THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COGNITIVE APPROACH IN ENHANCING STUDENTS PHRASEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE

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Abstract
Phraseological competence, as a crucial component of language proficiency, plays a fundamental role in mastering a foreign language. It encompasses the ability to understand, interpret, and appropriately use idiomatic expressions, collocations, and fixed phrases, which are deeply embedded in the cultural and cognitive framework of native speakers.

Keywords: Cognitive approach, phraseological competence, translation, knowledge, phraseological units.

Introduction

Traditional methods of teaching phraseology often focus on rote memorization and direct translation, which may lead to superficial knowledge without a deep conceptual understanding. However, the cognitive approach offers a more effective alternative by emphasizing the conceptual nature of phraseological units, their metaphorical motivation, and the mental associations they evoke in learners.

The cognitive approach to teaching phraseology is rooted in cognitive linguistics, which views language as a reflection of human thought processes and experience. By exploring the underlying cognitive mechanisms of phraseological units, such as metaphor, metonymy, and conceptual mapping, students develop a deeper comprehension of the figurative meanings of idiomatic expressions. This approach not only enhances retention but also fosters students' ability to use phraseological units in appropriate communicative contexts.

This article aims to examine the significance of the cognitive approach in enhancing students' phraseological competence. It explores theoretical foundations, methodological frameworks, and practical applications of cognitive linguistics in phraseology instruction. By analyzing empirical studies and pedagogical strategies, this study highlights the advantages of cognitive-based teaching in fostering deeper language acquisition and improving learners' communicative competence. Ultimately, understanding phraseological units through a cognitive lens enables students to internalize language more naturally, bridging the gap between linguistic knowledge and real-world communication.
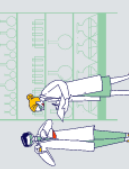
Developing phraseological competence is a crucial aspect of mastering a foreign language, as it enables learners to comprehend and use idiomatic expressions, collocations, and other fixed phrases naturally. Given the complexity of phraseology, effective teaching methods should not only introduce learners to the meanings and structures of phraseological units but also ensure their active use in communicative contexts. A variety of instructional approaches have been developed to address these challenges, each offering unique advantages in facilitating students' understanding, retention, and application of phraseological units.

One of the most structured and effective approaches is explicit instruction, which involves directly teaching the meanings, forms, and usage rules of phraseological units. This method ensures clarity and systematic learning by breaking down complex expressions into their components and providing clear explanations, examples, and guided practice. However, explicit instruction alone may not be sufficient to foster deep retention and automatic use, necessitating the integration of interactive activities such as role-plays, simulations, and games. These activities allow learners to apply phraseological units in realistic contexts, reinforcing their understanding through meaningful communication.

Additionally, repetition and spaced practice play a fundamental role in long-term retention. By strategically exposing students to the same phraseological units over extended periods, teachers can help solidify their knowledge and improve recall. Complementing these methods, visual aids and multimedia provide learners with contextualized input, making abstract or metaphorical meanings more tangible. Images, videos, and infographics enhance comprehension and create stronger associations between the phraseological unit and its meaning.

Moreover, a collocation-based approach helps learners internalize common word pairings, promoting fluency and accuracy in phrase usage. Through structured exercises that emphasize natural combinations of words, students develop a more intuitive grasp of idiomatic expressions. Similarly, contextualized grammar instruction ensures that phraseological units are integrated into broader linguistic structures, allowing learners to see their grammatical patterns and syntactic flexibility. This holistic perspective prevents isolated learning and fosters a deeper understanding of how phraseology functions within language.

Finally, error correction and feedback are essential for refining students' use of phraseological units. Constructive feedback helps learners identify mistakes, understand nuances, and make necessary adjustments. Providing corrective input in a supportive manner encourages students to develop confidence and accuracy in their phraseological competence.

By combining these instructional methods, educators can create a comprehensive and effective learning environment that not only facilitates the acquisition of phraseological units but also ensures their active use in natural communication. This multifaceted approach addresses the cognitive, contextual, and practical aspects of phraseology, equipping students with the skills necessary for proficient language use.
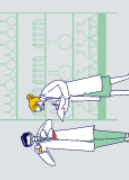
Explicit instruction involves directly teaching the meanings, forms, and usage of phraseological units. This method often includes providing definitions, examples, and rules governing the use of these units. Teachers might use techniques such as breaking down complex idioms into their component parts, explaining their figurative meanings, and demonstrating how they are used in various contexts. Explicit instruction can be particularly effective when combined with practice activities that reinforce the learned units.

Example: When teaching the idiom "break the ice" (meaning to ease the tension in a social situation), you could start with a direct explanation: "Breaking the ice means to start a conversation or activity to make people feel more comfortable." Follow this with examples, such as: "At the beginning of the meeting, the manager told a joke to break the ice." Then, practice exercises might include having students come up with their own examples or identifying "break the ice" in context from a list of sentences.

Interactive Activities

Interactive activities engage learners in hands-on practice with phraseological units. These activities can include games, role-plays, and simulations that require students to use idioms and collocations in communicative contexts. For example, a role-play activity might involve students acting out scenarios where they must use specific idioms correctly. Interactive activities promote active learning and help students apply phraseological units in a practical and meaningful way.

Example: For the idiom "hit the nail on the head" (meaning to be exactly right), you could set up a role-play activity where students act out a meeting in which one person makes a suggestion that perfectly addresses a problem. Students must use the idiom in their dialogue, such as: "When you suggested that we update the software, you really hit the nail on the head." This interaction allows students to practice using the idiom in a realistic setting [10].

Repetition and Spaced Practice

Repetition and **spaced practice** are essential for reinforcing phraseological units and facilitating long-term retention. Repetition involves repeatedly exposing learners to the same phraseological units through various activities and contexts. Spaced practice, on the other hand, spreads out these repetitions over time to enhance memory consolidation. Techniques such as regular review sessions and periodic quizzes can help ensure that learners retain and can accurately use the phraseological units they have learned.

Example: To reinforce the phraseological unit "let the cat out of the bag" (meaning to accidentally reveal a secret), you might have students practice using it in various sentences over multiple lessons. One day, they might write sentences using the phrase; another day, they might identify it in reading passages. Periodically reviewing these activities helps solidify their understanding and usage of the phrase.
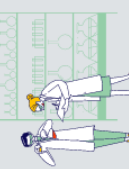
Use of Visual Aids and Multimedia

Incorporating **visual aids** and **multimedia** can enhance the teaching of phraseology by providing additional context and reinforcing learning through multiple channels. Visual aids such as pictures, infographics, and videos can illustrate the meanings and uses of phraseological units. For example, a video clip demonstrating an idiom in use can help learners grasp its figurative meaning more effectively. Multimedia resources also offer interactive elements that can engage learners and make the learning process more dynamic.

Example: When teaching the idiom "bite the bullet" (meaning to endure a painful or difficult situation), show a short video clip or image depicting someone facing a challenging situation and using the idiom in a conversation. For instance, the clip could show a character who is nervous about giving a speech but decides to "bite the bullet" and go through with it. The visual context aids in understanding and retention of the idiom.

Collocation Exercises

Collocation exercises focus specifically on teaching the combinations of words that frequently occur together. These exercises help learners understand and produce natural-sounding language by practicing common word pairings and phrases. For instance, activities that involve matching words to their common collocations or creating sentences using target collocations can enhance learners' ability to use phraseological units accurately.

Example: To teach collocations such as "make a decision" or "commit a crime," provide students with a list of verbs and nouns and ask them to match them to form common collocations. For example, students might complete sentences like "She decided to _____ (make a decision) about the project" or "He was charged with _____ (commit a crime)." This exercise helps students practice common word combinations and understand their usage.

Contextualized Grammar Instruction

Integrating phraseological units into **contextualized grammar instruction** involves teaching these units as part of broader grammatical structures. For example, educators might focus on how idioms fit into different grammatical patterns or how collocations function within sentence structures. This approach helps learners see the relationship between phraseological units and grammatical rules, providing a more comprehensive understanding of their use.

Example: When integrating the idiom "piece of cake" (meaning something very easy) into grammar instruction, you might focus on how it fits into different sentence structures. For instance, you could teach students to use the idiom in both affirmative and negative sentences: "The test was a piece of cake" versus "The exam wasn't a piece of cake at all." This approach helps learners understand how to use the idiom within various grammatical contexts.
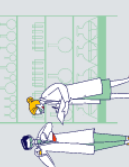
Error Correction and Feedback

Providing **error correction** and **feedback** is crucial for helping learners refine their use of phraseological units. Teachers should offer constructive feedback on students' use of idioms and collocations, highlighting errors and suggesting improvements. This feedback can be delivered through individual or group sessions, allowing learners to understand their mistakes and learn from them.

Example: If a student incorrectly uses the phrase "under the weather" (meaning feeling ill) by saying "I'm under the weather because of the hot weather," provide corrective feedback. You might explain, "The phrase 'under the weather' is used to describe feeling ill, not affected by the weather. A correct sentence would be, 'I'm feeling under the weather today because I caught a cold.'" Offer additional practice opportunities to help the student correct and internalize their usage.

Table 2.

Method	Pros	Cons
Contextual Learning	- Enhances understanding by linking phrases to real-life contexts. - Improves retention through meaningful use. - Highly engaging.	- May require more time and resources to create realistic contexts. - Some phrases may be harder to contextualize effectively.
Explicit Instruction	- Provides clear definitions and structured learning. - Easy to implement and measure. - Directly addresses specific phrases.	- Can be less engaging if not combined with interactive methods. - Retention might be lower without sufficient practice opportunities.
Interactive Activities	- Highly engaging and promotes active use of language. - Encourages practical application of phrases. - Improves retention through practice.	- May require more preparation and facilitation. - Effectiveness depends on the quality of the activity design.
Repetition and Spaced Practice	- Reinforces learning through repeated exposure. - Effective for long-term retention. - Can be applied to any phraseological unit.	- Can become monotonous if not varied. - Requires careful planning to balance repetition with new learning.
Use of Visual Aids and Multimedia	- Engages multiple senses, enhancing understanding and recall. - Provides contextualized examples. - Can be very engaging.	- Requires access to technology and resources. - May not be as effective without complementary activities or explanations.
Collocation Exercises	- Helps learners understand common word pairings. - Useful for producing natural-sounding language. - Can be adapted to various levels.	- Focuses primarily on collocations, which may not cover all phraseological units. - May be less engaging if not interactive.
Contextualized Grammar Instruction	- Integrates phraseology with grammatical structures, enhancing understanding. - Helps learners use phrases correctly in different contexts.	- Can be less engaging if overly focused on grammar. - May require additional explanations to link phrases with grammar.
Error Correction and Feedback	- Provides targeted support to improve accuracy. - Helps learners refine their understanding and use of phrases. - Applicable to any phraseological unit.	- May not be very engaging if focused only on corrections. - Effectiveness depends on the quality and timing of feedback.

The table 2 provides a comparative overview of various methods for teaching phraseology, each with distinct advantages and drawbacks. **Contextual Learning** is effective for enhancing understanding and retention by placing phrases in real-life scenarios, though it requires significant preparation and may not suit all phrases. **Explicit Instruction** offers clear definitions and structured learning, making it straightforward but potentially less engaging without supplementary practice. **Interactive Activities** engage students actively, improving retention through practical use, though they demand more preparation and depend on the activity's design quality.

Repetition and Spaced Practice reinforce learning through repeated exposure, which is highly effective for long-term retention but can become monotonous without variation. Use of Visual Aids and Multimedia enhances understanding by engaging multiple senses, although it relies on technological resources and may need additional support. Collocation Exercises focus on teaching common word pairings and are adaptable, but may not cover all types of phraseological units. Contextualized Grammar Instruction integrates phrases with grammar, offering comprehensive understanding but can be less engaging if overly focused on grammar. Error Correction and Feedback provides targeted support for accuracy improvement, though it may be less engaging and its effectiveness relies on the quality of feedback.

CONCLUSION

Enhancing students' phraseological competence is a critical aspect of foreign language learning, as it enables learners to understand and use idiomatic expressions, collocations, and other fixed phrases naturally and appropriately. Given the figurative and culturally embedded nature of phraseology, effective teaching requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond traditional rote memorization. The methods discussed—explicit instruction, interactive activities, repetition and spaced practice, visual aids and multimedia, collocation exercises, contextualized grammar instruction, and error correction—each contribute to a deeper understanding and more effective use of phraseological units.

By integrating explicit explanations with engaging, communicative practice, learners can develop both accuracy and fluency in using idiomatic expressions. The use of multimedia and visual aids enhances comprehension by providing contextual clues, while repetition and spaced practice ensure long-term retention. Additionally, focusing on collocations and contextualized grammar instruction helps students internalize phraseology within broader linguistic structures. Error correction and constructive feedback further refine learners' understanding, allowing them to recognize and correct mistakes in real-world communication.

A well-balanced combination of these methods fosters a comprehensive learning experience that not only improves phraseological competence but also enhances overall language proficiency. As research in cognitive linguistics and language pedagogy continues to evolve, educators should adapt their instructional strategies to incorporate evidence-based approaches that maximize student engagement and retention. Ultimately, developing phraseological competence through diverse and effective teaching methods empowers learners to communicate more naturally and confidently in the target language.

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