USAGE-BASED LINGUISTICS MEETS PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMAR

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Thanks to:

International Linguistic Association

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Richard Simmons
Cheryl Comeau-Kirschner
1. Usage-based view of language...
Ontologies of language: Ortega (2018a)

essentialist [=noun]  non-essentialist [=gerund]
SLA (all the way until the late 1990s), essentialist language ontology

Language has an objective reality, is separable from communication, and resides in the mind

Language is a system made of subsystems: sounds > words > sentences > .... captured in grammar books, dictionaries, corpora

The disciplinary goal is to understand language development

and we all know what ‘language’ is: knowledge + ability to use it
Imagine language as self-contained and explained by:

- Essentialist ontologies imagine language as self-contained and explained by:
  - Grammar books + dictionaries + corpora
  - Complete, finish line
  - "Educated standard," whatever language practices of the educated elites
Ontologies of language:

non-essentialist

[=gerund]
meaning is [...] not [...] something a word “has” but is something that a word “does” [...] meaning in situ always involves a process of creation. This process is not sequestered inside of heads but is enacted through a wide range of embodied activities of which what-is-in-the-head is just a part. (Smotrova & Lantolf, 2013, p. 413)

language does not reside in grammars, dictionaries, corpora, or minds, ready for use... it is a recurrent emergent social accomplishment of meaning making where the material and symbolic meet
• Grammar is not an “out there” system
• It’s inseparable from the users and the usage events

meaning  
(embodied)

frequency  
(statistical pattern abstraction)
“Usage-based” Linguistics

(.......one language........)

Tomasello, Goldberg, Bybee, Langacker, Hopper
“usage-based” SLA
Emergentism – N. Ellis
Complexity – Larsen-Freeman
Dynamic Systems – De Bot, Lowie, Verspoor
Cognitive Linguistics – Tyler, Cadierno
Constructionism – Eskildsen
Gabi Kasper, Johannes Wagner, Simona Pekarek Doehler, Tony Liddicoat, Rod Gardner…
The Douglas Fir Group (2016)

In the pic, left-to-right:
Byrnes, N. Ellis, Norton, Larsen-Freeman, Lantolf, Atkinson, Schumann, Hall, Ortega, Negueruela, Tarone, Duff
(Not shown: Swain, Doran, K. Johnson)
“language learning” =
“negotiate social and linguistic action in the face of minimal common ground and maximal semiotic demands”

The Douglas Fir Group (2016, p. 23)
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The Douglas Fir Group (2016, p. 23)

Language is a process
Language is performance
Language is social action
Language is indexical
Language is phenomenological
Language is “a primal activity of self-creation”

“meaning is [always] evolving over interactional time as an interpretive experience” (p. 154)
2. What about teaching grammar (where it is still taught)?
+ **Usage-based**

(including **Constructionist** and **Cognitive Linguistic**)

**insights**

are sources of inspiration for **L2 instruction**
Tyler (2012)
Reyes Llopis-García, Columbia University

Llopis-García, Real Espinosa, & Ruiz Campillo (2012)
Masuda, Arnett, & Labarca (2015)
De Knop & Gilquin (2016)
Ortega, Tyler, Park, & Uno (2016)

Tyler, Ortega, Uno, & Park (2018)

+ Rethink “language learning success”

Usage-based linguistics

Bilingual turn

Social justice turn
3. The ideal balance of form and meaning...
**Meaningfulness**: Whatever language is taught... (e.g., grammar, lexis, discourse), it is taught in the service of broader meaning making and communication ... [it] likely includes teaching polysemy, metaphor, and/or physically and visually grounded meaning.
Teaching meaning in grammar: examples of usage-inspired instruction
What languages do you teach?

- Spanish
- English
- Japanese
- Arabic
- Others?
Spanish example

How can students understand the difference between the preterit and the imperfect?

Spn *fue* vs. *era*
CL group (N=45), traditional group (N=41), control group (N=45)

Spanish preterit: *Fue estupendo!*

Spanish imperfect: *Era estupendo!*
Japanese example

*How can students understand the many meanings of locative particles?*
\( ni \) or \( de \) = “in”

So when use which?

\[
\text{umi-} \text{-ni} \quad \text{kame-ga} \quad \text{iru.} \\
\text{sea-LOC} \quad \text{turtle-NOM} \quad \text{is} \\
\text{‘A turtle is in the sea.’}
\]

\[
\text{umi-} \text{-de} \quad \text{kame-ga} \quad \text{oyoide-iru.} \\
\text{sea-LOC} \quad \text{turtle-NOM} \quad \text{swim-being} \\
\text{‘A turtle is swimming in the sea.’}
\]
existential = *ni*

place for activity = *de*

*umi-ni kame-ga iru.*
sea-LOC turtle-NOM is
‘A turtle is in the sea.’

*umi-de kame-ga oyoide-iru.*
sea-LOC turtle-NOM swim-being
‘A turtle is swimming in the sea.’
Arabic example
Zaki (2017),
Using corpus in the Arabic classroom to discover the use of words in authentic contexts

How does Arabic use ʕidda ("several of") and muʕẓam ("most of")?
Look up the word ʕidda in the corpus and find out the top ten words used after.

what follows ʕidda is an indefinite plural noun (and muʕẓam is followed by a plural noun, which is different)…
Data Driven Learning (DLL):

Boulton & Cobb’s (2017) meta-analysis of 64 studies: great effectiveness

\[ d = 0.95, \text{ control/experimental comparisons} \]
\[ d = 1.50, \text{ pre/posttest designs} \]
English example
Sachiko Yasuda (2010)  
Kobe University, Japan

Just 10 minutes making students aware of metaphorical bases for phrasal verb meanings can help!
11 orientational metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) matching Prt meaning up, down, into, out, off

1. MORE VISIBLE/ACCESSIBLE IS UP (open up, show up)
2. COMPLETION IS UP (dry up, use up)
3. LOWERING/DECREASING IS DOWN (break down, calm down)
4. DEFEATING/SUPPRESSING IS DOWN (knock down, turn down)
5. CHANGING IS INTO (burst into, turn into)
6. INVOLVING/MEETING IS INTO (enter into, run into)
7. OUT IS REMOVING/EXCLUDING (rule out, leave out)
8. OUT IS SEARCHING/FINDING (figure out, make out)
9. OFF IS DEPARTURE/SEPARATION (get off, take off)
10. OFF IS STOPPING/CANCELLING (call off, pay off)
11. OFF IS PREVENTION/PROTECTION (keep off)
It is a combination of meaning and frequency that makes some phrasal verbs more difficult than others.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HIGH frequency</th>
<th>LOW frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literal meaning</strong></td>
<td>settle down</td>
<td>charge up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>take out</td>
<td>clear out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cover up</td>
<td>pump up</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lay down</td>
<td>check over</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>step up</td>
<td>cut up</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hold up</td>
<td>lock out</td>
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<td></td>
<td>beat up</td>
<td>count out</td>
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<td></td>
<td>cut back</td>
<td>ring in</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>give away</td>
<td>think up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hand over</td>
<td>seal off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figurative meaning</strong></td>
<td>look up</td>
<td>knock off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pass out</td>
<td>live down</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bring about</td>
<td>make over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lay off</td>
<td>ride out</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pull off</td>
<td>strike up</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>blow up</td>
<td>chew out</td>
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<td></td>
<td>make up</td>
<td>pass off</td>
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<td></td>
<td>make up</td>
<td>tell off</td>
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<td></td>
<td>knock out</td>
<td>brush up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>set off</td>
<td>patch up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Most difficult, regardless of proficiency*
OK, so, learning grammar is about **learning to mean**, and **frequency matters**, yes…

… but is making meaning enough for good grammar teaching?
4. Support linguistic confidence and harmonious bilingualism while teaching grammar.
What is linguistic confidence vs. insecurity ... ?
are you bilingual?
many bilinguals … have a tendency to evaluate their language competencies as inadequate. Some criticize their mastery of language skills, others strive their hardest to reach monolingual norms, others still hide their knowledge of their “weaker” language, and most simply do not perceive themselves as being bilingual even though they use two (or more) languages regularly.
What is harmonious vs. conflictive bilingualism...?
Some children and their families will experience their bilingualism harmoniously (=as stress-free), others conflictively (=as a life burden) (De Houwer, 2015)
Harmonious bilingualism (free from stress, as not a life burden)

9 year-old heritage Portuguese speaker in Germany:
“Draw yourself speaking the languages you know”
(Melo-Pfeifer & Schmidt, 2012)
Conflicitive bilingualism (as a burden that erodes well-being)

Drawn by 10 year old: Portugal vs. Germany, family vs. loneliness

Portuguese & German flags, sun, sky, my family, sea water, rain & lightening
And what do language ideologies have to do with it all...?
language ideologies are central to any project of language learning...
Subtirelu (2014)

willingness to communicate
Subtirelu (2014):

Some students: in the face of difficult communication, they blamed it 100% on their nonnativeness, their not-so-good English.

lingua franca ideology

Other students: in the face of difficult communication, they blamed it 50%-50% on the not-so-helpful interlocutor (native or not!).

Who’s better off?
What about the language ideologies of teachers ...?
please react to the following statements:
Grammar books and dictionaries are usually out of touch with how people really use language

1                  2            3              4              5
strongly disagree                                         strongly agree

All ways of speaking a language are acceptable, as long as two or more people are able to communicate

1                  2            3              4              5
strongly disagree                                         strongly agree

(van Compernolle, 2016)
In your opinion… “loanwords” are…

(a) something that enriches the lexicon of a language

(b) a necessary evil

(c) a threat that can and should be combatted
low or high on linguistic purism/prescriptivism?

5, 5, (a)
teachers can instill linguistic insecurity in their students with implicit messages:

Excerpt 8:
Discussing the word *rubia* (blonde) from a story

1 Teacher: ¿Qué quiere decir *rubia*? (What does *rubia* mean?)
2 Students: [no answer]
3 Teacher: *Güera*. Nosotros generalmente decimos *güera*, pero la palabra correcta es *rubia.*
   (Blondie [colloquial]. We usually say blondie, but the correct word is blonde.)

(Sayer, 2013, p. 82)
Bi/multilinguals are not monolinguals...

So, let’s not treat them as if they were!

Cook & Li Wei (2016)
Does social justice have a place in grammar teaching too...?
... there are **systemic-structural forces** stacking the deck against certain groups more than others
But is it about language...?
Who is a legitimate speaker of a language?

Someone who not only sounds it, but also looks it!

(\textit{the –isms are inescapable})
In China -- my students say -- during study abroad they receive two completely different reactions based on the foreign physical appearance. If they look really “foreign,” the locals are shocked that they can speak fluent Chinese. If they are Asian Americans, the locals think their Chinese is bad. So the Asian American students have to explain to the locals that their families are from China, Korea, or Japan but that they grew up in the United States.
The foreign looking students take advantage of their “lao wai” identity (it means foreigner in Chinese, it is not a bad word) and are able to interact with different kinds of Chinese people, and they master a lot of street colloquial Chinese. The Asian looking students learn very polite forms of apology and bargain words. (Because when they go shopping, people usually give better offers to the Asian looking students.)
As a teacher, I’ve always wanted to know: How would my students’ social culture, and self-identity, and self-presentation in China shape their Mandarin Chinese outcomes? It’s very interesting to look at the outcomes in this light.
I interviewed a mixed-race peer who is both Jamaican and Chinese to examine her experiences. Although she is only half black, she explained that she is socially perceived to be only black (not mixed-race, and certainly not Chinese). She grew up in a household in New York that heavily emphasized Chinese education and she self-identifies as proficient in Chinese and fluent in English.

“My brother and I were the only black kids my Chinese Saturday school had ever seen... I remember getting teased by some of my classmates when I didn’t know how to say some things ... they thought I was only black, because my Jamaican mother would usually pick me up from school. There was one day when my Chinese father came to pick me up and they were shocked...the teasing was a little better after that day.”
Who is a legitimate speaker of a language?

Someone who not only sounds it, but also looks it!

(the –isms are inescapable)

Others talk to us depending on how we sound and look!
Many multilinguals in marginalized communities are constantly at risk of experiencing their multilingualism as a burden rather than a fact of life…

… all along while other multilinguals with more privilege are able to experience it as a (romanticized and commodified) gift that adds to their privilege.
Watch out for implicit messages that instill linguistic insecurity
Multilingual learning is fraught with vulnerabilities and inequities...

So, we can’t leave out of our grammar teaching linguistic confidence in support of harmonious bilingualism!
5. Role of authentic materials in usage-based thinking
... in usage-based linguistics, meanings are social and personal, physical and material, built on linguistic and nonlinguistic resources
EFL college student in Japan, Sampson (2012, p. 331):

“Do you want something to drink?” is like a textbook, it’s not me. But ‘Want something to drink?’ is like I’m actually saying it. That’s like my image now. Like … it’s me.
Successful meaning making is feeling our languages “are” us.
Kyle learned a lot of Indonesian while studying abroad and living with a family (DuFon, 2006):

vocabulary pedas = ‘spicy’, asin = ‘salty’
speech acts enak = ‘delicious’, hambar ‘tasteless’

and even more:

“My eating behavior has changed. Now I eat a lot in the morning, plus my eating etiquette has changed. Things that taste good taste really good. I kind of look at the food differently, with more respect” (p. 117)
And learning a language will change us in more than just linguistic ways (language is embodied)
If we only teach with sanitized materials (simplified, sentence level, invented or scripted language)...

... ... ... ... ... ... ... we strip meaning (social, personal, physical, material, linguistic, nonlinguistic) out of the grammar
“ordering a meal”

type of establishment: fast food

social roles:

counter worker & customer
What about social goals & framing
Kraut (2018)

“ordering a meal”

my allergies? “expressing anxiety”

the movie I need to be at after this? “imploring someone to hurry”

how come am I charged extra for the ketchup? “articulating disapproval”
Eventually, this is what a C2 / Superior proficiency should be able to do… right???
But how will student learn “the” language in all its complexity, if they do not experience **authentic language** while learning in the classroom?

necessary if the language is also all around them outside: because they need to make sense of the “messy” language they encounter constantly

necessary if access to the language is almost only in the classroom: so they encounter opportunities to learn from “real” language
6. We must rethink models (the native speaker!)
native speakers
as models??
"native speaker" =

One language

By birth

"non-native speaker" =

Not by birth

Multiple languages
Early Monolingual child = Late Bilingual adult

Monolingual

Early

Bilingual

Late

Native speaker

Nonnative speaker
Plus, in this world and age, we need to go beyond binaries:

- Second → Foreign
- Native ↔ Non-native
- L1 language ↔ L2 language
- Culture self ↔ Culture other
Nobody remembers them for being nonnative writers, but for being seminal writers

Joseph Conrad  
Franz Kafka
Nobody remembers them for being nonnative politicians, but for being “(in)famous” US politicians

Henry Kissinger

Arnold Schwarzenegger
People’s language competencies are a lot more complex and dynamic than dichotomous nativeness thinking can allow us to imagine!
Combat at all costs learning a language = felt to be a ladder to...
monolingual (native, educated) speaker perfection
If teachers/students hold the ideal of a native speaker as the model, they are doomed…

… because bilinguals can never be two monolinguals in one!

Cook & Li Wei (2016)
So, what does adult multilingual or “nonnative” success look like...?
confident & harmonious

Elizabeth Ellis (2013):
TESOL teachers in Australia who were experienced language learners themselves
Elizabeth Ellis (2013):

- View of “success” and “failure” as natural, and a matter of degree.
  - Dispassionately [“in quietly unemotional terms”, in a “matter-of-fact” tone].
- Realistic attitude towards time and effort investments.
  - Progress and attrition in language learning as normal and predictable, having weathered language learning failures without damage to their overall perception of themselves as learners.
- Confidence that success is perfectly possible.
  - They also evidenced beliefs that language learning takes effort, persistence, and time, but that ultimately learning is entirely possible.
- Positive language learner identity that is not dependent on failure or success.
  - View of “success” and “failure” as natural, and a matter of degree.

(p. 459)
7. In conclusion
some insights from usage-based linguistics point at some principles for the teaching of grammar
usage-based definition of “multilingual”  
= a **user** of multiple languages
not necessarily from birth

not “nativelike” or “passing” for a NS

not even perfectly equally proficient in the languages

simply: functionally able to use more than one language for one’s own purposes in life
not two monolinguals in one…
a whole-person bilingual
Language learners frequently experience oppression…

being positioned by others as a novice, a foreigner, an outside member, or a nonnative speaker
being told their language is not good enough

being promised language will open all doors in life

being racialized
Be vigilant against deficit orientations:

Minimize elements in your teaching of grammar that set up deficit assumptions

and the difficulties are “inside” learners

L2 learning is a difficult to impossible task
Be vigilant against deficit orientations:

these assumptions are incongruent with a usage-based stance!

difficulties are socially constructed and intersect with inequities

L2 learning:
L2 success is perfectly possible (but it won’t be just two monolingualisms in one head)
Build your students’ linguistic confidence…
so they want to keep learning and using the language, and they are proud of who they are in all their languages
form & meaning:

- keep meaning at the center of grammar

Support linguistic confidence and harmonious bilingualism:

- expose students to authentic, rich materials
- help them question nativistespeakism
- help them develop multilingual notions of success
If language is usage-driven and emergent, then:

≠ {grammar books + dictionaries + corpora}

≠ “educated standard,”
whatever language practices of the educated elites

≠ complete, ≠ finish line
inspiration for pedagogical grammar must come
where the action is:
usage
Thank You
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Ortega, L. (2018b). SLA in uncertain times: Disciplinary constraints, transdisciplinary hopes. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics, 33*(1), 1-30. Available at: https://repository.upenn.edu/wpel/vol33/iss1/1/


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