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Metaphors in Child Discourse: Interpretive Research from a Participatory Perspective

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Abstract

This article presents the study results of an educational project focused on visual metaphor in initiated child discourse. The objective of the study was to assess the knowledge of children between the ages of 9 and 10 years old regarding the target domain of metaphorical projection (concerning *togetherness*) and children's metaphorisation skills in the area of recognising similarities and differences between the target domain and the source domain of visual metaphor in an artistic picture book. In the designed didactic intervention activities, the research material originated from participant observation, focus interviews, and analysis of children's creations (graphic visualisations). The research was conducted on two groups of third graders in selected primary schools in the metropolitan environment of Łódź, Poland. The results illustrate children's preferences for translating one domain of metaphor with another, as well as the strategies for constructing children's knowledge with respect to life in a relationship. Furthermore, they point towards the need for expanding the educational environment in Polish educational culture.

Keywords: child discourse, children's aptitude for metaphorisation, target domain, metaphor source domain, knowledge construction, educational environment, picture book, educational culture.

Introduction

For this project, discourse is understood as a way of articulating intersubjectively existing convictions, perceptions, assessments, norms, and values produced in social practice, and more broadly as a set of practices of communicating beliefs, rooted in personal experience and cultural context, linked to the understanding of an area of reality. The theoretical justification for research in this area is based on a qualitative approach. It fits within the context of interpretative research, a part of which is cognitive science. In an attempt to answer the question, “How is it that children learn through conceptual metaphor?” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; 1999), cognitivists have provided revealing insights. Moreover, metaphor, in this study, has been defined as a cognitive-linguistic mapping between source and target domains. Previous studies have shown that the understanding of metaphor changes not only depending on the age of the study participants, but also on the type of target domain of the metaphorical mapping and the conventionality of the linguistic expressions from which the metaphor is transferred (Özçalışkan, 2005; 2007). In relation to the cited studies, this research will discuss how the process of encoding and decoding metaphor changes depending on children’s knowledge of *togetherness* – the target domain of metaphorical projection and the context that stimulates children’s metaphorical understanding.

Background

Cognitivism opens up new spaces while revealing insights for any reflection on education. Seeking answers to the fundamental question of the manner in which we learn, and come to understand and perceive the world, it offers a distinct view of children’s cognitive abilities, particularly as it relates to establishing correspondences between meaning elements of different structures as the foundation for using metaphors (Langacker, 1995). Cognitivists gave metaphors a completely new status. They linked it with the nature of thinking, assigned it to elementary cognitive processes, and showed metaphor as an indelible element of experiencing, understanding and expressing reality.

Metaphor ceased being considered as something foreign, external, decorative, or artificial. Thus, if we assume that metaphor is a way of thinking and understanding the surrounding reality, a phenomenon deeply rooted in human experience, and the ability to create metaphor is innate and related to the cognitive capacity of humans to establish correspondences between elements of different structures, a new area of learning processes emerges that can be critically analysed. Cognitivists draw attention primarily to the processual nature of learning: the gradual, subjective opening of meanings as a result of individually experienced categorising, profiling and evaluating. Consequently, learning is not mechanical, and knowledge does not have a finished, finite form. Cognitivism has also changed the status of language, which is no longer perceived as an objective structure with a system of grammatical rules with embedded mechanisms for their application that enable the production of intelligible statements. It is assumed that the structure of language is determined by patterns of neural activation, which constitute the overall activity of the brain and body. However, cognitive processes are largely individual. Meanings consist of conceptual content, expressing specific aspects of the surrounding world indirectly; they stem from thought operations or general ways of seeing the world, permeated by the personal and unique perception of what a learning child is immersed in (Langacker, 2003). As a result, the fundamental change introduced by cognitivism in the theory of cognitive processes is a concept of education wherein the process of constructing knowledge seeks to create subjective ways of describing reality, as well as discovering, interpreting and negotiating meanings. It encourages explorative and investigative attitudes as well as cognitive independence. It has been shown that teaching strategies based on metaphor often lead to more deeply consolidated results than strategies based on literal content. With shifts to theoretical consciousness, the approach to the function of metaphor is evolving, as it is understood and defined as an integral part of the internalisation of knowledge. Based on this conviction, Ortony argues three theses, stating that metaphor can facilitate learning by (a) transferring fragments of experience from familiar to less familiar contexts (the compactness thesis), (b) facilitating memorisation of the explored knowledge (the vividness thesis) and (c) enabling the description of

those aspects of experience that cannot be expressed with a linguistic code (the inexpressibility thesis) (Ortony, 1975, p. 25). Building on the cognitivist framework, the relationship between metaphor – and more broadly, of language – as well as conceptions of education is of pragmatic importance.

Methods and materials

The data

The analysed data comes from 15 two-hour lessons in a pair of third-grade classes at different primary schools, providing a total of 30 hours of video recordings of completed lessons. The research was conducted over a six-month period during the school year from October to March in Poland. The researcher, who was in the role of an interpretively engaged participant-observer, focused her observation on educational events initiated according to her own design. The transcription of the collected material was verified by two researchers who were involved in analysing the quality of the collected statements made by the students and teacher in the classroom. Each transcription was identified according to a theme – the subject was discussed in four thematic blocks: *coexistence*, *reciprocity of relations*, *unity in diversity*, and *togetherness (a new quality)* – and according to the research group (students of grades 3A and 3B). The children's understanding and production of metaphor were assessed by the researchers on a three-point scale.

Participants and procedure

The study included students between the ages of 9 and 10. The size of the selected grades (about 30 students in each group) and the participation of boys and girls in the study were comparable. A total of 60 children took part in the study. The choice of such a study group was determined by the exponential increase in finding similarities between domains, which is noticeable at this age (Özçalışkan, 2007). The children came from a city with a population of 700,000 inhabitants and belonged to a middle-class background.

The main research goal was the analysis of children's aptitude for metaphorisation, that is, their capacity to understand, recognise and create metaphors. I was interested in how children conceptualised the notion of *togetherness*, the common features of the target and source domains they considered important in a metaphor; and whether they could discern between the distinctive features of both domains. I also attempted to identify children's knowledge of the various aspects of coexistence: (a) *Things are easier for them because they are together*, (b) *Things are harder for them because they are together*, (c) *Some things are easier, and others are harder for them because they are together*.

I posited that the category of *togetherness* would encourage the children to seek non-literal ways of conceptualising this group. I presumed that they would use metaphorical verbalisation and symbolic visualisation, and the study of children's abilities for metaphorisation would pose a pragmatic purpose. I sought an answer to the question of whether developing an aptitude for metaphorisation was possible. Therefore, the conducted study included aspects of both quantitative and qualitative research. In the designed didactic interventions, the research material originated from participatory observation, focus interviews and analysis of children's creations (graphic visualisations). I observed both the students' activities as well as their effects (primarily artistic concretisations). These observations were combined with students' recorded statements and samples of situations that revealed children's aptitude for metaphorisation. Comprehension and production of metaphor were assessed on a three-point scale, with a score of 0 (irrelevant or no justification), 1 (incomplete response in the right direction), or 2 (valid justification).

To this end, I organised and performed an educational project involving a picture book. Based on the book, a stimulus-sentence was constructed around a visual metaphor. Over a period of fifteen weeks, modules excerpted from Iwona Chmielewska's book *Dwoje ludzi* [Two People] were incorporated into the school curriculum (Chmielewska, 2014).

Prompted by visual imagery around the category of *togetherness*, the child discourse went well beyond the horizon of the source domain adopted in the picture book. Expanding the visualised problems that were familiar to

children by virtue of being together prompted consideration of the target domain of metaphorical projection. It juxtaposed the obvious, familiar and simple with the untamed and controversial. The children's statements gained another dimension, focusing not only on what is more concrete and perceptible through the senses but on ambiguity. They also revealed the mechanism behind children's understanding, assessment and evaluation. The designed activities usually proceeded in a cycle developed with the children:

1. The free conversation was preceded by reflection on the issues addressed by the picture book, which was read in a problem-based order determined by metaphorical motifs.
2. Thoughts on the visual imagery of *togetherness* began with the source domain (more concrete and perceptible through the senses), which eventually became a pretext for analysing the target domain (abstract and complex). This line of considerations made it possible to establish a relationship between the children's knowledge of a particular source domain, as well as their understanding of the metaphorical extensions of that domain:
 - 2.1. First, we analysed metonymies and visual metaphors depicting various combinations of two objects/things: men's and women's clothes, windows of a room, wheels of a bicycle, and book covers. These became a pretext for elaborating on the metaphorical model concerning *coexistence*.
 - 2.2. Next, to encourage children to discuss the issue of *cooperation*, we discussed metonymies and visual metaphors with complementary objects, such as bulbs that form an hourglass, a stem and a flower, a mast and a sail, and keys and locks.
 - 2.3. We further considered the issue of visual metaphors illustrating the *diversity* of similar objects, i.e., two islands across from each other, different clocks, species of trees, and opposite walls of a house. They triggered reflection on the myriad forms of dissimilarity between people in a relationship, i.e., more dissimilarities than similarities, and more similarities than dissimilarities.

3. Our inquiry was completed with visualisation exercises, where symbol-based activities strengthened, consolidated and clarified reflection on the issues evoked by the picture book. A vital complement was the children's verbal activity while performing the tasks, including activities such as thinking out loud, reflecting, offering unprompted statements and asking and answering questions. A spontaneous thought exchange following the artistic concretisation and focus interviews with each student helped in avoiding the pitfalls of interpreting the drawings, including a situation where a child informs us about something in a literal way while we look for hidden meanings.

The theoretical justifications for research in this area were based on a qualitative approach, fitting within the context of interpretative research on didactic phenomena (Klus-Stańska, 2010, pp. 128–138). I understood the interpretive perspective in the study of didactic phenomena as a participatory perspective, which defines the status of the researcher in the role of an interpretively engaged participant-observer (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011) and the nature of participation in educational practice. Moreover, I assumed that the participatory perspective was a decentred perspective, self-creative/self-formative and critical and radically engaged (Piekarski, 2011, pp. 248–250). I focused my observation on educational events that were initiated according to my design. The designed didactic interventions were engaged in an emancipatory manner, requiring an interpretively engaged participant-observer to intentionally create didactic conditions that cannot be found in mainstream education. This was done to observe children's metaphorisation aptitude in situations that are neither planned nor offered by the school.

Results

The educational project with a metaphorical picture book allowed me to determine the knowledge of children between the ages of 9 and 10 based on four models of metaphorical projection: *coexistence*, *cooperation (reciprocity of relations)* and *finding unity in diversity*, as well as *appreciation of commonality*. In children's understanding, the strength of togetherness lies in the reciprocity

of relationships, i.e., not only taking, but also giving, in feeling the need to accept the diversity and otherness of the people who are in a relationship, and in realising one's own otherness (each I is the Other to Another Person). According to children, togetherness involved an attitude that could be called a sense of collegiality and kindness; these did not result in order, but from an internalised attitude that must be worked out patiently and persistently. Being together was considered a test of character, a conscious and wise building of I in relation to You and Others.

The children most often explained a domain with another domain; they understood the result of shifting the meanings of two completely independent concepts (abstract concept – physical object). In the children's metaphorical transformations, the non-sensory sphere gained an additional pictorial and mental dimension (*community is, and at the same time, is not community*).

The study found that in the model of metaphorical projection around *coexistence*, the children most often explained the concept of *togetherness* through the metaphor named *two people are two wheels in a bike* ($r = 1$). The metaphorical explanatory mechanism also prevailed in non-verbal statements. More than half of all children surveyed visualised *coexistence* in the form of bicycle wheels moving in the same direction and at the same pace. Due to its high frequency of occurrence, the metaphor *two people are two windows in a room* also received a high-rank position ($r = 2$). This was followed by the metaphors: *two people are two book covers* ($r = 3$), and *two people are pieces of clothes fastened together* ($r = 4$). Third-grade students indicated both the symptomatic and causal models of the metaphor. In tabular form, I discussed the target and source domains along with sample 'statements from the children. The results demonstrate the strategies for constructing children's knowledge regarding life in a relationship, and their preferences for translating one domain of metaphor with another.

Table 1. Children's metaphor comprehension and production: *Coexistence*

Target domain Two people are like two...	Children's metaphor comprehension and production COEXISTENCE	
	Source domain Generic-level metaphors Specific-level metaphors	
PIECES OF CLOTHES FASTENED TOGETHER	(1) CLOTHES for PERSON/BODY (2) CONTAINER (PERSON is the CLOTHES)	to match, things in tandem <i>tailored-made life, pull yourself up by the bootstraps, to match, mend a relationship vs. a heart ripped apart</i> "At first glance, it seems that they are a happy couple; appearance-wise, they are a good match, but as you get to know them better, you will find that they disagree on many things."
WINDOWS OF A ROOM	(1) PHYSICAL CLOSENESS (EYE CONTACT) IS EMOTIONAL CLOSENESS (2) BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP requires OPENNESS and SPACIOUSNESS OF THE CONTAINER – THE MIND (3) OPENING (windows-relations) implies OPENING YOURSELF UP TO EACH OTHER, LOOKING TOGETHER (4) LOOKING has two dimensions: OUTSIDE and FROM THE INSIDE	look at the same things differently see something different look in the same direction look at the world differently "Even the closest people are different from each other, every person sees something different"; "even friends and people in love are different from each other, but they must look in the same direction because they want to be together."
WHEELS OF A BIKE	(1) TOGETHERNESS IS MOVING AT THE SAME PACE AND IN THE SAME DIRECTION (2) EVEN DISTRIBUTION OF TASKS and RESPONSIBILITIES IN A RELATIONSHIP IS AN EVEN PACE OF MOVEMENT	move at the same pace move in the same direction

Table 1. (continued)

Target domain Two people are like two...	Children's metaphor comprehension and production COEXISTENCE	
	Source domain Generic-level metaphors Specific-level metaphors	
WHEELS OF A BIKE	(3) COMMON GOAL IS MOVING IN THE SAME DIRECTION	move at different paces
	(4) WORKING TOGETHER IS PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND DEXTERITY	move in different directions
	(5) BUILDING TOGETHERNESS REQUIRES PHYSICAL STRENGTH	"They move in the same direction when they do the same things," "when they think, feel, and experience things similarly."
	(6) A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP IS A SYNCHRONISED MECHANISM	"It is love that keeps them together, if the feeling wanes, the wedding rings will not keep their relationship together."
	(7) A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP IS A SMOOTHLY RUNNING BICYCLE	"People make a decision that they no longer want to live with each other, talk to each other, do anything together, and then they usually get a divorce."
	(8) THE WHEEL LOSING AIR IS LOSING ENERGY, STRENGTH, ENTHUSIASM, INTEREST	
BOOK COVERS	(9) SOMEONE LOSING AIR IS LOSING INTEREST OR STRENGTH TO ACT	
	(1) TOGETHERNESS IS CONTACT	form a whole/hang together/stay connected
	(2) A GOOD RELATIONSHIP IS A BOOK CONNECTED BY ITS COVERS	"They should make a whole," "hang together," "stay connected."
	(3) A BAD RELATIONSHIP IS A BOOK FALLING APART	"They lose their meaning in life, just as a book can lose its title page and you can't tell what it's about."

Sources: Own study.

The quantitative summary illustrates that for the target domain of *cooperation (reciprocity of relations)*, the students most often gave the metaphor *two people are a mast and a sail* ($r = 1$), as well as the metaphors *two people are keys and locks* ($r = 1$), *two people are a flower and a stem* ($r = 1$), and *two people are bulbs that form an hourglass* ($r = 2$). The latter metaphor appeared in the statements of a few children in the surveyed groups.

Table 2. Children’s metaphor comprehension and production: *Reciprocity of relationship*

Target domain Two people are like two...	Children’s metaphor comprehension and production RECIPROCITY OF RELATIONSHIP	
	Source domain Generic-level metaphors Specific-level metaphors	
MAST AND SAIL	<p>(1) LIFE IS A JOURNEY</p> <p>(2) LIFE IS A VOYAGE ACROSS THE SEA/OCEAN</p> <p>(3) PEOPLE IN A RELATIONSHIP ARE A MAST AND A SAIL. HARDSHIP/TROUBLE IN LIFE IS THE STORM ON THE SEA</p> <p>(4) HANDS ARE PEOPLE, HANDS ARE ACTION</p> <p>(5) DEALING WITH TROUBLES TOGETHER IS HOLDING THE SHIP UP ON A ROUGH SEA</p>	<p>Life together is one long voyage (spread over time and irreversible); sail to the end.</p> <p>“If they get along, this voyage is long and uninterrupted. They don’t sail in different directions; they decide on one long voyage.”</p>
PLANT (FLOWER AND STEM)	<p>(1) THE UNION OF TWO PEOPLE IS LIKE A FLOWER AND A STEM</p> <p>(2) TOGETHERNESS IS PHYSICAL CONTACT</p>	<p>Physical growth is mental/spiritual/moral development vs. withering is loss of life force/energy.</p> <p>“The flower is prettier, but the stem is more vital to the plant,” “it’s what makes the flower beautiful, it can flourish because the stem provides it with water/nutrients.”</p>

Table 2. (continued)

Target domain Two people are like two...	Children's metaphor comprehension and production RECIPROCITY OF RELATIONSHIP	
	Source domain Generic-level metaphors Specific-level metaphors	
PLANT (FLOWER AND STEM)	(3) GROWTH IS UP vs. DOMINATION IS DOWN (4) HAND IS A PERSON/ HAND IS ACTION/ HAND IN HAND is JOINT ACTION (metonymy)	
BULBS THAT FORM AN HOURGLASS	(1) BEING TOGETHER IS GIVING AND RECEIVING (2) PEOPLE IN A RELATIONSHIP ARE IN A CONSTANT STATE OF GIVING AND RECEIVING (3) SOLVING RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS IS GRAPPLING WITH GIVING AND RECEIVING / WITH ONESELF	reversibility (not only giving and not only receiving), reciprocity "As long as they care about each other and hang in together, it won't fall apart, but if they stop caring and thinking about the other person, they can easily be torn."
KEYS AND LOCKS	(1) OPENNESS vs. CLOSURE (2) RELATIONS ARE THE SMOOTH FUNCTIONING OF A MECHANISM (ADJUSTMENT) (3) TOGETHERNESS IS A LOCKING/ OPENING MECHANISM/KEY LOCK (4) SOLVING A PROBLEM REQUIRES THE RIGHT TOOLS	match vs. mismatch figuring him/her out – using the key match vs. adjust "I think that not only people who are alike can be a match, the key can be common interests. I play chess with different children and what we have in common is the game."

Source: Own study.

In both groups of children surveyed, the metaphors that appeared most frequently for the target domain of *togetherness (unity in diversity)* included *two people are two islands across from each other* ($r = 1$), *two people are opposite walls* ($r = 2$), and *two people are two different clocks* ($r = 2$). In addition to these, a handful of children in the study group created two further metaphors: *two people are two different trees* ($r = 3$) and *two people are day and night* ($r = 4$). Many interesting and explorative metaphors suggest that *togetherness* (the target domain of the metaphor) triggers children's thinking process with respect to a variety of source domains.

Table 3. Children's metaphor comprehension and production: *Unity in diversity*

Target domain Two people are like two...	Children's metaphor comprehension and production UNITY IN DIVERSITY	
	Source domain Generic-level metaphors Specific-level metaphors	
TWO ISLANDS ACROSS FROM EACH OTHER	(1) PEOPLE IN A RELATIONSHIP (MAN AND WOMAN) ARE DIFFERENT ISLANDS	someone wants/doesn't want to have valleys, volcanoes, and waterfalls
	(2) DIVERSITY OF CHARACTERS IS DIVERSITY OF LANDSCAPE	have one's own shape and area of freedom
	(3) HARDSHIPS ARE STORMS vs. JOY IS THE SUN (TO WARM A RELATIONSHIP)	meet vs. miss each other in common action, thinking and experiencing the world
	(4) NO PHYSICAL CONTACT means NO EMOTIONAL CONTACT	"Islands, just like people, have various experiences. Everyone goes through similar things; they face storms, that is, suffer some misfortune, unpleasantness, something bad may happen to them, but then the sun comes out, which is joyful, and life gets easier."

Table 3. (continued)

Target domain Two people are like two...	Children's metaphor comprehension and production UNITY IN DIVERSITY	
	Source domain Generic-level metaphors Specific-level metaphors	
TWO ISLANDS ACROSS FROM EACH OTHER	(5) LOOK THE OTHER WAY (6) TURN AWAY FROM SOMEONE	"I think that not everyone experiences the same things; some people get more storms than sunshine in their lives. And that's not fair."
DAY AND NIGHT	(1) TWO PEOPLE AVOIDING EACH OTHER IN A RELATIONSHIP ARE DAY AND NIGHT (2) TOGETHERNESS IS CONTACT/NO TOGETHERNESS IS NO CONTACT	avoid each other, evade meet vs. miss each other in actions, thinking and experiences "They can live together and never meet each other." "Sometimes it's like this at home; everyone comes home after work and school, but everyone is busy with something else (watching TV, making food, doing homework). And that's the way it is every day, family members passing each other by."
TWO DIFFERENT TREES	(1) PEOPLE ARE TREES (2) PEOPLE in A RELATIONSHIP/ COMMUNITY ARE TREES WHOSE ROOTS ARE ENTANGLED (3) PEOPLE in A RELATIONSHIP/ COMMUNITY ARE TREES LIMITING EACH OTHER'S ACCESS TO SUNLIGHT	devotion, care, responsibility, the strength of mutual bonds and willingness to make sacrifices "Sometimes someone is weak and doesn't look beautiful, doesn't grow so strong and sturdy, but can be beautiful inside and bear fruit."
OPPOSITE WALLS	(1) TOGETHERNESS IS PHYSICAL CONTACT (2) LACK OF TOGETHERNESS IS A LACK OF PHYSICAL CONTACT	distance experienced physically vs. emotionally "The longer you stay distant, the harder it is to get closer."

Table 3. (continued)

Target domain Two people are like two...	Children's metaphor comprehension and production UNITY IN DIVERSITY	
	Source domain Generic-level metaphors Specific-level metaphors	
OPPOSITE WALLS	(3) EMOTIONAL CLOSENESS IS PHYSICAL CLOSENESS (4) HANDS AS PEOPLE/PEOPLE ARE OPPOSITE WALLS	
TWO DIFFERENT CLOCKS	(1) PEOPLE IN A RELATIONSHIP (MAN AND WOMAN) ARE DIFFERENT CLOCKS (2) DIVERSITY OF CHARACTERS IS DIVERSITY OF CLOCKS (3) DIFFICULTIES/PROBLEMS/ RESPONSIBILITIES ARE BATTERY DRAINING/LOSING ENERGY/LOSING TIME (4) PLEASURE AND FUN ARE POWERING/RECHARGING THE BATTERY	meticulously managing one's own and others' time finding ways to recharge life's batteries one clock is late or fast; the other clock is reliable, but its battery may run out be late, fail to keep up in a relationship, speed up "Sometimes people lose the energy to continue being with each other, and then everyone functions on their own terms." "They don't have to measure the time together anymore."

Source: Own study.

The target domain *togetherness (new quality)* was represented with the same frequency. Children between the ages of 9 and 10 most often created two metaphors: *two people are two different colours* ($r = 1$) and *two people are two different persons* ($r = 1$).

Table 4. Children's metaphor comprehension and production: *Togetherness (new quality)*

	Children's metaphor comprehension and production TOGETHERNESS (NEW QUALITY)	
Target domain	Source domain Generic-level metaphors Specific-level metaphors	
TWO DIFFERENT COLOURS (COMBINED THEY CAN CREATE A THIRD COLOR)	<p>(1) COLOURS AS A REFLECTION OF HUMAN EMOTIONS/PERSONALITIES DIFFERENT COLOURS ARE DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES/CHARACTERS</p> <p>(2) A RELATIONSHIP IS A COMBINATION OF DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES</p> <p>(3) RELATIONSHIP OF DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES IS A COMBINATION OF DIFFERENT COLORS</p> <p>(4) EYE AS A PERSON (PART FOR THE WHOLE)</p>	<p>two different ways of seeing the world: a warm and cool perspective</p> <p>"These colours are the parents who create a new colour, their child. It comes from them, but it's different. Parents can also be mixed from other colours of their parents."</p>
TWO DIFFERENT PEOPLE (COMBINED THEY CAN CREATE A THIRD PERSON)	<p>(1) ROMPERS AS A CHILD</p> <p>(2) HAND AS AN ACTION</p> <p>(3) HAND AS A PERSON (PART FOR THE WHOLE)</p> <p>(4) COOPERATION BETWEEN PEOPLE IS LIKE COOPERATION OF TWO HANDS</p>	<p>working together, togetherness is a common good, together you can achieve more, do more good things, maturing to parenthood</p> <p>"They need to help each other, because this is a difficult job, if one of them was out of the picture, the job couldn't be completed."</p>

Source: Own study.

The quantitative summary depicts that the children's conceptualisation of *togetherness* is understood as a continuous movement gradually reducing the distance between two people (*togetherness is physical contact*): from *fitting in, matching, looking in the same direction, connecting, keeping together, sustaining to cooperating (setting a vehicle in motion, taking a journey, creating a new person)*. Relationship/emotional *closeness* is also transferred into the dimension of spatial-physical growing and lifting (*the stem lifts the flower high and provides it with everything it needs*). The essential orientation metaphor of *togetherness means up* is the basis for further conceptualisations of *being together* and consciously *facing the world and supporting each other* as objects literally drawing closer (*connecting, keeping together*).

The life of two people (*togetherness*) manifests several key properties of solids: *hardship* can manifest as *hardness*, e.g., life together is hard rocks on islands (colloquially, we can call it a hard nut to crack). If, on the other hand, the attempt to break the shell is successful and we manage to *break it, shatter it, and release egoistic thinking*, it means that the conditions for the formation of communal bonds have been created. Such thinking is revealed by the collocations "ready for change," "wants to communicate," "thinks the same way," and "feels the same way." *a lack of togetherness is a lack of physical contact*. The absence of *togetherness* is expressed by children through distance, i.e., *separation/estrangement*; and in two dimensions: horizontal distance (islands away from each other, islands across from each other), and vertical distance (two trees: a higher and a lower one growing in its shadow). Considering *togetherness* makes us imagine ourselves and other people as points or objects situated in space, at different distances from each other. These distances shift, as we get close to some people while we grow distant from others over time, moving away from each other. Children conceive of *togetherness* (*closeness*) as its *physical range*. In the children's statements, the linguistic markers of *closeness* are the phrases "close family," "a close friend," "he is close to me," and "he was the closest person in the world to me."

The proposed project of education oriented around visual metaphors in the initiated child discourse is an attempt to create conditions for the interiorisation of the values that comprise the common, elementary and irreducible co-

dex of human existence. This codex was personal and not imposed – it became ethical equipment, a compass, and not a disciplinary regulation, consisting of orders and prohibitions linked to a system of punishments and rewards. External ethics typically generates opportunism, and triggering figurative thinking is constitutionally part of a long-term and complex process, involving various educational interactions not calculated for immediate or superficial results. Deferring the expected results is fraught with uncertainty, like any action in “material” that is diverse and volatile (Wiśniewska-Kin, 2009).

The confrontation of the models in the picture book with the children’s perceptions and understanding of the same repertoire of problems reveals a remarkably accurate recognition of meanings from the perspective of children. The evoked reflections, discussions, observations, emotions, and evaluations refer to the children’s diverse experiences of togetherness. The carefully selected visuals were complemented by a short text in the picture book, which centred around the issues of kindness, compassion and forgiveness and provided excellent opportunities to reflect on the values of a diverse community. Moreover, they showed various ways of relieving tensions and reconciling contradictions as well as highlighted the elementary principles that foster being respectful of differences.

- The key thread that leads to creating such awareness and attitude is the issue of realising one’s own otherness (each I is the Other to Another Person) and the need for acceptance and respect, despite differences.
- The next issue considered with the students was openness linked to curiosity: He/She, as the Other, could offer or show me something I did not know. The principle of reciprocity became applicable: what could I present, offer, or show them? What would intrigue them? What was interesting about me?
- Another issue was to direct attention to what unites us more than divides us in diversity; to make us aware that there are more similarities between us than differences. What mattered more was what we had in common.
- Experiencing that the positive aspects of being in a community

proved to be equally important, for example, sharing interests with peers, and a sense of security in a family, neighbourhood or social community.

- With the emergence of conditions for the acceptance of being in a community, I reflected that while it brings unquestionable benefits, it also involved giving up some of one's own freedom, especially, the egoistic type. However, above all, it entailed seeing the needs of others and getting involved in community affairs. Inevitable rifts and tensions must not poison mentalities and harden behaviours, and conflicts must be resolved through dialogue and negotiation.

Hence, reflection on the initial category of *community* focused on issues of self-identification and self-acceptance through openness to all forms of otherness in peer communities. Belonging to peer communities provided positive stimuli but was also a source of emotional ambivalence and conflict. Their cause could be egocentrism, as well as strained family and social relationships, rivalry combined with a sense of restricted freedom, or alienation.

Thus, the understood respect for otherness in the community seemed to lay an indispensable groundwork for the formation of attitudes of cooperation and solidarity as ideas that may be grand and distant but nonetheless demanded inclusion in the repertoire of pedagogical interactions. This was especially true of phenomena wherein the presence of natural otherness increased through cultural diversity. Otherness, previously accepted as an exotic attraction or curiosity at best, is becoming part of our everyday social life.

The presented metaphorical statements confirm the validity of the cultural approach to learning processes. The social dimension of interaction places the functioning of metaphors in "interpersonal space," and considers the sociocultural context of their use (Cameron, 2003, pp. 267–268). Obstacles that hinder insights into children's metaphorisation aptitude are the researcher's problem. The children's abilities and limitations provide the data for explaining the discrepancy that exists between knowledge and comprehension skills, as well as the capacity for metaphorical imagery. I believe that we ought to assume that children often understand concepts; however, they cannot verbalise them and produce linguistic conceptualisations. The difficulty is the

use of appropriate language structures; they act as a barrier that inhibits the process of learning and understanding metaphorisation phenomena. A lack of proficiency in the processes of creating coherent descriptions makes children appear incompetent in terms of metaphorisation abilities, while in reality, they are still struggling to create reasoned messages. It can be said that by creating an emotional climate, interpersonal contacts train us in experiencing all areas of community life while preparing us to speak about them.

Therefore, what is crucial is not that metaphor is the pivotal point of cognitive-linguistic theory, “a matter of paramount importance,” but the fact that it is a cognitive structure that is vital for children’s orientation in the surrounding world. Furthermore, it becomes the key to an effective description of the process of understanding, which is essential for several reasons. First, it enables studying the kind of children’s thinking and behaviour that is interpretive in nature: it reveals not only children’s personal knowledge but more importantly, their ways of comprehending, categorising and evaluating an ambiguous reality. It also provides an opportunity to reconstruct the cognitive abilities externalised in the verbal and nonverbal responses of children confronted with a structured problem situation. Secondly, it allows for the formulation of postulates and “maps” of directions that reveal the possibilities of triggering linguistic images created in a young mind and anchored in culture and personal experience. Thus, it activates the space for thinking about necessary changes in the school system, related to adopting a different perspective of children’s understanding of the world. Consequently, in my research, I opted for an interdisciplinary cognitive position, which opened up new spaces and provided revealing insights for any reflection on education.

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