

EMBODIED LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM*Ashurova Shakhzoda Shavkatovna**An English teacher at the Department of Foreign Languages
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Abstract: In this article it is outlined present a series of embodied learning activities that teachers can use with their students to promote an understanding of some key aspects of meaning, structure and language. These are outlined in detail with ideas for structuring learning activities and some comment on the kinds of textual and contextual features that teachers and their students might want to explore.

Key words: Figure and ground, Teaching ideas, Further suggestions, Modality, Initial activities.

**ВОПЛОЩЕННАЯ УЧЕБНАЯ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ ДЛЯ
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Аннотация: В этой статье представлен ряд воплощенных учебных действий, которые учителя могут использовать со своими учениками, чтобы способствовать пониманию некоторых ключевых аспектов значения, структуры и языка. Они подробно описаны с идеями по структурированию учебной деятельности и некоторыми комментариями о видах текстовых и контекстуальных особенностей, которые учителя и их ученики могут захотеть изучить.

Ключевые слова: Фигура и фон, Учебные идеи, Дальнейшие предложения, Модальность, Начальная деятельность.

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada o'qituvchilar o'z o'quvchilari bilan ma'no, tuzilish va tilning ba'zi asosiy jihatlarini tushunishga yordam berish uchun foydalanishlari mumkin bo'lgan bir qator mujassamlangan o'quv faoliyati taqdim etiladi. Bular o'quv faoliyatini tizimlashtirish g'oyalari bilan batafsil bayon etilgan va o'qituvchilar va ularning talabalari o'rganishni xohlashlari

mumkin bo'lgan matn va kontekstual xususiyatlarning turlari haqida ba'zi izohlar berilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: Shakl va zamin, O'qitish g'oyalari, Qo'shimcha takliflar, Modallik, Boshlang'ich faoliyat;

Introduction. The activities are all designed to encourage students to primarily explore the concepts behind aspects of grammar and meaning rather than learn a set of technical and abstruse terms. Where terminology is used, it is done so to provide a common language for the teacher to use in conjunction with the outlines for each section in this article.

In many cases, I have left it up to the teacher to decide where and when terminology should be introduced and what this terminology should be. Clearly students need to know and be able to use linguistic terms exactly and convincingly, and this ability is to be encouraged. However, conceptual understanding should always come first, since this provides a genuine context and motivation for the assimilation of linguistic terms.

Figure and ground - The principle of figure and ground lends itself well to any embodied activity that stresses the physical nature of one element standing out against another as a fundamental principle of attention. Virtual embodied learning activities such as drawings that emphasise the figure – ground relationship within texts and parts of texts would be useful here. Equally, actual embodied learning activities that stress movement and the dynamic nature of figure – ground reconfiguration can encourage students to view the physical basis of the concepts of foregrounding in terms of parallelism and deviation. [1]

A more interesting approach would be to encourage students to see how the notion of figure – ground in texts is closely tied to our own perceptual systems, and particularly the way in which our visual system organizes incoming stimuli to form a coherent and organized reflection of the world for us. This could be carried out in the following way.

Ask students to look at a static scene from a window (a field, car park, corridor, etc.) They should be able to identify something that for them 'stands out' as prominent (the figure) compared with the rest of the scene (the ground). They should be able to explain that the figure is usually brighter, more vivid or smaller than the ground. When movement is introduced into the scene (someone walking, a car being driven, etc.), attention is naturally diverted towards that moving entity, and consequently the figure–ground relationship is re-configured so that the moving object becomes the figure. This is usually quite straightforward to set up, although you may need to 'introduce' a moving object into the scene to demonstrate how this works. Alternatively, searching for 'car traffic' (or similar) on YouTube will return video footage

that can be used in a similar way. This principle can then be applied to short texts (poetry and advertisements are good for this) to show how the figure – ground principle operates as a way of assigning prominence. [2]

The activities that follow on this text are designed to teach students the importance of foregrounding in written texts, and especially in prose fiction. As I explained in the beginning of this article foregrounding can manifest itself both in the establishing of textual patterns (phonological, lexical, semantic and syntactic) or through one of two kinds of deviation: internal deviation (the breaking away of a pattern from an established norm relative to that text) or external deviation (the breaking of a cultural, generic or semiotic norm).

This extract can be used to teach both of these concepts using the cognitive linguistic notion of figure and ground. In each case, suggestions include both actual and virtual embodied learning activities in the form of movement, gesture and the use of visuals.

Discussion. Teaching ideas – One of the initial ways to explore foregrounding in the first paragraph is to ask students to sketch the situation being presented. This allows for a visual representation of what is being primed for our attention (i.e. placed as a figure) and relegated to the background (i.e. in position as the ground). This could be developed into a storyboard to allow students to consider how the scene is essentially a dynamic one, with the figure and ground configuration changing as the paragraph progresses. With each storyboard frame, students could comment on how elements are positioned as requiring attention and link these back to the textual properties that mark figures as perceptually salient. In this instance, presenting the information in a visual way should draw attention to the textual maintenance on the door ('this is the door...which...it') and the subsequent reconfiguration of figure/ground when the sound becomes textually prominent and subsequently maintained over the rest of the paragraph. The pattern of internal deviation continues with attention drawn to the narrator's past, before a return to his current state and emotions at the end of the paragraph. Mapping out these shifts visually offers a way for students to understand the embodied nature of foregrounding. [3]

Further suggestions:

□ The activities detailed above could be used with any literary text where foregrounding of a particular character or theme is important. The matching of form to a particular interpretation demonstrates the significance of different kinds of textual patterns.

□ This approach also works well with advertising, which often aims to foreground and emphasis a particular attribute, quality or idea about a product or company. Clusters of advertisements by the same company or based around the same product or theme would be

good to explore, with students thinking about how different levels of language (graphology, lexis, syntax and so on) are given prominence.

□ Presenting figure and ground in an embodied manner automatically involves using the body metaphorically to stand for another entity (e.g. sound or a door). Students could make further use of the body as a resource-making tool by exploring the relationship between entities that are part of a figure ground configuration through movement and interaction. [4]

Modality – Since studies in cognitive linguistics have emphasized the physical and force–dynamic basis of modalised constructions, modality as a phenomenon can be explored through embodied learning activities that draw on various notions of force. These include actual kinegrams, and schematic and diagrammatic representations of types of force through virtual embodied learning activities. In the activities that follow I demonstrate how teachers can use some principles of force – dynamics in the classroom to encourage students to examine a complex conceptual and linguistic phenomenon.

Initial activities – Students can start by looking at the following utterances, all of which contain modal auxiliary verbs, together with a context in which each might occur or be spoken.

□ You must not enter the building before 9am (a teacher speaking to a group of students at school).

□ You cannot buy tickets on the train (a ticket inspector on a train talking to a passenger without a ticket).

□ You may open the window (a parent responding to a child’s request). [5]

Using this as a starting point, the students should be able to explore how the modal auxiliary verbs ‘must’, ‘can’ (cannot) and ‘may’ in the utterances represent different kinds of force being transmitted between participants. In the two sketches shown, this force was interpreted as either blocking an action (utterance 1) or providing the means for one to take place (utterance 3). These were then directly linked to the contexts of the utterances, taking into account the degrees of inherent power attached to participants in each. These utterances could be supplemented by similar ones in a range of contexts to demonstrate that modal auxiliary verbs can be understood in the kind of image – schematic terms those were explained in this article. At this stage, they can begin to investigate the different kinds of patterns that provide templates for the meanings of other modal auxiliary verbs: ‘should’, ‘ought’, ‘could’, ‘might’, ‘will’ and ‘shall’. With this underlying sense of patterns in place, students could then engage in a further activity to convey their thoughts on the conceptual content of each of these modal auxiliary verbs in the form of a kinegram, a precise embodied realization of linguistic phenomena. This

allows students to develop their initial ideas on image–schematic patterns to explore the embodied nature of meaning and the extension of a force schema based on physical movement into the more abstract domains. In this way, the context of each of the utterances can also be ‘played out’ through the ways in which the students interact with each other and use the physical space of the classroom as a way of both demonstrating physical and psychological force associated with each verb, and explaining its meaning. [6]

Teaching ideas – Using a similar working practice to the utterances in the initial activities, students can explore the use of modalised constructions in these two texts. These offer particular types of text (a text outlining restrictions, and a text aiming to persuade and stressing the possibilities afforded by the charity receiving donations) that are likely to be read in both specific contexts and for very different reasons. These then provide good opportunities for students to examine the relationship between the choice of modal forms and contexts, and to think of the particular motivations for force-related patterns. Students should be encouraged to relate linguistic choice and form to contextual and generic influences and constraints. For example, they could explore.

- How the use of deontic and epistemic modality varies according to the message the library wants to send (deontic when related to restrictions; epistemic forms when related to consequences of Readers not following conditions).

- The use of modal forms related to permission (‘may’) to emphasize the power the British Library holds over its Readers in being able to undertake certain actions and write these into its own terms of conditions. The balance between modal forms related to permission, certainty and obligation could be explored and commented on in interesting way using image – schematic sketches and / or kinegrams.

- The use of a variety of modal forms in The Salvation Army Christmas card, particularly those related to certainty and possibility, and how these forms relate to the purpose of the card to persuade people to support the charity.

Result. Students can now begin to explore this conceptual space or text world in more detail. Using text world theory’s diagrammatic notation offers an easy way of allowing students to explore both how this projected world is built up, and how readers use their background knowledge to create a rich and fully formed understanding of exactly what this world will contain, and why it would be appealing to agree with the world the advertisement is projecting.

In this instance, the notion and contents of conceptual space become embodied and explicitly set out on the physical page. The template can be easily reproduced to allow students to examine their own understanding

of how basic advertising operates in terms of projection and building on existing knowledge structures. In the top box (discourse world), this student has identified both the context of production (the advertiser's purpose and motivation) and the context of reception (her own influences and knowledge). This allows for a clear discussion of how meaning is a kind of negotiation between text producer and receiver.

Conclusion. In this article, I hope to have shown the potential for teachers to use the principles and concepts that I have introduced and discussed throughout this book to set up meaningful learning experiences for students that draw on the notion of embodied cognition. I have proposed a teaching methodology that utilizes a range of teaching approaches involving the body, role-play, gesture and spatial and visual representation. I believe that a language pedagogy based on the premise that learning sequences should mirror cognitive ones, offers the teacher ways of encouraging and developing students' understanding of aspects of grammar, structure and meaning. It also provides resources for students to demonstrate the explicit externalization of that understanding through analytical responses.

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