

FINDING A SUITABLE METHOD FOR TEACHING PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract

The Faculty of Philology at UGD-Shtip has teaching majors that primarily aim to train modern teachers of German, English, and Italian as foreign languages. As teachers, trainers or as guides of future language teachers, we aim to produce modern teachers who will be able to transfer knowledge to their students and easily fit into modern educational trends and be in step with world labor market trends. Such challenges require a reconsideration of the ways, i.e., of the methods used in language teaching. As everything in the world changes at lightning speed, so must the methods in the teaching process. This is exactly the topic of our research through which we will try to give an answer to one of the many current questions that we believe affect all stakeholders of the teaching process around the world, and that is finding an appropriate method for studying phraseological units (PUs) in foreign language teaching. There is no doubt that PUs are an important part of language and culture around the world. They cause difficulties for English, German and Italian learners of these as second languages because their meanings are more often than not unpredictable. Non-native speakers can find themselves in trouble at times when encountered with some PUs. To many foreign language learners PUs can be a stumbling block. Obviously, this is because the meaning of the words that constitute a PU in most cases does not match the intended meaning of the unit. Our paper investigates the reasons for the difficulties learners encounter in studying PUs and the practical methods in teaching these.

The research is conducted in three phases: in the first phase we will survey 15 students from the Departments of German, English and Italian who study the phraseology provided in the teaching curricula to see their attitude to these specific lexical categories, i.e., to give an answer to the question 'How do students perceive the teaching of phraseological units?' and the results will be given in a diagram in percentages.

The second phase will be done in two parts: the first part will consist of the use of the traditional method of studying phraseology in the teaching of the specified foreign languages and the evaluation of the acquired knowledge about the phraseology of the foreign languages they study through an appropriate test in order to determine the degree of acquired knowledge. The second part will consist of teaching using the modern method of studying phraseology called the conceptual metaphors method, conducted with the same students as in the first part of this phase, which will also be followed by testing the students involved to determine the degree of the acquired knowledge.

The third phase of the research will consist of a self-evaluation list that all involved students will receive, which will give us information about the attitude of the students-future teachers: Which method of teaching PUs in L2 does teachers prefer - the traditional method or the conceptual metaphors instruction? Through the results obtained from the final phase of the research, we will actually get an answer to the question of what the most appropriate method for teaching and adopting phraseology in a foreign language is, which we as teachers and our students as future teachers should apply in order to perform modern foreign language teaching that will be positioned side by side with the world teaching trends.

Keywords: phraseology, traditional teaching, modern teaching, methods.

1 INTRODUCTION

The latest research dedicated to the quality of teaching at all levels of education shows that overcoming the current combination of traditional versus modern teaching implies the use of modern teaching methods in which students should be proactively involved. Building modern teachers is an investment in any healthy society, which will produce teachers with lasting knowledge who will stimulate their students' critical thinking - the future bearers of that healthy society. Such conclusions and reflections of the scientific community should not be ignored, but on the contrary, they should be put in the center of our attention, especially for the teaching faculties that train future modern teachers. Thus, we, the Faculty of Philology, are the ones most called to action in relation to this issue and it is precisely because of this call that we as a team of teacher researchers tried to give our own contribution through a modest research with our

students in order to find the most suitable method for studying one of the most specific linguistic units - phraseologisms. The question arises: "Why exactly phraseologisms?" and we can point to the Schmidt's (2000) claims that "Formulaic language occupies a crucial role in facilitating language; it is the key to fluency and motivates the learner" as an answer. Most studies implemented in the field of lexis argue that vocabulary should be placed at the center of language teaching, because language consists of grammaticalized vocabulary, not lexicalized grammar. Lewis (1993) argued that the lexical approach is a shift in language teaching from grammar to vocabulary teaching, as 'language consists not of traditional grammar and vocabulary, but often of multi-word prefabricated chunks' Lewis (1997). Encouraged by the theory of the Conceptual Metaphor suggested by Lakoff and Johnson in the early 1980s, we tried to carry out an interesting research with students of German, English and Italian language, whose mother tongue is Macedonian, to try to find together the most suitable method for studying phraseology in order to educate modern teachers who follow modern world trends in the field of education.

One of the modern teaching methods produced by modern teachers is the method of the Conceptual Metaphor, because it favors the conceptual metaphors instruction because it allows L2 learners to express their inner thoughts, views, ideas, and emotions in approximately the same way native speakers do. The method itself implies prior preparation of the student and the professor for the teaching content set as a goal for adoption. To apply conceptual metaphors in teaching phraseology, Li (2010) suggested three aspects to consider. The metaphorical competence of the ESL teachers should be developed because they are the implementers of the conceptual metaphor theory, first. Second, students' metaphorical awareness should be raised by informing them that metaphors are not only regarded as "poetical or rhetorical embellishments." Third, cultural background should be underestimated word missing because having different religion beliefs and world views as well as living in different environment and geographical affect our "metaphorical mode of thinking" (p. 209).

In order to demonstrate the practical application of this method within the framework of teaching in higher education, as a team of professors we carried out a modest study. First, we selected the students who wanted to be involved in this research, indicating that they would be involved in three ongoing phases. In the first phase, we conducted an electronic survey among the students from the groups: German language and literature, English language and literature, Italian language and literature, and Macedonian language and literature (who study one foreign language as an elective subject); they were all teaching major. The students received a questionnaire with 8 questions and the possibility to answer through the five-point Likert scale. After we obtained the results of the survey, we moved on to the second phase of the research. It consisted of two parts, and in the first part the traditional method of studying phraseologisms was used in the teaching of the specified foreign languages, and the evaluation of the acquired knowledge about the phraseologisms of the foreign languages studied was carried out through an appropriate test to determine the level of the acquired knowledge. The second part, which consisted of teaching using the modern method of studying phraseologisms - conceptual metaphors, was conducted on the same students as in the first phase, which also followed by testing of the students involved in order to determine the degree of the acquired knowledge. The third phase of the research consisted of a self-evaluation list that all involved students received, and which gave us information about the attitude of the students-future teachers: Which method of teaching phraseologisms in L2 do teachers prefer: the traditional method or the conceptual metaphors instruction?

From the results obtained from the final third phase of the research, we actually got an answer to the question of what the most appropriate method for teaching and acquiring phraseologisms in a foreign language is, which we as teachers and our students as future teachers should implement in order to perform modern foreign language teaching that will be able to keep up with world teaching trends.

2 METHODOLOGY

Our research methodology implies a defined type of research with pre-set objectives, a research approach through the use of questionnaires and participation in a workshop where appropriate teaching tools are used. Our research paper implemented a qualitative research approach. The methodology includes modern approaches of implementation and verification of the obtained results.

HYPOTHESES:

- 1 The Conceptual Metaphor method suggested by Lakoff and Johnson is still insufficiently used in contemporary teaching at higher education institutions.
- 2 The Conceptual Metaphor method is useful and gives excellent results in the study of phraseologisms as linguistic units.

Our research included a total number of 50 students from the first to the fourth year: 25 students of the English language and literature study program, 12 of the German language and literature, 5 of the Italian language and literature and 18 of the Macedonian language and literature studying a foreign language as an elective subject. The students were between the ages of 19 and 23, and in terms of gender, female students predominate, which has no special impact on the results of the research. The questionnaire was prepared and the survey was carried out by the subject professors of the Macedonian language and the foreign languages that are included in the teaching. The goal of the research is to prepare students, as future creators of teaching within the framework of the educational process, to use modern teaching methods. Using the Conceptual Metaphor method was a new experience for them. The workshops within which the students had the opportunity to see the practical application of the indicated method gave the expected results.

3 RESULTS OF RESEARCH

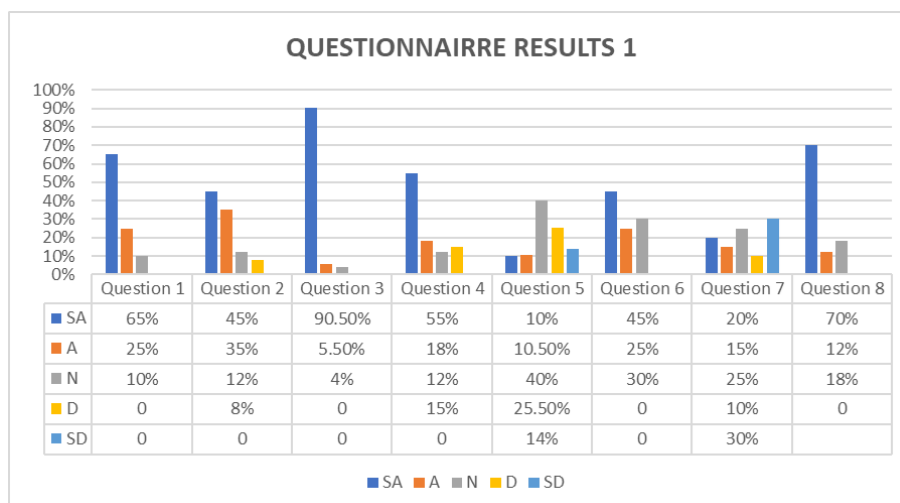
A two-part questionnaire was sent to the students-participants, as the most suitable instrument for verification, and they were given time in which to complete it. The survey was conducted during classes.

3.1 The first part of research

The first part of the questionnaire contains 8 questions that refer to the question 'How do students perceive the teaching of phraseological units?' The students' task was to give their individual answers. By applying the five-point Likert scale: SA (strongly agree), A (agree), N (neither agree nor disagree), D (disagree) and SD (strongly disagree), we obtained results that confirm the set hypotheses. The questionnaire consists of two parts; the first is to fill in the column that you think corresponds to the given statement according to the indicated symbols: SA (strongly agree), A (agree), N (neither agree nor disagree), D (disagree) and SD (strongly disagree). Students are instructed to complete the first part of the questionnaire, and below is the second part with appropriate clarification.

Table 1. Questionnaire

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Do you know what phraseologisms are?	65%	25%	10%	/	/
Does the teacher use phraseologisms in language teaching?	45%	35%	12%	8%	/
Do you think phraseologisms are difficult to learn?	90,5%	5,5%	4%	/	/
Do you believe that phraseologisms play an important role in teaching and learning?	55%	18%	12%	15%	/
How often do you use phraseologisms in your classes?	10%	10,5 %	40%	25,5%	14%
Do you think there is a relationship between phraseologisms and culture?	45%	25%	30%	/	/
Do you think that phraseologisms is sufficiently represented in textbooks?	20%	15%	25%	10%	30%

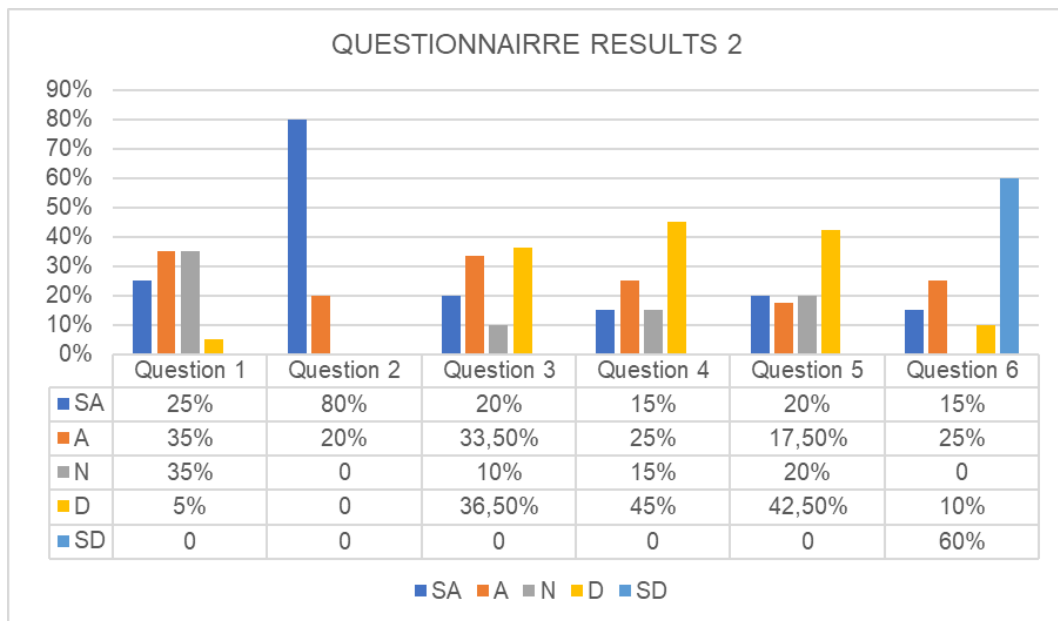


3.2 Second part of the research

The second part of the research is divided into two parts; in the first part, foreign language teaching is carried out using the traditional method of studying phraseology as well as evaluation of the acquired knowledge about the phraseology of the foreign languages they study through an appropriate test for determining the degree of the adopted knowledge. This is followed by a detailed review of the results obtained through the use of a diagram.

Table 2. Questionnaire

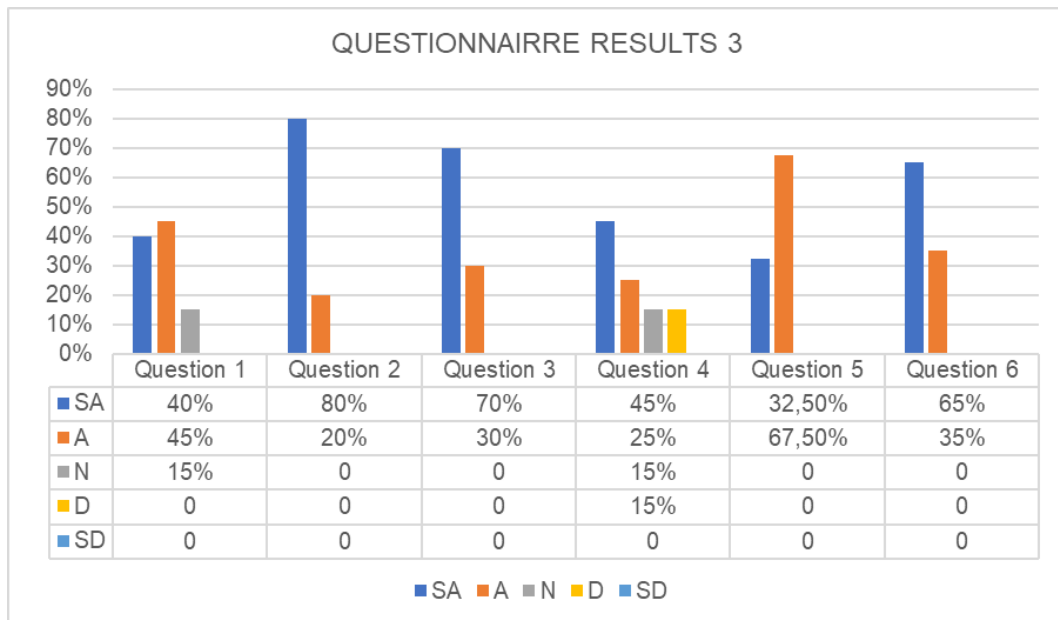
	SA	A	N	D	SD
Do you know what the traditional method of studying phraseologisms is?	25%	35%	35%	5%	/
The traditional method in language teaching allows me to easily find the phraseological units in the given text.	80%	20%	/	/	/
The traditional method in language teaching allows me to easily find the meaning of phraseological units.	20%	33,5%	10%	36,5%	/
The traditional method in language teaching allows me to learn phraseological units without the use of a dictionary.	15%	25%	15%	45%	/
The traditional method in language teaching allows me to easily learn phraseologisms.	20%	17,5%	20%	42,5%	/
The traditional method in language teaching allows me to use phraseologisms in a different context.	15%	25%	/	10%	60%



The second part consisting of teaching using the modern method of studying phraseologisms called the Conceptual Metaphors method, was conducted on the same students as in the first part of this phase and is also followed by testing the students involved in order to determine the degree of their acquired knowledge.

Table 3. Questionnaire

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Do you know what the Conceptual Metaphors method of studying phraseological units is?	40%	45%	15%	/	/
The Conceptual Metaphors method in language teaching allows me to easily find the phraseological units in the given text.	80%	20%	/	/	/
The Conceptual Metaphors method in language teaching allows me to easily find the meaning of phraseological units.	70%	30%	/	/	/
The Conceptual Metaphors method in language teaching allows me to learn phraseologisms without using a dictionary.	45%	25%	15%	15%	/
The Conceptual Metaphors method in language teaching allows me to easily learn phraseologisms.	32,5%	67,5%	/	/	/
The Conceptual Metaphors method in language teaching allows me to use phraseologisms in a different context.	65%	35%	/	/	/

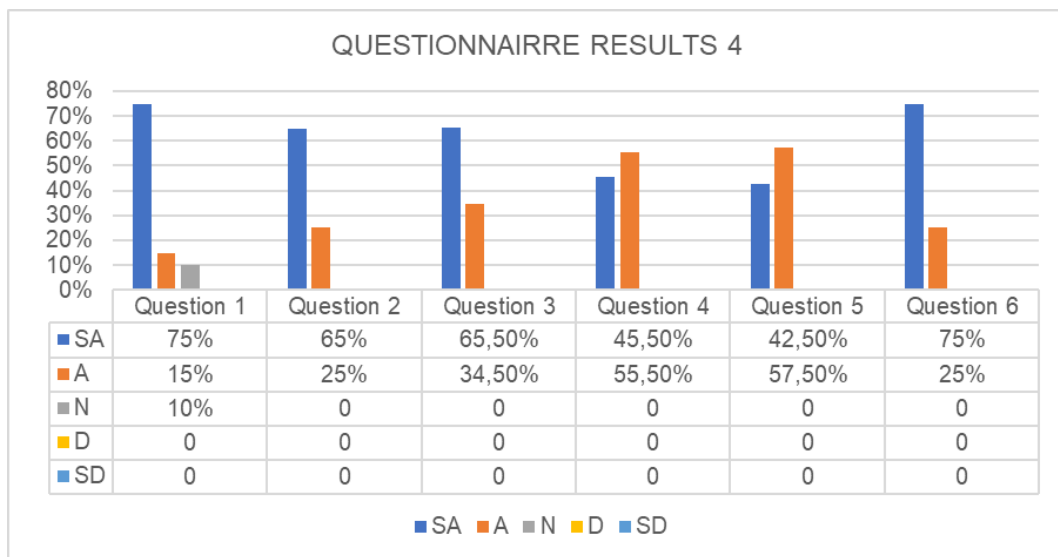


3.3 The results of the teaching realized using both models

Namely, by applying the method of Conceptual Metaphors, the professors direct their students towards the permanent adoption of phraseological units, because before the very process of using this modern method, it is necessary for the students to have some knowledge about them, or, in other words, some linguistic and cultural background. The students' task is to answer the questions based on their experience with the application of this method. The results of the teaching realized using both models is shown in a tabular display where it can be seen which of the mentioned models is more acceptable, more efficient and gives better results; therefore we can freely suggest that it can be included in the modern methods of teaching language.

Table 4. Questionnaire

	SA	A	N	D	SD
The Conceptual Metaphors method provides ample opportunities for research	75%	15%	10%	/	/
Students are put in the position of researchers	65%	25%	/	/	/
The method enables the acquisition of permanent knowledge	65,5%	34,5%	/	/	/
Learning phraseologisms is easier by this method	45,5%	55,5%	/	/	/
The frequency of phraseological units in the written and spoken texts of the language I study is easily detected by applying this method	42,5%	57,5%	/	/	/
The Conceptual Metaphors method is the future of modern teaching	75%	25%	/	/	/



The third phase of the research consists of a self-evaluation list that all involved students received, which will give us information about the attitude of students, future teachers: "Which method of teaching phraseologisms does teacher prefer: the traditional method or the conceptual metaphors instruction?" This question was answered by all involved students and 85% decided on the Conceptual Metaphors method, and only 15% on the traditional method of studying phraseologisms in language teaching. With the results obtained from the final third phase of the research, we have actually got the answer to the question of what the most appropriate method for teaching and acquiring phraseology in a foreign language is, which we, as teachers, and our students as future teachers should apply in order to perform modern foreign language teaching that can stand side by side with the world teaching trends.

The students-participants in the first phase received a questionnaire consisting of 8 questions. After completing it, the team of researchers obtained the following results in terms of students' knowledge of the term phraseologism: 65% of respondents strongly agree that they are familiar with phraseologisms, and 25% agree with the statement, 10% of students are not sure, that is, they declared themselves as neither agree nor disagree. Regarding the use of phraseologisms in language teaching by their teachers, the result obtained is interesting: 45% claim that their teacher uses them in language teaching, 35% agree that it is so, 12% are not sure and 8% claim that the teacher does not use phraseologisms in language teaching. As to the question of the importance of studying phraseological units in language teaching, 90.5% strongly agree, 5.5% agree, and only 4% neither agree nor disagree with the statement about the necessary study of phraseologisms. When it comes to the important role of phraseologisms in the process of teaching and learning the language, as many as 55% of the surveyed students claim that indeed phraseology has an important role, 18% of students agree, 12% are not sure, and 15% disagree. The following percentages refer to the use of phraseologisms by students during language teaching, and 10% and 10.5% use them (SA and A), 40% are not sure (N), 25.5% do not use them (D) and 14% do not use them at all (SD). Regarding the connection of phraseologisms with the culture of a nation, the students gave the following answers: 45% strongly agree that phraseologisms are closely related to the culture of the language, 25% agree and 30% neither agree nor disagree with the statement. When speaking about the representation of phraseologisms in textbooks and teaching aids, 20% of students strongly agree that

they are represented and 15% agree, and 25% are not sure of the answer (N), 10% disagree, and even 30% strongly disagree. As for the question if they support the concept of using phraseologisms in foreign language teaching, even 70% strongly agree, 12% agree and only 18% are not sure about the answer.

The second phase of the research consists of two parts, and the first part refers to the results obtained from the implemented traditional model of studying phraseology in foreign language teaching and the second part to the results of the Conceptual Metaphors method implemented by the same students involved in the research. In relation to these results, it is interesting that 80% of respondents strongly agree that the traditional learning model allows them to find phraseologisms in given texts more easily, and even 60% strongly disagree that this learning model allows them to use phraseologisms in another context, which is a really worrying fact regarding the process of learning a foreign language. Speaking about the results obtained after implementing teaching using the Conceptual Metaphors method, we got the following surprising results that even with this method 80% of the respondents strongly agree that this method allows them to find phraseologisms in given texts more easily, but in relation to this method, as many as 65% of respondents strongly agree that this model of studying phraseologisms allows them to use phraseology in another context, which is actually a great approach to finding a modern way to study this specific lexical category.

The results we have obtained so far actually foreshadow the results of the third phase of the research, where student-future teachers have to express themselves regarding the question: "Which method of teaching phraseologisms would you prefer as a teacher - the traditional method or the conceptual metaphors method? This question was answered by all respondents and 85% decided on the Conceptual Metaphors, and only 15% on the traditional method of studying phraseologisms in language teaching. These results give us a clear picture that the Conceptual Metaphors method is the most suitable method for teaching and acquiring foreign language phraseology, which we as teachers and our students as future teachers should apply in order to perform modern foreign language teaching that will keep the pace with world teaching trends.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The students-participants in the first phase received a questionnaire consisting of 8 questions. After completing it, the team of researchers obtained the following results in terms of students' knowledge of the term phraseologism: 65% of respondents strongly agree that they are familiar with phraseologisms, and 25% agree with the statement, 10% of students are not sure, that is, they declared themselves as neither agree nor disagree. Regarding the use of phraseologisms in language teaching by their teachers, the result obtained is interesting: 45% claim that their teacher uses them in language teaching, 35% agree that it is so, 12% are not sure and 8% claim that the teacher does not use phraseologisms in language teaching. As to the question of the importance of studying phraseological units in language teaching, 90.5% strongly agree, 5.5% agree, and only 4% neither agree nor disagree with the statement about the necessary study of phraseologisms. When it comes to the important role of phraseologisms in the process of teaching and learning the language, as many as 55% of the surveyed students claim that indeed phraseology has an important role, 18% of students agree, 12% are not sure, and 15% disagree. The following percentages refer to the use of phraseologisms by students during language teaching, and 10% and 10.5% use them (SA and A), 40% are not sure (N), 25.5% do not use them (D) and 14% do not use them at all (SD). Regarding the connection of phraseologisms with the culture of a nation, the students gave the following answers: 45% strongly agree that phraseologisms are closely related to the culture of the language, 25% agree and 30% neither agree nor disagree with the statement. When speaking about the representation of phraseologisms in textbooks and teaching aids, 20% of students strongly agree that they are represented and 15% agree, and 25% are not sure of the answer (N), 10% disagree, and even 30% strongly disagree. As for the question if they support the concept of using phraseologisms in foreign language teaching, even 70% strongly agree, 12% agree and only 18% are not sure about the answer.

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The research team consisting of teachers and students- teachers to-be in this research has achieved the set goal. Everyone agrees on the necessity of finding the most appropriate modern model for studying phraseological units, as they, as specific linguistic units, are specific in themselves, and the specificity or the weight they present for language students is also in relation to their connection with the culture of the given language. That is why our team had quite a difficult and demanding job to introduce the students-teachers to-be to the new method called Conceptual Metaphors, which turned out to be very little known and suppressed by language teachers who resort to the application of traditional models of teaching, with the excuse that this method is more suitable for application at a higher level of language learning; but, by doing so they slow down the process of modernization of teaching. After the completed workshops in which teachers and students actively participated, it was shown that the application of this method can bring positive changes in the teaching of languages in higher education. However, the traditional method should not be abandoned because some phraseological units have literal meaning (Liu, 2010). The Conceptual Metaphor teaching method is an "effective complement" in teaching and learning phraseology.

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