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COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS IN THE ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Objectives and research questions. The project aims at investigating to which extent the grammatical and lexical competence of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners as well as their motivation to learn the language can be enhanced by integrating Cognitive Linguistic (CL) insights into the curriculum. Selected aspects of the English language (e.g. *phrasal verbs, prepositions, tense and aspect*) serve as examples to reflect upon what should be considered when editing material for teaching purposes, to discuss the role of visualizations and to research which effects respective teaching and learning methods have on the learning process and on learning outcomes.

Theoretical Background. From a CL point of view, language usage in its grammatical and lexical form is based on universal, socio-cultural and individual experiences of the interlocutors (Geeraerts, 2006). Thus, form-meaning mappings are not to be regarded as arbitrary but as linguistically motivated. Theoretical insights into the experience-based linguistic motivation of certain phenomena in language serves as a basis to develop and introduce innovative teaching and learning material as well as strategies of instruction (Radden, 1997; Littlemore & Juchem-Grundmann, 2010; Tyler, 2012) and opens up some new and promising ways for the EFL classroom (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2008; de Knop, de Rycker & Boers, 2010; Juchem-Grundmann, 2009). Language rules and exceptions to these rules do not have to be simply learnt by heart but may be explored and explained based on their prototypical meaning, and thus become understandable (Littlemore, 2009). It can be assumed that the systematic integration of specific CL-insights into the curriculum can improve the quality of teaching and learning processes.

Relevance. Only a few researchers are currently working at the interface of CL and language pedagogy and develop materials and methods for selected areas of teaching grammar and/or lexis. Systematic research on how to implement CL-insights into the language teaching curriculum, especially with regard to empirical studies that test the effect of respective teaching and learning methods has yet to be provided.

Methodology. As a first step textbooks used in the context of EFL teaching in Germany are compared to native speaker corpora concerning the selected linguistic phenomena. Secondly, CL-insights into the motivation of a certain linguistic phenomenon (e.g. conceptual metaphor theory, semantic networks) are reflected upon concerning their usability for the language instruction context. Visualizations and the use of cognitive strategies, which are supposed to convey the pervasiveness of motivation in language on the lexical as well as on the grammatical level, are of key importance. The third step is then a quasi-experimental field study which compares the implemented CL-approaches to traditional pedagogical approaches towards the selected linguistic aspect concerning the development of foreign language competencies, learner motivation (tested by means of achievement tests, self-evaluation questionnaires, individual interviews with students and teachers), usability within the school context as well as the advantages and disadvantages of integrating CL-approaches (qualitative data collected by means of individual interviews with teachers).

Possible topics for PhD theses:

Applying Cognitive Linguistics to the English Language Classroom: Teaching (along) the Grammar-Lexis continuum (each thesis focuses on a selected linguistic aspect, e.g. tense, aspect, preposition, word order, metaphors, idioms, collocations etc.)