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COGNITIVE-PRAGMATIC APPROACHES TO TEACHING PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Sadbarg Mirolimovna Jumayeva
Teacher of the Department of Practical English №3
Uzbekistan State World Languages University
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Abstract: This article explores cognitive-pragmatic approaches to teaching phraseological units in foreign language education. The study investigates the linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic complexity of idiomatic expressions and highlights the necessity of innovative pedagogical strategies for their effective instruction. Special attention is paid to context-based learning, communicative interaction, multimodal teaching techniques, and digital educational technologies. The paper argues that phraseological competence constitutes an essential component of communicative competence and intercultural literacy. Furthermore, the research demonstrates that cognitive-pragmatic instruction enhances learners' interpretative skills, emotional engagement, and contextual awareness in language acquisition. The theoretical and methodological implications of interactive and learner-centered approaches are discussed within the framework of modern language pedagogy.

Keywords: phraseological units, cognitive-pragmatic approach, communicative competence, intercultural communication, contextual learning, multimodal pedagogy, idiomatic expressions, digital learning technologies, phraseological competence, learner-centered education, discourse analysis, semantic interpretation.

In contemporary foreign language education, the development of communicative competence has become one of the central objectives of language teaching methodology. Beyond grammatical accuracy and lexical acquisition, successful communication requires learners to understand figurative language, cultural references, and pragmatic nuances embedded within authentic discourse. Phraseological units, including idioms, collocations, and fixed expressions, represent a significant challenge for language learners due to their semantic opacity, metaphorical structure, and strong cultural associations.

Traditional methods of teaching phraseological units often rely on memorization and direct translation, which frequently fail to provide learners with a deep understanding of idiomatic meaning and contextual appropriateness. As a result, students may recognize phraseological expressions in isolation but experience difficulties applying them naturally in communicative situations. This issue necessitates the implementation of innovative methodological approaches capable of integrating semantic interpretation, pragmatic awareness, and communicative practice.

The cognitive-pragmatic approach offers an effective framework for addressing these challenges. From a cognitive perspective, phraseological units are conceptual structures reflecting human experience, perception, and cultural cognition. From a pragmatic perspective, they function as communicative tools conveying emotions, attitudes, evaluation, and sociocultural meanings within discourse. Therefore, teaching phraseological units requires more than vocabulary instruction; it demands the development of learners' interpretative and intercultural competencies.

This study aims to examine the theoretical foundations and pedagogical potential of cognitive-pragmatic approaches in teaching phraseological units in foreign language classrooms.

The cognitive-pragmatic approach emerged from the integration of cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, and communicative language teaching theories. Cognitive linguistics

emphasizes that language reflects conceptual thinking and mental representations. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphorical structures shape human cognition and influence how individuals interpret reality. Phraseological units, therefore, are not arbitrary combinations of words but conceptual metaphors rooted in cultural experience.

For example, idiomatic expressions such as “break the ice,” “spill the beans,” or “hit the nail on the head” are metaphorically motivated and cannot be fully understood through literal translation. Learners must interpret the conceptual imagery underlying these expressions in order to use them effectively in communication.

Pragmatics, on the other hand, focuses on language use in context. Phraseological expressions frequently carry emotional, evaluative, and stylistic meanings that vary depending on social situations, communicative intentions, and cultural norms. Consequently, pragmatic competence plays a crucial role in understanding when, where, and how phraseological units should be used appropriately.

The integration of cognitive and pragmatic perspectives provides several pedagogical advantages:

- promoting deeper semantic comprehension;
- developing contextual and inferential thinking;
- improving intercultural communicative competence;
- increasing learners’ emotional engagement;
- facilitating authentic language production.

Thus, phraseological competence becomes an integral part of communicative competence in foreign language acquisition.

Teaching phraseological units presents numerous linguistic and methodological difficulties. One of the primary challenges is semantic non-compositionality. In many cases, the meaning of an idiom cannot be derived from the meanings of its individual components. For instance, expressions such as “kick the bucket” or “under the weather” may confuse learners who attempt literal interpretation.

Another challenge involves cultural specificity. Phraseological units often reflect national traditions, historical experiences, and collective cultural values. Consequently, learners from different linguistic backgrounds may struggle to understand their pragmatic implications.

Additionally, phraseological units possess stylistic and emotional connotations. Some idioms may sound humorous, ironic, formal, or even offensive depending on the communicative context. Therefore, learners require contextualized exposure and communicative practice rather than isolated memorization.

Modern language pedagogy increasingly recognizes that phraseological competence cannot be developed through passive learning. Instead, learners must actively engage with phraseological expressions through contextual analysis, interaction, and discourse-based activities.

Contextual learning is one of the most effective methods for teaching phraseological expressions. Rather than presenting idioms separately, teachers introduce them within authentic texts, dialogues, or communicative situations.

For example, students may analyze phraseological units appearing in literary excerpts, films, podcasts, or news reports. Through contextual interpretation, learners identify emotional tone, speaker intention, and pragmatic meaning.

This approach develops inferential comprehension and encourages learners to interpret meaning beyond literal translation.

Role-play activities create realistic communicative environments in which learners actively apply phraseological units in speech. Such activities improve fluency, confidence, and pragmatic appropriateness.

For instance, students may participate in simulated social interactions, interviews, debates, or conflict-resolution scenarios where idiomatic language naturally emerges. Expressions such as “keep an eye on,” “get cold feet,” or “be on the same page” become meaningful within communicative practice. Dramatization also enhances emotional memory, allowing students to retain phraseological expressions more effectively.

The findings suggest that cognitive-pragmatic approaches provide a comprehensive methodological framework for teaching phraseological units in foreign language education. Unlike traditional memorization techniques, these approaches emphasize conceptual understanding, contextual interpretation, and communicative application.

Moreover, interactive and multimodal strategies contribute to learner autonomy, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness. Since phraseological units reflect cultural worldviews and social values, their instruction also promotes intercultural communicative competence.

The integration of digital technologies further increases motivation and supports learner-centered instruction. Therefore, modern phraseological pedagogy should combine cognitive analysis, communicative interaction, and technological innovation in order to achieve effective language learning outcomes.

Phraseological units represent one of the most culturally and semantically complex aspects of foreign language learning. Their successful acquisition requires innovative teaching methodologies capable of integrating linguistic, cognitive, pragmatic, and intercultural dimensions.

The cognitive-pragmatic approach offers substantial pedagogical potential for developing learners’ phraseological competence through contextualized learning, communicative practice, visual representation, and digital technologies. By engaging learners cognitively and emotionally, this approach facilitates deeper comprehension, long-term retention, and authentic language use.

Consequently, the implementation of cognitive-pragmatic methodologies in phraseological instruction contributes not only to vocabulary development but also to the formation of communicative, intercultural, and critical thinking competencies essential for modern foreign language education.

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