



OPOSICIONES AL CUERPO DE MAESTROS DE ENSEÑANZA PRIMARIA

INGLÉS

UNIT 1

Language as communication. Oral and written language. Factors defining a linguistic situation: sender, receiver, functionality and context.

La lengua como comunicación: lenguaje oral y lenguaje escrito. Factores que definen una situación comunicativa: emisor, receptor, funcionalidad y contexto.



INDEX

1.- INTRODUCTION

2.- LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION

2.1.- Definition

2.2.- Studies

2.3.- Aspects

2.4.- Functions

2.5.- Varieties

3.- ORAL LANGUAGE

4.- WRITTEN LANGUAGE

5.- DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE

6.- COMMUNICATION

6.1.- Factors

6.2.- Difficulties

6.3.- Communicative competence

7.- CONCLUSION

8.- SUMMARY

9.- BIBLIOGRAPHY



UNIT 1: Language as communication. Spoken and written language. Factors defining a linguistic situation: sender, receiver, functionality and context.

1. INTRODUCTION

The knowledge of one or different foreign languages is a necessary condition to facilitate intercultural understanding in a wider world where international relationships are very important to survive. Moreover, if we as teachers develop the communication abilities of our students in other languages it would be easier for them to acquire professional views to develop better future jobs.

Communication is the exchange of information between individuals by means of a common system of symbols. When we try to learn a language we come up against the most fundamental questions about the nature of language. The ability to produce sentences is crucial in the learning process of a language, but it is not the only ability that learners need to develop. Someone knowing a language knows more than how to understand, to speak, to read and to write sentences; he/she also knows how sentences are used to communicate effectively.

When we pronounce sentences in isolation, we manifest our knowledge of the language system of English. But we are generally required to use our knowledge of the language system in order to achieve some kind of communicative purpose.

The ability to speak English does not simply depend on the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, but on several other factors as well: who you are, who you are talking to, where you are, and what you are talking about. Words and sentences have meaning because they are part of a language system and this meaning is recorded in grammars and dictionaries.

We as teachers of a second or foreign language should firstly accept the need to use language as communication. Once we have accepted it, we cannot longer think in terms only of sentences. We must consider the nature of discourse, and how best to teach it and to transfer from grammatical competence to what has been called communicative competence. Language does not occur in isolation but in connected discourse.

2. LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION

2.1. Definitions



Language has been defined many times over the years from very different points of views by philosophers, psychologists, linguists, physicists, mathematics and so on. Here we have some definitions about what language is:

- ◆ “Language is a human method with no instinct of communication of ideas, emotions and desires through a self-produced system of symbols.” (Sapir, 1931, p.3)
- ◆ It is a very structured system of phonetic symbols used by the members of a social group to communicate between themselves. (Bram, 1966, p.2)
- ◆ It is an organized system of communicative resources used by a speaker’s community able to understand each other. (Brook, 1972, p.13)
- ◆ It is a systematic sound combination with meaning for entire cultural community members. (Pyles, 1974, p.3)
- ◆ It is an oral or written sign system that a community uses to express themselves. (Carreter, 1973)

2.2 Studies

If we go deeply into the problem of communication we could define it as an expressive system different from its specific structure into a phonological, grammatical or semantic level that the human would develop when the community necessities were required.

The definition of language must be analysed deeply in a phonological level (phonetic and phonemic), grammatical level (morphological and syntactic) and semantic level.

At this point there must be an interdependence between the synchronic, which approaches the language seen at a particular point in time rather than overtime, and the diachronic that looks at the development of language over a period of time.

Language is a live fact and it is always suffering transformations. As **W. Von Wartburg** (1962) said, future linguists should reach a level with the two points of view (synchronic and diachronic) to see it as system and movement. So that we can understand that language is a live fact and it is always on the move.

2.3 Aspects



Apart from this, three views of language down the centuries have distinguished language-as-product from language-as-tool and language-as-activity or process.

We consider **language-as-product** when we make the language an object of study. We examine the system of rules (phonological, syntactic, morphological and semantic) by which it operates. We identify parts of speech and observe the dialectical variations, neologisms, and what happens to the sound system in different contexts. Language-as-product is sometimes referred to as **langue** or as the language **code**.

Language as product	Phonology
	Syntax “grammar”
	Morphology
	Semantics

Language-as-tool, a concept that goes back to Aristotle emphasises the way we can use a language to operate upon the environment. Each language has great potential for expressing our intentions, our personal meaning. We may wish to ask, to order, to state, to deny or to persuade.

We will need to know how to do these things in a new language. As we learn a new language, we have to internalise its potentialities as an instrument.

Language as tool	Aristotle
	To ask, order, deny, persuade, ...

Language-as-activity or language-as-process belongs to linguists, from a pragmatics and social psychology point of view. We need to learn how to initiate interaction with speakers of the language, how to respond to the initiative of others, how to avoid and how to terminate communication. We need to know how to greet, console, and keep interaction. We should know what levels of language we should use in different circumstances, when to speak, when to remain silent. This is speech as a social event, and, as such, it can be learned only through experience with language in use.

Language as activity	pragmatics
	Social psychology

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