COMMUNICATION – A COMPLEX NETWORK OF INTERACTIONS

COMUNICAREA – O REȚEA DE INTERACȚIUNI COMPLEXE

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Abstract

Prezentul articol este dedicat, în special, comunicării umane, dar și celor trei tipuri de comunicare, cum ar fi: comunicarea bazată pe sens, cea convențională și interacțională. Un loc aparte este destinat competențelor esențiale în predarea/învățarea limbii engleze, ca de exemplu: competența lingvistică, sociolingvistică, pragmatică, strategică, dar și interacțiunii dintre ele pe baza unui text utilizat la nivelul avansat de studiu.

Key-words: syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, communication, interaction, competence, linguistic.

Rezumat

The present article is dedicated, especially, to humane communication, as well as to the three types of communication, such as: communication based on sense (meaning), conventional and interactional ones. A special place is designed for the essential competences in teaching/learning the English language, as for example, the linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, strategic competences,, as well as the interaction among them on the base of a text used at the advanced level of study.

Cuvinte-cheie: relații sintagmatice și paradigmatice, comunicare, interacțiune, competență, ligvistic.

INTRODUCTION

Human communication is viewed as a continuous process of encoding-decoding that goes on between two or more individuals who share the same language. (Ferdinand de Saussure)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chomsky proposed the term linguistic performance to designate the speaker's actual use of the language. Chomsky's ideas were taken up by foreign language teachers who, in accordance with his theory, established that their main goal was to endow learners with a kind of linguistic competence similar to that of the native speaker. Consequently, acquisition of a foreign language relied **on learning vocabulary** (spelling, pronunciation, and meaning) and grammatical structures of the target language.

The vocabulary of any language may be considered a structural set of interdependent and interrelated elements. The system of language consists of subsystems, all based on sameness, differences and oppositions. In the subsystems at all levels the functions of every linguistic element depend on its positional values.

Almost anything can signify something for someone. In his work *Course in General Linguistics*, published in 1916, Saussure focuses on the linguistic sign, making a number of crucial points about the relationship between the signifier and the signified.

According to the Swiss linguist, language is a system, which consists of various elements performing a variety of functions based on the relations the elements have one with another.

Saussure was the first to elaborate the tripartite relationship: signifier + signified = sign. According to him, the linguistic sign unites a sound-image and a concept. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. It should be remembered that neither of these entities exist outside the construct we call a sign. We separate these entities for convenience only.

The signifier, which has a physical existence, carries the meaning. This is the sign as we perceive it, i.e. the marks on the paper or the sounds in the air.

The signified is a mental concept that is the meaning. It is common to all members of the same culture who share the same language.

The sign is the associative total of the two, i.e. the associative total of the signifier and the signified and we speak of it as a signifying construct.

Saussure was concerned exclusively with three types of systemic relationships:

- between a signifier and a signified;
- between a sign and all of the other elements of its system;
- between a sign and the elements which surround it within a concrete signifying instance.

He emphasized that meaning arises from the differences between signifiers; these differences are of two kinds: syntagmatic (concerning positioning) and paradigmatic (concerning substitution). Saussure called the latter associative relations [11, p. 121].

These two dimensions are often presented as axes, where the horizontal axis is the syntagmatic and the vertical axis is the paradigmatic. The plane of the syntagm is that of the combination of 'this-and-this-and-this', whilst the plane of the paradigm is that of the selection of 'this-or-this-or-this'. Whilst syntagmatic relations are possibilities of combination, paradigmatic relations are functional contrasts. They involve differentiation. Temporally, syntagmatic relations refer intratextually to other signifiers co-present within the text, whilst paradigmatic relations refer intertextually to signifiers which are absent from the text [ibid, p. 122].

The value of a sign is determined by both its paradigmatic and its syntagmatic relations. Paradigms and syntagms provide a structural context within which signs make sense; they are the structural forms through which signs are organized into codes.

Paradigmatic relationships can operate on the level of the signifier, the signified or both [11, p. 121-124; 12, p. 10; 7, p. 124].

A paradigm is a set of associated signifiers or signifieds which are all members of some defining category, but in which each is significantly different. "Paradigmatic relations are those which belong to the same set by virtue of a function they share. ... A sign enters into paradigmatic relations with all the signs, which can also occur in the same context but not at the same time" [9, p. 8].

In a given context, one member of the paradigm set is structurally replaceable with another. "Signs are in paradigmatic relation when the choice of one excludes the choice of another" [12, p. 255].

We agree with Chandler that the use of one signifier rather than another from the same paradigm set shapes the preferred meaning of a text. Paradigmatic relations can thus be seen as 'contrastive'.

Saussure's notion of associative relations was broader and less formal than what is normally meant by paradigmatic relations. He referred to 'mental association' and included perceived similarities in form (e.g. homophones) or meaning (e.g. synonyms). Such similarities were diverse and ranged from strong to slight, and might refer to only part of a word (such as a shared prefix or suffix). He noted that there was no end (or commonly agreed order) to such associations [11, p. 121-124].

A syntagm is an orderly combination of interacting signifiers which forms a meaningful whole within a text, (in Saussure's terms a chain). Such combinations are made within a framework of syntactic rules and conventions (both explicit and inexplicit). "There are always larger units, composed of smaller units, with a relation of interdependence holding between both" [ibid, p. 127].

Syntagmatic relations are the various ways in which elements within the same text may be related to each other. Syntagms are created by the linking of signifiers from paradigm sets which are chosen on the basis of whether they are conventionally regarded as appropriate or may be required by some rule system (e.g. grammar). Synatagmatic relations highlight the importance of part-whole relationships: "the whole depends on the parts, and the parts depend on the whole" [ibid, p. 126].

Syntagms are often defined as 'sequential' and, thus, temporal, as in speech and music, but they can represent spatial relationships. Saussure himself noted that visual signifiers "can exploit more than one dimension simultaneously" [ibid, p. 70].

Although syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations are studied separately, it should be emphasized that the two dimensions cannot be considered in isolation, they should be considered as a whole, forming the system.

Together with Chandler we underline that the description of any semiotic system involves specifying both the membership of all of the relevant paradigmatic sets and also the possible combinations of one set with another in well-formed syntagms. For the analyst, according to Saussure (who was, of course, focusing on the language system as a whole), "the system as a united whole is the starting point, from which it becomes possible, by a process of analysis, to identify its constituent elements"; one cannot try to construct the system by working upwards from the constituent elements [ibid, p. 112].

Paradigms and syntagms are fundamental to the way that any system of signs is organized. In written language, the letters of the alphabet are the basic vertical paradigms. These may be combined into syntagms called words. These words can be formed into syntagms called phrases or sentences, i.e., according to the rules of grammar.

The French theorist and analyst Roland Barthes in his study Elements of Semiology marks a shift from Saussurean semiology to a theory of "the text", which was defined as a

field of the signifier and of the symbolic. He argued that "an important part of the semiological undertaking" was to divide texts "into minimal significant units. ..., then to group these units into paradigmatic classes, and finally to classify the syntagmatic relations which link these units" [1, p. 48]. This fact is also mentioned by Langholz Leymore [9].

According to Roland Barthes, the goal of studying the sign is to identify the principle at work in the message or text, i.e., to determine the rhetoric or the grammar tying together all the elements. We get a sense of how language works as a system [2, p. 58] if we think of language as a pair of axes or two planes of mental activity, the vertical plane being the selective principle (vocabulary) and the horizontal dimension being the combinative principle (sentences).

The major interest in vocabulary studies lies in determining the characteristic peculiarities of words, different relationships existing between them and their semantic correlation in language, which becomes the basis for communication. The major aim of our English teachers is to develop the students' communicative competence. In order to achieve this essential aim, language teachers must first of all understand the complex nature of communication. Jack C. Richards suggests the following main features of communication [10]:

Meaning based communication means that when speakers utter words and connect them by the rules of grammar, they do so in order to convey meaning.

Conventional communication is that communication is based on social and cultural conventions established by the community in which that language is used.

Communication is interactional: it involves at least two participants who interact; meaning is not inherent in words and phrases alone, but is negotiated between the interlocutors on a case-to-case basis. Communication is structured: human communication consists of a boundless variety of discourse types and genres, each with its own specific structure.

On the basis of such reflections, the Council of Europe has developed a Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which aims to provide guidelines for the learning, teaching and assessment of all foreign languages. According to it, as Adriana Vizental remarks in her study Strategies of teaching and testing English as a foreign language [13, p. 15 - 27], communicative language competence includes:

Linguistic competence, i.e. the speaker's ability to recognize and produce meaningful and coherent sentences, texts, discourse (it means the speaker's knowledge of the target language vocabulary and grammatical accuracy and his ability to use the language flexibly and fluently).

Sociolinguistic competence, i.e. the speaker's ability to adapt his message to the social environment (it means to use the language appropriately with respect to the receiver, the social and situational context in which exchange takes place).

Pragmatic competence, i.e. the speaker's ability to disambiguate utterances with the help of the context (it means to recognize the gap between what is said and what is meant, i.e. between the literal meaning of an utterance and the speaker's intended meaning).

Strategic competence, i.e. the speaker's ability to identify cues and make inferences (it means to cooperate and negotiate meaning, to use linguistic strategies of monitoring, of politeness aimed at obtaining real-world situations.

This is a complex network of interactions. We tried to observe and study this network of interactions during the lesson with advanced students on the base of text.

We started the lesson with the statement A cynic is a man who … The students were asked to continue it. They, firstly, remarked the core word cynic in the syntagm, tried to give the meaning they understood, then they worked with the dictionary for more appropriate information. Their variants were surprisingly interesting based on social and situational context.

On the next stage of the lesson we offered the title "It was Friday evening". The students were asked to predict what could happen on Friday evening. They wrote short stories which were lately discussed.

The next stage was dedicated to the reading of the text, its analysis from the perspective of the composition, theme, idea, message as well as characterization and characters, narration, focalization, etc. [4, p. 34 – 36; 5]

We predicted that there could appear difficulties with outlining the idea. That's why on the last stage we offered the following for discussion Morality is a private and costly luxury, to see how the students would make transfer of knowledge and make inferences, how they would cooperate and negotiate meaning, how they would use linguistic strategies of monitoring.

Being a complex network of interactions, each competence requires knowledge of the language, i.e. linguistic competence, but it also calls for knowledge of the world's conventions and structures - pragmatic competence [2, p. 23 - 27]. The interactional nature of communication necessitates sociolinguistic competence, but it also involves good control of vocabulary and grammar. Strategic competence attests good knowledge of the world and of the society, i.e. sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence as well as good language skills.

CONCLUSIONS

Summing up, we should underline that in order to teach the students to use the language appropriately and accurately, the teachers must teach them to use the language meaningfully, functionally and strategically.

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НЕКОТОРЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ФОНЕТИЧЕСКОЙ РАБОТЫ В АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНОЙ АУДИТОРИИ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ РУССКОГО ЯЗЫКА

SOME FEATURES OF PHONETIC WORK IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING RUSSIAN BY ENGLISH SPEAKERS STUDIERI

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the consideration of some aspects of phonetic work in an English-speaking audience in the process of learning the Russian. The author names the phonetic features of the Russian language, the most difficult in terms of pronunciation for English-speaking students, and offers the most effective ways to overcome them.

Key-words: Pronunciation, literary standard, speech rate, grammar marker

Rezumat

Articolul pune în evidență considerarea unor aspecte în predarea foneticii, vorbitorilor de limba engleză, în procesul de învățare a limbii ruse. Autorul numește caracteristicile fonetice ale limbii ruse, cele mai dificile în ceea ce privește pronunțarea pentru studenții care vorbesc limba engleză și oferă cele mai eficiente modalități de a le depăși.

Cuvinte-cheie: Pronunție, standard literar, ritm de vorbire, marker gramatical

В процессе преподавания иностранного языка, учителю предстоит реализовать комплекс задач:

1. сформировать у учеников представление о грамматической системе изучаемого языка.
2. руководить работой по пополнению словарного запаса учащихся