

TOPIC1. LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION: ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE. FACTORS THAT DEFINE A COMMUNICATIVE SITUATIONS: TRANSMITTER, RECIVER, FUNCTIONS AND CONTEXT.

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TOPIC1. LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION: ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE. FACTORS THAT DEFINE A COMMUNICATIVE SITUATIONS: TRANSMITTER, RECEIVER, FUNCTIONS AND CONTEXT.

“Learning is not the product of teaching.

Learning is the product of the activity of learners”.

John Holt.

1.- INTRODUCTION

We are living in a new international context known as the ‘knowledge society’ in which speaking foreign languages is a widely accepted need all over the world. As a matter of fact it is so important that different European governments, following the European Union recommendations, are adopting measures to encourage their citizens to learn two of them: a language used as an international means of communication, for example English, and one of the languages of a nearby country, for example Portuguese, French, Italian or Arabic in our case. The Andalusian government is adopting different measures for their citizens to speak foreign languages, for example, the Plurilingual Plan and the recommendation, according to the Decree 97/2015 3rd of March to use a communicative approach in the teaching learning process that takes place in the Andalusian educational centres. Using this type of approach in our schools implies the use of a well informed and eclectic methodology in which different resources are combined to adapt our lessons to our pupils’ interests and needs.

Being aware.....

.....**(PARTE DE LA INTRODUCCIÓN SESGADA PARA LA MUESTRA)**

2.- LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION: ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE.

Communication is the process of exchanging information and it is something absolutely basic for human beings. When talking about communication we tend to think about verbal communication, which includes oral and written language; However Human Communication includes other kind of communication such as: gestures, facial expression and body language...called non-verbal communication.

The communication implies the need of exchanging information between people which share a code, the knowledge of reality and symbols that represent it by understanding and producing messages that must be codified and decoded.(Canale 1983).

Features given by Hocket:

- What counts as human language are opposed to other systems.
- Auditory vocal channel
- Total feedback
- Arbitrariness
- Traditional transmission
- Duality- Sounds /phoneme become meaningful
- Displacement
- Productivity
- Structure dependence- relation between elements and structures (sentences)

All these features are a useful approach to language definition



Crystal (1997) started his Encyclopaedia of language explaining that language is a fascinating field of study because of its unique role in capturing the extent thought of human being.

Atchinson (1996) used the metaphor of the spider's web to refer to the complexity of human language. Language is a powerful tool of communication. Of all hominid species, it is ours, the most sophisticated as means of communication, language. Its importance arises from the need of communication to transmit culture and establish relationships with other people. It has its origins in a determined socio-cultural reality shared by the community of speakers, being its language a distinctive feature of the culture of that community.

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importance arises from the need of communication to transmit culture and establish relationships with other people. It has its origin in a determined socio-cultural reality shared by the community of speakers, being its language a distinctive feature of the culture of that community.

Thus, we as teachers can't forget that our basic educational aim must be to provide our pupils with the opportunity to learn the foreign language in a communicative way starting from the basis they already have, of course, taking into account English, a language that has many variations.

2.1.- Language and speech. Dialects.

Nowadays Linguists estimate that there are about six thousand different languages spoken all over the world. This imprecision is due to the fact that some dialects are in process of diverging but they have not reached the stage of being separate languages yet.

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Talking about native speakers Mandarin Chinese is the most common language in the world, but if think about languages spoken either as native or as foreign languages, English is probably the most popular. As a matter of fact, it is considered to be the "Latin" of the 21st century because it is the most spoken language as an international means of communication. About 80% of all the information in the Internet is in English. And it is the language of science.

The human language is unique in being a symbolic communication system that is learned instead of biologically inherited. *Symbols* are sounds or things which have a meaning given to them by the users and it is arbitrarily assigned. Human language is infinitely flexible because it can create new words to describe new situations and objects. Therefore, it is not surprising that all languages change through time being no one static. However, they change at different rates and times in response to new social, cultural and environmental conditions.

According to Harmer (2001) English has many variations in the places where it is spoken. Language and speech are not the same. **Speech** is the production of

the language. In contrast, a language is a set of rules for producing speech. The term **dialect** refers to the usage of a language that is characteristic of a specific group of people.

We can consider two kinds of dialects: The one that it is associated with a *geographically isolated* speech community, which is referred to as '*regional dialect*', or the one that is spoken by a speech community that is merely *socially isolated*, which is called '*social dialect*'.

2.2. Oral and written language.

In this unit we are going to concentrate on one of the multiple variations we can find as far as language is concerned: the variations based on the distinction between oral language and written language:

- **A brief comparison of oral and written language.**

Oral and written languages are different. Let's mention some of these differences just as an example:

ORAL LANGUAGE	WRITTEN LANGUAGE
It is immensely ancient	It is comparatively recent
It is the primary form of language	It is the secondary form of language
It is universal among humans	It is not universal among humans
It dies without trace	It dies but leaves traces.
Phonetic and auditive problems	Handwriting and spelling problems
Takes place quickly and automatically	Time for reflection and correction

As a consequence, when we organise the foreign language teaching learning process we have to approach the oral and written language in different ways.

- **Oral language**

Oral language is the most universal and natural form of communication. Traditionally, from the educative point of view, oral language was considered less important than written language, because oral language would be acquired automatically by the child. Nowadays there are a lot of reasons to stress the

importance of oral language: Human language is mainly oral, a child learns to speak before he/she starts attending school. Oral language is the daily, vital and permanent means of communication.

- **Components of the oral language.**

According to Lindfors, oral language is a complex system that relates sounds to meanings and is made up of three components: the phonological, the semantic, the syntactic one and the pragmatic one:

- The phonological component (rules for combining sounds). Speakers of English know for example that an English word can end but not begin with an –ng sound.
- The semantic component (morphemes, the smallest units of meaning that may be combined with each other to make up words). *Book + s* are two morphemes that make up *books*.
- The syntactic component (the rules that enable people to combine morphemes into sentences). Children start by combining two morphemes together, for example *like sweets*, and then they learn to construct more complex structures.
- The pragmatic level (using sentences in the correct way according to the context. E.g. informally at home or more formally at work).

The oral language includes linguistic and extra-linguistic elements.

- The linguistic elements of the oral language are:
 - Phonemic and orthoepic (correct pronunciation) resources. Among them we find: articulation of sounds, pause, accent, intonation and rhythm.
 - Lexical, semantic and morphosyntactic resources. Among them we find a rich and adequate vocabulary and its combination into sentences.
- The extra-linguistics elements of the oral language are:

When performing spoken language, the speaker not only uses the code of oral signs but also a different one: gestures and body language. Human communication includes a great variety of signs (gestures, body language, mimicry, musical signs, sign language used by deaf or blind people, etc) that make possible the production and comprehension of messages. Nonverbal

communication is strongly related to verbal communication. One method with a strong component of non-verbal communication is the Total Physical Response developed by James Asher.

- **Methodology for teaching oral language.**

To achieve a good oral communication we need our messages to be concrete, coherent and clearly expressed and not to be afraid of critics. It is also very important to learn to listen carefully to our interlocutor and to be as close as possible to the 'objective truth'.

Teaching the phonemic resources of language includes the correct pronunciation of sounds, adequate intonation and the emphasis the communicative act requires. Teaching the lexical, semantic and morphosyntactic resources includes learning words and learning to combine them into sentences and to join the communicative intention with the corresponding morphosyntactic constructions.

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Some of the methodological principles that should guide the teaching-learning process of the oral language are:

- Principle of activity. The more active you are the more you learn.
- Principle of socialization. Oral language is the main vehicle for establishing social relationships. (Vigotsky ZDP)
- Principle of individualization. Linguistic and mental development is individual and different in each child. (cater with diversity)
- Motivation. The first aim at school should be to motivate and release oral language starting from the child's interest and experience.

Some of the main forms and techniques of oral communication that should constitute the basis for the activities to practise the oral language are:

- Practice of dialogues. This possibility includes the use of conversation (free or spontaneous conversation and discussion or polemic conversation), dramatization and role-play, interviews and surveys, etc. Of course these activities should be carefully graded and contextualised.

- Practice of monologues: narration, exposition or explanation, etc. Of course again, carefully graded and contextualised.

- **Written language.**

Writing has a certain prestige over the verbal source. Normally it is perceived as permanent, more reliable and more correct. However, the only reason for the existence of written language is the representation of the oral language.

- **Some aspects of written language.**

Although written and oral languages use the same code, their functioning is based on quite different norms and rules. One of the characteristics could be that the interlocutor is not present when we write; thus, the receiver and the transmitter do not have the same context; as a consequence there is a lack of feed back that impedes the change of the discourse if there is some communication problem. Another characteristic of written language is the lack of paralinguistic features like gestures or body language, commonly called non-verbal communication. Written language includes punctuation signs written language is by far less expressive than oral language.

From a logical and structural point of view written language is better organized and it allows continuous revision and reflection and more time and space to establish communication. Moreover, the context of such communication is not implicit and grammatical complexity and lexical density is usually much higher, in contrast with oral language.

- **Methodology for teaching written language**

As well as in the native language, in the foreign language we must teach written expression after having taught the oral language. We only want to state that any practice of written language should help us reinforce what has been learnt orally before.

When learning to write children have to face handwriting and spelling problems (dyslexia, dyslalia). To achieve a good written communication they also need to

learn to write ordered coherent and clearly expressed messages to avoid rambling, confusing and generalising writing.

In the case of the foreign language we have to bear in mind that our aim is teaching to use the written language with a communicative purpose. Thus we should follow some steps: controlled, guided or directed and free practice. The difference between the three stages is determined by the level of free participation the student has when writing.

- In the controlled practice stage, pupils have to manage in the written code a certain amount of linguistic material learnt beforehand.
- In the guided or directed production stage pupils have to choose linguistic elements with the help of the teacher's orientation.
- In the free practise stage pupils have the opportunity to write about a topic with minimal help from the teacher.

The principles of activity, socialization, individualization and motivation are also valid when teaching learning to write.

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- **Assessment of written and oral language**

Evaluation of the written skills has to be continuous and formative. On the other hand, it has to be individual, keeping in mind each of the students' characteristics. Of course we can't forget the importance of self-assessment through the use of instruments such as the E.L.P.

It has to be done tactfully and fulfilling different points of view: the existence of a favourable and affective atmosphere in class, the need to develop self-assessment and the grading of evaluation. It should include three levels:

- Diagnostic of the difficulties and mistakes by taking notes or recording.
- Correction of the mistakes including self-correction and correction of the mistakes of the classmates.
- Reinforcement and extension to promote not only the learning of the language but its acquisition.

There are some guidelines a teacher can follow when he/she wants to assess the students' written production. For example if we decide to use a test we must consider which kind it is going to be (multiple choice, fill-in gaps,...), we

must write a list of the linguistic items the test is going to cover, the length, the different sections according to importance/time spent, spelling, the expression and usage of lexicon and structures and their written composition. And when evaluating the oral production, pronunciation and the use of language through the usage of lexicon and structures should be assessed.

However, tests do not have to be the only from we can use to evaluate the written or the oral production. We can also evaluate it from every day's tasks, projects, games, songs, by creating stories.....

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4.- CONCLUSION

We are living in a world that constantly changes. In this context new solutions are needed continuously. The knowledge of humanity doubles every fifteen years nowadays. It implies that most of what we teach our pupils and most of what they learn will probably be useless and outdated in that period of time. It also implies that we have to change the way we organise the teaching-learning processes in schools to provide our pupils with all they need to continue learning all-life long following the EU recommendations. Learning foreign languages in a communicative way is one of these needs.

Language is an important code for communication.....

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