New Frontier in Applied Cognitive Linguistics: A Review of Speech Acts in English from Research to Instruction and Textbook Development

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Abstract

The book Speech Acts in English from Research to Instruction and Textbook Development opens a new path in applying cognitive linguistics to EFL teaching. Adopting a contrastive, cognitive-constructional approach, this book offers a unified model of illocution in the form of cognitive pedagogical grammar of directive speech acts, and based on the model a set of practical implementations are provided to ensure efficient learning, thus bridging the gap between theory and practice. The pedagogical application of cognitive linguistics to EFL teaching helps to ensure efficient teaching of speech acts and sets grounds for a more comprehensive approach to the illocutionary phenomenon. Undoubtedly, this book represents a significant contribution in cognitive linguistics and EFL teaching.

Keywords

Speech act; Cognitive Linguistics; Pedagogical grammar.

1. Introduction

Speech acts have been a thriving field of investigation ever since Austin's and Searle's foundational contributions in the 1960s and 1970s, and research advancements on speech acts have mounted up over the years, but their transfer to the teaching practice has not been quite as dynamic. It has been manifested that speech acts are largely underrepresented in ELT textbooks (Ren & Han, 2016). Achard (2018) also noted the gap between theoretical findings and EFL practices.

As a response to recent calls, this book aims to bridge the existing gap between recent theoretical findings and their implementation in textbooks by providing a comprehensive model of directive speech acts and showing how to teach them to learners of English. Although the book titled as Speech Acts in English, its focus is limited to directive speech acts for practical reasons. Structurally, the book comprises of 6 chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion. It takes the reader through a smooth path from theoretical underpinnings to practical applications.

2. Book Description

The introduction chapter is an excellent lead-in for the reader as it brings out the research background, objectives, and methodology of this book. It helps readers to form a general picture before deep exploration. The author first illustrates the complex and kaleidoscopic nature of speech acts, and that lead to the underrepresentation treatment of directives speech acts in EFL textbooks. It is reported that "there exist a huge gap between present-day theoretical knowledge on the performance of directives and its implementation in EFL teaching material". Motivated by the existing disconnection between theoretical advancement and teaching, this

book aims to offer a comprehensive model of directive speech acts and implement it in EFL teaching. As for the methodology, this book takes a cognitive pedagogical grammar approach, which can offer contrastive, cognitive, and construction information about directives. In the final part of Chapter 1, author summarize each chapter's content, thus giving readers a preview of what is to be found in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 provides an accessible and reader-friendly outlook on contemporary theoretical research on speech acts, explaining the latest pragmatic, functional, conversational, and cognitive/constructional contributions to the understanding of illocutionary phenomena. The revision of theoretical accounts of speech acts reveals the strengths and weaknesses of current theories of illocution. For example, social considerations are not taken into account in Searle's and Morgan's accounts, the role of inference is overlooked in Halliday's functional-systemic approach, the possibility of full codification is not considered by Bach and Harnish or Leech. In the last section of this chapter, a comprehensive theoretical framework is established. Those current theoretical findings were integrated into a new model of illocutionary description, in terms of illocutionary ICMs and illocutionary constructions. The Illocutionary Idealised Cognitive Model is a conceptual layout that collect semantic and pragmatic attributes and variables. The illocutionary constructions consist of base constructions and realization procedures dealing with constructional side of each directive. Thus, Chapter 2 sets theoretical foundations for the following chapters, the theoretical advancements listed out in the final part guide the textbooks assessment in Chapter 3. Both Chapter 4 and 5 employs the theoretical model formed in Chapter 2 to translate it into a cognitive pedagogical grammar and practice material.

Chapter 3 focus on the assessment of the representation of directive speech acts in advanced EFL textbooks for the purpose of textbook development. Ten representative advanced EFL textbooks are selected to analyze their quantitative and qualitative representation of directive speech acts. The result shows that the quantitative representation of semantic, pragmatic, constructional, and cultural of directives is scare and unsystematic. While some popular directive acts like requests, suggestions, and advice acts receive the highest amount of attention; other illocutionary acts like beggings and warnings are absent from the vast majority of textbooks. In addition, the amount of exercise devoted to each speech acts is generally small with an average of just one or two exercise per speech act. Therefore, considering the weakness of present EFL textbooks, the corpus-based cognitive grammar with explicit instruction has been put forward as the solution to current problem.

Chapter 4 A Cognitive Pedagogical Grammar of Directive Speech Acts I:Know-What and Know-How of Directives ,and 5, A Cognitive Pedagogical Grammar of Directive Speech Acts II: Activities and Practice Materials set out to fight the disconnection between theory and practice. Chapter 4 applies the cognitive-constructional approach to provide an exhaustive corpus-based description of the meaning and form of the six directive speech acts (i.e., ordering, requesting, begging, suggesting, advising, and warning). Both the semantic/pragmatic knowledge associated with each directive (i.e., their know-what) and the base constructions and realization procedures (i.e., their know-how) are described and extensively exemplified with real language data from the iWeb corpus. In addition to that, a comparative study has been conducted on the directive constructions used in English and Spanish to examine similarities, differences, and mismatches between the two languages, then pedagogical suggestions are provided to avoid potential learning difficulties.

Chapter 5 presents a sample of activities for teaching directive speech acts to EFL learners. The teaching and practice materials have been designed in accordance with the tenets of cognitive pedagogical grammar as it is proposed in Chapter 2. The activities are able to tackle semantic/pragmatic (i.e., Know-what), linguistic and constructional (i.e., know-how), and cross-linguistic/cultural issues. The type of activities chosen included consciousness-raising,

knowledge-development, comprehension, and production-development tasks. Real language data from several corpora was used in the design of these activities, thus offering rich contexts in order to grant students access to pragmatic, conversational, and situational aspects of the directives involved. By providing a rich collection of practice materials exploiting the cognitive pedagogical grammar of directive speech acts, Chapter 5 enables teachers and textbook designers to design activities and arrange material according to their needs.

The final chapter summarizes the main contributions made in each chapter of this book and offers suggestions for future research.

3. Brief Comments

The book presents itself as a new contribution to EFL teaching and pragmatics well worth reading for several features.

First and foremost, this book incorporates a contrastive, cognitive-constructional pedagogical grammar approach to directive speech acts into the EFL teaching practice and the design of EFL teaching materials based on explicit instruction, thus opening a new, currently little explored path to further applications of this theoretical approach to language within the realm of higher levels of linguistic description.

Furthermore, this work uses real language date for the analysis of directives constructions, so it is considered one of the foremost studies that combine corpus research with cognitive pedagogical grammar. In addition to the data collected from BNC, iWeb, CREA and CORPES XXI Corpus, the resources from literature revision and everyday life interaction were used to enrich the linguistic realizations for each speech acts. This combined method guarantees the necessary degree of exhaustiveness in the final collection of linguistic configurations.

Third, it is worth noting that linguistic jargons have been avoided as much as possible in this book. Specific terms such as the variables and attributes involved in the description have been introduced in the form of questions that clarify their meaning for non-expert readers. (e.g., mitigation = does the speaker attempt to minimize the cost of the requested action?). Therefore, students, teachers, or publishers who do not know the technical, expert terms are able to understand the information and can be used teachers and textbook developers for the explicit teaching of the workings of directive illocutions to advanced Spanish EFL students.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this book is a valuable contribution to the EFL teaching literature as it has opened a new, currently little explored path to further applications of cognitive linguistics to the teaching of directive speech acts. It provides good insights for EFL teachers and textbook designers as to how to apply cognitive linguistics into EFL teaching. Consequently, this volume is a valuable asset for EFL teachers and textbook designers to help them prepare teaching sessions and design didactic materials on this topic. It may also be useful for postgraduate students and new researchers who are looking to gain an understanding of the workings of directive illocutionary acts.

Acknowledgments

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