

Unidad 2 Oposiciones al cuerpo de maestros

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Resumen

Antes de abordar el estudio de la comunicación en el contexto específico del aula TEFL debemos concentrar nuestra atención en el concepto de la comunicación y lo que vamos a considerar que la comunicación sea a través de esta unidad. Para definir la comunicación podemos tener en cuenta muchos estudios, pero con ninguna duda de que nos centrado nuestra atención en la relación entre el emisor y el receptor y la influencia de la información que se intercambia. Vamos a analizar profundamente.

Palabras clave: Inglés.

Title: Unit 2.

Abstract

Before dealing with the study of communication in the specific context of TEFL classroom we should concentrate our attention on the concept of communication and what we are going to consider communication to be through this unit. To define communication we can take into account many studies but with any doubt we will focussed our attention on the relation among sender and receiver and the influence of the information that is exchanged. We will analyse it deeply.

Keywords: English as a foreign language.

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0. INTRODUCTION.

Before dealing with the study of communication in the specific context of TEFL classroom we should concentrate our attention on the concept of communication and what we are going to consider communication to be through this unit.

Our purpose will be to develop a communicative context in our TEFL classroom focussing our attention on the way to promote the specific atmosphere to help our students to communicate. To do so we should pay attention to the use of verbal and non-verbal communication in our life but more specifically on our TEFL context. And following this idea we will develop the use of extra linguistic resources to get non-verbal responses to messages in different context.

In the present topic, we will have a look at those characteristics and see how they can be applied in the English classroom so as to enable our students to move gradually toward the general goal of acquiring communicative competence. 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 will be outlined over the receptive ones. Taking into account that the main goal that appear in **LOMCE 8/2013** for foreign language teaching is make our students communicative competent. We will take into account the curriculum developed by our community D. 54/2014, where Castilla la Mancha establishes the contents, evaluation criteria and standards of evaluation.

Regarding Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality in Education, the foreign language curricular area is essential in order to let students manage language in a multicultural and multilingual society. Furthermore, Royal Decree 126/2014, which establishes the minimum contents for Primary Education Stage, includes in its article two seven key competences, the first which is related to this unit, communicative competence as well as the General Stage Objective "F" which treats about acquiring a communicative competence in at least one foreign language.

To sum up, we will use communication as a guide of teaching a foreign language, being the main purpose of our daily teaching work.

1. THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION

Communication, that is, the exchange of information between individuals by means of a common system of symbols, has been of concern to countless scholars since the time of ancient Greece. In the definition of communication, there must be three fundamental notions:

- a) It is a process of information exchange. It implies a desire to communicate and to solve the information gap.
- b) The use of a code is necessary. All the members included in the communication have to share the same code for the communication to be meaningful.
- c) There are message comprehension and production processes. It requires the command of complex cognitive skills both to codify and decode the message.

According to **Canale** (1983) communication is understood as *“the exchange and also negotiation of information between individuals through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, oral and written or visual modes and production and comprehension processes”*.

As soon as we try to learn a language we come up against the most fundamental questions about the nature of language. It is hardly imaginable that a language could be taught without any underlying conception of the general 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 also knows how sentences are used to communicate.

Three views of language down the centuries have been 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 analyse specimens of the language, as linguists do, and 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 the language code. The grammar-translation approach emphasizes language-as-product when students study grammar rules and paradigms. So does contrastive linguistics, which compares language systems.

Language-as-tool, a concept which goes back to Aristotle, emphasizes the ways we can use a language to operate upon the environment (upon things, upon people, upon ourselves, etc.). Each language has great potentiality for conveying our intentions, our personal meaning. We may wish to ask, to order, to state, to hypothesize, to deny, to persuade, etc. We will need to know how to

do these things in a new language so that we can express nuances and subtleties of meaning. As we learn a new language, we have to internalize its potentialities as an instrument.

We use language as a vehicle of communication either oral or written it is intended for a purpose. The functionality of language is to communicate with other individuals, and the factors that influenced our speech acts will allow us to develop a communicative effect or not. Whenever we use the language with a communicative purpose we are using the **language-as-activity or process**.

2. COMMUNICATION IN THE TEFL CLASSROOM

Though communication between humans is a very complex phenomenon, scholars have found certain characteristics which seem to apply in every situation. If we want our teaching to be really communicative we will have to follow some characteristics.

Following **Harmer** (1983), we can say that when one person speaks he/she wants to address someone, he/she has a **communicative purpose**, i.e. he wants something to happen as a result of what he says. In order to do so he/she selects from his language store and uses the language he feels appropriate for his purpose.

These generalizations are valid for both written and spoken linguistic codes. However in a spoken context, the person listening is interested in the communicative purpose of what is being said and processes a variety of language.

All these factors were not traditionally taken into account when designing language learning activities. It is only with the advent of the Communicative Approach to Language Teaching that real communication enters the classroom. The notion of communicative competence is one of the theories that underlie the communicative approach to foreign language teaching.

Canale and Swain developed the idea of **communicative competence**, a design taken on by the Ministry of Education as the basis for objectives in the curricular design and as a guide for teaching methodology. This communicative competence consists of 5 subcompetences: grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, strategic and sociocultural.

“Communicative competence consists of:

- 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. Through the influence of communicative language teaching, it has become widely accepted that communicative competence should be the goal of language education, central to good classroom practice. This is in contrast to previous views in which grammatical competence was commonly given top priority. The understanding of communicative competence has been influenced by the field of pragmatics and the philosophy of language concerning speech acts as described in large part by John Searle and J.L. Austin.

In the history of teaching and learning a language, there have been important errors. Nowadays methodologies are working hard to correct and solve these historical mistakes. Throughout the centuries, even as recently as 20th century, experts and teachers firmly believed that a language should be mastered through the study of long list of vocabulary and hard work on grammar; nowadays, communication in the classroom is becoming more and more important.

Communication should be based on these functions:

- a) Direct: the speaker controls or has an influence on the hearer.
- b) Personal: politeness, in a hurry, furious, happy... this will have to be taught to avoid unpleasant situations with the hearer.
- c) Rapport: a contact with the hearer is vital for communicative success.
- d) Enjoyment: poetry, rhymes, songs, drama playing...

The notions of **Teacher’s Talking Time (TTT)** and **Student’s Talking time (STT)** are also important in our TEFL classroom. In order to improve our students’ language ability we should let them participate as much as possible being communication the main purpose of the teaching-learning process.

One of the techniques that are very useful for developing communication is **groupwork** in opposition to **individual work**. Cooperation and collaboration among students are required to learn a foreign language. That is the main reason for using group work in our TEFL classroom. However, students also need concentration and development of grammar knowledge that is why individual work is also needed. The two types of activities have to be introduced in our annual programmes but gradually taking into account difficulties and the necessities of our pupils.

Communication implies oral tasks and for oral communication to take place we need to promote a specific context. Students should feel confident enough to produce the foreign language. We should introduce grammar and phonetics gradually. And students should have a clear idea of what they are supposed to do before starting the activity. Several steps should be developed to get to free oral communication. First of all, students have to practice oral guided activities. These kind of activities allows our students to make mistakes, with the teacher help they will be able to choose from a number of options before speaking, giving them a feeling of trust on their ability to produce the language. A second step will be the use of dramatization or role play, where students prepare their oral productions. Dialogues are very useful in the production of oral language, at least 30 seconds or one minute talking. Then the last level will be free oral communication, talking to each other or speaking about a topic.

2.1. Verbal communication

Whenever we talk about verbal communication we think undoubtedly to the use of oral language. But is the language only used with this purpose or not?

The language is not the unique way of communicating, as we will see in this unit we also use some techniques for developing non-verbal communication. Despite of not using the oral language we are able to achieve

our communicative intention. When we use a language we make a mental image of the world, according to Bruner, *“the reality is coded in the use of the language.”* We can conclude with this idea that learning a language allows us to have a view of the reality and that when we learn a second or even a third language we can analyse the same reality through different aspects.

2.1.1. Oral language

Brown and Yule (1983) begin their discussion on the nature of spoken language by distinguishing between spoken and written language. They point out that for most of its history; language teaching has been concerned with the teaching of written language. This language is characterised by well-formed sentences which are integrated into highly structured paragraphs. Spoken language, on the other hand, consists of short, fragmentary utterances, in a range of pronunciations.

In spoken language, the speaker does not only resort to the linguistic elements to express meaning, but he/she also has available to him or her the full range of ‘voice quality’ effects, e.g. intonation, pitch changes, etc...as well as facial expression, postural and gestural systems, etc...which support the basic meaning conveyed by the utterance. All these paralinguistic features make spoken language much more meaningful for communication, but at the same time they make it much more complex, both in the encoding as in the decoding process.

Together with the foresaid characteristics, a set of syntactic and lexical differences are patently noticeable in spoken language, when compared with the written medium: There is often a great deal of repetition and overlap between one speaker and another, and speakers frequently use non-specific references (‘thing’, ‘this’, ‘it’). That is to say:

- Short utterances, usually incomplete sentences or phrases as well as ready-made expressions.
- Sentence coordination is preferred to subordination.
- Predominance of active over passive voice.
- Topic comment structure: once the topic has been nominated and grasped by the listener a comment is added.
- The environment is present for references, the context is relevant.
- The vocabulary is very general with a low degree of explicitness. Contracted forms of non-lexical verbs are used. Lexical density is rather low, as compared with written language.
- Repetition of utterances or chunks is admitted.
- Frequent pauses, interruptions, markers and fillers for clarification, re-elaboration or testing comprehension are given in an atmosphere of spontaneity.
- Use of extra linguistic resources, gestures, body language being this one of the reason why drama playing is so useful in the English classroom.

In oral language there is little time to change things, and if changes are made some mistakes will occur; however, oral language, is by definition spontaneous which means that all these mistakes are allowed and understood as reasonable.

2.1.2. Written Language

It now seems most likely that writing systems evolved independently of each other at different times in several parts of the world.

We can classify writing systems into two types: non-phonological and phonological.

- Non-phonological systems do not show a clear relationship between the symbols and the sounds of the language. They include the pictographic, ideographic, cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphic and logographic.
- Phonological systems do show a clear relationship between the symbols and the sounds of language. We can distinguish syllabic and alphabetic systems.

In a system of syllabic writing, each grapheme corresponds to a spoken syllable, usually a consonant-vowel pair. Alphabetic writing establishes a direct

correspondence between graphemes and phonemes. This makes it the most economic and adaptable of all the writing systems. In a perfectly regular system, there is one grapheme for each morpheme.

However, most alphabets in present-day use fail to meet this criterion. At one extreme we find such languages as Spanish, which has a very regular system: at the other, we find such cases as English and Gaelic, where there is a marked tendency to irregularity.

The process of learning how to write can go through different stages. First of all a process of copying, teachers should worry for detail. Then a second stage arouses the dictation, what the pupil hears. It is very useful as a previous step to listening. Dictation implies listening, remembering and writing, very useful for spelling in English language. The last one will be writing composition, what the pupil thinks. It helps our student to develop creativity and autonomy.

2.1.3. Comparison between oral and written language

Research has begun to investigate the nature and extent of the differences between them. Most obviously, they contrast in physical form:

- Speech uses phonic substance typically in the form of air-pressure movements.
- Writing uses graphic substance, typically in the form of marks on a surface.

Differences of structure and use are the product of radically different communicative situations. **Crystal** pointed out that “speech is time-bound, dynamic, transient, part of an interaction in which, typically, both participants are

present, and the speaker has a specific addressee in mind. Writing is space-bound, static, permanent, the result of a situation in which, typically, the producer is distant from the recipient, and often, may not even know who the recipient is.”

As writing can only occasionally be thought of as an interaction (writer-reader), it is just normal that we can establish the following points of contrast:

(a) The permanence of writing allows repeated reading and close analysis. The spontaneity and rapidity of speech minimizes the chance of complex preplanning, and promotes features that assist speakers to think standing up.

(b) The participants in written interaction cannot usually see each other, and they thus cannot rely on the context to help make clear what they mean as they would when speaking. As a consequence, feedback is normally avoided.

(c) The majority of graphic features present a system of contrasts that has no speech equivalent. Many genres of written language, such as tables, graphs, and complex formulae, cannot be conveyed by reading aloud.

(d) Written language displays several unique features: punctuation, capitalization, spatial organization, colour and other graphic effects.

(e) Some constructions are easily found only in writing such as time for correction and thinking, and others only occur in speech, such as slang.

(f) 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. Its permanence provides it with a special status.

Despite these differences, there are many aspects in which the written and the spoken language have mutually interacted. We normally use the written language in order to improve our command of vocabulary, active or passive, spoken or written. Loanwords may come into a country in a written form, and sometimes, everything we know about a language is its writing, e.g. Latin. It is true that writing has derived from speech in a historical sense, but nowadays, their dependence is mutual.

2.2. Non-verbal communication

First of all we should pay attention to what do we consider non-verbal communication. When we refer to non-verbal communication we should think about ways of communication where we do not use oral or written language. These situations will be where we use gestures, mimicry, traffic signs, sign language used by deaf or blind people, musical signs, flags,...

We should include this type of communication in our classroom in order to support the learning of our students when they have a low level in the foreign language. It is a way of making them feel confident enough to practice and use other ways of communication such as oral language. As an example, mimicry will be one of the best non-verbal ways of communication that we can include in our teaching activities to guess vocabulary.

We have focussed our attention on the use of verbal communication but we have to include non-verbal communication elements in our foreign language class to make the learning of a language easier, friendly and above all communicative.

Following the Law the definition of strategic competence is the: *"ability to use verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies to compensate interruptions in communication."*

3. EXTRALINGUISTIC STRATEGIES: NON-VERBAL REACTIONS TO MESSAGES IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

In order to develop the linguistic competence of our students we should promote the use of strategies to develop communication. These strategies will include extralinguistic strategies where we can include the use of body language (gestures, facial expressions,...) and the use of other codes (visual, mathematical, plastic,...).

From the large amount of extralinguistic strategies we can find on teaching methodologies, there is one that has been used with great results in foreign language teaching contexts. We are speaking about **Total Physical Response (TPR)**.

Total Physical Response is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action. It attempts to teach language through physical activity. Students are supposed to have non-verbal reactions to different messages. It was developed by **James Asher** and it draws on several fields: education, psychology, language teaching, and humanistic pedagogy.

Listening before speaking is the rule for productive skills, students need a reference before producing a language.

A TPR-based curriculum will have the following objectives: to teach oral proficiency at a beginner's level. The main aim is to teach basic speaking skills. Comprehension is a means towards this end. Asher does not set specific instructional objectives because these will depend largely on the needs of the learner. However, these goals must be reachable by means of action-based drills.

Grammar is taught inductively as Total Physical Response requires initial attention to meaning rather than to the form of the items. Grammatical features and lexical items are selected not according to their frequency of use in target language situations, but according to the classroom situations.

The major classroom activity in Total Physical response is obviously imperative drills. They are used to elicit physical actions on the part of our pupils. Speaking (for the pupils) is delayed until after about a hundred and twenty hours of instruction. Other class activities will include role plays or slide presentations. Role plays will centre on everyday

situations. The pupils will be ordered to perform common actions in a particular setting: a supermarket, a surgery... Slide presentations provide a visual backup to our narration. This will be followed by a series of questions.

Reading and writing activities may also be used to consolidate structures and vocabulary and/or as follow-ups to oral imperative drills. However, remedial work is not encouraged; if any item is not learned rapidly, this means that our pupils are not yet ready for it and should be dropped until a future time.

According to Asher, the teacher is the director of a stage play and the pupils are the actors. It is the teacher who decides what to teach, who models and presents the new materials and who selects materials for the classroom.

Learners in Total Physical Response have the primary roles of listeners and performers. They listen attentively and respond physically to our commands. Learners have little influence over the content of learning. They monitor and evaluate their own progress and are encouraged to speak when they feel ready to speak.

3.1. Communicative activities

In relation to non-verbal reactions to messages in different contexts we can also include the use of some games in classroom, such as

- Bingo game,
- Colour this in...,
- Simon says ...stand up, sit down,
- Who is who (from mimicry to oral response),
- Graphic orders...draw a house, a dinosaur,
- Silent role play: somebody makes gestures and the rest verbalizes them.

Teaching a foreign language also includes teaching the foreign culture and gestures are part of the culture. Each language has its own gestures that are specific and peculiar only to that language. This should be also learnt in the TEFL classroom.

4. RELATING TOPIC 2 TO THE CURRICULUM

The Royal Decree 126/2014, states out the learnings for **Primary Education**. In this Royal Decree we can find many references to the concepts we have developed in this topic. Communication, both in oral and written form, is related to many aspects of the curriculum. At the very beginning of the foreign language area we can find the first reference to communication in the decree related to foreign language.

“The need to communicate in the foreign language has a real importance due to sociological and educative reasons. The process of integration in the European Languages is part of the modern societies.”

The goal of this area is learning to communicate in the foreign language and acquire a communicative competence.

The **contents** are the general frame of reference that limits what do we have to teach in the foreign language area of Primary Education. Here we have to consider concepts, procedures and attitudes. Obviously they are intended to develop the communicative competence of our students.

According to the **Royal Decree 126/2014, 28th February** contents are divided in four different groups: Comprehension of oral texts; Production of oral texts: expression and interaction; Comprehension of written texts; Production of written texts: expression and interaction.

Without any doubt this topic is related to them. First of all in this unit we have developed the importance of developing oral and written communication and through the use of it improving the learning of socio cultural aspects to express emotions, asking and giving information and develop socialisation.

“Messages have to be related to the personal and social experience of our students, their communicative needs, the classroom context, and the more representative and motivating cultural aspects, expressed through the foreign language in a social interactive context.”

In relation to **methodology** it states that in Primary Education the main objective is to develop communication, which is directly connected to this topic. Communication is the main goal of our foreign language curriculum. Following the Royal Decree we have to integrate the skills and include them as much as possible showing respect for the silent period of our pupils or any difficulty they could have when learning English.

“It will be necessary to get the students in contact with those communicative data that are meaningful and comprehensive to them. They must have the following characteristics: they must be close to the students’ interests, they could be applied to a wide range of situations, with a level of complexity just a step further that their knowledge and without enough contextual support to facilitate comprehension”

After methodology we find evaluation criteria where communication takes an important role. Understanding oral and written messages is the first one, and in order to acquire these evaluation criteria we have to work on the four skills.

It is also related to the production of messages in communicative situations, and reading comprehensively. So as we have justified this topic is well related to our Primary Education Decree we will now deal with the conclusion.

5. CONCLUSION

As a conclusion we can say that communication must be our goal in TEFL classroom. To facilitate our students learning and to be able to create the appropriate context for communication to take place should be the aim of a foreign language teacher. For this reason we have to develop an eclectic methodology including as many types as possible in order to reach every student and to help them in every difficulty. If we as teachers focused our attention on TPR we will devote our time on an exclusive way of teaching and it will not be effective for the whole group. So we have to mix methodologies paying special attention to develop communicative context in TEFL.

Our legislation encourages us to promote communication and emphasizes the purpose of teaching a foreign language on a communicative context. So now that we have well defined what is communication we should look for it in every educational context.

To achieve communicative competence, pupils must acquire not only linguistic competence, but also rules, skills and strategies for association. In other words, they must adapt their extralinguistic reactions to different contexts.

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