

# COGNITIVE INSIGHTS, PEDAGOGICAL SHIFTS: RETHINKING LANGUAGE TEACHING

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In Cognitive Linguistics (CL), language is understood as being fundamentally grounded in human cognition and reflecting processes of conceptualization. Recently, CL has greatly influenced second language (L2) pedagogy, particularly in teaching difficult-to-acquire forms and constructions, including polysemous items, discourse marker, as well as pragmatics (Tyler, 2012; Masuda ed., 2018; Wu, Huang, Polley, 2024; Llopis-García, 2024). Despite empirical evidence, applied CL pedagogy has been critiqued for its tendency to focus more on CL descriptions and to rely heavily on basic teacher-fronted explicit instruction, often without closely aligning with mainstream pedagogical approaches in applied linguistics and second language acquisition (SLA).

The current theme session aims to strengthen the theoretical connection between CL and pedagogical approaches. The session features six empirical classroom-based studies focusing on English, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese as L2s, demonstrating how CL insights have been successfully incorporated into instruction. Topics include English and Chinese modal verbs, Japanese causative constructions and mimetic words, Korean honorifics, and English cohesive devices of contrast in an English for Academic Purposes context. These studies showcase how CL constructs can enhance current pedagogy and provide high-quality evidence of their pedagogical impact.

This session highlights the compatibility between CL and Sociocultural Theory (Lantolf & Poehner, 2016; Poehner & Lantolf, 2024), especially in the use of Concept-based Language Instruction (C-BLI) developed by Gal'perin (1992). C-BLI promotes mediated language learning through internalization with the visualization and verbalization of conceptual knowledge (Lantolf & Poehner, 2016), while CL as a theory of language emphasizes embodied conceptual meaning (Talmy, 1988) and typically materializes its analysis of meaning through visual symbols like schematic diagrams (Langacker, 2008). Key constructs of C-BLI, such as Schemas for a Complete Orienting Basis of Action (SCOBAs) and *linguaging* (Swain, 2016), are used as essential cognitive tools for promoting learners' internalization of target linguistic items. By integrating cognitive insights into the classroom, each study provides empirical evidence of L2 learners' cognitive and linguistic development in acquiring complex grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic features through the symbolic mediation of CL-based instructional materials. The studies present the close relationship between cognitive processes and language learning.

The significance of this theme session lies in its potential to inform innovative L2 teaching practices, opening new avenues for bridging CL with mainstream SLA theories and methodologies. It also motivates future research by calling for further empirical studies to explore the long-term effects of integrating CL into diverse L2 contexts and learner populations.

## References

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