Developing conceptualization of JSL difficult aspect items through a Cognitive Linguistics–Sociocultural Theory Approach

Kyoko Masuda & Angela Labarca
Georgia Institute of Technology/ J.F. Oberlin University & Georgia Institute of Technology
Kyoko1230@hotmail.com, angela.labarca3@gmail.com

Keywords: image-schema, subjective/objective construal, Japanese-as-second-language, concept-based instruction, schemas for complete orientating basis of action (SCOBAs)

Interest in applied cognitive linguistics (CL) has been increasing steadily (e.g., Cadierno and Eskildsen 2015; De Knop and De Rycker 2008; Tyler 2012, Achard 2018) and many studies explore implementing CL approaches to language teaching (cf., Beréndi et al., 2008; Lam 2009). However, applying the theoretical proposals of such studies to Japanese-as-a-second language (JSL) instruction is still in its infancy (Imai 2016) and not all quasi-experimental studies (Masuda ed., 2018) have obtained robust effects when applying a CL approach. Therefore, we propose that Concept-based instruction (CBI) (Gal'perin 1992) be tried along with CL. CBI is grounded in Sociocultural Theory (SCT), a theory of human mental development built on the work of Vygotsky. Indeed, both consider meaning-making via symbols as the essence of mind and language and their development.

First, we examine the very important constructs relevant to pedagogical grammar — *image-schema*, *prototypes*, and *networks* in CL — as well as SCOBA — *schemas for a complete orienting basis of action* in CBI. All of them have proved useful for teaching difficult-to-acquire-L2-conceptual items. Together, both CL and CBI constructs support the visual organization needed to facilitate the incorporation of the new difficult concept in learners' minds. In addition, a usage-based analysis of the new items brings a practical and real feature to learners' tasks. While SCOBAs serve as important pedagogical tools by promoting materialization of target concepts in L2 learners' minds (Negueruela, 2008), "schematic and prototype characterizations have their place in a pedagogical grammar since the virtue of a schematic characterization lies in the fact that it makes possible a concise statement of the complex conceptual unity of a category." (Taylor 2008: 210). Furthermore, CBI takes a stepwise approach; after a conceptual explanation represented in SCOBAs, L2 learners engage in activities that promote their understanding of an L2 form and its functional value through over/covert speech and social interaction or cooperation.

Second, we propose that a CL-SCT-driven approach is instrumental for teaching difficult-to-acquire-aspects for typologically different languages like Japanese ("Be-language") and English ("Have-language"), because it emphasizes different construing processes (Ikegami, 2016) and makes learners engage with L2 concepts. In this manner, we can reduce 'unnecessary' arbitrariness or 'rules of thumb'. Ikegami (1991) and Moriyama (2007) state that while English speakers prefer an objective construal — which represents the event by placing the focus on the particular agent/individual, the Japanese speaker prefers subjective construal — which represents an event as a whole, where the individual involved is submerged in the scene. Following Focus-on-form (Doughy & Williams 1998), we propose that a CL-SCT-driven approach consisting of communal tasks along with a presentation of the image-schema for objective construal and subjective construal would foster learners' understanding of seemingly-peculiar aspects of the Japanese language, such as the non-use of *watashi* 'I' as subject, the use of motion verbs like *iku* 'go' and *kuru* 'come', the use of donator verbs *ageru* 'give' and *kureru* 'give (me/us)', and the use of passives.

Selected References

Gal'perin, Piotr I. 1992 [1978]. Stage-by-stage formation as a method of psychological investigation. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 30 (4). 60–80.

Ikegami, Yoshihiko. (2016). Subject-object contrast (shukaku-tairitsu) and subject-object merger(shukaku-gouitsu) in "thinking for speaking": A typology of the speaker's preferred stances of construal across languages and its implications for language teaching. In Kaori Kabata & Kiyoko Toratani (eds.), *Cognitive-functional approaches to the study of Japanese as second language,* 301–318. Boston & Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Kyoko, Masuda (ed.) (2018). *Cognitive Linguistics and Japanese Pedagogy.* Boston & Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.