

## Topic 1

# Primary Education - English



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



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✂ SUMMARY (Sample for the elaboration of the topic for the examination)



## GUIDELINES FOR STUDYING THE TOPIC

The purpose of this topic, as indicated in its title, is to discuss the concept of language as a means of communication, the differences between communicating in an oral and in a written manner, and the factors or elements that define a communicative situation.

For studying this topic, you should first pay attention to its table of contents. In it, you will be able to find the main sections into which it is divided and, thus, obtain a general idea of the structure of the topic. Then, you should read the introduction, for it will explain the purpose of the topic and its essential elements. You will see that this topic answers three main questions: (i) in what sense can we say that language is communication? (ii) what are the differences between spoken and written language? and (iii) what are the main elements of any communicative situation? Together with the reading and underlining of the different sections of the topic, pay special attention to the guidelines introduced in the *remember* boxes. They will help you discriminate the essential contents of the topic. Similarly, the paragraphs highlighted as *important* will guide your study towards the elements that you must particularly pay attention to.

You should start by memorising and summarising the topic answering the first question previously presented: in what sense can we say that language is communication? In order to do so, learn some authors and their definitions of language. Furthermore, you should build on more specific functions of language, for language can be used to communicate a variety of information in a variety of contexts. To conclude this section, you should learn what communicative competence is (according to several authors and attending to Spanish legislation for Primary Education). The concept of communicative competence is essential in Foreign Language Teaching. Since languages are means of communication, foreign language students must learn to understand and transmit simple messages in a variety of daily-life situations. This involves the acquisition of the necessary communicative competence in the foreign language in both writing and speech. The essential elements to be memorised have been highlighted in *remember* boxes and *important* sections to facilitate their identification.

Then, you should concentrate on the second question: what are the differences between spoken and written language? In order to give answer to this question you should focus on the specific characteristics of these two modes of communication and analyse their differences in three main aspects: grammar, vocabulary and discourse. You can find the essential elements of this section in the *remember* boxes and in the sections highlighted as *important*.

The last question —what are the main elements of any communicative situation?— must be answered by analysing the theories of different authors regarding the various components of communication and focusing on those included in the title of the topic: the person producing the message, the person receiving the message, the communicative purpose (speech act) and the context. Again, support will be given in the *remember* boxes and in the elements underlined as *important*.



### Connection with other topics

This topic is very much related with other topics analysing the nature of language and communication, particularly topics **2** and **3**, which deal with verbal and non-verbal communication, and spoken and written communication respectively. Topics **7** and **8** also deal with communication and the language skills: topic **7** with the oral skills (listening and speaking) and topic **8** with written skills (reading and writing). The concept of communicative competence (1.3.) is also developed in topics **2**, **3**, **13** (didactics of Foreign Language Teaching) and **14** (methods and techniques of FLT related to the acquisition of communicative competence). However, the concept of communicative competence could be developed in any topic since, according to Spanish legislation, it is the ultimate goal of FLT.

## 0 INTRODUCTION

Traditional Foreign Language Teaching concentrated on getting students consciously to learn items of language in isolation. These bits of information would be mainly used to read texts and only occasionally for oral communication. The focus was not on communication, but on a piece of language. Following Krashen's distinction between *acquisition* and *learning*<sup>1</sup> we can say that people got to know about the language (*learning*) but could not use it in a real context (*acquisition*).

The British applied linguist Allwright tried to bridge this dichotomy when he theorised that if the language teacher's management activities were directed exclusively at involving the learners in solving communication problems in the target language, then language learning would take care of itself. We may or may not agree with this extreme rendering of the Communicative Approach<sup>2</sup>, but we all agree nowadays on the importance of letting our pupils use English for real communication during, at least, the production stage<sup>3</sup>.

In this unit we are going to study language and its functions to see that communication is one of these functions. We will then posit that learning a language is not only a grammatical and lexical process, but also a social process. We will also analyze the differences between writing and speech; and finally we will discuss the most important communication theory models, defining their key factors.

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Krashen identifies two types of linguistic knowledge in *Second Language Teaching*: acquisition and learning. **Acquisition** occurs automatically when the learner engages in natural communication where the focus is on meaning and where there is comprehensible input. Acquisition is, therefore, unconscious and consists of subconscious second-language rules which the learner can call upon automatically. **Learning**, on the other hand, occurs as a result of formal study where the learner is focused on the formal properties of the second language. Learning is a conscious process and consists in metalinguistic knowledge which can only be used to monitor output generated by means of acquired knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> See topic number 13 for further information.

<sup>3</sup> The production stage is mainly used to give pupils the opportunity to experiment on their own and allow them to see how much they have really understood and learnt of the language that has been practised under controlled conditions so far. This stage also provides both teachers and pupils with feedback about the learning/teaching process.

# 1 LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION

## 1.1 Language definitions



**CONNECTION:** *We will start by providing different definitions of language to defend the idea that languages are means of communication as the title of the topic affirms.*

The word language has prompted innumerable definitions. Some focus on the general concept of language (what we call "*lengua*" or "*lenguaje*") and some focus on the more specific notion of a language (what we call "*lengua*" or "*idioma*").



Sapir (1921) said that:

*"Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols."*

Trager (1949) said that:

*"A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which the members of a society interact in terms of their total culture".*



Hall (1964) defined language as:

*"The institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory arbitrary symbols."*

As we can see in these definitions it is difficult to make a precise and comprehensive statement about formal and functional universal properties of language so some linguists have tried to identify the various properties that are thought to be its essential defining characteristics.

The physical aspects of human teeth, larynx and so on are not shared by other creatures and may explain why only the human creature has the capacity for speech. However, we did not suggest that the human was the only creature which was capable of communicating. All creatures, from apes, bees, dolphins, through to zebras, are capable of communicating with other members of their species. The most widely acknowledged comparative approach has been proposed by Charles Hockett, who used a zoological mode of enquiry to identify the main points of connection between language and other systems of communication, especially those found in animals. The range and complexity of animal communication systems are staggering and we could not hope even to summarise their diverse properties here. What we can do, as part of an investigation of language, is concentrate on those **properties which differentiate human language from all other forms of signalling and which make it a unique type of communication system** (Yule, 1985).



- a) **Communicative versus informative.** In order to describe those properties, we should first distinguish what are specifically **communicative** signals from those which may be unintentionally **informative** signals. A person listening to you may become informed about you via a number of signals which you have not intentionally sent. He may note that you have a cold (you sneezed), that you are not at ease (you shifted around in your



seat), and that you are disorganised (non-matching socks). However, when you use language to tell this person “I would like to apply for the vacant position of senior brain surgeon at the hospital”, you are normally considered to be intentionally communicating something. By the same token, the blackbird is not normally taken to be communicating anything by having black feathers, perching on a branch and eating a worm, but is considered to be sending a communicative signal with the loud squawking to be heard when a cat appears on the scene.

- b) **Displacement.** When your pet cat comes home spending a night in the black alleys and stands at your feet calling *meow*, you are likely to understand this message as relating to that immediate time and place. Now, human language-users are perfectly capable of producing messages equivalent to *last night, over in the park, ...* and going on to say *In fact, I'll be going back tomorrow for some more.* They can refer to past and future time, and to other locations. This property of human language is called **displacement**. It allows the users of language to about things and events not present in the immediate environment. Animal communication lacks this property.
- c) **Arbitrariness.** It is generally the case that there is no “natural” connection between a linguistic form and its meaning. You cannot look at the French word *chien*, and from its shape, for example determine that it has a natural meaning, any more than you can with its English translation from – *dog*. The linguistic form has no natural or ‘iconic’ relationship with that four-legged barking object out in the world. The forms of human language demonstrate a property called **arbitrariness** – they do not, in any way, ‘fit’ the objects they denote.
- d) **Productivity.** It is a feature of all languages that novel utterances are continually being created. A child learning language is especially active in forming and producing utterances which he or she has never heard before. With adults, new situations arise or new objects have to be described, so the language-users manipulate their linguistic resources or produce new expressions and new sentences. This property of human language has been termed **productivity**. It is an aspect of language which is linked to the fact that the potential number of utterances in any human language is infinite.
- e) **Cultural transmission.** The process whereby language is passed on from one generation to the next is described as **cultural transmission**. While it has been argued that humans are born with an innate predisposition to acquire language, it is clear that they are not born with the ability to produce utterances in a specific language. Human infants, growing up in isolation, produce no ‘instinctive’ language. Cultural transmission of a specific language is crucial in the human acquisition process.
- f) **Discreteness.** The sounds used in language are meaningfully distinct. For example, the difference between a *b* sound and a *p* sound is not actually very great, but when these sounds are used in a language, they are used in such a way that the occurrence of one rather than the other is meaningful. The fact that the pronunciation of the forms *pack* and *back* leads to a distinction in meaning can only be due to the difference between the *p* and *b* sound in English. This property of language is described as **discreteness**. Each sound in the language is treated as discrete.

- g) **Other properties.** These properties may be taken as the core features of human language. Human language does of course have many other properties, but generally they are not unique to it. The use of the **vocal-auditory channel**, for example, is certainly a feature of human speech. Human linguistic communication is typically generated via the vocal organs and perceived via the ear. Linguistic communication, however, can also be transmitted without sound, via writing or via the sign languages of the deaf. Similar points can be made about **reciprocity** (any speaker / sender of a linguistic signal can also be a listener / receiver); **specialisation** (linguistic signals do not normally serve any other type of purpose, such as breathing or feeding); **rapid fading** (linguistic signals are produced and disappear quickly).

## 1.2. Language functions



**CONNECTION:** After having studied the main properties of language ("what is language?") we will now see its functions ("what is language for?").



*In the simplest sense, the word 'function' can be thought of as a synonym for the word 'use', so that when we talk about functions of language, we may mean no more than the way people use their language, or their languages if they have more than one.* Stated in the most general terms, people do different things with their language; that is, they expect to achieve by talking and writing, and by listening and reading, a large number of different aims and different purposes. We could attempt to list and classify these in some way or other, and a number of scholars have attempted to do this, hoping to find some fairly general framework or scheme for classifying the purposes for which people use language.



*There are a number of familiar classifications of linguistic functions:* for example, that put forwards by Malinowski, which is associated with his work on situation and meaning referred to earlier. Malinowski (1923) classified the functions of language into the two broad categories of **pragmatic** and **magical**. As an anthropologist, he was interested in practical or pragmatic uses of language and in ritual and magical uses of language that were associated with ceremonial or religious activities in the culture.

A quite different classification is that associated with the name of the Austrian psychologist Bühler (1934), who was concerned with the functions of language from the standpoint not some much of the culture but of the individual. Bühler made the distinction into **expressive** language, **conative** language and **representational** language:

- the expressive being language that is oriented towards the self, the speaker;
- the conative being language that is oriented towards the addressee; and
- the representational being language that is oriented towards the rest of reality – that is, anything other than speaker and addressee.

However, one of the most widely known classifications of functions of language was proposed by Roman Jakobson in his article "Linguistics and Poetics". Jakobson distinguished six functions that corresponded with the six factors involved in verbal communication (addresser, context, message, contact, code and addressee). The first three are similar to the traditional model of language as elucidated particularly by Bühler (emotive, conative, and referential), but he adds three more. **The following is Jakobson's taxonomy of language functions:**



1. REFERENTIAL, denotative or cognitive function is the leading task of numerous messages. However, the accessory participation of the other functions in such messages must be taken into account.
2. EMOTIVE or expressive function aims a direct expression of the speaker's attitude toward what he is speaking about. It tends to produce an impression of a certain emotion, whether true or feigned. The purely emotive stratum in language is presented by the interjections. Swear words and obscenities are probably the most usual signals to be used in this way, especially when we are angry. But there are also many emotive utterances of a positive kind, such as expressions of fear, affection, astonishment ...
3. CONATIVE function is directed to the addressee. It finds its purest grammatical expression in the vocative and imperative.
4. PHATIC function may be displayed by a profuse exchange of ritualized formulas, by entire dialogues with the mere purport of prolonging communication. It helps to establish or maintain contact between two speakers. Malinowski used it to refer to the social function of language, which arises out of the basic human need to signal friendship, or, at least, lack of enmity. If someone does not say hello to you when he is supposed to, you may think he is hostile. In these cases the sole function of language is to maintain a comfortable relationship between people, to provide a means of avoiding an embarrassing situation.
5. METALINGUAL or metalinguistic function refers to the use of language to speak about language itself. Any process of language learning, in particular child acquisition of the mother tongue, makes wide use of metalingual operations. The metalinguistic function is also predominant in questions like "Sorry, what did you say?" where the code is misunderstood and needs correction or clarification.
6. POETIC function focuses on the message for its own sake. Messages convey more than just the content. They always contain a creative "touch" of our own. These additions have no purpose other than to make the message "nicer". Rhetorical figures, pitch or loudness are some aspects of the poetic function.



Another function could be added: the PERFORMATIVE function. A performative sentence is an utterance that performs an act. This use occurs in the naming of a ship at a launching ceremony (the act of naming the ship coincides in time with the act of launching her), or when a priest baptizes a child (equally, the child is baptised at the time the priest pronounces the words).

We may also find other functions such as recording facts, instrument of thought, expression of regional, social, educational, sexual or occupational identity.




The British linguist Halliday grouped all these functions into three metafunctions, which are the manifestation in the linguistic system of the two very general purposes which underlie all uses of language, combined with the third component (textual) which breathes relevance into the other two.

The **ideational** function is to organize the speaker's or writer's experience of the real or imaginary world, *i.e.* language refers to real or imagined persons, things, actions, events, states, and so on.

The **interpersonal** function is to indicate, establish or maintain social relationships between people. It includes forms of address, speech function, modality...


The third component is the **textual** function which serves to create written or spoken texts which cohere within themselves and which fit the particular situation in which they are used.

### 1.3. Communicative competence

 **CONNECTION:** *Once the definition and the main functions of language have been presented, it may be appropriate here to develop the concept of communicative competence, which refers to individuals' ability to use language for effective communication in a variety of contexts.*

The Communicative Approach in Foreign or Second Language Teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes referred to as "communicative competence". Chomsky (1957) defined language as a set of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of 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 thought that Chomsky had missed out 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*.

#### a) Chomsky and the critique of behaviourism.

 **Chomsky argued that it was impossible for people to acquire a language by simple repetition and reinforcement. Children, he said, do not learn a language this way, for they do not, in fact, repeat what adults say, but produce their own sentences, and create phrases which they have never heard before. They also make systematic errors, and no amount of correct input or of error- correction will stop them from doing so. Children do not so much learn the grammar of a language, as they construct it anew.**

It should be said that even if this was the case for children learning their mother-tongue, we could not simply assume that adults and adolescents learn a FL in the same way. Nevertheless, the idea that over-learning of typical structures would lead to mastery of an FL seemed to be very dubious in the light of Chomsky's critique of Behaviourist approaches to language learning. However, Chomsky himself did not feel that linguistics could do much to help language teachers. Indeed, he wrote that neither linguistics, nor psychology could do or say much to further the cause of classroom learning.

Moreover, Chomsky's own model of language quickly came under fire from people who were at least sympathetic to his attack on behaviourism. This was because Chomsky's model appears to construct an ideal, and unreal, image of the language user. **Chomsky, extending Saussure's distinction between 'langue' and 'parole', differentiates between competence and performance. The proper object of study for the linguist, he says, is not language as it is produced in everyday situations —that is performance— but the inner, and ultimately innate knowledge of grammar that everyone has in their minds —that is competence.**

To study language, then, we need to turn away from real usage, in which the actualisation of grammar is always partial, interrupted and likely to be over-ridden by other concerns, and look to the prior knowledge of grammar that all speakers possess, and which has nothing to do with the social situation within which they happen to find themselves. From the start, this conception of the linguist's task aroused criticism, and one of the most telling critiques was made by the sociolinguist Dell Hymes.





## b) Hymes and 'Communicative Competence'

Hymes first of all draws attention to the image of the ideal speaker that Chomsky's model draws:

*The image is that of a child, born with the ability to master any language with almost miraculous ease and speed; a child who is not merely moulded by conditioning and reinforcement, but who actively proceeds with the unconscious theoretical interpretation of the speech that comes its way, so that in a few years and with a finite experience, it is master of an infinite ability, that of producing and understanding in principle any and all grammatical sentences of language. The image (or theoretical perspective) expresses the essential equality in children just as human beings. It is noble in that it can inspire one with the belief that even the most dispiriting conditions can be transformed; it is an indispensable weapon against views that would explain the communicative differences among groups of children as inherent, perhaps racial.*

But, says Hymes, this image is also misleading, for it abstracts the child as learner, and the adult as language-user, from the social contexts within which acquisition and use are achieved. And because it does this, it produces an ideal speaker who is a very strange being indeed.

Consider now a child with just such ability (Chomsky's competence). A child who might produce any sentence whatsoever —such a child would be likely to be institutionalised: even more so if not only sentences, but also speech or silence was random, unpredictable. For that matter, a person who chooses occasions and sentences suitably, but is master only of fully grammatical sentences, is at best a bit odd. Some occasions call for being appropriately ungrammatical.



***We have then to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others.***



***Hymes suggests, then, that linguistic competence is but a sub-division of a greater whole — communicative competence.*** Language is but one mode of communication among others, and full communication involves mastery of all the codes —gesture, position, non-verbal vocalization, use of visual aids and so on. And language itself varies from situation to situation, from communicative dyad to communicative dyad; bilingual and multilingual people, Hymes points out, often differentiate the contexts within which one language or another can be used - the Berber uses the Berber language for everyday interaction, and reserves Arabic for discussions of transcendental matters. The change in social relationships that in French is signified by the shift from 'Vous' to 'Tu' is, in Paraguay indicated by shift of a whole language, from Spanish to Guarani. Within a single language, differences and distinctions may be denoted by changes in code or register, by the use of specific kinds of vocabulary, or by the way silence is used. These constraints on language use are as important as the rules of grammar. Hymes writes:

*The acquisition of such competency is of course fed by social experience, needs, and motives, and issues in action that is itself a renewed source of motives,*

*needs, experience. We break irrevocably with the model that restricts the design of language to one face toward referential meaning, one toward sound, and that defines the organization of language as solely consisting of rules for linking the two. Such a model implies naming to be the sole use of speech, as if languages were never organized to lament, rejoice, beseech, admonish, aphorize, inveigh, for the many varied forms of persuasion, direction, expression and symbolic play. A model of language must design it with a face toward communicative conduct and social life.*

Hymes insists, then, on the utility of language, and the need to understand it as a tool - or set of tools - that people use to carry out different tasks. This will bring us to a consideration of the concept of the 'speech act': the idea that when someone says something, she is not simply sitting back and describing the world, but intends to produce some kind of effect, some kind of change in the world.



Hymes distinguished four aspects of Communicative Competence:

- a) **Systematic potential.** 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. We study if an utterance is possible according to the forms of expression available.
- b) **Appropriacy.** Appropriacy means that the native speaker knows what language is appropriate in a given situation. An utterance will be appropriate in relation to a context. All the following have been considered important elements of appropriacy.
- c) **Occurrence.** Occurrence means that the native speaker knows how often something is said in the language and act accordingly. This means that an utterance should not only be possible from a grammatical point of view. It should also be actually performed<sup>4</sup>.
- d) **Feasibility.** Feasibility means that the native speaker knows whether something is possible in the language. Even if there is no grammatical rule to ban twenty-adjective prehead construction we know that these constructions are not possible in the language.

### c) Canale and Swain's theory.

One of the most helpful discussions of competence is to be found in Canale and Swain's (1980) article. They point out that

*there is some diversity of opinion in the literature as to (i) whether or not the notion 'communicative competence' includes that of 'grammatical competence' as one of its components and (ii) whether or not communicative competence should be distinguished from (communicative) performance. (Canale & Swain 1980:5)*

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<sup>4</sup> To make it clear, let us use an example. There is no doubt that a sentence in Spanish such as "La manzana es comida por mi" is clearly possible, but it seems hard to imagine any real Spanish speaker (outside limited scholar environments) saying such sentence.



As they say, 'it is common to find the term "communicative competence" used to refer exclusively to knowledge or capability relating to the rules of language use and the term "grammatical (or linguistic) competence" used to refer to the rules of grammar' (p.5). However, they maintain that just as there are rules of grammar that would be useless without rules of language use (Hymes 1972), so there are also rules of language use that would be useless without rules of grammar. Hence they see communicative competence as consisting of grammatical competence plus sociolinguistic competence.

Thus for them, there are two clearly defined and distinct subcomponents of communicative competence. They use 'the term "communicative competence" to refer to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the rules of language use' (p.6). This is a welcome clarification, and one is grateful to have a position so clearly stated. It can be seen that this corresponds very closely to Chomsky's position, as his 'pragmatic competence' can easily be related to Canale and Swain's 'sociolinguistic competence'.

Another very welcome clarification which at the same time brings them into line with Chomsky is Canale and Swain's decision to exclude explicitly from their notion of communicative competence any idea of 'ability for use', unlike Hymes, who makes this an important feature.

*(...) we hesitate to incorporate the notion of ability for use into our definition of communicative competence for two main reasons: (i) to our knowledge this notion has not been pursued rigorously in any research on communicative competence (or considered directly relevant in such research, and (ii) we doubt that there is any theory of human action that can adequately explicate 'ability for use' (Canale & Swain 1980:7)*

This view clearly reflects that of Chomsky quoted earlier (Chomsky 1975:138), and the fact of stating it so explicitly makes an important contribution to clarifying the debate. (Unfortunately, but typically in this field, Canale, in a later article meant to be a refinement of this one, backslides when he explicitly associates grammatical competence with 'skill' (Canale 1983:7). The rest of Canale and Swain's article is concerned with the development of communicative competence (including grammatical competence) in second language learners.

As one component of their overall conception of communicative competence they develop the interesting notion of 'strategic competence' to deal with the knowledge and ability learners need to develop in order to take part in communicative interaction. This is clearly important, but on the one hand they fail to distinguish between knowledge and ability, or rather they incorporate both, and on the other hand they do not distinguish between those strategies which all speakers have, both native and non-native, and those which are peculiar to non-native speakers. Once again we see the difficulties that arise when the notion of competence is extended beyond the domain to which it was originally applied.

Canale expanded the description to four in 1983 due to his new view of linguistic communication. Yalden gives us Canale's account of linguistic communication as:

1. It is a form of social interaction, and is therefore acquired and used in social interaction.
2. It involves a high degree of unpredictability and creativity in form and message.

3. It takes place in discourse and sociocultural contexts which provide constraints on appropriate language use and also clues to correct interpretations of utterances.
4. It is carried out under limiting psychological and other conditions such as memory constraints, fatigue and other distractions.
5. It always has a purpose.
6. It involves authentic language.
7. It is judged as successful or not on the basis of actual outcomes.



According to Canale (1983: 5), communicative competence refers to 'the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication'. The four components of communicative competence can be summarized as follows:

CANALE (1983)
1. Grammatical competence.
2. Sociolinguistic competence.
3. Discourse competence.
4. Strategic competence.

**Grammatical competence** producing a structured comprehensible utterance (including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling).

**Sociolinguistic competence** involving knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language and of discourse.

**Discourse competence** shaping language and communicating purposefully in different genres (text types), using cohesion (structural linking) and coherence (meaningful relationships in language).

**Strategic competence** enhancing the effectiveness of communication (e.g. deliberate speech), and compensating for breakdowns in communication (e.g. comprehension checks, paraphrases, conversation fillers).

Canale also drew a distinction between the underlying systems of knowledge and actual communication. Actual communication was for him the realization of such knowledge and skills under limiting conditions such as fatigue, nervousness...

We can finally say that in neither account is a model provided, e.g., a description of how these four components interact. Sandra Savignon was the first one to propose a possible relationship.

#### d) Savignon's theory.

The inevitable and fundamental changes in the nature of competence once it is associated with any kind of communication come out very clearly in Savignon's discussion of the subject (Savignon 1983). She makes such statements as the following:



*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)*

Savignon is here spelling out very clearly what follows from Hymes' introduction of a social dimension (see above). More consequences follow.



*Communicative competence is relative, not absolute, and depends on the cooperation of all the participants involved. It makes sense, then, to speak of degrees of communicative competence. (Savignon 1983:9)*

Once again, we are dealing with something very different from Chomsky's original concept. The problem is that Hymes, and those that follow him, such as Savignon, are apparently claiming to be merely extending the original concept, whereas they are obviously doing more than that. The danger is that even when such writers apply the notion of competence to its original domain, i.e. that of the native speaker, they introduce their fundamentally different view, as may be seen in the following extract from Savignon.

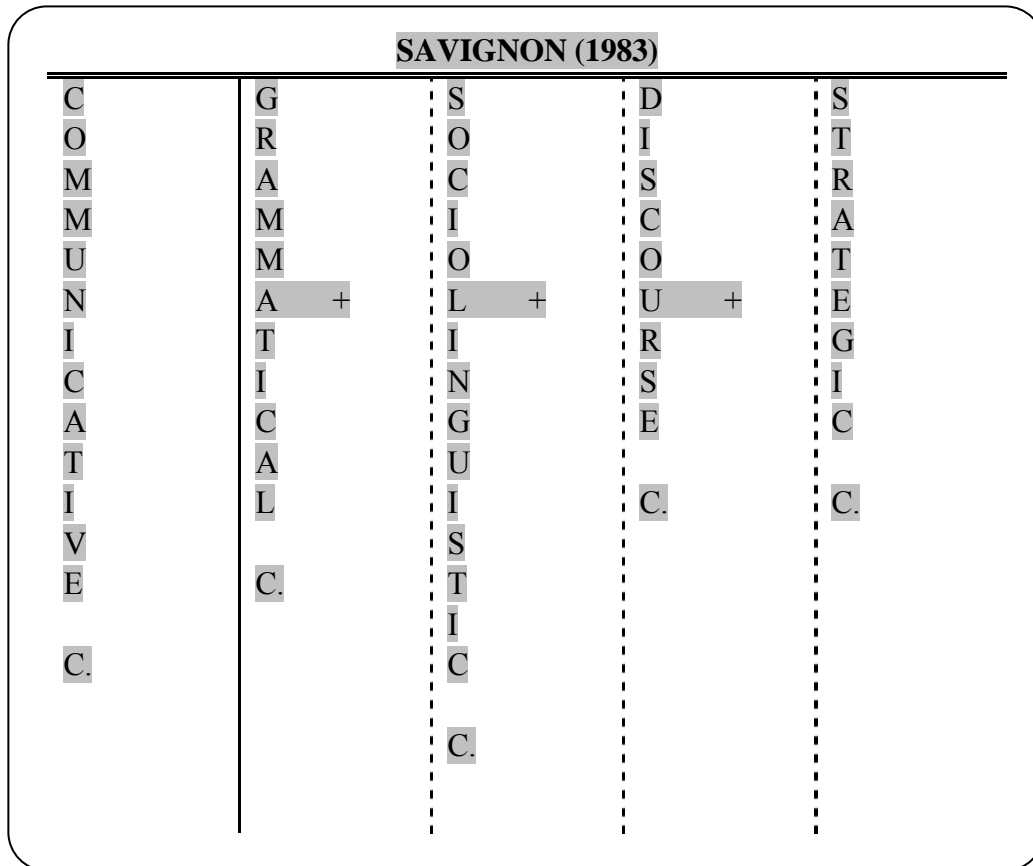
The competence of native speakers, well developed though it may be, is relative. Mother-tongue proficiency varies widely from child to child and from adult to adult. Vocabulary range, articulation, critical thinking, persuasiveness, and penmanship are but a few of the many, many facets of competence wherein native speakers differ. (Savignon 1983:53)

Here again we see the identification of competence with proficiency and the inclusion of elements specifically excluded by Chomsky (see Chomsky 1980:234). What is important is that there does not seem to be any awareness in any of these instances that a changed concept of competence is being used. Under these circumstances it is very difficult to know in any given instance what exactly is meant by the term 'competence'.

As far as the term 'communicative competence' is concerned, it generally seems to mean, in the context of language teaching and learning, 'ability to perform' or 'ability to communicate' in the L2. More generally, associating competence with communication inevitably seems to bring in some aspects of performance. It is difficult to escape the conclusion, therefore, that when we talk about communicative competence in the context of language teaching or learning we are really talking about communicative *performance*. Especially when we talk about aims and about specifying them for teaching and learning purposes, we are interested mainly in performance, no matter what the terms we use. Hence in all these discussions, as we have noted, the distinction between competence and performance tends to become blurred and the exact meaning of the terms used is difficult to determine.



In brief, Savignon proposes a relationship between Canale's four factors. The following diagram tries to show how they interact continuously:



Savignon also posits that both sociolinguistic and strategic components may grant the language learner a basic, limited communicative ability, before the acquisition of any grammatical competence. She finally suggests that strategic competence is present from the very beginning of language learning, diminishing in importance as the rest of the components increase.



The concept of communicative competence is also present in our education system. The Organic Law on the Improvement of the Quality in Education 8/2013, of the 9th December, **LOMCE**, propounds a modification of the **LOE**(Organic Law of Education 2/2006, passed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May) and highlights the importance of developing both oral and written skills in the six different years of Primary Education. All these contents aim to help Primary students become communicative competent in the foreign language. The new **Royal Decree 126/2014** (passed on the 28<sup>th</sup> February) establishes the following blocks of contents for the area of foreign language in Primary Education: block 1: comprehension of oral texts, block 2: production of oral texts: expression and interaction, block 3: comprehension of written texts, block 4: production of written texts: expression and interaction.

**REMEMBER:**

- According to Sapir, “language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols.”
- Languages have different functions: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, poetic, metalingual, and performative. Halliday grouped them into three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual.
- Communicative competence is the ability to communicate effectively in a variety of daily-life situations. This concept derives from Chomsky’s distinction between competence and performance and was later analysed by Hymes, Canale and Swain, Savignon, and others. According to these scholars, communicative competence must not only be referred to as an ability that native speakers have but also a capacity that foreign language learners must acquire. These authors describe communicative competence as having several components. These components vary depending on the theory.

## 2 SPOKEN AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE



**CONNECTION:** *Once we have analysed what language is and the functions it performs, we will concentrate on the two main modes of language: spoken and written language. In order to do so, we will first analyse the historical attitudes towards writing and speech. Then, we will present their internal characteristics. Finally, we will analyse the differences between these two modes of communication.*

### 2.1. Historical attitudes



**Historically speaking, written language was considered to be superior to spoken language for many centuries.** It was the medium of literature, and literature was considered a source of standards of linguistic excellence. Written records provide language with permanence and authority and so the rules of grammar were illustrated exclusively from written texts.

On the other hand, spoken language was ignored, when not condemned, as an object unworthy of study. Spoken language demonstrates such a lack of care and organization that cannot be studied scientifically; it was said to have no rules, and speakers have thought that, in order to speak properly, it was necessary to follow the correct norm. As this norm was based on written standards, it is clear that the prescriptive tradition rested on this supremacy of writing over speech.



**This viewpoint became widely criticized at the turn of our century.** Leonard Bloomfield insisted that:

*"writing is not language but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks."*

This approach pointed out several factors, some of which we have already mentioned:



- speech is many centuries older than writing.
- it develops naturally in children.

- writing systems are mostly derivative, *i.e.* they are based on the sounds of speech.

If speech is the primary medium of communication, it was also argued that it should be the main object of linguistic study. Actually, the majority of the languages of the world's cultures have never been written down and this has nothing to do with their evolutionary degree. It is a fallacy to suppose that the languages of illiterate or so-called primitive peoples are less structured, less rich in vocabulary, and less efficient than the languages of literate civilization.

Edward Sapir was one of the first linguists to attack the myth that primitive peoples spoke primitive languages. In one study he compared the grammatical equivalents of the sentence "*he will give it to you*" in six Amerindian languages. Among many fascinating features of these complex grammatical forms, note the level of abstraction introduced by the following example from Southern Paiute:

maya- vaania-aka-anga-'mi = give will visible-thing visible-creature thee

Many linguists and ethnographers, therefore, stressed the urgency of providing techniques for the analysis of spoken language and because of this emphasis on the spoken language, it was now the turn of writing to fall into disrepute. Many linguists came to think of written language as a tool of secondary importance. Writing came to be excluded from the primary subject matter of linguistic science. Many grammarians presented an account of speech alone.



***Nowadays, there is no sense in the view that one medium of communication is intrinsically better. Writing cannot substitute for speech, nor speech for writing, without serious disservice being done. The functions of speech and writing are usually said to complement each other. We do not normally write to each other when we have the opportunity to speak, nor can we speak to each other at a distance.***

On the other hand, there are many functional parallels which seem to be increase in modern society. We can now use recording devices to keep facts and communicate ideas (books for the blind, libraries for recorded sound, telephone answering machines, radio phone-in ...). On the other hand writing is also taken the social or "phatic" function typically associated with the immediacy of speech (birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries, exam results and many more are conveyed by means of cards).

Despite these parallels we can obviously find striking differences.

## 2.2. Spoken language



***CONNECTION:*** *After having analysed the traditional attitudes towards spoken and written language, we will now move to explain the nature of spoken language.*

The most obvious aspect of language is speech. Speech is not essential to the definition of an infinitely productive communication system, such as is constituted by language. But, in fact, ***speech is the universal material of human language.*** Man has almost certainly been a speaking animal from early in the emergence of *homo sapiens* as a recognizably distinct species. The earliest known systems of writing go back perhaps some 5,000 years. This means that for many hundreds of thousands of years human language was transmitted and developed entirely as spoken means of communication.







***The description and classification of speech sounds is the main aim of phonetics.*** Sounds may be identified with reference to their production, their transmission or their reception. These three activities occur at a physiological level, which implies the action of nerves and muscles. The motor nerves that link the speaker's brain with his speech mechanism activate the corresponding muscle. ***The movements of the tongue, lips, vocal folds, etc., constitute the articulatory stage of the speech chain, and the area of phonetics that deals with it is articulatory phonetics.***



***The movement of the articulators produces disturbances in the air pressure called sound waves, which are physical manifestations. This is the acoustic stage of the chain, during which the sound waves travel towards the listener's ear. The study of speech sound waves corresponds to acoustic phonetics. These sound waves activate the listener's ear-drum. The hearing process is the domain of auditory phonetics.*** This can be seen in the following table:

SPEECH CHAIN	BRAIN	SPEECH MECHANISM	SOUND WAVES	EAR	BRAIN
activity	psychological	physiological	physical	physiological	psychological
stage	linguistic	production	transmission	perception	linguistic
phonetics		articulatory phonetics	acoustic phonetics	auditory phonetics	

In this table we can see how phonetics is the study of all possible speech sounds. This is not the most important task for a linguist, however. A linguist must study the way in which the native speakers of a language systematically use a selection of these sounds in order to express meaning. In this activity he is helped by phonology.



***Phonology is continually looking beneath the surface of speech to determine its underlying regularities. It is not interested in sounds but in phonemes, i.e. smallest contrastive phonological units which can produce a difference in meaning. The study of speech is, therefore, the field of both phonetics and phonology.***

From a historical point of view, there is not a long tradition in the study of spoken language, since it was considered to be a secondary kind of language when confronted with the highly valued literary works. The fact that there was no permanent record of what people say in a conversation until the age of tape-recorders made it be neglected in linguistic theory for many years.

Mutability in the understanding and perception of what people say in a conversation is a natural fact for everybody. Arguments are typical situations in which people often blame each other for things which were or were not said and which were understood in the wrong way:

- A. *Why did you say that?*
- B. *I didn't say it, what I said...*
- A. *What about your ironical tone...?*
- B. *You don't understand what I mean...*

We seem to have a fine ear for the tone with which people say things to us, but a very bad memory for the actual things that people say. Firth was one of the first scholars who urged people to study conversation in 1935, in opposition to the current formalistic approach to language at the time (we must remember that one of the leading trends in that age was the mentalist approach led by Bloomfield):

*'We shall find the key to a better understanding of what language is and how it works. The main concern of descriptive linguistics is to make statements of meaning, partly embodied in the levels of phonology and syntax, but language is mainly a way of behaving and making others behave, the linguist must concern himself with the verbal process in the context of situation'*

The tradition started by Firth and his followers, Halliday being the most representative one, has tried to show that speech is not a formless and featureless variety of written language, as it was thought to be. As a matter of fact, since then, there has been an increasing interest in the study of spoken language both from the purely linguistic point of view, *e.g.* the study of intonation (Halliday, Crystal, Cruttenden, etc...); as well as from the social point of view, *e.g.* ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, discourse analysis etc.

A basic empirical finding about spoken language, one that has been discovered by conversation analysts and discourse analysts is that spoken language consists of a sequence of exchanges that naturally develops out of a series of turns at talking (Sacks et al., 1974). In the light of this discovery, it is sequences and turn within sequences —rather than isolated sentences or utterances— that have come the primary unit of analysis. What emerges is that two distinct kinds of sequences may be alternatively considered as the most successful device for relating utterances: two-utterance sequences and longer-than two-utterance sequences.

On the one hand, according to Schegloff and Sacks (1973), utterances are related to form pair types so that a particular first pair part sets up the expectation of a particular second pair part. So strong is the expectation that if the second pair part does not occur, its absence will be noticeable and noticed by participants. And when the expected response is not forthcoming, interlocutors often give an account of why it is not forthcoming. In other words, given a question, regularly enough an answer will follow. *E.g.* 'What time is it?' 'It's three o'clock'. On the other hand, Sinclair and Coulthard proposed a three-part exchange for analysing spoken discourse, using classroom data as a starting point. Later studies such as Tsui (1994) and García Gómez et al., (2002) have shown that that spoken language develops naturally in three-part exchanges.

This research has given rise to a fruitful methodology of investigation into the oldest form of human communication, mainly thanks to the help of audio and video recording devices, as well as to the development of computer data-bases which enable the researcher to accumulate a great deal of information which can be easily retrieved.



### 2.3. Written language



**CONNECTION:** *The two modes of communication are speech and writing. The former having been analysed in the previous point, we will now start analysing the nature of written language.*

Myths and legends of the supernatural shroud the early history of writing. One point, at least, is fairly clear. It now seems most likely that writing systems evolved independently of each other at different times in several parts of the world - in Mesopotamia, China... There is nothing to support a theory of common origin.



**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.

- a) **Pictograms and ideograms.** Cave drawings may serve to record some even, but they are not usually thought of as any type of specifically linguistic message. They are normally considered as part of a tradition of pictorial art. When some of the 'pictures' came to represent particular images in a consistent way, we can begin to describe the product as a form of picture-writing, or **pictograms**. Thus, a form such as ☀ might come to be used for the sun. An essential part of this use of a representative symbol is that everyone should use similar forms to convey roughly similar meaning. In time, this picture might take on a more fixed symbolic form, such as O, and come to be used for 'heat' and 'daytime', as well as for 'sun'. This type of symbol is considered to be part of a system of idea-writing, or **ideograms**. The distinction between pictograms and ideograms are essentially a difference in the relationship between the symbol and the entity it represents. The more 'picture-like' forms are pictograms, the more abstract, derived forms are ideograms. A key property of both pictograms and ideograms is that they do not represent words or sounds in a particular language.
  
- b) **Logograms.** When the relationship between the symbol and the entity or idea becomes sufficiently abstract, we can be more confident that the symbol is being used to represent words in a language. In Egyptian writing, the ideogram for water was Φ. Much later, the derived symbol ≍ came to be used for the actual word meaning 'water'. When symbols come to be used to represent words in a language, they are described as examples of word-writing or logograms. A good example of logographic writing is that used by the Sumerians, in the southern part of modern Iraq, between 5,000 and 6,000 years ago. Because of the particular shapes used in their symbols, these inscriptions are more generally described as **cuneiform** writing. The term 'cunei-form' means 'wedge-shaped' and the inscriptions used by the Sumerians were produced by pressing a wedge-shaped implement into soft clay tablets, resulting in forms like 𐎶. The form of this symbol really gives no clue to what type of entity is being referred to. The relationship between the written form and the object it represents has become arbitrary, and we have a clear example of word-writing, or logogram.



**Phonological systems do show a clear relationship between the symbols and the sounds of language. We can distinguish syllabic and alphabetic systems.**

- a) **Syllabic writing.** When a writing system employs a set of symbols which represent spoken syllables, it is described as **syllabic writing**. There are no purely syllabic writing systems in use today, but modern Japanese has a large range of single symbols which represent spoken syllable and is consequently often described as having a partially syllabic writing system. Both the Egyptian and the Sumerian writing systems evolved to the point where some of the earlier logographic symbols were used to represent spoken syllables. However, the full use of syllabic writing system does not appear until that used by the Phoenicians. It is clear that many of the symbols which they used were taken from earlier Egyptian writing.
- b) **Alphabetic writing.** If you have a set of symbols being used to represent syllables beginning with, for example, a *b* sound or an *m* sound, then you are actually very close to a situation in which the symbols can be used to represent single sound type of sound. This is, in effect, the basis of **alphabetic writing**. An alphabet is essentially a set of written symbols which each represent a single type of sound. Thus, 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.

#### 2.4. Differences between writing and speech



**CONNECTION:** *Once the characteristics of both speech and writing have been developed, we will continue by analysing the differences between writing and speech.*

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 (1987) pointed 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."*



**Holtgraves (2002) offers a complete inventory of what he calls mode features in terms of the grammatical, lexical and discourse features of speech and writing:**

##### a) Spoken mode features:

1. **Grammatical features:** The tendency to ellipsis; the abbreviation of verbs; the ability for phrases, particularly noun phrases to stand for complete utterances; high incidence of coordinated clauses; the use of *and* as a loose continuation marker; problematic clause analyses; and active verb forms.



2. **Lexical features:** Low lexical density; tendency for less abstract vocabulary; tendency for more generalised and simpler vocabulary and semantically “empty” prefabricated “fillers”; use of terms that depend on the context of production for their understanding.
3. **Discourse features:** Discourse produced by more than one participant; high incidence of markers of interpersonal dynamics; repetition and echoing between speakers; indication of the presence of the author of the discourse.

**b) Written mode features:**

1. **Grammatical features:** Full phrases and clauses with little abbreviation and less ellipsis (Except in conjoining and listing); standard grammar; longer and more complex clauses with embedded phrases and clauses: densely informative noun phrases; and explicit and varied marking of clause relations.
2. **Lexical features:** High lexical density; complex vocabulary and the use of more abstract terms with a higher incidence of words of Greek and Latin origin; greater variety in choice of vocabulary with lower levels of repetition.
3. **Discourse features:** Explicit presentation of idea to a non-presence audience; few markers of interpersonal or personally-oriented discourse; explicit indication of text organisation.



**REMEMBER:**

- Written language was traditionally considered to be superior to spoken language for many centuries.
- Contrary to this influential view, a group of linguists and ethnographers argued in favour of studying speech as the primary medium of communication in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Nowadays, there is no sense in the view that one medium of communication is intrinsically better. Writing cannot substitute for speech, nor speech for writing.
- The description and classification of speech sounds is the main aim of phonetics. In this sense, Sounds may be identified with reference to the production, their transmission or their reception, which, in turn, can be related to the three main fields of phonetics: articulatory, acoustic, and auditory.
- Two types of writing systems can be established: phonological, and non-phonological.
- Holtgraves analysed the differences between writing and speech by studying the grammatical, lexical, and discourse features of these two modes of communication.

## 3 COMMUNICATION THEORY



**CONNECTION:** After having examined what language is and the two main forms in which language can be used (writing and speech), we will now discuss the elements that interact in any communicative situation.

### 3.1. Communication definition



**Communication, the exchange of meanings between individuals through a common system of symbols,** concerned scholars since the time of ancient Greece. Savignon (1997: 15) defines language and further emphasises the contextual dimension of language use and that one's success in communicating may vary from situation to situation:

*Communication takes place in an infinite variety of situations, and success in a particular role depends on one's understanding of the context and on prior experience of a similar kind. Success requires making appropriate choices of register and style in terms of the situation and the other participants.*

Since about 1920 the growth and apparent influence of communications technology have attracted the attention of many specialists who have attempted to isolate communication as a specific facet of their particular interest.



In the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan, drew the threads of interest in the field of communication into a view that associated many contemporary psychological and sociological phenomena with the media employed in modern culture. **McLuhan's idea, "the medium is the message",** stimulated numerous film-makers, photographers, and others, who adopted McLuhan's view that contemporary society had moved from a print culture to a visual one.




**By the late twentieth century the main focus of interest in communication seemed to be drifting away from McLuhanism and to be centring upon:**

1. the mass communication industries.
2. persuasive communication and the use of technology to influence dispositions.
3. processes of interpersonal communication as mediators of information.
4. dynamics of verbal and non-verbal (and perhaps extrasensory) communication between individuals.
5. perception of different kinds of communications.
6. uses of communication technology for social and artistic purposes, including education.
7. development of relevant criticism for artistic endeavours employing modern communications technology.


In short, a communication expert may be oriented to any number of disciplines in a field of inquiry that has, as yet, neither drawn for itself a conclusive roster of subject matter nor agreed upon specific methodologies of analysis.




### 3.2. Shannon and the Communication Theory

 **CONNECTION:** *Once the definition of communication and the evolution of communication theory have been examined, we will now present an analysis of the factors that define a communicative situation.*

Fragmentation and problems of interdisciplinary outlook have generated a wide range of discussion concerning the ways in which communication occurs and the processes it entails. Most communication theorists admit that their main task is to answer the query originally posed by the U.S. political scientist **Harold D. Lasswell**, "*Who says what to whom with what effect?*" Obviously all of the factors in this question may be interpreted differently by scholars and writers in different disciplines.

 *In the late 1940s Claude Shannon, a research mathematician at Bell Telephone Laboratories, invented a mathematical theory of communication that gave the first systematic framework in which to optimally design telephone systems.* The main questions motivating this were how to design telephone systems to carry the maximum amount of information and how to correct for distortions on the lines. His ground-breaking approach introduced a simple abstraction of human communication, called the channel. *Shannon's communication channel consisted of a sender (a source of information), a transmission medium (with noise and distortion), and a receiver (whose goal is to reconstruct the sender's messages).*

In order to quantitatively analyse transmission through the channel he also introduced a measure of the amount of information in a message. To Shannon the amount of information is a measure of surprise and is closely related to the chance of one of several messages being transmitted. For Shannon a message is very informative if the chance of its occurrence is small. If, in contrast, a message is very predictable, then it has a small amount of information —one is not surprised to receive it. For some communication systems the components are the following:

- 
- Information source: a man on the phone.
  - Transmitter: the mouthpiece.
  - Message and signal: the words the man speaks.
  - Channel: the electrical wires.
  - Receiver: the earpiece.
  - Destination: the listener.

To complete his quantitative analysis of the communication channel, Shannon introduced the entropy rate, a quantity that measured a source's information production rate and also a measure of the information carrying capacity, called the communication channel capacity. He showed that if the entropy rate, the amount of information you wish to transmit, exceeds the channel capacity, then there were unavoidable errors in the transmission. This is intuitive enough. What was truly surprising, though, is that he also showed that if the sender's entropy rate is below the channel capacity, then there is a way to encode the information so that it can be received without errors. This is true even if the channel distorts the message during transmission.

What emerges from the general discussion above is another concept, first called *noise source*, but later related to the notion of *entropy*, which was imposed on the communication model. The notion of *entropy* diminishes the integrity of the message and distorts the message for the

receiver. With regard to the notion of *entropy*, there are two mechanisms which are aimed at counteracting the potential failures in the communication process. On the one hand, *negative entropy* may occur in instances where incomplete or blurred messages are nevertheless received intact, either because of the ability of the receiver to fill in missing details or to recognise, despite distortion or paucity of information, both the intent and the content of the communication. On the other hand, *redundancy* also counteracts *entropy*. *Redundancy* can be defined as the repetition of elements within a message that prevents the failure of communication of information, is the greatest antidote for entropy. It is an indispensable element for effective communication.

Shannon adapted his theory to analyse ordinary human (written) language. He showed that it is quite redundant, using more symbols and words than necessary to convey messages. Presumably, this redundancy is used by us to improve our ability to recognize messages reliably and to communicate different types of information.

### 3.3. Key factors



**CONNECTION:** This unit title mentions some of the key factors affecting any communicative interaction such as the sender and the receiver. After putting them in the broader framework of the Communication Theory, we will analyse the intended effects of our communicative interactions (**speech acts**) and the environment in which they are exchanged (**social context**).

#### 3.3.1. *Speech acts*

As Holtgraves (2002) argues, in the early part of the last century there existed a major theoretical approach to language –termed logical positivism – that claimed all utterances were to be evaluated exclusively on the basis of their verifiability. In this view, if the truth of an utterance could not be determined, the utterance was viewed as meaningless.

Austin's (1962) speech act theory arose from his observation that it simply is not possible to determine the truth value of many utterances. For example, the truth of the utterance “I promise to do it tonight” cannot be determined. The utterance has no relationship with the external world, and so truth conditions cannot be established.



This led to *Austin to propose a distinction between performative utterances and constative utterances. Constatives are utterances for which a truth value conceivably could be determined. Thus, one could ascertain the truth of the utterance “It’s raining out” by looking out the window. Performatives (e.g., “I apologise”), on the other hand, are used in order to perform some act (their occurrence changes the world in some way., and hence they are not amenable to a truth conditional analysis.*

Although one cannot determine the truth value of performatives, there are various ways in which they can go wrong or infelicitous. For example, if you utter the performative “I declare war on Canada”, you will fail to substantially alter the world. The remark will misfire; that is, it will have no effect because you have no authority to declare war. Performatives, then, are a class of utterances that are conventionally used as a means of performing certain actions. They can be either successful or not but are neither true or false. On the basis of these problems, *Austin abandoned the performative-constative distinction in favour of a theory of illocutionary forces or speech acts.*







On this view, all speech has a dimension of meaning and a particular force. In other words, one is *doing* something with one's words. ***In Austin's speech act theory, any utterance involves the simultaneous performance of a number of different acts. First, one is performing a locutionary act. That is, one is making certain sounds (a phonetic act) that comprise identifiable words that are arranged on the basis of a particular grammar, having a certain sense and reference. In a sense, the locutionary act involves the dimensions of language (phonetics, syntax, and semantics) with which linguistics has traditionally been concerned.***



In addition to the locutionary, as Grundy (2000) points out, the speaker is also performing a particular "act in saying", or what Austin termed an illocutionary act. ***The illocutionary act is the conventional force associate with the uttering of the words in a particular context.*** Thus, John's utterance – "I promise to do it tonight" – will have the **illocutionary force** of a promise (if performed felicitously). ***Finally, a speaker is simultaneously performing what Austin termed a perlocutionary act. The perlocutionary act refers to the effects the utterance has on the hearer.***



Beginning with his dissertation, ***Searle (1969) systematised and extended speech act theory in several directions. For the present discussion, his most important contributions include his taxonomy of speech acts.*** The essential condition states that an utterance in context will have a conventionally recognised illocutionary point, and according to Searle (1969), there are five basic, primitive illocutionary points. As Cutting (2002) cleverly claims, this represents an important attempt to classify, in a systematic manner, actions that speakers can perform with their utterances.

- a) **Directives:** A directive counts as an attempt to get the hearer to perform some future action. Prototypes include requesting, ordering, and questioning. With these speech acts, a speaker is attempting to alter the world in some way with words. Hence, directives represent a word-to-words fit; the speaker is attempting to bring the world in line with words.
- b) **Assertives:** An assertive counts as an attempt to represent an actual state of affairs, to commit the speaker to something being the case. Prototypes include asserting, concluding, informing, predicting, and reporting. With assertives a speaker is attempting to depict the nature of the world. Hence, rather than attempting to get the world to match one's words (the world-towards fit of directives), one is attempting to get one's words to match the world; assertives represent a words-to-world fit.
- c) **Commissives:** A commissive counts as an attempt to commit the speaker to a future course of action. Prototypes include warning, promising, threatening, and guaranteeing. As with directives, the speaker of a commissive is attempting to alter the world in some way; commissives thus reflect a world-to-words fit. Unlike directives, however, it is the speaker's (rather than the hearer's ) subsequent actions that will alter the world.
- d) **Declaratives:** A declarative counts as an attempt to bring about a change in some institutional state of affairs. Prototypes include declaring war, performing a marriage, and calling a base runner "out". For a declarative, the relationship between the world and a speakers' world is bi-directional; declaratives have a double direction of fit (both words-to-world and world-to-words).The point of a declarative (e.g. declaring war) is to alter the state of the world (world-to-words) by stating that the propositional content matches the state of the world (words-to world).

- e) **Expressives:** Expressives count as attempts to express a psychological state. Prototypes include thanking, complaining, greeting, and apologizing. For expressives, there is no fit between words and the world. Instead, the point of an expressive is simply to express the speaker's inner psychological state or to express a particular attitude that is represented by the propositional content of the utterance.

### 3.3.2. Context

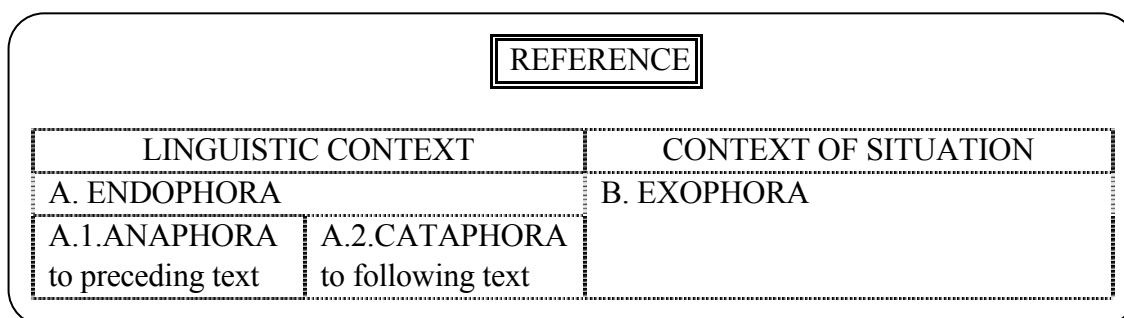


**CONNECTION:** *Apart from speech acts, there is another factor that can condition any communicative situation: the context.*

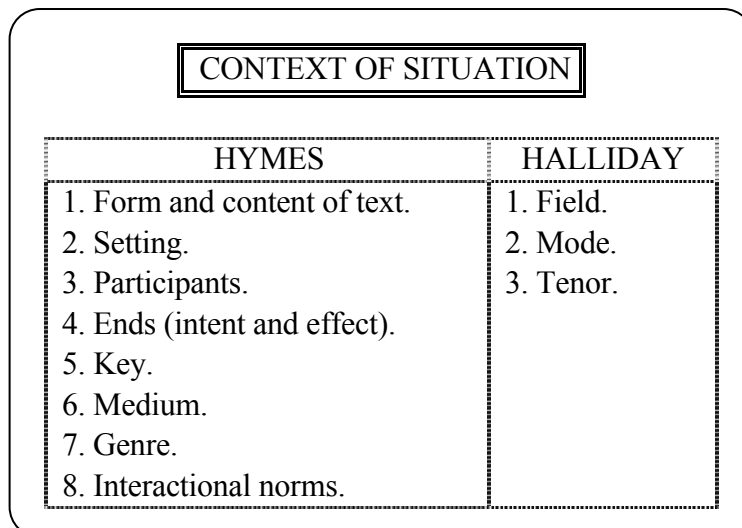
Context is defined by the Collins English Dictionary as:

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 that are relevant to an event, fact, etc.*

The first definition covers what we may call linguistic context, but as we can infer from the second definition, linguistic context may not be enough to fully understand an utterance understood as a speech act. In fact, **linguistic elements in a text may refer not only to other parts of the text, but also to the outside world**, to the context of situation, following next scheme:



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:





We will now analyse Halliday's more abstract interpretation as it practically subsumes Hymes's. 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:*** what is it that the participants are engaged in, in which the language figures as some essential component?

***The TENOR OF DISCOURSE refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles:*** what kind of role relationship obtain among the participants, including permanent and temporary relationships of one kind or another, both the types of speech role that they are taking on in the dialogue and the whole cluster of socially significant relationships in which they are involved?

***The MODE OF DISCOURSE refers to what part to who is taking part the language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation:*** the symbolic organisation of the text, the status that it has, and its function in the context, including the channel (is it spoken or written or some combination of the two?) and also the rhetorical mode, what is being achieved by the text in terms of such categories as persuasive, expository, didactic, and the like.

If we analyse an English lesson in our school we can see that the field of discourse is language study, *i.e.* colours. We as teachers are imparting, and pupils are acquiring knowledge about colours in our target language. The tenor of discourse refers to two types of participants: teacher-pupils.

We have fixed role relationships defined by the educational institution and society at large. Teacher is in higher role, even when we play the role of participants, and there may be temporary role relationships between pupils, depending on their personality. As far as the mode is concerned we can say that the language used is going to be instruction and discussion language. The channel will be both spoken and written. Field, mode and tenor collectively define the context of situation of a text.



### REMEMBER:

- Communication has been defined as the exchange of meanings between individuals through a common system of symbols.
- Most communication theorists admit that their main task is to answer the query originally posed by Lasswell, “*Who says what to whom with what effect?*”
- Shannon's communication channel consisted of a sender (a source of information), a transmission medium (with noise and distortion), and a receiver (whose goal is to reconstruct the sender's messages).
- In speech act analysis, the effect of utterances on the behaviour of speaker and hearer is studied using a threefold distinction: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts.
- According to Searle (1969), there are five basic, primitive illocutionary points: directives, assertives, commissives, declaratives, and expressives.
- Two types of context must also be taken into consideration: linguistic context and context of situation.



## CONCLUSION



**CONNECTION:** To conclude, we can point out that...

...languages are means of communication and they allow us to convey information, express feelings, indicate social relationships, etc. We can communicate in both writing and speech, though being aware and taking into account the differences between using spoken or written language. In order to be communicative competent in a language (both in writing and in speech) we must not only be aware of its grammar rules, for instance, but must also use the appropriate form of language in each situation. This also applies to foreign language learners. Each communicative situation involves the analysis of —especially— the sender, the receiver, the communicative purpose (speech act) and the context (both the linguistic context and the context of situation).



## LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Organic Law on the Improvement of Quality in Education 8/2013, **LOMCE**, passed on the 9th December, which propounds a modification of the **LOE**, the **Royal Decree 126/2014**, which establishes the Basic Curriculum for Primary Education nationwide, and **B-CURRI** (your autonomous decree) indicate that, among the general objectives of Primary Education, is the acquisition of a basic communicative competence in a foreign language. Students will thus have to be able to understand and convey messages in a variety of daily-life communicative situations (in both writing and speech).

The **Royal Decree 126/2014** establishes the following blocks of contents for the area of foreign language in Primary Education:

- block 1: comprehension of oral texts
- block 2: production of oral texts: expression and interaction
- block 3: comprehension of written texts
- block 4: production of written texts: expression and interaction

The development of the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) is a must in the curriculum of Primary Education, for they comprehend the **4 blocks of contents**. The knowledge and application of grammar rules, and vocabulary are also present in the curriculum (**syntax-discourse contents**), together with the application of sociocultural features relevant to language use (in some communities, for example in Madrid, included in a separated set of contents, that of **English Culture**).

All these blocks contribute, in a way, to the achievement of the different components of communicative competence in the foreign language.



The development of oral and written skills is particularly important; they constitute some of the contents that students must develop in all areas, which can be termed as **cross-curricular elements**. These are:

- reading comprehension
- oral and written communication
- audiovisual communication and ICT
- social and civic education
- entrepreneurship

Since this topic is related to communication, it is clearly connected to the first three cross-curricular elements.

### CONNECTION TO THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND THE COMPETENCES

As teachers we must make sure that any theoretical point developed for our training and skills should be somehow materialised in our teaching practice and classroom management as well as the use of resources that help maximizing the students development of communicative competence. To that end, it seems coherent and to the purpose to mention some of the ICT resources that can help our students expand their skills on the subject:

- <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/uk-culture>. This webpage offers a series of lesson plans that allow the students to deepen into aspects of English culture through contextualising language in cultural items and features such as climate and geography, manners, drama, stories, etc.
- <http://www.bbckids.ca> offers fun and games for Primary students.
- <http://www.esl-lab.com> offers a vast repertoire of recordings and scripts that appear graded for our students personal use.
- <http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/es/>. LearnEnglishKids has many games, songs, stories and activities available on-line and that are freely accessible for all children that can have fun while they learn. By signing up as members, we can also note the video tutorials and download articles written by experts on Foreign Language learning.

Following this curricular premise, it makes sense to connect this topic to the competences that appear in Royal Decree 126/2014:

- C 1: Linguistic competence: Linguistic competences have been developed by the *Common European Framework of Reference for languages* (CEFR, 2001) and the document comprises Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening skills.
- C 2: Mathematical competence and basic competence in Science and Technology:

Deduction abilities empower students with certain healthy ‘prejudices’ that allow anticipate answers, foresee conventions, structure discourse, select vocabulary items and registers... all of which forsters successful communication.

- C 3: Digital competence: Communication in written and spoken form can be carried out through E-Pal programmes and other internet and digital resources available. The fact that access to the internet offers us the possibility of being exposed to different accents and speakers enables us to develop skills to recognize and develop near-native fluency.
- C 4: Learning to learn competence: Language-learning and development of skills require an element of integration which requires a certain construction and processing on the speaker’s behalf.
- C 5: Social and civic competences: Language and the language skills are means of communication, which, amongst many other functions, it contemplates negotiation of meaning, offers, explanations, clarifications, etc. and other principles that constitute a democratic and healthy coexistence amongst human beings.
- C 6: Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship spirit competence: One of the indicators of success in communicative competence is the capacity speakers have to generate sentences they have never heard before. A full understanding of grammar and acquisition of skills allows the students not only to assimilate rules and certain chunks of language, but, in time, to create their own language.
- C 7: Cultural consciousness and expression: Literature and the arts are not subordinated subjects to History and Language but they could be even taken as motors or items at the center of history. Languages emerge as a consequence of the need of personal expression and self-understanding. For that, if students have a vast repertoire of linguistic production for poetic and cultural purposes, their understandings of themselves and the world will increase.



## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

*John L. Austin was one of the leading philosophers of the twentieth century. The William James Lectures presented Austin's conclusions in the field to which he directed his main efforts on a wide variety of philosophical problems. These talks became the classic How to Do Things with Words. For this second edition, the editors have returned to Austin's original lecture notes, amending the printed text where it seemed necessary. An appendix contains literal transcriptions of a number of marginal notes made by Austin but not included in the text.*

- *Collins English Dictionary*. Collins. Glasgow, 2003 (6<sup>th</sup> ed.).

*Collins English Dictionary has evolved into a glorious great slab of a reference book since its relatively modest first appearance in 1979. The 2003 version, rooted in the Bank of English, a 524-million word database launched in 1991, is the sixth edition.*



- Crystal, David. *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language*. Cambridge: C.U.P., 2003 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

*The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language is one of the publishing phenomena of recent times. Rarely has a book so packed with accurate and well researched factual information been so widely read and popularly acclaimed. It has played a key role in the spread of general interest in language matters, generating further publications and broadcasting events for an avid audience. Its First Edition appeared in hardback in 1995 and a revised paperback in 1997. There have been numerous subsequent updated reprintings; but this Second Edition now presents an overhaul of the subject for a new generation of language-lovers and of teachers, students and professional English-users concerned with their own linguistic legacy. The length of the book has been extended and there are 44 new illustrations, extensive new material on world English and Internet English, and a complete updating of statistics, further reading suggestions and other references.*

- Cutting, Joan. *Pragmatics and Discourse. A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge, 2002.

*Traditionally distinct areas of study, the boundaries between pragmatics and discourse have become increasingly blurred; this volume addresses the need for an introduction that explores the similarities between the two terms. Pragmatics and Discourse covers the core areas of the subject: context, co-text, speech acts, conversation, cooperative principle and politeness. It draws on a wealth of real, interesting texts, including the BBC miniseries *Pride and Prejudice*, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, *The Full Monty* and a *Delia Smith* recipe. It also provides classic readings from the key names in the discipline, from Sperber and Wilson to Hoey and Wodak.*

- *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 2005.

*Nearly a quarter millennium after the "Society of Gentlemen in Scotland" captured the sum total of extant human knowledge in the first edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, what was known then, and what was not, will fascinate, intrigue, surprise, and entertain family and friends for hours on end. The handsome three-volume reproduction is so beautifully executed that it is almost indistinguishable from the 1768 original, right down to the natural age spots and watermarks on the pages.*

- García Gómez, Antonio. et al. (2002). "On the existence of the follow-up move in spontaneous conversation". Actas del XXV Congreso de la Asociación Española de Estudios Anglo-Norteamericanos. CD-ROM.

*Speech given by Professor García Gómez in a series of conferences. It analyses the factors that interact in any conversation, especially spontaneous conversation.*

- Grundy, Peter. *Doing Pragmatics*. London: Arnold, 2000 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

*Beginning with an exploration of the relationship between language and context, the book then introduces the major areas of linguistic pragmatics: deixis, speech acts, Grice's theory of conversational implicature, Relevance Theory and presupposition, before expanding into wider areas: speech events, politeness phenomena, conversation and metapragmatics. Each explanation is counterbalanced with the close examination of 'live' data taken from a variety of sources, which serves to lighten the theory and to emphasise the 'how to' application of pragmatics. Exercises are included at regular intervals throughout chapters to confirm understanding and encourage practice of the principles learnt. The Answer Key which was printed as an appendix in the first edition is now available at the Arnold website.*



- Halliday, M.A.K.: *Spoken and Written Language*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

*This book identifies the important differences between speaking and writing. Halliday leads the reader from the development of speech in infancy, through an account of writing systems, to a comparative treatment of spoken and written language, contrasting the prosodic features and grammatical intricacy of speech with the high lexical density and grammatical metaphor of writing.*

- Holtgraves, Thomas M. *Language as Social Action: Social Psychology and Language Use*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002.

*This interdisciplinary synthesis of the social psychological aspects of language use provides an integrative and timely review of language as social action. The book successfully weaves together research from philosophy, linguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropology, social and cognitive psychology, pragmatics, and artificial intelligence. In this way, it clearly demonstrates how many aspects of social life are mediated by language and how understanding language use requires an understanding of its social dimension. Topics covered include: \*speech act theory and indirect speech acts; \*politeness and the interpersonal determinants of language; \*language and impression management and person perception; \*conversational structure, perspective taking; and \*language and social thought.*

- Jakobson, Roman. "Linguistics and Poetics". Thomas Sebeok, ed. *Style in Language*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960, pp. 350-377.

Jakobson's model of the functions of language distinguishes six elements, or factors of communication, that are necessary for communication to occur: (1) context, (2) addresser (sender), (3) addressee (receiver), (4) contact, (5) common code and (6) message. Each factor is the focal point of a relation, or function, that operates between the message and the factor. The functions are the following, in order: (1) referential ("The Earth is round"), (2) emotive ("Yuck!"), (3) conative ("Come here"), (4) phatic ("Hello?"), (5) metalingual ("What do you mean by 'krill'?"), and (6) poetic ("Smurf"). When we analyze the functions of language for a given unit (such as a word, a text or an image), we specify to which class or type it belongs (e.g., a textual or pictorial genre), which functions are present/absent, and the characteristics of these functions, including the hierarchical relations and any other relations that may operate between them.

- Richards, Jack C., John Platt & Heidi Platt. *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. Longman. London, 2010 (4<sup>th</sup> ed.).

*This best-selling dictionary is now in its 4rd edition. Specifically written for students of language teaching and applied linguistics, it has become an indispensable resource for those engaged in courses in TEFL, TESOL, applied linguistics and introductory courses in general linguistics. Fully revised, this new edition includes over 350 new entries. Previous definitions have been revised or replaced in order to make this the most up-to-date and comprehensive dictionary available.*

- Searle, John R. *Speech Acts: An essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.).

*This book has immediately, and justly, been accorded the status of a major contribution to the philosophy of language. The brilliant but programmatic insights of Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* are systematically developed and integrated with the more recent work of philosophers such as Grice, Rawls and Searle himself to produce an apparently comprehensive*





*and certainly illuminating general theory, summarized in what Searle terms the 'main hypothesis' of the book, 'speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behaviour.*

- Steinberg, Danny & Natalia V. Sciarini. *An Introduction to Psycholinguistics*. London: Pearson, 2006 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

An Introduction to Psycholinguistics examines the psychology of language as it relates to learning, mind and brain as well as to aspects of society and culture. How do we learn to speak and to understand speech? Is language unique to humans? Does language influence culture? Using non-technical language, and providing concrete examples, the authors explore:

- How children learn to speak and read their native language
- Deaf language education
- Case studies of wild children and animals and what we can learn from these
- Second language acquisition, second language teaching methods, and the problems associated with bilingualism
- Language and the brain
- The relationship between thought and language



## WEBGRAPHY

- <http://dictionary.reference.com/>

*Monolingual dictionary of the English language to be used online.*

- <http://everything2.com/title/competence+vs.+performance>

Explanation of Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance.

- <http://www.coli.uni-saarland.de/projects/milca/courses/dialogue/html/node66.html>

*Searle's classification of speech acts*

- <http://www.howjsay.com/>

*A free online talking dictionary of English pronunciation. You type in a word and you hear how it is pronounced.*

- <http://www.ling.ohio-state.edu/~swinters/371/designfeatures.html>

*Charles Hockett's design features of human language*

- <http://www.pc.scu.edu.tw/admin/activites/upload/3.1%20Speech%20Act%20Theory.pdf>

*Speech act theory*

- <http://www.spectrum.uni-bielefeld.de/Classes/Summer96/Textdesc/funslides/node7.html>

*Graph of Claude Shannon's mathematical model of communication.*

- <http://www.uni-kassel.de/fb8/misc/lfb/html/text/6-4.html>

*Jakobson's model of communicative functions are here briefly explained.*

- <http://www.wordreference.com/>

Website where you can translate from English to Spanish and from Spanish to English. In the forum discussions you can also find the translation of complex collocations and phrases.



## GLOSSARY

- **B-CURRI:** Development of the curriculum of Primary Education in each autonomous region. It is an arbitrary *code set* by *MAGISTER* to focus on the development of the RD 126/2014 (establishing the Basic Curriculum for Primary Education nationwide) in each community.
- **Cross-curricular elements:** contents that all areas of Primary Education must develop. They include: reading comprehension, oral and written communication, ICT, audiovisual communication, entrepreneurship, constitutional and civic education
- **Communicative competence:** ability to understand and convey messages in a variety of daily-life communicative situations.
- **Curriculum:** it includes objectives, key competences, contents, pedagogical methods and assessment criteria as well as learning standards of each area in every stage of education
- **FLT:** Foreign Language Teaching.
- **Functions:** speech acts; communication purposes. They indicate what we use language for (agreeing, apologising, inviting, etc.).
- **ICT:** Information and Communication Technologies.
- **LOE:** Organic Law of Education, passed on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2006.
- **LOMCE:** Organic Law 8/2013, for the Improvement of Education Quality, passed on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December.
- **Prescriptive curriculum:** it is established by educational administrations and is, therefore, compulsory. In Primary Education, it is established by RD 126/2014 and by B-CURRI.
- **RD 126/2014:** Royal Decree that establishes the Basic Curriculum nationwide, derived from LOMCE.
- **Speech acts:** functions; communication purposes. They indicate what we use language for (agreeing, apologising, inviting, etc.).



## OUTLINE OF THE TOPIC (ESQUEMA – RESUMEN)

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

#### O. INTRODUCTION

- \* Traditional language teaching/Krashen: acquisition and learning/Allwright: communication.
- \* Language as social semiotic: its functions.
- \* Written and spoken language and communicative situations.

#### 1. LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION

##### 1.1. Language definitions

- \* specific and general meanings: Sapir's and Hall's definitions.
- \* Contrastive approach: Hockett's design features.

##### 1.2. Language functions

- \* Referential, expressive, phatic, poetic...
- \* Halliday's metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual

##### 1.3. Communicative competence

- \* Chomsky's competence: abstract rules.
- \* Hymes's competence: rules of use. Aspects of communicative competence.
- \* *Canale and Swain*
- \* *Savignon*

#### 2. SPOKEN AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE

##### 2.1. Historical attitudes

- \* Written language supreme: standard.
- \* Speech supreme: primary.
- \* Complementary point of view.

##### 2.2. Spoken language

- \* Man as speaking animal.
- \* Phonetics: field of study: articulatory, acoustic and auditory
- \* The Speech Chain.
- \* Phonology.
- \* Recent studies.

##### 2.3. Written language

- \* Origins of writing.
- \* Writing systems: non-phonological and phonological.
- \* Non-phonological: pictographic, ideographic, cuneiform, hieroglyphic, logographic.



- \* Phonological: syllabic and alphabetic.

## **2.4. Differences between writing and speech**

- \* Physical form.
- \* Structure and use.
- \* Points of contrast: permanence, face-to-face, privative features and constructions, standard use.
- \* Mutual interaction

## **3. COMMUNICATION THEORY**

### **3.1. Communication definition**

- \* Communication definition.
- \* McLuhan's viewpoint.
- \* Late twentieth century points of interest.

### **3.2. Shannon and Communication Theory**

- \* Communication Theory.
- \* 6 elements: information source, transmitter, etc.
- \* Additional elements: noise or entropy, negative entropy, redundancy.

### **3.3. Key factors**

#### **3.3.1. Speech acts**

- \* Austin's utterance types: performative, constative
- \* Austin's utterance forces: locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary.
- \* Searle's illocutionary force types: representative, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative

#### **3.3.2. Context**

- \* Definition: linguistic context, context of situation
- \* Linguistic context and reference.
- \* Context of situation: Hymes's factors, Halliday's macrofactors
- \* Halliday: field, mode, tenor



**REMEMBER:** In MAGISTER platform (area students) can respond to basic questions of topic 1.



## REVISION QUESTIONS

1. **MAIN FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE**
2. **DEFINITION OF PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY.**
3. **PHONOLOGICAL WRITING SYSTEMS.**
4. **ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE.**
5. **ANAPHORA AND CATAPHORA**



**ANSWERS – A PROPOSAL**

**1. MAIN FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE**

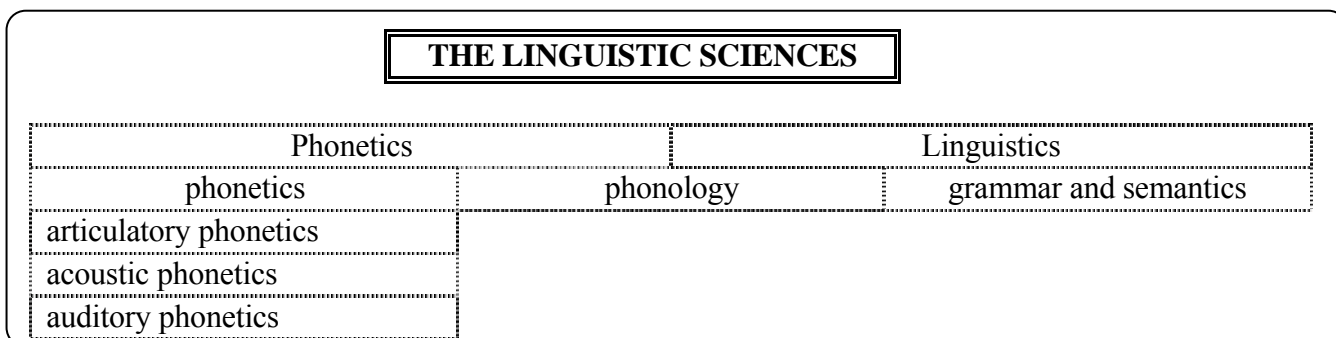
One of the most widely known classifications of functions of language was proposed by Roman Jakobson. Jakobson distinguished six functions of language:

- a) REFERENTIAL, denotative or cognitive function is the leading task of numerous messages.
- b) EMOTIVE or expressive function aims a direct expression of the speaker’s attitude toward what he is speaking about
- c) CONATIVE function is directed to the addressee. It finds its purest grammatical expression in the vocative and imperative.
- d) PHATIC function refers to the social function of language, which arises out of the basic human need to signal friendship, or, at least, lack of enmity.
- e) METALINGUAL or metalinguistic function refers to the use of language to speak about language itself.
- f) POETIC function focuses on the message for its own sake. Rhetorical figures, pitch or loudness are some aspects of the poetic function.

Another function could be added: the PERFORMATIVE function. A performative sentence is an utterance that performs an act. This use occurs in the naming of a ship at a launching ceremony (the act of naming the ship coincides in time with the act of launching her), or when a priest baptizes a child (equally, the child is baptised at the time the priest pronounces the words).

**2. DEFINITION OF PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY.**

Phonetics is the study of speech sounds. There are three main areas of phonetics: articulatory, acoustic and auditory. Phonology studies the selection and organization of phonic substance into a given pattern or form. It deals with the distinctive sound units of a language or phonemes. Some linguists prefer the term phonemics and consider phonology a cover term for both phonetics and phonemics. The most popular view in Britain today is to consider Phonetics as the main science and divide it into phonetics and phonology:





### 3. PHONOLOGICAL WRITING SYSTEMS.

Phonological writing systems show a clear relationship between the symbols and sounds of the language. We have syllabic and alphabetic phonological writing systems.

In syllabic systems each grapheme corresponds to a spoken syllable. In Alphabetical writing there is a direct correspondence between graphemes and phonemes.

### 4. ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE.

The illocutionary force is the effect the speaker wants the utterance to have on the listener. Searle divided these intended effects in five categories:

- commissive
- declarative
- directive
- expressive
- representative

### 5. ANAPHORA AND CATAPHORA

ANAPHORA is the use of a word as a regular grammatical substitute for a preceding word or group of words, as the use of *it* and *do* in *I know it and he does too*.

CATAPHORA is the use of a word or phrase to refer to a following word or group of words, as the use of the phrase *as follows*.



#### GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE TOPIC

The writing of the topic must give a balanced answer to all the elements included in its title. It should be written in the first person singular or passive voice, with adequate vocabulary, and clear and concise sentences. You can formulate questions that you will later answer so that the discourse becomes more attractive and appealing. Follow the recommendations below to make sure that the information you provide is complete and that it can be easily assessed by the board of examiners.

First of all, you must include an introduction. It should contain two paragraphs:

- In the first paragraph you should identify a general idea, a basic principle related to the topic: languages as means of communication. You can start with a definition of language or a definition of communication. You could also say that, according to Spanish legislation for Primary Education, the purpose of FLT is to help students become communicative competent, that is, to help students handle daily-life situations in the foreign language. You could also synthesise the introduction we provide in the topic.
- In the second paragraph, you should identify the key components of the topic, that is, the development that you are going to follow. You can find an example in the third paragraph of our introduction to the topic. The purpose of this paragraph is to let the examining board know what you are going to be writing about and in which order.

Secondly, you should start by writing the first component of this topic:

- Tell the examining board that you are going to start developing the first section of the topic. You can use the connection that we include at the beginning of this section.
- Start by providing one or two definitions of language, analysing its features and functions. Then, write about communicative competence. You should mention several authors to support your arguments and the information given. You can use the paragraphs highlighted as *important* and the *remember* boxes as guidelines.

Thirdly, you should continue by discussing the second part of the topic: spoken and written language.

- Start by establishing a connection with the previous point. You can use the one provided in the topic as example.
- Then, write briefly about the traditional attitudes towards writing and speech as varieties of language. Concentrate on the specific features of these two modes of communication, to conclude by establishing the differences between them. Do not forget that in the *important* and *remember* sections you can find useful information.

Next, focus on the third part of the topic, that is, the factors that define a communicative situation.

- Remember to write a connection with the previous point, as indicated in the sample topic.
- Explain the elements that condition communication exchanges quoting several authors and their theories. Make special emphasis on the description of speech acts and their classification and in the explanation of the context. Again, support will be given in the *remember* boxes and in the elements underlined as *important*.

Finish the topic with a conclusion that compiles the main aspects developed in the topic or highlighting its main idea. You can use the sample conclusion offered in the topic as a writing guide.

Finally, select four or five texts from the bibliography offered. Focus especially on the authors quoted during the development of the topic and highlight two or three websites from which you may have compiled information to write the topic.

In the writing of the topic, you can use capital letters or underline some words or phrases to facilitate the distinction of its different components. Highlight definitions, essential concepts, etc. so that (once you have finished writing the topic on the day of the exam) you can make sure that you have given response to all its elements by carrying out a quick reading.



### GUIDELINES FOR READING THE TOPIC

First, you must remember that the reading of the topic is the only means by which you can fulfil the objective of informing about the topic and of being evaluated by the board of examiners. Do not forget that you must read literally the discourse you have elaborated and which the board has not read in advance. Thus, practice the reading the topics, record and listen to yourself reading the topics, making sure that you allow the listener to understand the information you want to transmit. Show confidence and reliability. Other criteria you must consider are:





- Facilitate the understanding of the examining board by means of an expressive oral reading. It should be the most adequate considering our situation as candidates and the characteristics of the specific expository text. You must take into account that the board of examiners does not know the structure or content of your discourse. Thus, you must emphasise, highlight with your tone of voice, reading speed, etc. the presentation of the topic and the connections between its elements. Your discourse must be similar to that of a journalist in a news programme: the information must be made comprehensible for the examining board. Avoid the abuse of acronyms by using both FLT and Foreign Language Teaching in your reading. Remember that the novelty of some of the contents demands that you carry out a slow reading; do not speed up the reading in the identification of resources or institutions related to the topic. On the other hand, when reading aloud legal documents, remember the importance of clarifying from the very beginning the meaning of the acronym that represents the document you refer to.
- The examining board can only listen to our text once, and at the pace of reading that we set: do not read either too fast or too slowly. You must adjust the reading pace to the contents of the topic. You should read more slowly those aspects in which it is most important to pay attention: the transition to one section to the next (the connections), the introduction and the conclusion, and the definition of language and communication. Nevertheless, when you give examples of speech acts (for instance) you can speed up the reading. You should read emphatically the lists of functions of language, elements of communicative competence, etc. Say “first”, make a short pause, and read the word or phrase. When you finish, make another short pause, say “second”, make a short pause, and read the corresponding information.
- Articulate clearly every word, with appropriate tone, showing enthusiasm and dynamism. Avoid monotony and exaltation. If you use questions, read them with adequate intonation and make a brief pause before and after formulating the question.
- Emphasise important concepts and ideas by means of pronunciation and intonation, gestures, tone and looking at the board.
- Do not concentrate on the reading and forget about the recipient. It may give the impression of lack of confidence. We must raise our eyes and look at the different members of the examining board so as to keep their attention. We should be careful not to lose track of the written text, however. Use the transition from one section to the next, or the questions you may pose in your writing to look at the board. You can also look at them when you go from the introduction to the development of the topic, when you read a connection, and before and after the conclusion.
- Control your breathing. An adequate rhythm and making pauses (full stops, sections, etc.) will prevent us from feeling breathless, losing voice, and the like. If necessary, you can make a brief pause to drink water. If you make a mistake when reading a word, do not worry: re-read it correctly in a spontaneous manner.



#### APPLICATION OF THE TOPIC TO THE SYLLABUS DESIGN

The design of the didactic programme integrates elements that can be developed using some contents presented in this topic. This topic, being about communication and the acquisition of

communicative competence, can be related to our course design in a very global way. The ultimate purpose of the course design is to help students increase their communicative competence in English. Thus, we could incorporate some elements and definitions of this topic related to this issue to the *objectives* section of our syllabus. In the same line, since we must evaluate whether students fulfil the objectives proposed or not, we should also evaluate students' acquisition of communicative competence in our syllabus.

This topic can also be related to the *key competences* section, for one of them —linguistic competence— is very much related to the general ideas of this topic, particularly those about the importance of acquiring a basic communicative competence to handle daily-life situations in the foreign language.

The *contents* section of our course design presents the development of the didactic units. In each of them, we will identify, among other aspects, the way in which students will develop spoken and written language. These two modes of communication have already been described in this topic, and some ideas could be obtained for the writing of the course design. Another important element of the contents of each didactic unit is related to speech acts. All the units incorporate a *functions* section in which we indicate what students will be using language for (agreeing, describing, expressing opinions, etc.).



#### APPLICATION OF THE TOPIC TO THE DIDACTIC UNITS

In the same way in which in the course design we can incorporate concepts and elements from this topic, the didactic units that are developed in our syllabus can develop some contents presented in this topic.

In the *objectives* and *key competences* sections of each didactic unit, we should specify the means by which students will increase their communicative competence in English, in both writing and speech.

The *contents* will incorporate an explanation of the way in which students will work on some specific aspects of communicative competence (spoken and written language, grammar structures to be worked on, vocabulary to be attained, and functions —speech acts— to be developed).

The *activities* will incorporate techniques that will help students practice both written and spoken language.

The *evaluation criteria and learning standards* will incorporate mechanisms to assess students' development of the language skills and, therefore, of communicative competence.



#### APPLICATION OF THE TOPIC TO THE PRACTICE QUESTIONS

The development of communicative competence is a concept that can be applied to the majority of practice questions since it is the ultimate goal of FLT and most of the techniques, activities, materials, etc. will contribute to the achievement of this objective.



## SUMMARY (Sample for the elaboration of the topic for the examination)

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

The present essay aims to study language, and more precisely to develop the notion of language as communication. For this purpose, I will divide the topic into three main sections. First, I will deal with the definition and the main properties of language. In order to do so, I will address the following two questions: “what is language” and “what is language for?” Then, I will introduce the concept of communicative competence. Second, I will, on the one hand, present the historical attitudes towards spoken and written language; and, on the other hand, I will outstand the main characteristics and differences between writing and speech. Third, I will deal with the communication theory. In this light, I will present the definition of communication and discuss the main ways in which communication occurs and the processes it entails. In addition, I will attempt to identify the key factors affecting any communicative interaction. Finally, I will compile the main conclusions and the bibliography used to develop this topic.

Traditional Foreign Language Teaching concentrated on getting students consciously to learn items of language in isolation. These bits of information would be mainly used to read text and only occasionally for oral communication. In Krashen’s terms, it could be said that people got to know about the language (*learning*) but could not use it in a real context (*acquisition*), since the focus was not on communication, but on a piece of language.

To develop the first part of the topic, I will deal with the definition and main properties of language; that is to say, I will attempt to answer the following question: “what is language?” As far as the definition is concerned, the word language has prompted innumerable definitions. Some focus on the general concept of language (what we call “lengua” or “lenguaje”) while some others focus on the more specific notion of a language (what we call “lengua” or “idioma”). For illustrative purposes, I will present the following general definitions. On the one hand, **Trager (1949) claimed that “A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which the members of a society interact in terms of their total culture”.** On the other hand, **Hall (1964) defined language as “The institutions whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory arbitrary symbols”.**

What emerges from these general definitions above is that it is difficult to make a precise and comprehensive statement about the formal and functional universal properties of language. In this light, some linguists have tried to identify the various properties that are thought to be its essential defining characteristics. **The following properties attempt to differentiate human language from all other form of signalling and which make it a unique type of communication system:**

- a) **Communicative versus informative.** Informative signals are those that are given intentionally; whereas communicative signals respond to some intended effects from human beings.

- b) **Displacement.** Human language users can refer to past and future time, and to other locations. It allows the users of language to talk about things and events not present in the immediate environment.
- c) **Arbitrariness.** It is generally the case that there is no “natural” connection between a linguistic form and its meaning; that is to say, they do not, in any way, ‘fit’ the objects they denote.
- d) **Productivity.** It is a feature of all languages that novel utterances are continually being created. It is an aspect of language which is linked to the fact that the potential number of utterances in any human language is infinite.
- e) **Cultural transmission** or the process whereby language is passed on from one generation to the next. Cultural transmission of a specific language is crucial in the human acquisition process.
- f) **Discreteness.** The sounds used in language are meaningfully distinct. For example, the difference between a *b* sound and a *p* sound is not actually very great, but when these sounds are used in a language, they are used in such a way that the occurrence of one rather than the other is meaningful.
- g) **Other properties.** These properties may be taken as the core features of human language. Human language does of course have many other properties, but generally they are not unique to it. The use of the **vocal-auditory channel**, for example, is certainly a feature of human speech. Human linguistic communication is typically generated via the vocal organs and perceived via the ear. Linguistic communication, however, can also be transmitted without sound, via writing or via the sign languages of the deaf. Similar points can be made about **reciprocity** (any speaker / sender of a linguistic signal can also be a listener / receiver); **specialisation** (linguistic signals do not normally serve any other type of purpose, such as breathing or feeding); **rapid fading** (linguistic signals are produced and disappear quickly).

Now that I have established the main features of language, I will go on to address what language is for. In order to do so, I will firstly outline the main functions of language. Second, I will group all these functions into three metafunctions - proposed by Halliday. One of the most widely known classifications of functions of language was proposed by Roman Jakobson. Jakobson distinguished six functions of language:



1. **REFERENTIAL**, denotative or cognitive function is the leading task of numerous messages.
2. **EMOTIVE** or expressive function aims a direct expression of the speaker’s attitude toward what he is speaking about
3. **CONATIVE** function is directed to the addressee. It finds its purest grammatical expression in the vocative and imperative.
4. **PHATIC** function refers to the social function of language, which arises out of the basic human need to signal friendship, or, at least, lack of enmity.
5. **METALINGUAL** or metalinguistic function refers to the use of language to speak about language itself.
6. **POETIC** function focuses on the message for its own sake. Rhetorical figures, pitch or loudness are some aspects of the poetic function.



**Another function could be added: the PERFORMATIVE function. A performative sentence is an utterance that performs an act.** This use occurs in the naming of a ship at a launching ceremony (the act of naming the ship coincides in time with the act of launching her), or when a priest baptizes a child (equally, the child is baptised at the time the priest pronounces the words).



**Halliday grouped these five functions into three metafunctions**, which are the manifestation in the linguistic system of two very general purposes which underline all uses of language, combined with the third component – the textual one – which breathes relevance into the other two. These metafunctions read as follows:

1. **Ideational function** is to organise the speaker's or writer's experience of the real or imaginary world.
2. **Interpersonal function** is to indicate, establish or maintain social relationships between people. It includes forms of address, speech functions, and modality.
3. **Textual function** serves to create written or spoken texts which cohere within themselves and which fit the particular situation in which they are used.



Once the definition and the main functions of language have been presented, it may be appropriate here to develop the concept of **communicative competence**. Such a concept was firstly introduced by **Chomsky (1957) who defined language as "a set of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of 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 (i.e. competence)**. **Nevertheless, Hymes argued that Chomsky had missed out 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 to whom. Thus, **Hymes replaced Chomsky's notion of competence with his own concept of communicative competence** and distinguished the following four aspects:

- a) **Systematic potential**. A native speaker possesses a system that has a potential for creating language.
- b) **Appropriacy**. A native speaker knows what language is appropriate in a given situation.
- c) **Occurrence**. A native speaker knows how often something is said in the language and act accordingly.
- d) **Feasibility**. A native speaker knows whether something is possible in the language.

Let us analyse **Canale and Swain's theory**. One of the most helpful discussions of competence is to be found in Canale and Swain's (1980) article. They point out that: *"there is some diversity of opinion in the literature as to (i) whether or not the notion 'communicative competence' includes that of 'grammatical competence' as one of its components and (ii) whether or not communicative competence should be distinguished from (communicative) performance."* (Canale & Swain 1980:5)

As they say, 'it is common to find the term "communicative competence" used to refer exclusively to knowledge or capability relating to the rules of language use and the term "grammatical (or linguistic) competence" used to refer to the rules of grammar' (p.5). However, they maintain that just as there are rules of grammar that would be useless without rules of language use (Hymes 1972), so there are also rules of language use that would be useless without rules of grammar. Hence they see communicative competence as consisting of grammatical competence plus sociolinguistic competence.

Thus for them, there are two clearly defined and distinct subcomponents of communicative competence. They use 'the term "communicative competence" to refer to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the rules of language use' (p.6). This is a welcome clarification, and one is grateful to have a position so clearly stated. It can be seen that this

corresponds very closely to Chomsky's position, as his 'pragmatic competence' can easily be related to Canale and Swain's 'sociolinguistic competence'.

According to Canale (1983: 5), communicative competence refers to 'the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication'. The four components of communicative competence can be summarized as follows:

- a) **Grammatical competence** producing a structured comprehensible utterance (including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling).
- b) **Sociolinguistic competence** involving knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language and of discourse.
- c) **Discourse competence** shaping language and communicating purposefully in different genres (text types), using cohesion (structural linking) and coherence (meaningful relationships in language).
- d) **Strategic competence** enhancing the effectiveness of communication (e.g. deliberate speech), and compensating for breakdowns in communication (e.g. comprehension checks, paraphrase, conversation fillers).

Surprisingly, Canale did not offer a description of how these four components interact. Such an interaction was proposed by Savignon (1983). As for her, *“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)

Savignon is here spelling out very clearly what follows from Hymes' introduction of a social dimension. More consequences follow: *“Communicative competence is relative, not absolute, and depends on the cooperation of all the participants involved. It makes sense, then, to speak of degrees of communicative competence.”* (Savignon 1983:9)

Once again, we are dealing with something very different from Chomsky's original concept. The problem is that Hymes, and those that follow him, such as Savignon, are apparently claiming to be merely extending the original concept, whereas they are obviously doing more than that. The danger is that even when such writers apply the notion of competence to its original domain, i.e. that of the native speaker, they introduce their fundamentally different view, as may be seen in the following extract from Savignon.

The competence of native speakers, well developed though it may be, is relative. Mother-tongue proficiency varies widely from child to child and from adult to adult. Vocabulary range, articulation, critical thinking, persuasiveness, and penmanship are but a few of the many, many facets of competence wherein native speakers differ. (Savignon 1983:53)

Here again we see the identification of competence with proficiency and the inclusion of elements specifically excluded by Chomsky (see Chomsky 1980:234). What is important is that there does not seem to be any awareness in any of these instances that a changed concept of competence is being used. Under these circumstances it is very difficult to know in any given instance what exactly is meant by the term 'competence'.



As far as the term 'communicative competence' is concerned, it generally seems to mean, in the context of language teaching and learning, 'ability to perform' or 'ability to communicate' in the L2. More generally, associating competence with communication inevitably seems to bring in some aspects of performance. It is difficult to escape the conclusion, therefore, that when we talk about communicative competence in the context of language teaching or learning we are really talking about communicative *performance*. Especially when we talk about aims and about specifying them for teaching and learning purposes, we are interested mainly in performance, no matter what the terms we use. Hence in all these discussions, as we have noted, the distinction between competence and performance tends to become blurred and the exact meaning of the terms used is difficult to determine.



***The concept of communicative competence is also present in our education system. The Organic Law of Education 2/2006, passed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, highlights the importance of developing both oral and written skills in the different years of Primary Education. This importance is maintained by the Organic Law 8/2013, for the Improvement of Education Quality, passed on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December. The new R.D. 126/2014 (passed on the 28<sup>th</sup> February) establishes four different blocks of contents: 1) oral texts comprehension; 2) oral texts production: expression and interaction; 3) written texts comprehension, and 4) written texts production: expression and interaction. All these contents aim to help Primary students become communicative competent in the foreign language.***

Now that the communicative nature of language has been developed, I will move on to the second part of the topic. For this purpose, I will firstly deal with the historical attitudes towards spoken and written language. Second, I will examine the main features of spoken and written language. Third, I will attempt to establish the main differences between speech and writing.



***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 a source of standards of linguistic excellence. Written records provide language with permanence and authority and so the rules of grammar were illustrated exclusively from written texts. On the other hand, spoken language was ignored, when not condemned, as an object unworthy of study. The central point was that spoken language lacked of care and organisation which assumed that speech could not be studied scientifically. Given that the norms were based on written standards, it is clear that the prescriptive tradition rested on this supremacy of writing over speech. Recent studies have shown that spoken language has an observable structure, for instance García Gómez et al., (2002) have cleverly argued that the exchange (a three-part structure) is the basic organisational unit of spontaneous conversation.



***Contrary to this influential view, a group of linguists and ethnographers argued in favour of studying speech as the primary medium of communication.*** In view of this criterion, the urgency of providing techniques was stressed for the analysis of spoken language and many linguists came to think of written language as a tool of secondary importance. Writing came to be excluded from the primary subject matter of linguistic science.



***Nowadays, there is no sense in the view that one medium of communication is intrinsically better.*** Writing cannot substitute for speech, nor speech for writing. The functions of speech and

writing are usually said to complement each other. This is reflected on the fact that we do not write to each other when we have the opportunity of speaking, nor can we speak to each other at a distance. This fact leads to the need of identifying the main characteristics of both spoken and written language. After that, I will outline the main difference between writing and speech.



Let us start by defining the most obvious aspect of language: speech. ***Speech is the universal material of human language.*** It is well known that for many hundreds of thousands of years, human language was transmitted and developed entirely as spoken means of communication. The description and classification of speech sounds is the main aim of **phonetics**. In this sense, Sounds may be identified with reference to the production, their transmission or their reception, which, in turn, can be related to the three main fields of phonetics:

- a) **Articulatory phonetics.** The area of phonetics that deals with the production of sounds.
- b) **Acoustic phonetics.** The area of phonetics that deals with the transmission of speech sound waves.
- c) **Auditory phonetics.** The area of phonetics that deals with the hearing process; that is, the reception of speech sound waves.

With regard to written language, myths and legends of the supernatural shroud of the early history of writing. One point, at least, is fairly clear. It now seems most likely that writing systems evolved independently of each other at different times in several parts of the world. There is nothing to support a theory of common origin. In addition, **two types of writing systems can be established:**



- a) **Non-phonological systems** which do not show a clear relationship between the symbols and the sounds of the language. They include the pictographic, ideographic, cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphic.
- b) **Phonological systems** which do show a clear relationship between the symbols and the sounds of language. Within the phonological systems, it can also be distinguished between **syllabic** systems - where each grapheme corresponds to a spoken syllable - and **alphabetic systems** - where a direct correspondence between graphemes and phonemes is established.

Once having considered the main features of spoken and written language, I will go on to investigate the nature and extent of the differences between them. In general terms, they contrast in physical form; that is, speech, on the one hand, uses phonic substance, typically in the form of air-pressure movements and writing, on the other hand, uses graphic substance, typically in the form of marks on a surface. ***Holtgraves (2002) offers a complete inventory of what he calls mode features in terms of the grammatical, lexical and discourse features of speech and writing.***



As far as the spoken mode features are concerned, Holtgraves proposed the following ones:

- a) **Grammatical features:** The tendency to ellipsis; the abbreviation of verbs; the ability for phrases, particularly noun phrases to stand for complete utterances; high incidence of coordinated clauses; the use of *and* as a loose continuation marker; problematic clause analyses; and active verb forms.
- b) **Lexical features:** Low lexical density; tendency for less abstract vocabulary; tendency for more generalised and simpler vocabulary and semantically “empty” prefabricated “fillers”; use of terms that depend on the context of production for their understanding.





- c) **Discourse features:** Discourse produced by more than one participant; high incidence of markers of interpersonal dynamics; repetition and echoing between speakers; indication of the presence of the author of the discourse.

With regard to the written mode features, the following ones were outstood:

- a) **Grammatical features:** Full phrases and clauses with little abbreviation and less ellipsis (Except in conjoining and listing); standard grammar; longer and more complex clauses with embedded phrases and clauses: densely informative noun phrases; and explicit and varied marking of clause relations.
- b) **Lexical features:** High lexical density; complex vocabulary and the use of more abstract terms with a higher incidence of words of Greek and Latin origin; greater variety in choice of vocabulary with lower levels of repetition.
- c) **Discourse features:** Explicit presentation of idea to a non-presence audience; few markers of interpersonal or personally-oriented discourse; explicit indication of text organisation.

Despite these differences, there are many respects 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. It is true that writing has derived from speech in a historical case, but nowadays, their dependence is mutual.

Our concern now turns to dealing with the **communication theory**. For this purpose, I will firstly present the definition of **communication**. Second, I will discuss the main ways in which communication occurs and the processes it entails. Finally, I will attempt to identify the key factors affecting any communicative interaction.



*As far as the definition of communication is concerned, this concept has been defined as the exchange of meanings between individuals through a common system of symbols.* Savignon (1997: 15) defines language and further emphasises the contextual dimension of language use and that one's success in communicating may vary from situation to situation:

*Communication takes place in an infinite variety of situations, and success in a particular role depends on one's understanding of the context and on prior experience of a similar kind. Success requires making appropriate choices of register and style in terms of the situation and the other participants.*



In investigating communication, McLuhan (1960's) drew the threads of interest in the field of communication into a view that associated many contemporary psychological and sociological phenomena with the media employed in modern culture. *By the late twentieth century, the main focus of interest in communication seemed to be drifting away from McLuhanism ("the medium is the message") and to be centring upon:*

- a) the mass communication industries.  
 b) persuasive communication and the use of technology to influence dispositions.  
 c) processes of interpersonal communication as mediators of information.  
 d) dynamics of verbal and non-verbal communication between individuals.

- e) perception of different kinds of communication.
- f) uses of communication technology for social and artistic purposes, including education.
- g) development of relevant criticism for artistic endeavours employing modern communication technology.

After having discussed the definition of communication, let us deal with the ways in which communication occurs and the processes it entails. **Most communication theorists admit that their main task is to answer the query originally posed by Lasswell, “Who says what to whom with what effect?” Obviously, all the factors in this question may be interpreted differently by scholars and writers in different disciplines.**



**In the late 1940s Claude Shannon, a research mathematician at Bell Telephone Laboratories, invented a mathematical theory of communication that gave the first systematic framework in which to optimally design telephone systems.** The main questions motivating this were how to design telephone systems to carry the maximum amount of information and how to correct for distortions on the lines. His ground-breaking approach introduced a simple abstraction of human communication, called the channel. **Shannon's communication channel consisted of a sender (a source of information), a transmission medium (with noise and distortion), and a receiver (whose goal is to reconstruct the sender's messages).**



To complete his quantitative analysis of the communication channel, Shannon introduced the entropy rate, a quantity that measured a source's information production rate and also a measure of the information carrying capacity, called the communication channel capacity. He showed that if the entropy rate, the amount of information you wish to transmit, exceeds the channel capacity, then there were unavoidable errors in the transmission. This is intuitive enough. What was truly surprising, though, is that he also showed that if the sender's entropy rate is below the channel capacity, then there is a way to encode the information so that it can be received without errors. This is true even if the channel distorts the message during transmission.

What emerges from the general discussion above is another concept, first called *noise source*, but later related to the notion of *entropy*, which was imposed on the communication model. The notion of *entropy* diminishes the integrity of the message and distorts the message for the receiver. With regard to the notion of *entropy*, there are two mechanisms which are aimed at counteracting the potential failures in the communication process. On the one hand, *negative entropy* may occur in instances where incomplete or blurred messages are nevertheless received intact, either because of the ability of the receiver to fill in missing details or to recognise, despite distortion or paucity of information, both the intent and the content of the communication. On the other hand, *redundancy* also counteracts *entropy*. *Redundancy* can be defined as the repetition of elements within a message that prevents the failure of communication of information, is the greatest antidote for entropy. It is an indispensable element for effective communication.

After having presented the models related to the communication theory, I shall concern myself with the analysis of the intended effects of our communicative interaction; that is, an overview of **speech acts**; together with the environment in which they are exchanged; that is, **the social context**. Let us start with the characterisation of Speech Act Theory.



The British philosopher Austin was the first to draw attention to the many functions performed by utterances as part of interpersonal communication. He distinguished the two main types of functions:

- a) **Performative.** It is an utterance that performs an act: to say is to act. Performatives may be explicit as “promise, warn and deny” and implicit performatives, which do not contain a performative verb as in “There is a vicious dog behind you”.
- b) **Constative.** It is an utterance which asserts something that is either true or false.



In addition to this, in speech act analysis, the effect of utterances on the behaviour of speaker and hearer is studied using a threefold distinction:

- b) **Locutionary acts.** It is the saying of something which is meaningful and can be understood.
- c) **Illocutionary acts.** An illocutionary act is the use of a sentence to perform a function, the cases where saying is doing.
- d) **Perlocutionary acts.** A perlocutionary act is the result or effect that is produced by means of saying something.



Searle (1969) systematised and extended speech act theory in several directions. According to Searle (1969), there are five basic, primitive illocutionary points:

1. **Directives:** A directive counts as an attempt to get the hearer to perform some future action. Prototypes include requesting, ordering, and questioning.
2. **Assertives:** An assertive counts as an attempt to represent an actual state of affairs, to commit the speaker to something being the case. Prototypes include asserting, concluding, informing, predicting, and reporting.
3. **Commissives:** A commissive counts as an attempt to commit the speaker to a future course of action. Prototypes include warning, promising, threatening, and guaranteeing.
4. **Declaratives:** A declarative counts as an attempt to bring about a change in some institutional state of affairs. Prototypes include declaring war, performing a marriage, and calling a base runner “out”.
5. **Expressives:** Expressives count as attempts to express a psychological state. Prototypes include thanking, complaining, greeting, and apologizing.

It is worthwhile making explicit here that there are some fuzzy areas and overlapping between different types of illocutionary forces. Apart from the influence of these intended effects in the communication, there is a second key feature which may be taken into account: the **context**. This concept is defined by the Collins English Dictionary as “*the parts of a piece of writing, speech, etc., that precede and follow a word or passage and contribute to its full meaning*” as well as “*the conditions and circumstances that are relevant to an event, fact, etc.*”.



The first definition covers what we may call linguistic context, but as we can infer from the second definition, the linguistic context may not be enough to fully understand an utterance-understood as a speech act. In fact, linguistic elements in a text may refer not only to other parts of the text, but also to the outside world, to the **context of situation**.



With regard to Malinowski's concept of context of situation, a number of linguists have worked over and extended this concept - specially Hymes and Halliday. For instance, Halliday categorises the communicative situation in terms of three components for the analysis:

- a) **FIELD OF DISCOURSE** refers to what is happening, to the nature of the social action that is taking place: what is it that the participants are engaged in, in which the language figures as some essential component?.
- b) **TENOR OF DISCOURSE** refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles: what kind of role relationship obtain among the participants, including permanent and temporary relationships of one kind or another, both the types of speech role that they are taking on in the dialogue and the whole cluster of socially significant relationships in which they are involved?
- c) **MODE OF DISCOURSE** refers to what part to who is taking part the language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation: the symbolic organisation of the text, the status that it has, and its function in the contest, including the channel (is it spoken or written or some combination of the two?) and also the rhetorical mode, what is being achieved by the text in terms of such categories as persuasive, expository, didactic, etc.

To sum up, what I have developed in this essay is the notion of language as communication. The first part of this essay has dealt with the definition of language and has argued the difficulty in making a precise a comprehensive statement about the formal and functional universal properties of language. In addition, the main five functions of language have been argued. Arising from these functions, Halliday's re-categorisation into three main metafunctions has also been postulated. To finish off the first part, I have defined the concept of communicative competence both from a Chomsky and Hymes' linguistic point of view and the adaptation for teaching purposes. The second part has been aimed at giving a historical background about the attitudes towards spoken and written language. Once the main historical attitudes have been developed, I have outlined the main features of both spoken and written language. Finally, I have established the basic differences between writing and speech. With regard to the communication theory, I have firstly provided the reader with both a general definition of communication as well as the latest focus of interest in communication. Furthermore, I have introduced the wide range of discussion concerning the ways in which communication occurs and the processes it entails. This discussion has been encapsulated into the dynamic and linear models. Finally, I have put forward the two key factors affecting any communicative interaction; that is, the intended effects of our communicative interactions (speech acts) and the context in which the interaction takes place.

**In order to develop this topic, the following bibliography has been used:**

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