Why understanding conceptual knowledge matters for teaching foreign languages

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NeuroELT Maxims

“Cognition is context dependent”

“The labeling of concepts is a double-edged sword”
Discussion

How do you teach word meanings to your students?

What problems do you encounter?
Theory of Norms and Exploitations

Words have meaning potential

Word meanings are events, not entities
Discussion

Do you use any methods to give your students richer knowledge of words?

What and why? or Why not?
How the mental lexicon is related to conceptual knowledge
Conceptual Spaces

Concepts can be represented as regions.
Instances are points within a region.
Object and event regions span multiple domains.
Conceptual Spaces

Concepts can be represented as regions

Instances are points within a region

Objects and event regions span multiple domains
Higher level cognition is grounded in the brain’s various modality-specific motor-perceptual areas, and in the body, and the socio-environment.
The body map in the primary motor cortex

Somatotopic representation of action words in human motor and premotor cortex.
Discussion

How often do you ask your students to “see” the sentence they are reading, and do you think this could be a useful thing to do?

Does classroom learning encourage students to imagine, and does it matter?
Language and thought

Our language makes us think our subjective categories are objective
“L1 English speakers learning L2 Russian in the FL classroom, where words are used in the absence of their referents, fail to acquire the distinction between sinij and goluboj”

Pavlenko, 2014
Discussion

Can you think of an instance when students’ lack of understanding may have been conceptual, not linguistic? How could you explain any conceptual differences of English language users and do you think this would help your students?
Language and thought

If our language doesn’t have a word for something, do we have the concept?
References - Kindle Books


References - Papers


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