

TEMA 1

LA LENGUA COMO COMUNICACIÓN: LENGUAJE ORAL Y LENGUAJE ESCRITO. FACTORES QUE DEFINEN UNA SITUACIÓN COMUNICATIVA: EMISOR, RECEPTOR, FUNCIONALIDAD Y CONTEXTO

Violeta de la Jara

INDEX

1. THE LANGUAGE AS A COMMUNICATION: ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Language

1.3 Communication

1.4 The language as a communication

1.5 Oral language

1.6 Written language.

1.7 Differences between oral and written language.

2. FACTORS THAT DEFINE THE COMMUNICATIVE SITUATION: SPEAKER, LISTENER, FUNCTIONALITY AND CONTEXT

SUMMARY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. THE LANGUAGE AS A COMMUNICATION: ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this topic is to study the language as a communicative system and not as a capacity. The main focus along the years in language teaching was in the language but not in the communication, students used to learn the grammatical rules, used to read texts but not used to practise their oral skills. For that reason is important to know what language is and what is communication and the characteristic that language as a communication system has, i.e. the rules of Hockett. In this topic we are going to study the definition of language, the definition of communication, the rules of Hockett and some types of communication, i.e. oral language and written language putting emphasis in the differences they have.

After many years centered in the gramatical-translation method for learning and others which were not communicatives, in the didactic area a feeling of needs with communicative objectives started to appear. As a consequence, many methodologies and methods appears with the purpose of improve the communication.

1.2 Language

The language is the main tool to socialise. It allows the members of a community to be in contact and to understand each other. In English, we have only the term language but in Spanish it means lengua, lenguaje or idioma. This distinction was introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure in his distinction between language (language or tongue) and parole (speech). According to him, La langue denotes the abstract systematic principles of a language, without which no meaningful utterance (parole) would be possible. As a consequence, many definitions of language were given and, for that reason, we have widely definitions of languages.

A. Definition of language

Along the history of learning/teaching second languages there were many authors who investigates about what is a language from different perspectives. In the amount dictionaries of linguistics the term is largely discussed. Thus, we can find it defines in general and in specific terms. For instance, The Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistic says:

a. Language¹ n

The system of human communication which consists of the structured arrangement of sounds (or their written representation), into large units, e.g. MORPHEMES, WORDS, SENTENCES, UTTERANCES.

In common usage it can also refer to non-human systems of communication such as the 'language' of bees, the 'language' of dolphins.

b. Language² n

Any particular system of human communication (see LANGUAGE¹), for example, the French language, the Hindi language. Sometimes a language is spoken by most people in a particular country, for example, Japanese in Japan, but sometimes is spoken by only part of a population of a country, for example, Tamil in India, French in Canada.

Languages are usually not spoken in exactly the same way from one part of a country to the other. Differences in the way the language is spoken by different people are described in terms of regional and social variation (see DIALECT, SOCIOLECT). In some cases, there is a continuum from one language to

another. Dialect A of Language X on one side of the border may be similar to Dialect B of Language Y on the other side of the border if language X and language Y are related. This is the case between Sweden and Norway and between Germany and the Netherlands.

As we mentioned, it was studied by some researchers as Sapir (1921) who define language as follows: "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols."; or Noam Chomsky who, in his book *Language and Responsibility* (1979), said: "Language serves essentially for the expression of thought." Thus, as we can see, language is much more than the faculty for the use of such system which is a distinguishing characteristic of man as compared with other animals.

B. Features of human language

The first language definition shows that language, in some cases, is used also for animal communication but there is a distinction between animal and human communication. Thus, Charles Hockett considers a set of design-features, depending on the research they can vary from 13 to 17 design-features, that characterize human language; many of them can be share with animals but others do the language the special it is.

These human features of language according to Hockett are:

1. Vocal-auditory channel: sounds emitted from the mouth and perceived by the auditory system.
2. Broadcast transmission and directional reception: the human language signal is sent out in all directions, while it is perceived in a limited direction.
3. Rapid fading (transitoriness): Signal last a short time. This is true of all systems involving sound.
4. Interchangeability: All utterances that are understood can be produced.
5. Total feedback: The sender of a message also perceives the message. That is, you hear what you say.
6. Specialization: The signal produced is specialized for communication and is not the side effect of some other behaviour.
7. Need for learning: It is impossible to acquire the language in isolation. To acquire it humans need a long exposure to language and a careful learning.
8. Semanticity: There is a fixed relationship between a signal and a meaning.
9. Discreteness: Language can be said to be built up from discrete units (e.g., phonemes in human language). Exchanging such discrete units causes a change in the meaning of a signal. This is an abrupt change, rather than a continuous change of meaning.
10. Arbitrariness: There is an arbitrary relationship between a signal and its meaning. That is, the signal is related to the meaning by convention or by instinct but has no inherent relationship with the meaning.
11. Displacement: Communicating about things or events that are distant in time or space.
12. Cultural/ traditional transmission: Each generation needs to learn the system of Communications from the preceding generation.
13. Creativity or productivity: Language is an open system. We can produce potentially an infinite number of different messages by combining the elements differently. That is a limitation or restriction of messages does not exist in human language.
14. Prevarication: Linguistic messages can be false, deceptive, or meaningless.
15. Duality of patterning: Large numbers of meaningful signals (e.g., morphemes or words) produced from a small number of meaningless units (e.g., phonemes).

16. Reflexiveness: In a language, one can communicate about communication.

17. Structure dependence: Language operations depend on an understanding of the internal structure of a sentence.

Some of these design-features for human communication can be easily found in animal communication. Thus, it is commonly accepted that animals share with humans the voca- auditory channel, broadcast transmission and directional reception, rapid fading, interchangeability, total feedback, specialization, discreteness and need for learning. In spite of this, there are some other design-features that exist in animal communication but not as much as in human communication. These features are: Semanticity, arbitrariness, displacement, cultural/ traditional transmission and duality of patterning.

Although, human and animal communication shares the features we mentioned before, there are some others that unique to human communication. Thus, creativity, prevarication, reflexiveness and structure dependence are only for humans.

In that way there have been made many researches which study the differences between both, human and animal communication. The next table shows a comparison between some animal communication systems and the human one:

HOCKETT'S "DESING FEATURES" OF LANGUAGE AND OTHER ANIMAL COMMUNICATION SUSTEMS

	Bee dancing	Western meadowlark song	Gibbon calls	Signing apes	Alex, a Grey parrot	Human sign languages	Spoken language
Vocal-auditory channel	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Interchangeability	Limited	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Total feedback	?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Specialization	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Semanticity	Yes	In part	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Arbitrariness	No	If semantic, yes	Yes	Largely yes	Yes	Largely yes	Yes
Discreteness	No	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Displacement	Yes, always	?	No	Yes	No	Yes, often	Yes, often
Productivity	Yes	?	No	Debatable	Limited	Yes	Yes
Traditional transmission	Probably not	?	?	Limited	Limited	Yes	Yes

<http://www.slideshare.net/amispears/the-psychology-of-language-chapter-3-11168455>

1.3 Communication

A. Definition of communication

Communication.

noun

1. the act or an instance of communicating; the imparting or exchange of information, ideas, or feelings.

Collins Dictionary

Humans have the necessity of interaction since they live in communities. Thus, communication is a vital factor to live with the others or to be a part of the group. As we mentioned, the main tool for communication is the oral language which is the most effective, although the most complex, way but not the only one, and it is usually complete by gestures, images, etc. Without gestures the communication could result significantly affected.

Canale (1983) explains communication as the exchange and negotiation of ideas, information, etc., between two or more persons. For that purpose, the participants use verbal and non-verbal signals. The communication can be through oral, written or visual channel. Also, he pointed out that communication has the following characteristics:

1. It is a form of social interaction, and is therefore acquired and used in social interaction.
2. It involves a high degree of creativity in its form and content.
3. It takes place in discourse and sociocultural contexts which are in charge of the proper use of the language.
4. Limiting psychological and other conditions such as memory constraints, fatigue and other distractions.
5. It always has a purpose, for instance to persuade or to promise.
6. It involves authentic language which it is not the invented language of books.
7. It is carried out with success or not depending on the basis of actual outcomes.

B. Communicative competence

The term is commonly attributed to Dell Hymes's paper 'On communicative competence' (Hymes, 1970). Hymes (1972) defined communicative competence not only as an inherent grammatical competence but also as the ability to use grammatical competence in a variety of communicative situations. Other authors, as Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), understood communicative competence as a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skill needed for communication. In general terms, dictionaries, as Longman Dictionary, explain the communicative competence as follows:

Knowledge of not only if something is formally possible in a language, but also whether it is feasible, appropriate, or done in a particular speech community.

Communicative competence includes:

- a. **grammatical competence** (also **formal competence**), that is, knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and semantics of a language (also see competence)
- b. **sociolinguistic competence** (also **sociocultural competence**), that is, knowledge of the relationship between language and its nonlinguistic context, knowing how to use and respond appropriately to different types of speech acts, such as requests, apologies, thanks, and invitations, knowing which address forms should be used with different persons one speaks to and in different situations, and so forth (see also appropriateness, pragmatics, role relationship)

- c. **discourse competence** (sometimes considered part of sociolinguistic competence), that is, knowing how to begin and end conversations (see also speech events, cohesion, coherence)
- d. **strategic competence**, that is, knowledge of communication strategies that can compensate for weakness in other areas.

For Hymes the Communicative Competence (CC) had four aspects depending on what is possible, appropriate, feasible and actually done:

1. whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible; this means that a native speaker possesses a system that has a potential for creating a lot of language. This is similar to Chomsky's competence.
2. whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available; this means that a native speaker knows whether something is possible in the language;
3. whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated; this means that the native speaker knows what language is appropriate in a given situation, according to: setting, participants, purposes, channel and topic;
4. whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails. This means that the native speaker knows how often something is said in the language and acts accordingly.

These four categories have been adapted for teaching purposes.

Savignon (1983) made an interactional approach. She defines the communicative competence in the following terms:

Communicative competence is a dynamic rather than a static concept. It depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more persons who share to some degree the same symbolic system. In this sense, then, communicative competence can be said to be an interpersonal rather than an intrapersonal trait.

(Savignon 1983:8)

For her, the central characteristics of competence in communication are associated with:

1. The dynamic, interpersonal nature of communicative competence and its dependence on the negotiation of meaning between two or more persons who share to some degree the same symbolic system.
2. Its application to both spoken and written language as well as to many other symbolic systems.
3. The role of context in determining a specific communicative competence, the infinite variety of situations in which communication takes place, and the dependence of success in a particular role on one's understanding of the context and on prior experience of a similar kind.
4. Communicative competence as a relative, not absolute, concept, one dependent on the cooperation of all participants, a situation which makes it reasonable to speak of degrees of communicative competence.

More actual is Bachman model (1990) in where he describes the language communicative ability. Communicative language ability combines competence and performance "in appropriate contextualised communicative language use" (Bachman, 1990: 84).

Moreover, we can quote three basics of the language communicative learning:

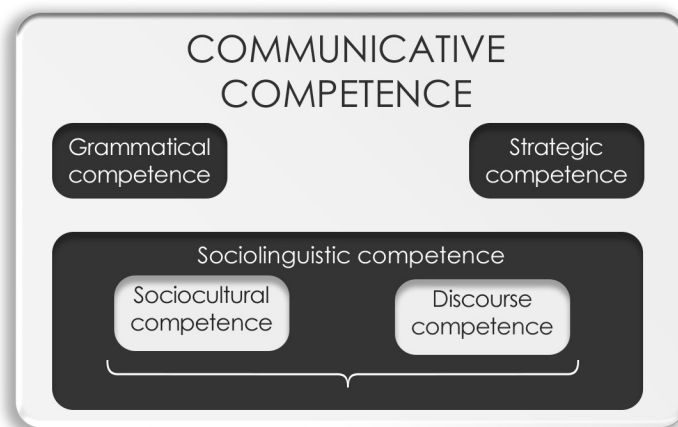
1. Language learning is related to the language use and not with the linguistic knowledge since we learn a foreign language with the aim to communicate with foreign people, i.e. to use the foreign language in communicative situations of the daily life. For that reason, the learner should develop and improve the interpretative and expressive capacities, that is listening, reading, speaking and writing skills.

2. The language use in real contexts means that the learner can be more efficient since they apply the ways of learning the contents and not the contents by their selves.
3. It is a student-centred learning. This method takes under consideration the students' needs and expectatives, to the different learning ways and to the students' previous experiences with other languages.

Later, other authors in their researches about the methodology and didactic of foreign languages have deepened into the concept.

The concept of communicative competence was reformulated by Canale and Swain (1980; 1983). Thus, in 1980 there three dimensions for the communicative competence of the second language learners, grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence, while in 1983 we can find four competences. According to 1983 theory these subcompetences are a set of four competences which are related done with each other. Thus, he explains the subcompetences as follows:

- Grammatical or linguistic competence, with formal character that contains words and rules.
- Sociolinguistic competence (in some cases it has the discourse competence), knowing and understanding how to speak given the circumstances you are in.
- Strategic competence, which is able to apply the communication strategies of the learners to solve the problems of the other three competences. That is, the competence to use appropriately the communication strategies.
- Discourse competence, concerns the selection, sequencing, and arrangement of words, structures, sentences and utterances to achieve a unified spoken or written text. It is in charge of the domain of the discursive rules.



Canale and Swain's (1980) components of CC.

In 1986, Van Ek added to more competences to the four mentioned before. These two competences are sociocultural competence and social competence.

To sum up, it presents a vision of the communicative competence which it can be define as the intersection of two axis of linguistic knowledge:

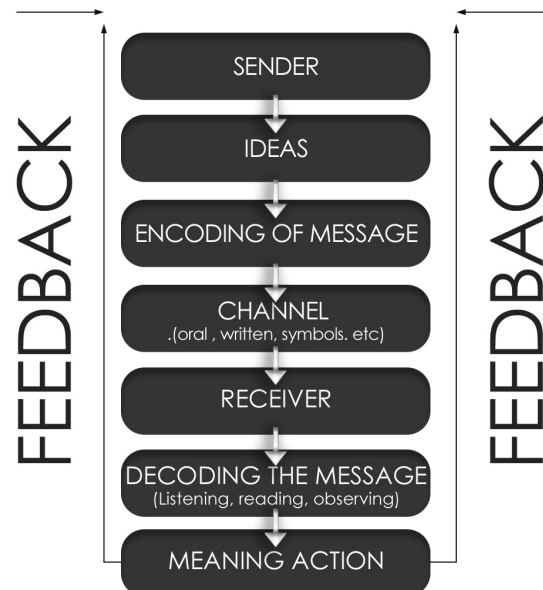
1. The continuum ' mastery of content necessary for communication / development processes underlying communication activities ";
2. The articulated development of its four dimensions.

1.4 The language as a communication

As we mentioned before, the language is a way of communication. Humans have the necessity of interaction since they live in communities. Thus, the main purpose of the language is the communication. Language is not exclusively for humans, we apply the term to talk about animal language or machines languages so they can communicate since the exchange information. In spite of that, in a communicative act there are some elements that possibilities it. These are the elements of communication process:

1. Sender: The person who intends to convey the message with the intention of passing information and ideas to others is known as sender or communicator.
2. Listener/ receiver: is the person who receives the message or for whom the message is meant for. It is the receiver who tries to understand the message in the best possible manner in achieving the desired objectives.
3. Code: any system of signals which can be used for sending a message.. In this part of communication we encoded the message, that is we turning a message into a set of symbols, as part of the act of communication.
4. Message: which is the information to be conveyed in speech or writing from one person to one or more other people. The message may not always be stated in verbal form but can be conveyed by other means, e.g. wink, gestures.
5. Channel: the path along which information is sent.
6. Context: that which occurs before and/ or after a word, a phrase or even a longer utterance or a text. The context often helps in understanding the particular meaning of the word, phrase, etc.
7. Feedback: any information that provides information on the result of behaviour.

The communication has exit when the listener do something, i.e. the listener becomes into a sender, bilateral communication, or the listener act according with the information received, unilateral communication. Thus, the first step to make communication possible is that the sender formulates an idea about something, opinions or information he wants to convey. Next, this idea have to be translated into words (spoken or written), symbols or some other form of message which he expects the receiver to understand. As we mentioned, this process is the encoding of the message. Then, he (the sender) should choose a suitable media for the transmission of the message which is going to be received by the listened who should decode the message. Finally, the effectiveness of communication is measured



through feedback so the sender knows that his message has been understood as a consequence of a change of listener's behaviour.

Although there can be some problems during the communication act such as noise which, according to Longman dictionary, is:

(IN INFORMATION THEORY) any disturbance or defect which interferes with the transmission of the message from one person to another. In speech, this interference could be caused by other sounds, e.g. a pneumatic drill, a voice on the radio. Because of the presence of noise, a certain degree of REDUNDANCY is necessary in any communication.

As we see in the definition, redundancy can be another problem in communication.

Apart from this, to explain why we used language authors give to human language some essential functions. In general it is commonly accepted that it has main functions explained by Jakobson (1960):

1. Referential function: corresponds to the factor of context and describes a situation, object or mental state.
2. Expressive function: relates to the sender and is best exemplified by interjections and other sound changes that do not alter the denotative meaning of an utterance but do add information about the sender internal state.
3. Apelative function: waits for the receiver's answer using vocatives and imperatives.
4. Phatic function: checks if the channel works using questions such as 'ok?' or 'hello?' to verify the communication.
5. Poetic function: focuses on the code by itself.
6. Metalinguistic function: the use of the language to describe or talk about the language itself.

In spite of this, Halliday's framework sums these functions up into three metafunctions:

- Ideational function, organizing a speaker's or writer's experience of the world and conveying information which can be stated or denied and in some cases tested.
- Interpersonal function, used to establish, maintain and signal relationships between people.
- Textual function, creating written and spoken texts.

Also, when we talk about language as communication we refer to speech acts. It is defined as an utterance as a functional unit in communication. These utterances could have propositional meanings, the basic literal meaning of the utterance, or illocutionary meaning, the effect on the listener the utterance has. According to the Longman Dictionary:

The philosopher Searle established a five-part classification of speech acts:

- a. **Commissive:** a speech act that commits the speaker to doing something in the future, such as a promise or a threat. For example:
 - If you don't stop fighting I'll call the police. (Threat)
 - I'll take you to the movies tomorrow. (Promise)
- b. **Declarative:** a speech act which changes the state of affairs in the world. For example, during the wedding ceremony the act of marriage is performed when the phrase I now pronounce you man and wife is uttered.
- c. **Directive:** a speech act that has the function of getting the listener to do something, such as a suggestion, a request, or a command. For example:
 - Please sit down.