1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, all of us know the differences between written and spoken language. However, traditional foreign language teaching methods concentrated on making students to learn isolated items of the language. These elements were only used to read texts and, rarely, for oral communication. Therefore, people used to know about the language but they were unable to use it for communication.

But, new social demands have produced a change in the conception of the teaching of any foreign language. Now, we are not interested in learning about a language but being able to communicate in that language. As a response to these necessities, the Official Curriculum Royal decree 126/2014 establishes as the main aim of the foreign language area the acquisition of an adequate Communicative Competence, where the oral skills (listening and speaking) will be outlined over the receptive ones. This would be detailed in de Decree 54/2014 of our community Castilla la Mancha.

2. LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION

2.1. Language definitions

The concept of language has many different definitions (ones are focused on the general concept of the word and others on a more specific view). In this sense, we can mention authors such as:

TRAGER (1949) who defined language as system of arbitrary vocal symbols and, through them, the members of any society interact among them.

SAPIR (1921) defined it as a purely human and non-instinctive way of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols.

2.2. Language functions

Now that I have established the main features of language, I will go on to address what language is for:
• **Representative function**: when the speaker uses the language to show reality. It’s parallel to the context.

• **Conative function**: Here the speaker sends a message to change the listener’s behavior or to call his/her attention. It’s parallel to the receiver.

• **Emotive function**: The speaker sends a message in order to express its own feelings. It’s parallel to the sender.

• **Phatic function**: when the language is used to keep the communication going. It’s parallel to the contact.

• **Metalinguistic function**: when we use the language to talk about the language. It’s parallel to the code.

• **Poetic function**: when we use the language the best as we can. The speaker is more interested in the way of communicating. It’s parallel to the message.

2.3. **Communicative competence**

Now we are going to concentrate to develop the concept of communicative competence. This concept was deliberately contrary to Chomsky’s Linguistic Competence, who tried to explain how a child learns language. He referred to a process of deduction using the input received and constructing an internal grammar with natural resources.

But later, Hymes provided a more complete definition which stated that a native speaker does not only utter grammatically correct forms, he also knows where and when to use a sentence, and to whom. In his idea of communicative competence he distinguished four aspects:

- The native speaker has a system with a potential for language creation (**Systematic potential**).
- When a native speaker speaks he/she knows what language is appropriate in a given situation (**Appropriacy**).
- The native speaker knows how often something is said in the language (**Occurrence**).
- The native speaker knows whether something is possible in the language or not (**feasibility**).

Canale and Swain developed the idea of communicative competence, a design taken on Decree 54 of Primary Education in Castilla La Mancha as the basis for objectives in the curricular design and as a guide for teaching methodology. This communicative competence consists of 5 subcompetences:

- **Linguistic competence** or the ability to recognise and formulate correct messages by means of phonetic, semantic or morphosyntactic elements.
- **Sociolinguistic competence**, or the ability by which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of the interaction, and norms or conventions of the interaction.
- **Discursive competence**, or the ability to understand and produce different types of oral and written texts organised according to the communicative situation in which they are produced and interpreted.
- **Strategic competence** or ability to use verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies to compensate interruptions in communication.
- **Sociocultural competence** or the ability to become familiar with the social and cultural context in which the foreign language is spoken.

This is our communicative frame for teaching foreign language in a Primary classroom following our Decree. This perspective is known as Communicative Approach. Being an approach it embraces many methodologies that can be used in the context of the foreign language teaching, it is based on constructivism.

3. **SPOKEN AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE**

3.1. **Historical attitudes**

With regard to the historical attitudes, written language was traditionally considered to be superior to spoken language for many centuries. This is due to the fact that written language was the medium of literature, and literature was
considered the standards of linguistic excellence. On the other hand, spoken language was ignored, being the central point that spoken language lacked of care and organization which assumed that speech could not be studied scientifically. Given that the norms were based on written standards, the tradition rested on this supremacy of writing over speech.

3.2. Differences between writing and speech

However, many other differences can be pointed out. I will analyse the relationship between speech and writing in terms of seven points of contrast.

- Speech is time-bound, dynamic, transient. It is part of an interaction in which both participants are usually present, and the speaker has a particular addressee in mind. Writing is space bound, static, permanent. The writer is usually distant from the reader, and often does not know who the reader is going to be.
- The spontaneity and speed of most speech promotes looser construction, repetition, rephrasing, and comment clauses (“you know”, “mind you”, “as it were”). Writing promotes careful organization with often intricate sentence structure.
- Because participants are typically in face-to-face interaction, they can rely on such extralinguistic clues as facial expression and gesture to aid meaning. Lack of visual contact in written language means that participants cannot rely on context to make their meaning clear.
- Unique features of speech include most of the prosody. Intonation, loudness, tempo, rhythm provide highly efficient hints. Unique features of writing include pages, lines, capitalization, spatial organization and several aspects of punctuation.
- Lengthy coordinate sentences are normally used in speech. Multiple instances of subordination in the same sentence, elaborately syntactic patterns, and the long sentences are typical in written texts.
- Speech is very suited to social or “phatic” functions. Writing is very suited to the recording of facts and the communication of ideas, and to tasks of memory and learning.
- In speech, there is an opportunity to rethink an utterance while it is in progress (starting again, adding a qualification). However, errors, once spoken, cannot be withdrawn. Errors in our writing can be eliminated without the reader ever knowing. Interruptions, if they have occurred while writing, are also invisible in the final product.

4. COMMUNICATION THEORY

4.1. Communication definition

In general terms, it can be affirmed that most linguist agree on the concept of communication as a process that involves a sender who encodes and sends a message which is carried via the communication channel to the receiver who decodes the message, processes the information and send an appropriate reply via the same communication channel. To better understand the concept, we must know the main attributes of communication:

- It is dynamic, not static.
- It is interactive, pro-active, not passive. It is more than a passive reaction to a stimulus.
- It is contextual, that is, it always takes place within a context.
- It can take place through different methods and channels.

Therefore, there are different types of communication. Regarding human communication, it can be defined as the act whereby someone communicates to someone their feelings, emotions, knowledge or wishes. This communicative act can take place in a written or oral form.

4.2. Communication process

For the last thirty years, the most common and popular conception of human linguistic communication has been what we will term the Message Model:
Here a speaker has some ideas in mind that he wants to communicate to a hearer. The speaker then builds up a linguistic product, “puts his ideas into words”, that is, he encodes a message that will put meaning across. Upon hearing the beginning of the expression, the hearer starts a decoding process that sequentially identifies the incoming sounds, syntactic categories, and meanings, then composes these meanings in the form of the successfully decoded message.

This model accounts for certain commonsense features of talk exchanges. It predicts that communication is successful when the hearer decodes the same message that the speaker encodes; and it predicts that communication breaks down if the decoded message is different from the encoded message. Likewise, it portrays language as a bridge between speaker and hearer whereby “private” ideas are communicated by “public” sounds, which thereby function as the vehicle for communicating the relevant message.

4.3. Key factors

JAKOBSON (1978) proposed a model of communication where he identified six main elements within communication:

1. A context.
2. An addresser, that is, the sender.
3. An addressee or receiver.
4. A contact between the sender and the receiver.
5. A common code.
6. A message.

This concept was developed later by HALLIDAY and HASAN (1985) who argued that communication cannot take place without a situation as the context which allows the participants of a communicative act to interpret and understand a message.

Finally and, in order to explain the last point in this essay, I will present the most important communication factors which are the following ones:

1. **SENDER** is the person who sends the message.
2. **RECEIVER** is the person who gets the message.
3. **PURPOSE** is the intention of the message.
4. **CONTEXT** is the physical or social situation where communication takes place. It affects the comprehension of the message.
5. **CHANNEL** is the means through which the message travels.
6. **MEDIUM** is often used to describe a means of communication. It should be applied to those media which include more than one form such as television.
7. **MESSAGE** is the content of information produced by the sender to the receiver. They work at two different levels: what the sender means and what he says unintentionally (use of non-verbal signs).

8. **FEEDBACK** is the response one gets from sending a message and the adjustments made according to the response.

9. **ENCODING/DECODING** implies both: the sender encodes the message and the receiver has to decode it.

10. **CONVENTIONS** are the unwritten rules that govern the use of the different forms of communication.

11. **SIGNS** are part of language. Consequently, they are also part of any communicative act.

12. **CODE** is a set of signs organized by rules. It has to be mastered by all the participants of a communicative act in order to get understanding among them.

5. **CONCLUSION**

As a conclusion, I would like to underline the importance of language within a communicative act since it allows us to establish continuous relationship with those around us. Furthermore, as language can be oral or written communication can be established in different ways.

Therefore and, from an educative point of view, we must teach our students to communicate not only in their mother tongue but also in a foreign language. At this point, the Curriculum establishes as our main goal the adequate development of the communicative competence. This way, our students will be able to use language with a purpose and in a meaningful way and, what is more important, they will be able to face real world in a successful way.

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**Bibliografía**

- RD 126/2014
- Decree 54/2014