

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: HOW COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS CAN HELP METHODOLOGY

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Cognitive linguistics (Evans V., Lakoff G., Fillmore Ch.) as a branch of linguistics is connected with semantics, acquisition, storage, production and understanding of the language. Linguists working in this sphere try to explain how human knowledge is stored in memory and how it can easily be retrieved from it when needed. There are two classes of knowledge that can be explained – declarative knowledge that refers to knowledge of facts, knowledge of concepts, knowledge of the facts about individuals and surrounding world. Another one is procedural knowledge which is the knowledge of how to do with the things.

Among the subjects of cognitive linguistics which has actively been developing for the last thirty years are such linguistic branches as phonology, morphology (categories of clause, transitivity, voice, tense, aspect), word-building (inflectional morphology, as an example), lexicology (nominal classifications, idioms), syntax in relation with semantics and pragmatics.

Cognitive linguistics, studying the relations between language, mind, thought and organization and representation of knowledge, introduced the notions of concept, schema, frame, script, scenario.

For example, frame is defined as a collection of slots and slot filters that describe a stereotypical item. For example, let us consider the concept of a sparrow. It belongs to the class of birds, it has its specific attributes all of which can be encoded in a semantic networks. Then the situations in which a sparrow can appear would be described. Frames (Minsky) help in representing the cluster of complex knowledge.

Script contains information about stereotypical roles and events in everyday activities. It may be booking a train ticket or visiting a café. This allows inferences be made about reaching the booking-office or a café by transport, or presence of a waiter, paying money and so on. Methodologically such activities can be organized in classes as role-play, building a semantic network, etc.

What is important for methodology which flows out from cognitive linguistics is:

- the statement that knowledge of language arises from the language use. This statement is closely connected with modern methodological approach of teaching language, including a foreign language, through communication, so called language in use.

- the possibility to avoid influence of mother tongue (interference) while studying a foreign language. Usually mother tongue is acquired automatically and easily stocked in the child's mental structures. Cognitive linguists, investigating these mental structures, help methodologists in managing the process of semantic content verbalization by the means of a foreign language.

- the possibility of adequate comprehension of texts and discourses, interpretation of metaphors, distinguishing between literal and intended meanings.

There pragmatic inferences are needed to interpret the meaning and reference of an utterance as a part of discourse and also its implicatures.

- the possibility to make conscious operations while learning new knowledge or extending already existing knowledge automatic by repeated use of the material, use of production rules.

There are kinds of exercises which are compiled by methodologists for studying and teaching languages. A bulk of these exercises is made on the basis of cognitive linguistics elaborations. Thus, possible variants are building semantic networks, describing and performing the standard situations, role-play, etc. Exercises connected with text comprehension can include revealing propositions, analysis of linguistic and non-linguistic meaning of some parts of the text, study of metaphors and other figurative language. Language structures can be learned through the contexts, thus there are correspondent exercises which serve better language understanding.