EMBODIED COGNITION AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN OUR CLASSES

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Abstract:
Learning and teaching second language skills requires many different techniques and approaches. In the modern world, students have many opportunities to learn many different languages with the help of technology and with the help of many different modern and traditional approaches. Embodied cognition approach plays a great role in second language acquisition. When foreign language teachers or professors develop embodied cognition in their classes students can learn many different languages easily. This study deals with embodied cognition in foreign language learning classes. The definitions of embodied cognition and the embodied approach in foreign language education will be given. General characteristics of embodied cognition will be told. Different views of embodied cognition will be shared. Sample classroom activities will also be shared.

Keywords: embodied cognition; foreign language learning; sample classroom activities

1. Introduction

Foreign language learning and English language education as a second or as a foreign language is a very important job in our country and in all of the countries of the world. Instructors who teach English as a second or a foreign language at the universities they work at try many different approaches in their own teaching classes. Embodied cognition approach has a great role in foreign language education.

In this study, the role of the embodied cognition approach will be told. Definitions of the word 'cognition' and 'embodied cognition' will be given. Sample classroom activities that are related to the embodied cognition approach will be shared. This approach can be applied at all language levels in foreign language education and English language education.

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2. Theoretical Background

2.1 What is Cognition?
The term 'cognition' has been defined in the Cambridge Dictionary as: "*the use of conscious mental processes: a book on human learning, memory, and cognition.*"

2.2 What is Embodied Cognition?
As it is defined in the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/embodied-cognition/#WhaEmbCog):

> "*The general characterization of embodied cognition with which we began provides the basis for what we will call the Embodiment Thesis. Embodiment Thesis: Many features of cognition are embodied in that they are deeply dependent upon characteristics of the physical body of an agent, such that the agent's beyond-the-brain body plays a significant causal role, or a physically constitutive role, in that agent's cognitive processing.*"

As it has been defined on the Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (https://www.iep.utm.edu/embodcog/):

> "*Embodied Cognition is a growing research program in cognitive science that emphasizes the formative role the environment plays in the development of cognitive processes. The general theory contends that cognitive processes develop when a tightly coupled system emerges from real-time, goal-directed interactions between organisms and their environment; the nature of these interactions influences the formation and further specifies the nature of the developing cognitive capacities.   Since embodied accounts of cognition have been formulated in a variety of different ways in each of the sub-fields comprising cognitive science (that is, developmental psychology, artificial life/robotics, linguistics, and philosophy of mind), a rich interdisciplinary research program continues to emerge.*"

Karl Friston (2018) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HW0JnjgCO3o) states that:

> "*It is the notion that fully understand how the brain work and how cognitive processes operate. You have to acknowledge that the brain is embodied. It lives in a body. It uses a body. It gets all sensations through a body.*"

2.3 General Characteristics of Embedded Cognition
Cowart (https://www.iep.utm.edu/embodcog/#H2) denotes that:

> "*To say that cognition is embodied means that it arises from bodily interactions with the world. From this point of view, cognition depends on the kinds of experiences that come from having a body with particular perceptual and motor capacities that are inseparably linked and that together form the matrix within which memory, emotion, language, and*

all other aspects of life are meshed. The contemporary notion of embodied cognition stands in contrast to the prevailing cognitivist stance which sees the mind as a device to manipulate symbols and is thus concerned with the formal rules and processes by which the symbols appropriately represent the world (xx).

Once again, the central claim of embodied cognition is that an organism's sensorimotor capacities, body and environment not only play an important role in cognition, but the manner in which these elements interact enables particular cognitive capacities to develop and determines the precise nature of those capacities."

From the above paragraph, it is understood that cognition is related to different kinds of experiences. Memory, emotion, language, and all other expectations of life are linked with the embodiment of cognition.

2.4 Role-playing, Games, and Embodied Cognition

Lankoski and Järvelä (2013) state that:

"Role-playing as a process can be analytically divided in two. The first part is internal and focused on a creative use of imagination around conceptual constructs such as character, game world and story. The other part is the procedural expression and sharing of this internal fiction with others and the procedure of combining these into a shared fiction. In practice, these two are mixed and cannot be distinguished entirely from each other."

From this paragraph, it is understood that role-playing triggers creativity and imagination. In the game world, players play games and make up stories.

As it has been mentioned by Becker (2005):

"The establishment of a clear connection between best practices in game design and current learning theories is one more strategy that can be adopted to support the use of games as valuable tools for learning. Arguing that games are pedagogically sound instructional technology addresses at least some of Gardner's levers, namely: reasoning, resonance, representational redescription, and resistances. This connection needs to be made explicit, both for the benefit of teachers currently in the classroom, and for the benefit of the academics who ultimately create the programs and curricula that are used to train the next generations of teachers."

Here, we understand that games and designing games play a valuable role in learning. Players get benefits in learning new ideas or words and creating new ideas.

3. Objectives of This Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:
1) To help students speak English as much as possible;
2) To help students develop their communication skills;

3) To remind students to be proud of their vision
4) To help students improve their pronunciation skills

4. Method

4.1.1 Participants

There were 44 (forty-four) participants and they were university students at Dokuz Eylul University in the city of Izmir in Turkey. These students were the second-class students and the preparatory class students at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir in Turkey. The second-class students were the students in the Department of Museum Students at the Faculty of Letters at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir in Turkey. Their ages ranged from 18-23.

4.1.2. Teaching Procedure

During the 2nd week of the academic terms, students were asked to write short compositions about the difficulties in learning English as a second language. They were also asked to write their interests and hobbies. According to their interests, different kinds of classroom activities were prepared and used for these university students during their class hours.

4.1.3. Sample Classroom Activities

The following classroom activities were used during classroom hours:
- using picture cards;
- using documentaries;
- using short films;
- using the coursebook and the speaking activities;
- using and suggesting different kinds of mobile applications to improve or develop vocabulary knowledge.

Sample Classroom Activity 1: Matching Pictures

This classroom activity has been suggested by Pugliese (2010: 42):

> *"This is a quiet, relaxing activity to get the students ready for English.*
> ***Be Prepared***
> *You will need one picture per student present in the class. You will also need to cut out descriptions of the pictures and put them up on the walls. Soothing music played in the background might be a good idea.*
> ***Be Creative***
> *Before the lesson starts, take as many descriptions of pictures as the number of students you have, and put them up on the walls of the classroom.*
> *When the students come in, give them a picture and tell them that you would like them to find the description that matches the picture.*

When they are ready, invite them to share their picture with their nearest neighbour, and tell each other what they liked about it."

Sample Classroom Activity 2: Picture Cards

This is a picture talk activity that will help instructors who try to make their students more active and talkative during class hours. Students talk about the picture cards they are given. They also ask the questions behind them to each other.

Sample Classroom Activity 3: Mobile Applications

Different kinds of mobile applications were suggested. The following were suggested to develop vocabulary knowledge:

1) Word Crossy - A crossword game:
   https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.fillword.cross.wordmind.en&hl=tr. Word Crossy is a puzzle game to repeat or remember the words you know. There is no age limit for this game.
2) Wordscapes
   https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.peoplefun.wordcross&hl=en_US. This is an enjoyable word game that can help students or anyone learn new words or repeat the words they know. There is no age limit.
3) Boatload Puzzles:
   https://www.boatloadpuzzles.com/playcrossword. This is a free online word game to learn new words and practice problem-solving skills when you play the crossword puzzle. There is no age limit.
4) Words of Wonders:
   https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.fugo.wow&hl=en. Words Of Wonders is a game to learn or remember the names of historical places in the World and to develop vocabulary knowledge. There is no age limit.

Sample Classroom Activity 4: Reading Aloud Activity

This classroom activity help students learn the definitions and the pronunciations of the new words effectively. Reading the words, phrases, and sentences loudly triggers memory and students can learn the definitions and the pronunciations of the words they learn easily.

Sample Classroom Activity 5: Gesture Game

The following classroom activity has been suggested by the genkienglish.net: (https://genkienglish.net/teaching/perfect-gesture-game/):

> *"1. Put the students in two groups.*
> *2. One person from each group comes to the front.*
> *3. Show the two people at the front a mini card*
> *4. They gesture to their group.*
> *5. The quickest team to answer wins.*

6. Repeat from step 2."

This classroom activity can be played with all of the ages of the students in English language learning classes.

5. Findings

The classroom applications which were written above in this study were applied in my own teaching classes. Students in these classes were university students from the different faculties at Dokuz Eylul University and they were between the ages of 18 and 23. These applications were conducted in two different classes in the English Preparatory Classes Department at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey. They were also conducted in the first class and in the second-class students in the Department of Musem Studies in the Faculty of Letters at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir in Turkey. Students in these classes were informed that the classroom applications helped them to learn new words and phrases effectively. They also informed me that their vocabulary knowledge improved rapidly day by day. Only five students in the English Preparatory Classes Department informed that all of these classroom activities are useless and they also informed that using the coursebook was not useful and enjoyable.

6. Conclusion

Up to here, the definitions of the words' 'cognition' and 'embodied cognition' have been given. General characteristics of the embedded approach have been told. Sample classroom activities have been shared. The findings of this study have been given.
It is hoped that this study will help colleagues to create more enjoyable class hours. It is also hoped that colleagues who teach English as a second or as a foreign language or colleagues who teach English for specific purposes will get benefit from this study.

7. Discussion Questions

1) Do you think embodied cognition approach will be useful in your English language teaching classes?
2) Do you often use this approach in your classes?
3) Do you sometimes use this approach in your classes?
4) Do you use classroom activities in your classes or teach grammar and translation?
5) Do you think your students will enjoy attending the classroom activities which have been shared in this study? Why?
6) What kind of classroom activities do you use in your own teaching classes?

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Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Ozlem Yagcioglu is working as a full-time instructor at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey. She has also taught different levels of academic courses such as Academic Report Writing and Translation, Academic Writing, Technical English, Medical English, Professional English, Advanced English and Basic English courses at different faculties. Since 2018, she has been teaching English courses in the Department of Museum Studies at the Faculty of Letters at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey. She also teaches different levels of English courses in the English Preparatory Classes Department at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey.
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