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SEÇÃO: ARTIGOS

Take the plunge: using phraseology to enhance learners' knowledge of grammar

Pule de cabeça: o uso de fraseologia na ampliação do conhecimento gramatical de aprendizes

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Abstract: Phraseology has proven to be an important aspect of languages; as such, linguistic theories were forced to reshape their explanatory tools so as to incorporate this important aspect of language to their descriptive models. In light of this, analogous areas such as first and second language acquisition theories have all acknowledged the importance of speakers' phraseological knowledge in real communication, both in L1 and L2 acquisition settings and in general language use. Nevertheless, despite being a relatively well-known phenomenon in theoretical studies, little has been said about the relationship between phraseology and syntax. More specifically, the idea of using phraseology as a starting point for the teaching of schematic grammatical structures seems to be a promising area of application and investigation. This paper aims to contribute to this area by presenting some ideas on how phraseology can be used as a springboard for the teaching of grammar.

Keywords: phraseology, syntax, schematic constructions, English teaching, causative constructions

Resumo: A fraseologia tem mostrado ser um importante aspecto linguístico. Como tal, teorias linguísticas viram-se forçadas a reavaliar suas ferramentas de análise de modo a incorporar tal aspecto da descrição linguística aos seus modelos. Com base nisso, áreas análogas como as teorias de aquisição de primeira e segunda línguas reconhecem a importância do conhecimento fraseológico dos falantes na comunicação efetiva, tanto no contexto da aquisição de L1 e L2 quanto no uso geral de linguagem. No entanto, apesar de ser um fenômeno relativamente bem conhecido nos estudos teóricos, pouco já foi dito sobre a relação entre fraseologia e sintaxe. Mais especificamente, a ideia de usar a fraseologia como um ponto de partida no ensino de estruturas gramaticais esquemáticas parece ser uma área promissora de aplicação e investigação. Este artigo tem como objetivo contribuir para essa área apresentando algumas ideias sobre como a fraseologia pode ser usada no ensino de gramática.

Palavras-chave: fraseologia, sintaxe, construções esquemáticas, ensino de inglês, construções causativas

The role and importance of phraseology is acknowledged in various linguistic persuasions as well as by different areas of application such as first language acquisition (Diessel, 2013; Tomasello, 2003), second language acquisition (Ellis, 1993; Ellis & Ferreira-Junior, 2009; Wulff, 2008), second language teaching (Lewis, 1993; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992), language description (Moon, 1998; Pawley & Syder, 1983; Wray & Perkins, 2000; Wray, 2002), Translation Studies, Terminology, Lexicography, etc. Nevertheless,



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among the areas devoted to the description of the phraseological structure of languages only corpus linguistics (Gries, 2006, 2008, 2012; McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Wulff, 2008) has developed a body of methodological techniques and procedures on how to empirically examine this aspect of language in large datasets. These corpus-based analyses of language phraseology have naturally begun to interface with functional theories such as cognitive linguistics in the explanation of certain phenomena such as the *collostructions* (Gries & Stefanowitsch, 2004; Stefanowitsch, 2013), that is, the quantitative, corpus-based analysis of the relationship between particular words and the constructions in which these words frequently occur; hence the name *collostruction*, a blending of the words *collocation* and *construction*.

Although collostructional analyses have recently gained traction and shed some light on the relationship between phraseology and syntax, very few studies in the area of second language teaching address this interplay and its effects on learners' language performance. This paper aims at contributing to this area by proposing that the systematization of syntactic structures can be successfully done via the exposure and analysis of conventional, lexically specified instances of language, that is, via conventional phraseologisms that mirror the schematic structure aimed at in the teaching context.

After briefly presenting the theoretical basis upon which lies this view of language, the paper will address the practical, analytical aspects in the form of a set of teaching tasks aimed at the teaching of a rather complex English structure, the caused-motion construction. This is done in the context of English as a Foreign Language.

The constructional view of first language acquisition

According to cognitive and constructional studies of L1 acquisition (Tomasello, 2003; Diessel, 2013), whose main focus is to determine how mental grammars are constructed, the *creation* of schematic and abstract grammars follows a systematically inductive process in which children

generalize from more particular, concrete and prototypical instances. An example of these prototypical instances can be found in studies focused on the statistical relationship between verbs and certain argument structure constructions, as briefly mentioned in the introduction.

In adult language, collostructional analyses have shown that the statistical attraction between verbs and certain argument structures can be so strong that these verbs are seen as *prototypical instantiations* of specific argument structure constructions. This is, for instance, the case of the relations of instantiation between *give* and the ditransitive construction. Research shows that calling it a *perfect fit* is, if anything, a simplistic account of the relationship that specific verb classes keep with certain constructions and vice versa. Researchers working on collostructional analyses, which interfaces between cognitive linguistics, especially cognitive construction grammar, and corpus studies (Gries & Wulff, 2005; Hilpert, 2013; Wulff, 2008), have turned their attention and research agenda to the investigation of the statistical levels of attraction between phrasal patterns (that is, constructions) and lexical items. Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004), based on previous collexeme analyses of the relationship between verbs and constructions, set out to investigate the *ditransitive/to-dative alternation* (1) to determine whether or not certain lexical items have statistical attraction to these constructions.

- (1) a. *Ditransitive*: John sent Mary the book.
 - b. *To-dative*: John sent the book to Mary.
- (Gries & Stefanowitsch, 2004, p. 102)

The theoretical interest in such a question lies in the fact that, given that ditransitive and to-datives are alternations and, as such, do not differ with regard to general information structure properties, one would expect that both types of constructions would attract the same groups of verbs. In other words, one would not expect that one type of construction would statistically favor a set of verbs over another. Drawing on corpus data from ICE-GB, the authors found that *give* is the most preferred choice for the verbal slot in

the ditransitive construction, that is, it matches, not only semantically, but also statistically with the X CAUSES Y TO RECEIVE Z meaning. As for the to-*dative* construction, *bring* was found to be statistically associated with the construction's verbal slot, differently from what a purely information structure analysis would suggest.

One could certainly claim that the statistical significance of the attraction between a certain type of verb and a construction might be the result of the text types used in the analysis, that being an issue of methodological reasons. One could also claim that the very semantic compatibility between the lexical content of the verb and the constructional constraints are held responsible for such a preference, that being a fully predictable behavior based on similarities in meaning. Should any of those reasons be true, the statistical preference could not be used to make claims about the knowledge that speakers have about languages and how to use them. In other words, the statistical preference would lack psycholinguistic plausibility. Thus, aiming to test whether these findings could shed some light on the general question of whether or not such statistical knowledge is part of speakers' knowledge of language, Gries & Wulff (2005) and Schmid, (2010) conducted a series of experiments to find that speakers seem to be rather sensitive to collocational properties of constructions such as lexical restrictions, statistical attraction and repulsion.

In light of such findings, as well as on children's use of exemplars in L1 acquisition, on the presence of item-specific knowledge in adult grammar and also on non-linguistic categorization of information in the form of units, Goldberg (2006) revisited her definition of constructions to add the important aspect of conventionality to it. Thus, the linguist's definition of constructions, and the one we subscribe to, states that

[a]ny linguistic pattern is recognized as a construction as long as some aspect of its form or function is not strictly predictable from its component parts or from other constructions recognized to exist. In addition, patterns are stored as constructions even if they are fully

predictable as long as they occur with sufficient frequency. (Goldberg, 2006, p. 5)

The definition above, which draws on psycholinguistic studies as well as long-standing corpus investigations of phraseological knowledge (Pawley & Syder, 1983; Wray, 2002), is capable of encompassing both the non-predictable phrasal patterns and also to capture analytical and predictable linguistic material that is thought to be stored holistically as units of knowledge in the constructional network. That means to say that:

[f]urther evidence for some amount of redundancy in language comes from the fact that very typically a fully general linguistic pattern is instantiated by a few instances that are highly conventional. In such a case, it is clear that both generalizations and instances are stored. (Goldberg, 2006 p. 55)

Goldberg's words above could be schematically summarized in Fig.01 in which an idiomatic phraseologism is exemplified as being a lexically specified instance of the absolutely schematic VP construction.

[Verb Phrase]

|

[Verb Obj]

|

[kick Obj]

|

[kick [the bucket]]

Figure 1 – Levels of constructional schematization (Croft & Cruse, 2004, p. 263).

If we take the idiom *kick the bucket* (meaning *die*), it is clear that we are before a construction in the very definition of the term. The semantics of the expression is non-predictable and non-compositional, that is, a form-function pairing which is, just like any other idiom, a low-level lexical construction. Nevertheless, as the scheme demonstrates, this lexical construction hides grammatical properties in its internal structure which do not seem to be proper to it, but rather general. The scheme above shows that, by abstracting away to more schematic structures,

one could claim that *kick the bucket* is a more specific instance of a transitive construction with a lexically specified verb, that is, *kick*. This partially specified construction is in turn a more specific instance of a general transitive construction (Verb Obj), which could license actual expressions like *she kissed him*, *Tom cleaned the floor*, etc. In other words, although *kick the bucket* complies with the grammatical requirements to be regarded as a construction and, as such, features as a unit in the construct-i-con, it inherits many of its grammatical properties from other existing constructions such as the VP construction and the rather abstract Subject-Predicate construction.

An important aspect of the model is that the described interconnectedness between constructions show that the construct-i-con must not be seen as a mere repository of constructions in the form of a bag of items. Instead, constructions will mutually motivate one another either syntactically or semantically in such a way that lexical constructions, for instance, will both inherit their grammatical properties from stored schematic constructions and will, at the same time, be stored themselves as nodes in this constructional network.

Besides reflecting the L1 linguistic knowledge of speakers, this theoretical framework is also explanatorily and descriptively adequate for the analysis of second language knowledge, given the centrality of exemplars in L2 acquisition and use, as will be discussed in the following section.

(Re)constructing languages: construction grammar and second language acquisition

The use of *cognitive construction grammar* (henceforth CCG) as a theoretical framework for studies in second language acquisition is relatively recent, thus one could only expect that many of its claims about the processes of L2 acquisition and learning would rely on the general view of language acquisition adopted by CCG as a whole and that is exactly what most literature in the area has produced so far. As was said before, studies on the acquisition of L1 from a cognitive and constructional perspective have all advocated

that the development of grammatical knowledge starts from concrete (i.e. lexical) instances. Children are thought to generalize from lexical instances in the creation of schematic grammatical knowledge via general cognitive processes, such as generalization, association, etc. Tomasello (1992) uses the metaphor of *constructional islands* to illustrate this process and states that, just like islands, the first structures acquired, which are seemingly isolated from one another, are in fact all interconnected and in more advanced stages of the acquisition process these islands will come together in the form of a *grammatical archipelago*.

As far as second language acquisition (henceforth SLA) is concerned, Ellis (2013), adopts a perspective of foreign language acquisition and learning that takes many of the factors discussed above about the acquisition of L1 as central. Among the main factors is the *usage-based thesis*, which defends that linguistic knowledge is conceived and acquired through interaction between speakers while these try to communicate their thoughts, aims and needs (Goldberg, 2006; Langacker, 1987; Tomasello, 2003). However, in spite of the particular mechanisms that characterize L1 and L2 as distinct acquisition processes, Ellis (2013) claims there is evident influence exerted by the knowledge of L1 on the L2 acquisition process. Ellis (2013) points out that L2 learners have expectations about the structure of the target language and these are based on their knowledge of L1 (*L1-tuned expectations*). In addition, L2 learners have a kind of *selective attention* which may turn some aspects of L2 relatively opaque to the learner's acquisition process. In other words, cognitive perspectives on SLA will acknowledge the similarities between L1 and L2 acquisition on the grounds of the cognitive processes involved in both tasks; however, studies also show that the task of learning a second language cannot be restricted to the processes and strategies used in the process of L1 acquisition, since "L2A is different from L1A in that it involves processes of construction and reconstruction" (Ellis, 2013, p. 366).

Despite involving relatively different processes, the *usage-based thesis*, which essentially revolves

around the capacity of speakers to conceptualize their surrounding reality and codify such a reality into constructions, unifies the first and second language acquisition agendas based on the premise that knowing a language, irrespective of whether it is a first, second or third language, means having knowledge of a structured inventory of constructions that belong to such a language. In other words,

If the units of language are constructions, then language acquisition is the learning of constructions. So SLA depends upon learners' experience of language usage and upon what they can make of it. (Ellis & Cadierno, 2009, p. 117)

The passage above highlights two aspects which are of utmost importance for the acquisition of L2 from functionalist and cognitive perspectives, that is, the importance such perspectives give to learners' *experience with language* and also the fact that this experience is not objectively accessed, but rather *interpreted* by learners. These two factors are important aspects for any theory of learning, but they can be especially restrictive for the process of acquiring a second language. Ellis (2013) breaks these two points into three conditioning factors for the learning of foreign material to take place and these are (i) *the frequency of input*, (ii) *the form of the linguistic material learners have access to* and (iii) *the function of these forms in discourse*. We briefly tackle each of these below.

Input frequency

The frequency of the linguistic material to which learners are exposed is important in the modeling of their mental grammar, given that it promotes learning, decreases the processing burden and is essential to the entrenchment of constructions (Ellis, 2013). However, input

frequency must be understood as an important variable in a more general scenario and not as the one and only factor that contributes to the learning of language structures. Goldberg (2016) emphasizes that the frequency of language expressions reflects the externalization of grammatical and cognitive properties and, as such, should not be treated as an object of investigation per se, but rather as a tool in the analysis and investigation of meaningful and relevant matters, such as the productivity of constructions, the level of entrenchment of certain expressions in the cognition of speakers, the analysis of how certain patterns characterize specific genres, the verification of what is more conventional and natural in a given community of speakers, etc. As far as SLA is concerned, Ellis (2013) foregrounds the importance in distinguishing the frequency of types and tokens, given that the high frequency of types is an important factor in the acquisition of schemes.

An example of the importance in distinguishing the type/token frequency is the way certain NPs are pluralized in English. There are different ways in which nominals can be pluralized in English, one of which is by adding the morpheme -s in the case of regular nouns (*cars, apples, books*, etc.), or through an alteration in the quality of the vowels in irregular nouns (*foot > feet, goose > geese, man > men*, etc.). Both *strategies* display a very distinct type frequency, that is, the schematic construction [N-s] is a lot more frequent and productive and, because of that, it is likely to be the preferred strategy of pluralization that speakers will resort to while pluralizing newly learned linguistic material. In other words, the schematic construction of pluralization [N -s] is more likely to *attract* nouns (neologisms, coinages and irregular nouns with low frequency and discursive salience) to itself than the other one.

This point can be exemplified with the words *phenomenon* and *criterion*, whose distributions on COCA Corpus can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1 – Pluralization of irregular nouns on COCA

Singular	Plural	Pluralized
<i>Phenomenon</i> (20.021)	<i>Phenomena</i> (8192)	<i>Phenomenons</i> (52)
<i>Criterion</i> (6993)	<i>Criteria</i> (23810)	<i>Criteria</i> (13)

As the table shows, the distribution of the frequencies for the irregular nouns *phenomenon* and *criterion*, whose normative plural forms are *phenomena* and *criteria*, seem to endorse the fact that the type/token frequency does exert a pressure on speakers' cognition as far as their grammatical choices are concerned. Although *phenomenon* is a relatively frequent token, the pressure exerted by the type frequency on its pluralization, that is, the constructional scheme [N -s], is strong enough to make some speakers regularize it and produce *phenomenons*. The same thing seems to apply to the word *criterion* for which the corpus shows 13 occurrences of regularized forms in spite of the high frequency of the plural form *criteria*. To put it in simpler terms, this could be taken as evidence of the fact that, although *criteria* is frequent and discursively salient, some speakers will resort to a much more ubiquitous strategy of plural formation in English, that is, the constructional scheme [N -s]. In addition to that, from the perspective of language change, the occurrence of the pluralized forms may be used as a cue for the regularization of these words in the future, mainly in non-specialized genres.

Similar to what happens to native speakers and children acquiring their L1, L2 learners are also subjected to such frequency effects in the target language as well as the frequency relations of their L1. These effects may lead L2 learners to make mistaken generalizations about the structure of L2 because of uses that are not prototypical or even because of the low type or token frequency of a construction in the target language. Another factor that may contribute to learners' lack of attainment to certain constructions may have to do with how salient the construction is in linguistic terms.

Formal issues: salience and perception

As mentioned previously, selective attention is a restriction to which the system of L2 acquisition is conditioned. This way, the learning of some structures depends on the linguistic characteristics which the learner has little, if any, power to control. That is, language is full of elements which are more or less salient both from a formal and

functional perspective and these form-function correspondences also exhibit distinct levels of salience in terms of contrast. Let us take Ellis' example of the third person singular morpheme which, as well as marking the agreement relations between the subject and the verb, also serves the functional purpose of marking the tense of the sentence, that is, *present*. Comparatively, the third person morpheme -s is both functionally and formally less salient than lexical adverbs like *today* and *every day*, which obviously denote the time of the event, but also serve to reinforce the tense of the sentence. As a result of the low salience of -s, in contrast with an independent lexical item with the same functional contribution, the acquisition of this morphological feature tends to become more laborious to the learner. In other words, the less salient an element is, the harder its perception will be, according to studies (Ellis, 2013; Cintrón-Valentín & Ellis, 2016).

The same idea can be applied to common errors that low-level L2 learners of English struggle to overcome, such as the omission of the morphological mark of past in sentences where past adverbs are given, that is, *she walkø back home yesterday* instead of *she walked back home yesterday*. Similar to what occurs to the third person morpheme, the morphological mark of past is significantly less salient, thus less conspicuous, than adverbs that perform the same function. From a functional perspective, we can still highlight that the realization of both morphological marks may also illustrate a case of *redundancy*, that is, given their redundant functions, learners may deliberately avoid their realization.

Function

We briefly tapped into cases when two elements with distinct levels of discourse salience can be interpreted as *redundant* by the learner. As a result of this redundancy, less salient and apparently redundant elements may be omitted to the detriment of more prominent elements. This is a clear example of how discourse and communication play a determining role in the choice of items and also in the processing of

messages in a second language (Ellis, 2013). To put it differently, the omission of less salient elements will not, from a communicative perspective, result in the unacceptability of a sentence, since the item in question has little communicative contribution to the understanding and interpretation of the sentence. Another factor raised by Ellis (2013) refers to how *prototypical* the items are and how sensitive to this L2 learning can be. By and large, constructional studies about the acquisition of L1 show that children tend to be relatively conservative in relation to verbs and different argument structures. That is, children tend to be less accepting of *marked relations* between verbs and argument structures, such as in *she sneezed the foam off the latte*. This is partly due to the fact that prototypes demand less processing effort, show more memorability and are also the best examples in the definition of the category (Rosch, 1975).

The same effect of prototypicality was verified by Ellis and Ferreira-Junior (2009) who analyzed the most frequently used verbs by L2 learners of English in relation to different argument structures. The study showed that L2 learners, similarly to what children do in the process of L1 acquisition, tend to opt for verbs that prototypically instantiate the different argument structures. Another tendency showed that learners seem to prefer semantically generic verbs, like *go* in V+Loc, *put* in V+Obj+Loc and *give* in ditransitive constructions. This tendency was also felt with the learner data discussed in Rosa (2020), that is, we believe that the prototypicality of uses may have been a hindering factor in learners' production and processing of caused-motion constructions such as *I'll try to **talk** some sense into her*.

Phraseologisms with *get*: a way into caused motions

Rosa (2014) studied the form-functional properties of the verb *get*, commonly defined as a highly polysemous verb, and proposed a constructional mapping of such a predicate based on the types of argument structure constructions presented in Goldberg (1995). With the aid of

corpus linguistics procedures, the study extracted a total of 2449 causative utterances containing analytical causatives of three types, described and exemplified from (2) to (7) below, as well as a special type of causative - the caused-motion construction - that is exemplified in (8) and (9).

- [Subj [get [Obj] past part]]
 (2) *We should pay the money right away to **get** our names **removed** from the book* [1998/ACAD]²
 (3) *So, it's critical to **get** these people **hunted down** and **arrested*** [2011/NEWS]
 [Subj [get [Obj] -ing]]
 (4) *Let's **get** these people **monolithically voting** this way and **thinking** this way* [2010/SPOK]
 (5) *The key to **chipping** is to **get** the ball **rolling** as soon as you can* [2009/MAG]
 [Subj [get [Obj] infinitive to]]
 (6) *I'll **get** the kids **to come** pick all this up* [2003/FIC]
 (7) *If I can **get** the words **to fit in** with that rhythm* [1999/SPOK]
 [Subj [get Obj Obl]]
 (8) *...conservatives have been more effective in **getting** their ideas **across to the public**...* [1994/NEWS]
 (9) *What are you all going to do to **get** these people **back in your fold** between now and the Election day?* [2004/SPOK]

From these 2449 occurrences of causatives, 1284 (=52.42%) were specific cases of caused-motion constructions, that is, a syntactic pattern in which the verbal gap must be filled by a non-static verb and the oblique argument takes the form of a prepositional phrase that indicates the DIRECTION towards which the dislocated THEME will be caused to move. English caused-motion constructions, thus, synthesize a X CAUSES Y TO MOVE Z scene in the form of [Subj [V Obj Obl]].

It is generally accepted in the area of cognitive semantics that these are characteristics of *satellite-framed languages* (Talmy, 2000), that is, languages that conflate the semantic events of MOTION and MANNER in the verb while assigning the category of PATH to a sentence satellite, thus the name *satellite-framed languages*. On the other hand, languages that conflate the MOTION and PATH categories in the verb, the case of Romance languages like Portuguese, will be classified as *verb-framed languages*. Below is a summary of this typological distinction.

TABLE 2 – Types of event confluations

Language	Verb	Satellite
English: <i>He walked into the room</i>	motion + manner <i>walk</i>	path <i>into the room</i>
Portuguese <i>Ele entrou no quarto correndo</i>	motion + path <i>entrar</i>	manner <i>andando/a pé</i>

These typological differences make it really hard for speakers of Romance languages to notice such a pattern in naturally occurring language data, given the inexistence of this formal construction in Portuguese. What is more, Rosa (2020) showed a low level of production and comprehension of this construction in learner language with only C1/CEFR level learners performing relatively well in the comprehension tasks proposed.

Rosa (2020) analysis of learner corpus data showed that a great part of the few instances produced by learners were either instances of caused motions with verbs of three-argument structures (eg. *she put the roses in the vase*) or instantiations of lexicalized phraseologisms (eg. *she got herself into trouble*). This shows that, on the one hand, learners were unable to produce and process schematic caused motions, especially those with verbs of modification (eg. *the audience laughed the artist off the stage*); on the other hand, the same learners seemed to rely on the argument structure of specific verbs as well as on specific phraseologisms while producing these structures. If teaching should mirror learning, as we believe is the wisest thing to do, teachers should use the already acquired knowledge of learners as a springboard for the teaching and development of new types of constructions. This is the main suggestion of this paper and what we present in the coming sections.

Using phraseologisms in the teaching of schematic caused motions

In this section, we draw on the theoretical discussions presented thus far to offer an example

of a learning-informed set of teaching tasks. For that, we focus on a prototypical language presentation phase of a foreign language lesson, based on the *Observe-Hypothesize-Experiment* procedure suggested in Lewis (1993), to demonstrate how acquired phraseological knowledge can be used in the classroom as a springboard for grammatical development, as the scheme outlined and presented in Fig. 1 would suggest.

Observing language in use

In this phase, as the name itself suggests, learners first tackle the text from an informative perspective, that is, they are asked to read the text and answer a couple of comprehension-focused questions. The example below refers to an article published in The Telegraph², which was chosen because of its general theme – house refurbishment.

Meet the couple who restored their home into a Victorian time capsule

By Mary Wilson
20 November 2018 • 2:00pm



Figure 2– Headline of a text used in the observation phase.

² Wilson, M. (2018, Nov 20). Meet the couple who restored their home into a Victorian time capsule. *The Telegraph*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/property/uk/meet-couple-restored-home-victorian-time-capsule>.

After answering the comprehension-focused questions and debating about different interpretations, learners are asked to perform a task meant to get them started in the process of observing and interpreting the language

pattern. The task below guides them to focus on the meaning of the caused motion and aims at helping them apprehend the X CAUSES Y TO MOVE Z interpretation of the headline.



Which of the sentences below (a), (b) or (c) best rephrases the headline?



- a) Meet the couple who restored their home and moved to a Victorian capsule.
- b) Meet the couple who refurbished their home and transformed it into a Victorian time capsule.

c) Meet the couple who restored their home as well as a Victorian capsule.

Justify your answers!

Figure 3 – Noticing the language pattern.

Once their justifications have been collected and discussed as to why (b) is the right answer, learners are presented with a sorting and categorizing task,

important parts of the observation phase which will also pave the way for the hypothesizing phase.

Case study 1: grammar & vocab

1. So, how else do I get that point across to him [2002/SPOK]
2. We didn't want to get our hands dirty in the mill [1994/MAG]
3. Billy Hope turns to trainer Tick Willis to help him get his life back on track after losing his wife in a tragic accident [2015/NEWS]
- 4...learn new skills in a new business sector, and a way to get your foot in the door to prospective full-time employment. [2012/WEB]
- 5...dear God in heaven I would like to get my hands around the necks of the filthy rotten swine who infected my life with this. [2012/WEB]
6. I was not worried about anything, and I just wanted to get the job done and worry about the next fight. [2012/BLOG]



1. Observe the data above extracted from COCA corpus;
2. Which sentence(s) have the same type of structure found in the headline?
3. Is there anything in common amongst them?

Figure 4 – Sorting and categorizing task.

Hypothesizing about the structure

In the previous sorting and categorizing task, learners were expected to have spotted the *get*-phraseologisms with a caused-motion structure. In the hypothesizing phase, as it is expected, learners will be taken to think about the form-functional

properties of caused motions, firstly by matching the phraseologisms with the correct formal group (which is verb + object + prep. + noun) and then by reasoning about which functional properties these forms represent; that is, that of a scene in which *someone causes something to move somewhere*.

Case study 1: grammar & vocab

1. So, how else do I **get that point across to him** [2002/SPOK]
3. Billy Hope turns to trainer Tick Willis to help him **get his life back on track** after losing his wife in a tragic accident [2015/NEWS]
- 4....learn new skills in a new business sector, and a way to **get your foot in the door** to prospective full-time employment. [2012/WEB]
- 5....dear God in heaven I would like to **get my hands around the necks** of the filthy rotten swine who infected my life with this. [2012/WEB]



1. Where in the categories below would you place the chunks with *get*?
2. Which of the following meanings do these expressions convey:
a) sb causes sth to move somewhere b) sb causes sth to become sth else c) sb causes sth to be complete

verb + object + prep. + noun	verb + object + adjective	verb + object + past part.
<i>put it out of its misery</i> <i>talk some sense into her</i> <i>breathe new life into it</i>	<i>split his head open</i> <i>set him free</i> <i>wipe the table clean</i>	<i>get the job done</i> <i>get the party started</i> <i>have my hair cut</i>

Figure 5 – Categorizing the form and function of caused motions.

Still on a more analytical part of the hypothesizing phase, the next step was devoted to learners' understanding of the relationship between lexicalized instances of the construction and fully schematic representations. This task is meant to

aid learners see the relationship between lexis and grammar as well as give them a chance to derive grammatical knowledge out of expressions they might already be familiarized with, along the lines of what was theoretically presented in Fig. 1.

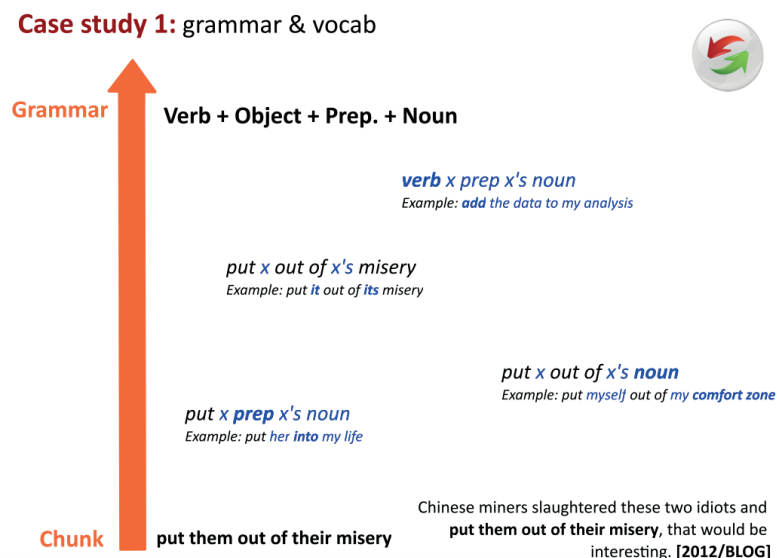


Figure 6 – Phraseologisms and schematic structures.

In the task above, learners are asked to distribute the italicized expressions along a scale that goes from a fully lexicalized instance (the phraseologism *put them out of their misery*) to a fully schematic representation of the caused-motion construction. This distributive task is also meant to help learners deal with the idea that the more schematic the representation is, the more abstract it will get.

Below we present the last phase, the *experiment* part.

Experimenting with the structure

This last phase is used to provide learners with the opportunity to experiment with language based on what they have observed and hypothesized about in the previous stages. This involves manipulating language in a freer and more creative way.

In the task below, learners are shown a couple of concordance lines taken from COCA Corpus and are asked to place the verbs back into their original

co-texts. Notice that the instructions reinforce that sentences can be filled with more than one verb. This is meant to give learners the chance to think creatively about the sentences they are working with. An example of this creativity is sentence (10) whose verbal slot is originally filled with *laugh*, but which could also be filled with *beat*.

- (10) a. If we walk into the police with a half-cocked story, they're gonna **laugh us off the station**.
 b. If we walk into the police with a half-cocked story, they're gonna **beat us off the station**.

In both sentences above, the main predicates *laugh* and *beat* specify the manner that the object represented by *us* will be removed from the station. In (10a), they will cause us to move out of the station by *laughing at us* whereas in (10b), they will cause us to move out of the station by *beating us*.

Below is the proposed task.

Causative constructions: practice



1. If we walk into the police with a half-cocked story, they're gonna _____ **us out of the station**. [2009/TV]
2. The baby who usually resisted napping at this hour was sleeping. She'd _____ **herself into exhaustion**. [2004/FIC]
3. This doesn't make sense. Smart people don't _____ **themselves to death** for things they don't need. [2012/BLOG]
4. What do we do? Lie awake wondering? Pace the floor? _____ **ourselves to oblivion**? [2012/BLOG]
5. I wanna interrogate him. So do I. You can't _____ **the truth out of him**. Is that right? [2002/MOV]

Read the sentences taken from the corpus. Use the verbs below to produce possible sentences. You can use more than one verb in each sentence.

beat work laugh drink cried

Figure 7 – Experimenting with caused motions.

In order to perform the suggested task successfully, learners will have to think of the form-functional properties of the caused motions, but they might also resort to pragmatic coercing factors to help them figure out the right answer. In (2), for instance, the fact that the sentence talks

about a *baby* might suggest the use of *cried* purely for pragmatic reasons, not syntactic or semantic ones. In order to bypass this possible pragmatic factor, the following task requires that learners rephrase the sentences. This is a task focused on the semantic manipulation of the construction.

Causative constructions: practice



1. If we walk into the police with a half-cocked story, they're gonna laugh us out of the station. [2009/TV]
2. The baby who usually resisted napping at this hour was sleeping. She'd cried herself into exhaustion. [2004/FIC]
3. This doesn't make sense. Smart people don't work themselves to death for things they don't need. [2012/BLOG]
4. What do we do? Lie awake wondering? Pace the floor? drink ourselves to oblivion? [2012/BLOG]
5. I wanna interrogate him. So do I. You can't beat the truth out of him. Is that right? [2002/MOV]

Can you rephrase the sentences above?

eg. (1) if we walk into the police with a half-cocked story, they're gonna make us go out of the station by laughing at us.

Figure 8 – Rephrasing caused motions.

After manipulating the sentences semantically, the last task is focused on learners' freer experimentation with the structure. Learners are

asked to use the expressions to produce expressive newspaper headlines, similar to the one they were presented with at the beginning of the class.

Causative constructions: practice



- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>laugh</i> sb out of a place | <i>get</i> the point across to sb |
| <i>get</i> one's life back on track | <i>cry</i> oneself into exhaustion |
| <i>work</i> oneself to death | |
| <i>get</i> one's hands around sth | <i>drink</i> oneself into oblivion |
| <i>beat</i> the truth out of sb | <i>get</i> one's foot in the door |
| | <i>put</i> sb out of their misery |

Getting creative!

We started discussing this structure with the headline: "meet the couple who restored their home into a Victorian time capsule". Using the expressions above, create some expressive headlines.

Figure 9 – Freer practice of caused motions.

In the phases above, we exemplified how the linguistic connection between specific phraseologisms and schematic constructions can be explored in a foreign language class. In other words, we aimed at offering an example of how the theoretical claim schematized in Fig. 1 can be applied in the teaching of abstract grammatical constructions.

It is important to state that the same idea, that is, that of using already acquired knowledge of

specific lexicalized expressions as a springboard for the development of grammatical knowledge can be applied to other constructions such as inversion constructions after adverbials (eg. *under no circumstances would she do that*) and their lexicalized counterparts *so do I*, *neither do I* constructions; specific chunks such as *drive sb crazy* to discuss resultatives, *get the job done* to talk about causatives, *if I could, I would* to present

conditional constructions, *the more the merrier* to get learners thinking about comparative correlative constructions, etc. In other words,

The goal would not be to have students analyze just those chunks introduced in the lessons, of course, but to have them learn to segment and construct new patterns of their own on analogy with the kind of analysis they do in the classroom. (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992, p. 117)

Conclusions

This paper aimed at presenting the theoretical interconnectedness between lexicalized expressions and general schematic constructions by reviewing what cognitive construction grammar, as well as corpus-based studies have to say about such a relationship. After discussing the structure of the construction, which is believed to accommodate both schematic constructions and their corresponding lexicalized instances, the paper accounts for the cognitive view on first language acquisition that can be summarized in the following claims (Croft & Cruse, 2004):

- Grammatical development starts with lexical formulas;
- Children acquiring L1 analyze these formulas and elaborate complex schematic units;
- The process of analysis takes place via cognitive mechanisms (analogy, categorization, etc.);
- Constructions form complex networks grounded in their linguistic experience.

Relying on the convergences, rather than on the divergences, between the aspects above and the processes of L2 acquisition, as defended in Ellis (2013), Ellis & Cadierno (2009), we present a suggestion on how this inherent interconnectedness between grammar and lexis can be used in the context of teaching foreign language grammatical constructions.

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