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THE WAYS OF USING CONSTRUCTIVISM TO TEACHING PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS AND VOCABULARY FOR EFL

KarimovaUmida
Teacher, the Department of English History and Grammar,
Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages
mrs.karimova17@gmail.com

Abstract
This article is dedicated to the study of the English phraseology units and typology of two languages which presents a certain interest both for theoretical investigation and for practical usage.

Key words: We should use different types of methods during teaching classes. And we can use majority of modern techniques while teaching phraseological units and vocabulary.

Introduction

With international materials it is obvious that the needs of individual students and teachers, as well as the expectations of particular schools in particular countries, can never be fully met by the materials themselves while studying phraseological units and vocabulary.

Indeed, most users seem to accept that what they choose will in many ways be a compromise and that they will have to adapt the materials to their situation. This is a reasonable approach - indeed it prevents the illusion that, situation-specific materials can do the job without the teacher having to adapt the materials to a particular group of individual students at i particular time. In other words, contrary to many current arguments about the inhibiting role of course books, international course materials can actually encourage individual teacher creativity rather than the opposite. It all depends on the relationship that a user, in particular a teacher, has or is allowed to have with the material. Course books are tools which only have life and meaning when there is a teacher present. They are never intended to be a straitjacket for teaching programme in which the teacher makes no decisions to supplement, to animate or to delete. The fact that course materials are sometimes treated too narrowly for example, because of the lack teacher preparation time, the excesses of ministry or institution power, the demands of examinations, or the lack of professional training should not be used as a reason to write off global course books.

Obviously no publisher is going to make a substantial investment unless there is a prospect of substantial sales. Material has to be usable by teachers and students alike or publishers lose their investment hype can encourage a teacher or school to try a course once but no amount of hype can encourage the same course to be readopted. It has to work, at least in the eyes of the school. In order to work, the material up to a point has to be targeted - targeted to a particular type of student, in a particular type of teaching situation, and a particular type of teacher with a particular range of teaching skills and who has assumptions about methodology which he/she shares with his/her colleagues.

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There is no point in writing a course for teachers of adult students and expect it to be used by primary teachers. These teaching contexts are different anywhere in the world. And yet adult teaching in most countries has a lot in common - particularly these days with far greater professional integration than ever before (thanks to conferences, courses, professional magazines etc.). We felt that many of the situations around the world in which teachers would want to use our materials *did* have a lot in common: for example, teachers used to organizing group work and aiming for improved communicative competence in the classroom and young adult students very similar to the ones we were used to in the UK.

It may also be true that materials in which designers have too great an influence are also weakened commercially in the long-run. In our experience what is good design for a designer is not necessarily a good design for a teacher. We ourselves have heard designers severely criticize the design of successful books that teachers seem to regard as well-designed books and praise the design of books that are not thought by 1 teachers to be well-designed. Does it matter to a teacher whether there,;!are one, two or three columns on a page and whether a unit is uniform length in its number of pages? In our experience, what matters to teachers is that it is absolutely clear on the page where things are and what their purpose is and that the balance (and tone) of visuals and text is right for their students. While publishers would undoubtedly agree with this in principle and argue that the number of columns and pages per unit affects usability there is sometimes a worrying gap between the aesthetic principles of a designer and the pedagogic principles of the writers.

Also there are real and necessary pedagogic constraints which designers have to accept as well as design constraints that authors have to accept. Sometimes it is necessary pedagogically to sacrifice illustration for words (texts, rubrics etc.) in order to make a series of activities work in the classroom just as it is sometimes necessary to cut back u say a practice activity to make it fit in with an adequately-spaced visual This is not to decry the role of designers. They have an essential **(aril** integral) function in making sure that the authors ideas are properly and attractively presented. They also need to make the students and teachers feel they are using materials with an up-to-date but usable look. Compromise has to be a benefit combined with what works for them in the classroom. This is hardly surprising if a publisher who has done little real research of their own (with their only input coming from the hunches of marketing managers and conventional publishing wisdom) relies on the authors own experience and then later tells them they cannot put their ideas into practice.

But teachers who are authors also have to compromise. Their teaching experience is often different from that of many intended users and their ideas might not work in a majority of classrooms. They have to beware of being too much the teacher trainer and look also at what students want rather than concentrate on new ideas for teachers. It is very tempting to try and impose your views about what *should* happen in a classroom when the learning experience for different learners is so diverse. This is a common problem in coursebooks (possibly our own included) where the writers are used to working in a privileged learning environment with videos, study centres, small motivated classes etc.

It is not for nothing that most global course books aim to be eclectic in their approach. Also what may work in the context of a particular lesson for the writer - or work in a skills and supplementary book

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does not necessarily work in a coursebook where a range of syllabuses are operating, where balance of activity and skill is necessary and where there is often one eye on recycling and revision. And another major, often overlooked consideration is that your material has to fit on the page so that students can actually see it!

Authors who are not teachers also have to compromise. While there are writing skills which not all teachers have such as structuring a sequence of activities and balancing it with usable visuals and there are skills which experienced writers have which teachers need if they are to write (see Waters 1994 for a light-hearted view) so there are teaching realities which authors long out of the classroom have to recognise if they are to produce materials that teachers want to teach with. In a lesson of 50 minutes the register still has to be taken, homework given back, announcements made and revision undertaken with students who have just come in tired from work and an irritating traffic jam. And that activity in your course book cannot work unless you allow an hour for it!

The process of materials writing.

The assumption was that teachers would have been trained to do things like set up communicative activities in the class, work with texts to develop reading and listening skills and be able to use course-books flexibly. However, the brief itself indicated a need for compromise:

1.The multilingual intensive UK situation and the monolingual far less intensive situation are, as we have already seen, not the same. What is needed in the context of 25 hours a week in the native speaker environment is not necessarily needed in the 1-3 hours a week in the non-native speaker environment. For example, the latter may need (but it has to be said, not necessarily want) a lot more focus on listening and speaking than the former.

Monolingual situations differ. For example, can you write for both Europe and the Middle East when the shared knowledge and cultural assumptions are so different? All course book writers know the dangers of assuming that all students will know who the (usually Western) cultural icons are.

The material was also likely to be used by less trained, untrained or differently-trained teachers. It cannot be assumed that a type of communication activity familiar to a trained teacher will be familiar to an untrained teacher. Things have to be spelt out to the inexperienced teacher without patronising the experienced teacher.

What is an adult? It was likely that the material would be chosen by some schools when it is inappropriate for their situation and used by learners who are too young to identify with the cultural content of the material. But could we really worry about that - no matter how keen the publishers might be on extensive sales?

It was likely that the materials would be used in some schools where the language syllabus and indeed the whole programme of study arc framed by the coursebook even though the aim was to try to produce materials which could be used flexibly.

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Principles

We decided on a set of key principles:

Flexibility

We wanted an activity sequence that worked pedagogically. But it was important that teachers should feel they could move activities around, cut them out or supplement them according to need. In other words, we wanted to produce a course book with a strong resource book element. Indeed we saw the Workbook as a potential extra-classroom resource for the teacher as well as a self-study book for the learner.

From text to language

Because of the needs of intermediate students, we wanted to provide authentic texts which contained examples of the focus language, rather than construct texts of our own. 'Language in a global context' we called it and we hoped we could draw language work out of the texts.

Engaging content

We wanted to provide human interest texts from a specific British context and stimulate cultural and personal comparisons. We wanted the texts to engage the students personally. At the same time we wanted them to be used as a resource for language and the basis for speaking and writing. We felt that some of the texts could be serious in tone but not too many. Too many texts on the environment, vegetarianism and race relations would not appeal. While quite a lot of students seemed to be interested in money, relationships, clothes and food, far fewer students in general language classrooms were interested in the worthier topics to be found in the *Guardian*. There needed to be a balance of serious and 'fun' articles. We realized that course books are written partly to appeal to teachers; but teachers are hardly likely to accept material that bores their students.

Overall we felt that the main criteria for the texts was that they should be generative in terms of language and would motivate students to want to talk or write. Inevitably, this meant choosing texts which focused on many old, favouritetopics (relationships, clothes, money etc.) but it also meant that we had to find new angles on those topics.

Of course, we recognize that even these decisions made cultural and situational assumptions. Some students may well prefer intellectual topics and indeed it was subsequently found by many British and American teachers working in post Cold War 'Eastern Europe' that their students regarded 'fun' material as trivial!

Natural language

We wanted spoken texts to be authentic as far as possible and 'real' people (not actors) to do the recordings. We felt that exposure to real and unscripted language was important at this level to motivate students and help get them off the learning plateau. 'Old' language which they had already had presented at lower levels would at intermediate level be embedded in new and natural language - from native speakers communicating naturally The process of materials writing

Analytic approaches

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We wanted a variety of approaches to grammar but decided to place great importance on students working things out for themselves - an analytic approach. After all our target students were adults and the conscious mind has a role to play in language learning as well as the acquisition device. This was particularly true for grammatical structures students were familiar with but needed more work on - the difference between the Present Perfect and Past Simple, or *will* and *going to* for example.

Emphasis on review

We felt the need to review rather than present a lot of grammar at this level. We assumed students already 'knew' most of the grammar and had practised it at lower levels. Yes, sometimes we felt something should be re-presented but in general at intermediate level fluent and accurate use was what we decided to focus on rather than trying to get across the 'meaning' and use of the structure.

Personalised practice

We wanted to provide a lot of practice activities at this level. We felt that where oral practice had to be mechanical (e.g. pattern repetition) it should as far as possible be personalised. So for example, when practising*if* structures for imaginary situations learners would draw on their own experience, as in the activity below.

Integrated skills

We believed that the four skills should be integrated throughout аш1 that the 'receptive skills' of reading and listening should not be tagged on after the language work. Language use is a combined skill where everything depends on everything else - at the very least we listen and speak together, and read and write together. And we felt that, like playing tennis, communicating in language is something you only improve with practice. *Knowing* about the language can be helpful for adults in learning to use it but overemphasis on the *knowing about* - usually the grammar - is useful for traditional exams but less useful in real-life communicative situations. We believed that both language work and the productive skills should come out of work on listening and reading texts. We believed in the value of texts being slightly above the level of the students and in the possibility of acquisition of language whilst focusing on content.

We wanted a balance in our approaches. We wanted inductive, deductive and affective approaches to grammar. We wanted fluency -*y* accuracy work (i.e. 'process' approaches) as well as traditional accuracy ->fluency work in speaking and writing because we believed that drawing on what the students can do and improving upon it was a valid aim. And in general we would provide opportunities for both controlled practice and creative expression.

Learner development

We regarded this as very important but we thought it best to integrate learner development work throughout rather than make it 'up-front' training. Nevertheless we decided to have up-front work on vocabulary skills, to get students to analyse grammar for themselves and to provide a language reference for students at the end of each unit. We also wanted to encourage students to start their own personalised vocabulary and grammar books.

Professional respect

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We wanted to produce something that gave us professional satisfaction and was academically credible to our colleagues, something we could be proud of. We also wanted a course that looked 'cool': adult and sophisticated with a clean look about it.

Pressures

The publishers As inexperienced course book writers we were soon confronted by not only the harsh realities of commercial publishing but by some of the diverse needs of potential users.

The publishers were encouraging and allowed us a lot of creative freedom. They shared many of our aspirations and also wanted something that would give them academic credibility as well as healthy sales. Nevertheless they had an eye on markets they had to sell to and did not want spiralling production costs. There was no open-ended budget for colour photographs or permissions for songs sung by famous pop singers. At the same time we sometimes felt - not necessarily justifiably - that they gave more attention to first impressions the material would make (the 'flick-test') than its long-term usability. We also felt they over emphasised the need for rubrics to be intelligible to students when we were writing a class book which would be mediated by teachers. In fact to us teacher mediation was vital or we would end up prescribing the methodology too much (a real problem this: should you ever say 'Work in groups' when the teacher may want to do an exercise in pairs, or 'Write these sentences' when the teacher may want the students to say them?).

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