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Title:

New Roles for Language Learners, Teachers, and Technologies: From Two Decades of Interdisciplinary Research and Classroom Practice

Abstract:

In this address I explore developments from three disciplines that have potentially profound implications for language learning and teaching. These developments are: the rise of construction grammar and usage-based approaches in linguistic theory; the development of computational language models and deep learning in language engineering; and the shift to learner-centered pedagogy in education. I first sketch these developments, highlighting how each contributes to and alters the approaches that preceded them. Then I make a case that important potential for contributing to language pedagogy has been left untapped largely because these developments have arisen in relative isolation from each other. I describe and illustrate how each can be approached anew in ways that are mutually illuminating, opening novel possibilities for language learning which emerge only when these disciplines are reconceived as tightly inter-related. Examples are taken from failures and successes encountered in a cycle of interdisciplinary research and development of language models and technologies (see, for example, nav4.stringnet.org), and their incorporation into language classroom practices. Ultimately, the aim is to offer learners and teachers roles that move from teaching as delivery to learning as discovery, and from content mastery to awareness raising. This, however, requires knowledge resources of a new sort that support such roles. I elaborate on this aim and such resources and trace their implications through examples.