Cognitive Linguistics, Project-Based Learning, and technology at the crossroads

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Abstract

The way we interact with the world shapes the way we learn languages. For instance, we speak of the temperatures going up when they increase or feeling down when we have had a bad day. This is a result of our experience that MORE is UP and LESS is DOWN (cf. basic Cognitive Linguistic principles outlined in Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). These connections are rooted in metaphorical thinking. Cognitive Linguistics has proven to be an effective tool in the realm of language teaching (Dirven, 2001; Langacker, 2001). These authors have claimed that it is possible to use the principles of Cognitive Linguistics in order to build didactic materials and organize teaching sessions built on the sensorimotor experience of the students and relate it to the way contents are taught. This model follows Lakoff's (1990) *cognitive commitment* (i.e. the commitment of linguists to formulating generalizations on the basis of linguistic evidence, that is, finding usage patterns that shed light on linguistic structure at different levels of organization). This is of particular interest in the realm of language teaching due to its capacity to connect the students' previous experience and the learning experience of linguistic content. This presentation addresses the specific case of English teaching as an L2 from a Cognitive Linguistic perspective in the realm of *Project-Based Learning*. Project-Based Learning involves systematic teaching that engages the students in learning knowledge and skills by means of carefully designed questions and tasks. The present study claims that the application of Cognitive-Linguistic principles to Project-Based Learning enhances the efficiency of the proposed tasks, and that they can be incorporated to the realm of technology. Drawing from data gathered from a study that brought together Project-Based Learning and Cognitive Linguistics in the form of a didactic blog at the level of higher-education, the aims of this presentation are (1) to explain the interaction between these components, and (2) to outline the advantages and disadvantages of such combination in teaching English as an L2.

Keywords: Cognitive Linguistics; Project-Based Learning; language teaching; information technology; embodiment.

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