Thinking outside the word: contributing to the teaching of vocabulary in public schools[1]

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Biodata

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Abstract

This presentation describes the objectives of the research project and the different activities completed: the teacher-training courses taught, and the materials designed for a pilot experience in 2020 to teach formulaic sequences in songs and legends in primary schools. It will outline future courses of action and the importance of establishing links among university, research findings and the EFL teaching community.

[1] This presentation is based on research carried out within the J033 Research Project "Enseñanza y aprendizaje de secuencias formulaicas en estudiantes de ILE (Inglés como Lengua Extranjera) en escuelas primarias", dirigido por Mg. Magdalena Zinkgraf y subsidiado por la Universidad Nacional del Comahue.

Summary

After decades of corpus linguistics studies into the use of natural language, there has been an important shift in the conception of the lexicon and its organization, which focusses on longer chains of words naturally and typically occurring together in native speaker language. We refer to 'formulaic sequences' (FSs), defined by Wray (2002) as "a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar" (p. 9). Clearly, foreign language learners' exposure to these sequences differs considerably from that of native speakers and, for them to perceive, learn and effectively use sequences, this imbalance needs to be redressed through FS explicit teaching. Authors like Siyanova-Chanturia *et al*. (2011) and those reviewed in Boers & Lindstromberg (2012) have sought to implement approaches contributing to the development of L2 oral and written skills.

Based on the pedagogical approaches to the teaching of chunks by Lindstromberg & Boers (2008) and Boers & Lindstromberg (2009), research project J033 at Fadel has set out to investigate the implementation of an experience with primary school children learning English. In the belief that the earlier learners are exposed to a more formulaic view of language, the more aware they will be of these sequences in future input and the better equipped to model their learning process, this project aims at teaching vocabulary from a more holistic perspective. To this end, in-service training has been offered to EFL teachers in local schools on theoretical and practical aspects of FS contextualized teaching with songs and legends. This training aims to involve practitioners in the actual implementation of this approach during 2020. Pedagogical materials have been designed based on four songs and four legends following Nation (2001)'s vocabulary learning processes: noticing, retrieving and generative use. Through this experience data will be gathered on the impact of this type of teaching on written tasks in a primary school context in terms of vocabulary acquisition and participants' views.

This presentation describes the objectives of the research project and the activities that have been completed so far (the teacher-training courses offered, and the materials designed). It will outline future courses of action and discuss the importance of establishing links among university, research findings and the EFL teaching community.

References

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