TOPIC 1

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

LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION: SPOKEN AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE. FACTORS WHICH DEFINE A COMMUNICATIVE SITUATION: SENDER, RECEIVER, FUNCTIONALITY AND CONTEXT.

INDEX OF CONTENS.

Current Foreign Language Teaching Methods are based on communication; that is to say, English is used by pupils in real situations. Traditional Teaching Methods used to concentrate on simple single items of language. The result was that pupils got to know about the language but they were unable to use it in a communicative situation.

On other hand, human communication can be expressed through oral or written language. As we know, spoken and written languages demand different linguistic and paralinguistic abilities on the part of language producers. These abilities are taught when learning a Foreign Language.

In this topic, we are going to:

- Study language and its functions to affirm that the communicative function is the main function of language.
- Analyze the differences between spoken and written language.
- Study the Communication Theory for a better understanding of the communicative process and its components.
- And finally, we will discuss the importance of knowing how the communicative act works in order to teach a modern Foreign Language from a communicative point of view.

1. LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION.

We start our topic answering two universal questions:

- **What is language?**
- **What is language for?**

The first question is answered by the definition or concept of language and the second one leads us to the functionality of language.

1.1. Language definitions.

As we have mentioned before the first question is answered by the general concept of language. Language has been defined in many ways, following the American linguists Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and Robert A. Hall (1911-1997).

Sapir (1921) stated that "language is a purely **human** and non-instinctive **method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires** by means of voluntary produced symbols."

Hall (1964) defined language as "**the institution whereby humans communicate** and interact with each other by means of habitually use oral-auditory symbols."

Both definitions underline communication as the main function of language. This ability to communicate or communicative competence is studied at the end of this part.

However, communicating our ideas is not the only way in which we use language. Several other functions are performed by language, the innate human capacity.

1.2. Language functions.

The word function may be considered a synonym of 'use'. When dealing with language, it is related to the way people use language. Therefore, when we refer to the functions of language, we are actually talking about the features of language, and the purposes for which individuals use it.

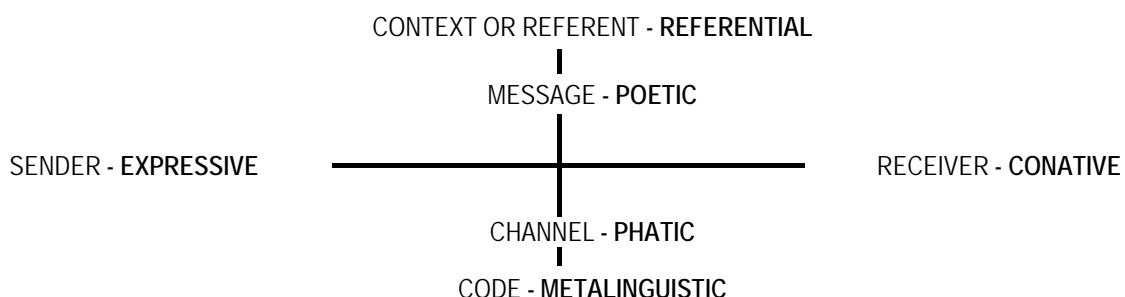There are different classifications of language functions attending to the purposes people use language for:

Malinowski (1923)**:** as an anthropologist, he set up that language had only two main purposes:

1. Pragmatic: that is a practical use of language, either active (by means of speech) or narrative (written texts).
2. Ritual or Magic: the use of language associated to ceremonies.

Bühler (1934, English version 1990)**:** as a psychologist, he classified the language functions from the point of view of individuals, and he established three functions connected to grammar:

1. Expressive oriented towards the speaker.
2. Conative oriented towards the addressee.
3. Representational oriented towards the rest of reality.

Jakobson: His classification may be said to comprise Bühler's plus three more functions. The functions established are based on the communication model. **Roman Jakobson (1896-1982)** differences 6 language functions applied to the components which take part in the communication process:

```
                  CONTEXT OR REFERENT - REFERENTIAL
                               |
                      MESSAGE - POETIC
                               |
SENDER - EXPRESSIVE  ——————————+——————————  RECEIVER - CONATIVE
                               |
                      CHANNEL - PHATIC
                               |
                  CODE - METALINGUISTIC
```

These linguistic functions are defined as follows:

1. **Referential:** as its name implies the message is orientated to the context (the different events, things which surround the message).
2. **Expressive:** the language informs us about the emotive attitude of the speaker.
3. **Conative:** we use language to call attention to the listener.
4. **Phatic:** the aim is to make contact. The phatic function is focused on the channel.
5. **Metalinguistic:** when we refer to the own language.
6. **Poetic:** language acquires its autonomous value.

Michael Alexander Kirkwood **Halliday** (or M.A.K Halliday, 1989) grouped all these functions into three metafunctions:

- The **ideational function** organizes the speaker's and writer's experience of the real or imaginary world.
- The **interpersonal function** indicates, establishes or maintains social relationships.
- The **textual function** serves to create written or spoken texts.

1.3. Communicative competence.

The **Communicative Competence is the capacity or ability to communicate effectively in a language**. The main aim of all our teaching is to make our pupils acquire communicative competence in a Foreign Language.

For a better understanding of the concept of communicative competence we need to depart from the definition that **Chomsky** gave for language in 1957. In fact, Chomsky defined language as a set of sentences each finite in length and formed by a finite set of elements. An able speaker has a subconscious knowledge of the grammar rules of his language which allows him to make sentences in that language. However, **Dell Hymes (1971)** thought that Chomsky had not included some very important information: **the rules of use**. When a native speaker speaks, he does not only utter grammatically correct forms, he also knows where and when to use these sentences and to whom. Hymes then said that competence by itself is not enough to explain a native speaker's knowledge and he replaced it with his own concept of **communicative competence**.

Hymes distinguished four aspects of this competence:

- **Systematic potential** means that the native speaker possesses a system that has a potential for creating a lot of language. This is similar to Chomsky's competence.
- **Appropriacy** means that the native speaker knows what language is appropriate in a given situation. His choice is based on the following variables, among others: setting, participants, purpose, channel, topic...
- **Occurrence** means that the native speaker knows how often something is said in the language and acts accordingly.
- **Feasibility** means that the native speaker knows whether something is possible in the language.

Canale and Swain (1980) defined communicative competence in terms of four components:

- **Grammatical competence:** words and rules.
- **Sociolinguistic competence:** appropriateness.
- **Discourse competence:** cohesion and coherence.
- **Strategic competence:** appropriate use of communication strategies.

Jan Van Ek (1984) added the **Sociocultural competence** as the fifth component. Therefore, the changes in the nature of competence associated with any kind of communication come out very clearly in Savignon's discussion of the subject (**Savignon, 1983**). She states that *Communicative competence is a dynamic rather than a static concept. It depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more persons. Following Dell Hymes,* Savignon introduces a social dimension and adds that *Communicative competence depends on the cooperation of all the participants involved.*

A more recent survey of communicative competence by **Bachman (1990)** divides it into the broad headings of "organizational competence," which includes both grammatical and discourse (or textual) competence, and "pragmatic competence," which includes both sociolinguistic and "illocutionary" competence.

Following the **Common European Framework of Reference** for Languages (CEFR, 2001) Communicative Language Competence consists of several components: linguistics, sociolinguistics and pragmatics. Each of these components is postulated as comprising, in particular, knowledge and skills and know-how.

- Linguistic competences include lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills.
- Sociolinguistic competences refer to the sociocultural conditions of language use.
- Pragmatic competences are concerned with the functional use of linguistic resources (production of language functions, speech acts,) drawing on scenarios or scripts of international exchanges.

The concept of communicative competence is also present in our education system. The Organic Law of Education 2/2006, 3rd May, modified by the Organic Law 8/2013, 9th December for the Improvement of Education Quality, highlights the

importance of developing both oral and written skills in the six different courses of Primary Education. This importance is maintained by the R.D. 126/2014, 28th February, which establishes four different blocks:

1. Oral texts comprehension.
2. Oral texts production: expression and interaction.
3. Written texts comprehension.
4. Written texts production: expression and interaction.

All these contents aim to help Primary students become communicative competent in the foreign language.

In the Community of Castilla-La Mancha, the Decree 54/2014, 10th July, which sets up the Primary Education curriculum groups contents into two blocks:

Block 1: Oral and written texts comprehension.
Block 2: Oral and written texts production.

In both blocks the communicative basic language skills of listening, speaking, interacting reading and writing are developed.

Students at the end of primary Education will reach a level close to A1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, since they will be able to understand words, basic sentences and ideas in simple and short messages. Equally, they will understand and follow instructions interacting in the Foreign Language, giving personal information and transmitting ideas about themselves or from their close environment through oral or written statements.

In fact, the current curriculum includes seven key competences being the first one the linguistic or language communicative competence. The communicative competence in English is one of the dimensions of the first key competence, the so-called linguistic competence.

To acquire this competence level, we will depart from a communicative approach in our English class joined to the enhancement of competency learning, integrated into the curricular elements in line with the Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and Council of 18th December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning and in the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training ("ET 2020").

2. SPOKEN AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE.

When learning a Foreign Language, we need to acquire this so-called communicative competence in both mediums: writing and speech.

2.1. Spoken and written language.

It is traditional in language study to distinguish between spoken and written language. We will see their main features and differences.

Spoken language may be defined as the ability of communicating ideas, emotions or desires using oral sounds while written language uses the graphic symbols.

Historically speaking, written language was considered to be superior to spoken language for many centuries. It was seen as a model of standard linguistic excellence. On the other hand, spoken language was ignored and something unworthy to study.

At the turn of the twentieth century, spoken language became more important because it was considered as the primary medium of communication for many centuries human language was transmitted and developed entirely as spoken means of communication. Undoubtedly, speech is the universal material of human language.

Nowadays, there is no sense in the view that one medium is superior to the other. The functions of speech and writing are usually said to complement each other. However, we can obviously find differences.

2.2. Spoken vs. written language.

As we have said previously that writing and speech are now seen as alternative systems of expression. Research has begun to study the differences between them.

Most obviously, **they contrast in physical form. Speech uses phonic substance while writing uses graphic substance**.

As teachers, we are mostly interested in the differences in structure and function that exist. Speech is considered to be part of an interaction in which both participants are present and the speaker has a specific addressee in mind. On the other hand, writing is considered to be part of an interaction in which the producer is distant from the receiver.

The permanence of writing allows repeated reading and close analysis. It promotes development of careful organization: grammatical and lexical differences. The spontaneity and rapidity of speech minimizes the chance of complex preplanning but feed-back is possible in oral interchanges.

Finally, we can say that written language tends to be more formal and so it is more likely to provide the standard that society values.

To sum up, spoken and written language makes somewhat demands on language producers. The full range of voice quality effects as well as facial expressions, postural and gestural systems is available for the speaker. These paralinguistic features cannot be used by the writer. The speaker must monitor what the listener has just said, plan his next utterance and decode what the listener answers him. The speaker has no permanent record of what he has said before, and only under unusual circumstances does he have notes which remind him what he wants to say next.

The writer, on the contrary, may look over what he has already written, pause between each word, take his time in choosing a determined world, even looking it up in the dictionary if necessary, check his progress with his notes, record what he has written, and even change his mind about what he wants to say.

Meanwhile the speaker is under considerable pressure to keep on talking in the time assigned to him, the writer in under no such pressure.

3. COMMUNICATION THEORY.

We will go on analyzing the communication process and its components in order to understand better the communicative act. This understanding will help us as teachers to get our pupils to negotiate meaning for an interactive point of view.

3.1. Definition of communication.

Communication can be defined as **the exchange of meanings between individuals through a common system of symbols**.

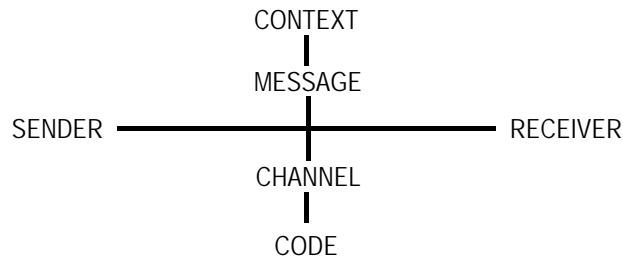### 3.2. Different models of communication: Dynamic & linear models.

We can distinguish two types of models of communication: dynamic and linear models of communication:

- Dynamic models are used in describing cognitive, emotive and artistic aspects of communication as they occur in sociocultural aspects.
- Linear models of communication were designed for electronic messages and are used in technological fields. These models contained 5 initial elements (based on Shannon and Weaver's mathematical model of communication,1948):
    - An information source or source.
    - A transmitter or encoder.
    - A channel (of transmission).
    - A receiver or decoder.
    - A destination.

This model was modernized adding the concepts of **entropy or noise source, redundancy or the repetition of elements** within a message and **feed-back**.

3.3. Linguistic model of communication: its components.

For linguistic purposes these elements were renamed and other ones added:

```
                        CONTEXT
                           |
                        MESSAGE
                           |
SENDER  ———————————————————+——————————————————  RECEIVER
                           |
                        CHANNEL
                           |
                         CODE
```

These components are defined within a linguistic framework as follows:

1. *SENDER:* the person who monitors a message.
2. *RECEIVER:* the person who is delivered the message.
3. *CONTEXT:* the physical or social situation in which communication takes place. It will always affect how the message is understood.
4. *MESSAGE:* it is what the sender means and what the receiver thinks the sender has said.
5. *CHANNEL:* the channel is the discourse expressed through oral or written words. Besides, it is necessary to have channels to put messages within sender's reach. Among these channels, we have the telephone, the radio, the T.V., etc. for the oral expression and texts, press, computers, for the written expression.
6. *CODE:* the code is a set of linguistic signs related to each other in accordance with grammatical rules shared by the sender and the receiver.

In a communicative interaction as a conversation on the phone, the components named before are as simple to specify as for instance:

1. *SENDER:* a man on the phone.
2. *RECEIVER:* the person who answers the phone.
3. *CONTEXT:* the situation where the conversation takes place.
4. *MESSAGE:* the words the man says.
5. *CHANNEL:* the electrical wires.
6. *CODE:* the linguistic oral sounds used to transmit the message which both the sender and the receiver know.

In face to face communication the sender becomes the speaker and the receiver, the listener. Feed-back is automatic and both of them interchange roles.
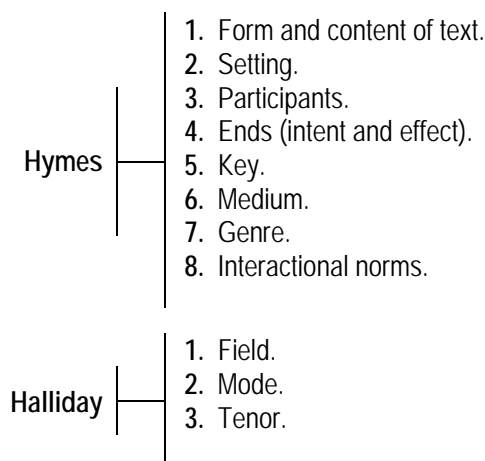
3.4. The Context.

In the linguistic communication process, one component acquires great importance: the context. Context is defined by the Collins English Dictionary as:

1. The parts of a piece of writing, speech, etc. that precede and follow a word or passage and contribute to its full meaning.
2. The conditions and circumstances which are relevant to an event, fact, etc.

The first definition covers what we may call linguistic context as we can infer from the second definition, linguistic elements in a text may refer not only to the other parts of the text but also to the outside world, to the context of situation.

The concept of context of situation was formulated by Malinowski in 1923. It has been worked over and extended by a number of linguists, especially Hymes and Halliday. Hymes categorizes the communicative situation in terms of eight components while Halliday offers three headings for the analysis:

Hymes
1. Form and content of text.
2. Setting.
3. Participants.
4. Ends (intent and effect).
5. Key.
6. Medium.
7. Genre.
8. Interactional norms.

Halliday
1. Field.
2. Mode.
3. Tenor.

As **Grundy** (2000) points out, the terms field, mode and tenor describe how the context of situation determines the kinds of meaning that are expressed:

- The **field of discourse** refers to what is happening, to the nature of the social action that is taking place.
- The **tenor of discourse** refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles.
- The **mode of discourse** describes the way the language is being used in the speech interaction, including the medium (spoken, written, etc.) as well as the rhetorical mode (expository, instructive, persuasive, etc.).

If we analyze an English lesson in our school we can see that the field of discourse is language study, *for instance, shapes.* We as teachers are teaching, and pupils are acquiring knowledge about *shapes* in our target language. The tenor of discourse refers to two types of participants: teacher-pupils and their relationships. As far as the mode is concerned, we can say that the language used is going to be instruction and discussion language. Field, mode and tenor collectively define the context of situation of a text.

3.5. Speech acts.

Speech Act Theory is concerned not just with the literal meaning of a sentence but with what kinds of acts derive from it. Some of these include ordering, promising, requesting, informing, and apologizing. The basic concepts of **Speech Act Theory** have been developed by the linguists **J. L. Austin** (1962) and **John Searle** (1970). An example of a speech act analysis might involve a minister saying at the end of a marriage ceremony: "I now pronounce you man and wife." The sentence, according to Austin and Searle, has three functions: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. The locutionary function is saying the actual words, the illocutionary does something (it legally recognizes the couple's relationship) and the perlocutionary expresses the psychological consequences of what is said (in this case, a higher level of commitment and intimacy). Where most philosophers of language had examined the denotative meaning of words and the logic of propositions, Speech Act Theorists focus on connotations and the instrumentality of language, often to be inferred from tone, context, etc. For example, "You're taking the garbage out?" can be merely a question, an order, or a reprimand for past negligence. Whether a speech act succeeds depends on whether the listener understands the speaker's intended meaning. Speech acts can include non-verbal as well as verbal communication: slapping someone on the back can be an act of aggression or of congratulation.

In brief and within the theory of communication, speech acts deal with the intended effects of our communicative interactions or speech acts and the environment in which they are exchanged or social context.

4. CONCLUSION.

Traditional Foreign Language Teaching (TFLT) concentrated on items of language in isolation. It was believed that learning a language involved learning grammar, vocabulary and structures.

The result was that pupils got to know about the language but could not use it in a real context. The communicative approach tried to bridge this dichotomy. The communicative approach reminded us that communication is the main function of language. Communicative method forced linguists to analyse the communicative process and its components together with the

written and spoken codes in order to improve effectiveness in communication or the so-called communicative competence. The traditional communicative competence concept is included into the first curricular linguistic competence.

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