

# Frank Boers

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**Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand**

## **About the speaker**

Frank Boers is an Associate Professor at the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies of Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. His initial research interests were in the field of lexicology (e.g., studies of polysemy) and semantics generally (e.g., studies of metaphor). Most of his more recent research interests, however, were sparked by his long experience as an EFL teacher and teacher trainer in Belgium. Frank now publishes mostly on matters of instructed second language acquisition, especially the teaching of vocabulary and phraseology, and the potential merits of Cognitive Linguistics in that domain. His work has appeared in journals such as *Applied Linguistics* and *Language Teaching Research*, and he is co-author (with Seth Lindstromberg) of *Optimizing a Lexical Approach to Instructed Second Language Acquisition* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

## **About the presentation**

### ***Applications of Cognitive Linguistics to L2 Pedagogy***

The pace at which new L2 words, expressions, and patterns are acquired is influenced by the degree of engagement with them on the part of the learner. Several researchers with a Cognitive Linguistics (CL) background have, since the 1990s, proposed ways of exploiting non-arbitrary aspects of language as stimuli for such engagement. In my talk, I will first illustrate these proposals. Examples range from ways of helping learners appreciate how abstract word meanings (e.g., *beyond* in "Why she got married is beyond me") derive from literal ones (e.g. "The ball was beyond the hedge") to ways of helping learners appreciate iconicity (e.g., sound symbolism) in language.

Such CL proposals for language instruction have been backed up by the results of multiple quasi-experimental studies, which I will review in the second part of my talk. Although certain weaknesses of some of these studies must be acknowledged, taken collectively the reported experiments are beginning to constitute a body of evidence in favor of CL-informed instruction that is hard to dismiss. And yet, it stays hard to find any text books that contain traces of CL ideas.

In the third and final part of my talk, I will explore how CL-style instruction can judiciously be integrated in a language learning program, in a way that is aligned with "mainstream" second language research. Insights to be taken on board from the mainstream concern issues of selection, the desirability of distributed learning, and the need to foster complementary types of knowledge.