

**UNIT 5. ORAL COMMUNICATION. ELEMENTS AND RULES GOVERNING ORAL DISCOURSE.****EVERYDAY ROUTINES AND FORMULAIC SPEECH. SPECIFIC STRATEGIES IN ORAL COMMUNICATION.**

In this study, we shall approach the notion of *oral communication* and its *general features*. This survey will be developed into three main sections. The first part is an attempt to introduce the reader to the historical development of the notion of oral communication from its *anthropological origins*. In the second part, a revision of the literature will lead us, first, towards the treatment of *oral discourse* within the framework of a *communicative approach*, and secondly, towards a revision of the *main oral components* in different subsections. Among those components to be considered in the third section of our study, we include elements and rules governing oral discourse; everyday routines and formulaic speech, and specific strategies in oral communication.

The third section deals with general patterns of discourse regarding elements and rules. Hence, our study starts first with an analysis of the linguistic and non- linguistic elements taking part in oral discourse. In next sections, it then turns to routines and formulaic language, regarding rules of usage and rules of use within the prominent role of conversational studies. To finish with, and in conjunction to our goal, discourse strategies will be examined.

Furthermore in the sixth section, we shall consider *new directions* in language learning research, and current *implications on language teaching*, regarding the treatment of speaking and listening skills as part of the oral component. Finally, a conclusion will provide again a brief historical overview of the treatment given to the oral component by a language learning theory.

**1. A HISTORICAL APPROACH TO ORAL COMMUNICATION: ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT.**

We shall provide in this section a linguistic background for *the notion of oral communication*, concerning human communication systems and its main features, in order to establish a link between the notion of communication and the concept of language concerning human social behaviour. All these terms are interrelated as they serve as a basis for communicative event processes and their description.

**1.1. ON THE NATURE OF COMMUNICATION: ORIGINS AND GENERAL FEATURES.**

Research in cultural anthropology has shown quite clearly that the origins of communication are to be found in the very early stages of life when there was a need for animals and humans to communicate so as to carry out basic activities of everyday life, such as hunting, eating, or breeding among others. However, even the most primitive cultures had a constant need to express their feelings and ideas by other means than guttural sounds and body movements as animals did. Human beings constant preoccupation was how to turn thoughts into words.

From a theory of language, we shall define the notion of communication in terms of its main features regarding the oral component, thus types and elements. First, in relation to *types of communication*, we distinguish mainly two, thus verbal and non-verbal codes. Firstly, *verbal communication* is related to those acts in



which the code is the *language*, both oral and written. Thus, giving a speech and writing a letter are both

instances of verbal communication. Secondly, when dealing with *non-verbal* devices, we refer to communicative uses involving visual and tactile modes, such as kinesics, body movements, and also paralinguistic devices drawn from sounds (whistling), sight (Morse) or touch (Braille). According to Goytisoló (2001), the oral tradition in public performances involves the participation of the five senses as the public sees, listens, smells, tastes, and touches.

Thirdly, regarding **elements** in the communication process, we will follow the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson and his productive model on language theory which explains how all acts of communication, be they written or oral, are based on *six constituent elements* (1960).

Briefly, according to Jakobson, *the Addresser/encoder* (speaker) sends a Message (oral utterance) to the *Addressee/decoder* (listener). Messages are embedded in or refer to Contexts which the Addressee must be able to grasp and perhaps even verbalize. The Addresser and Addressee need to partially share a Code (language as verbal, and symbols as non-verbal devices) between them, that is, the rules governing the relationship between the Message and its context; and the Message is sent through a physical channel (air) and Contact, a psychological connection, is established between Addresser and Addressee so that they may enter and stay in communication (1960).

## 1.2. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION.

Linguists often say that language and communication are not the same thing, and certainly this is true. People can and do communicate without language, and species that do not use language, which include all except *Homo Sapiens*, seem able to communicate adequately for their purposes, with and without language. Hence, we may say that there are common features to the notions of language and communication, such as purposes and elements (participants).

Main contributions on describing *communication purposes* are given by the anthropologist Malinowsky who claimed in the early twentieth century for two main purposes, thus a *pragmatic purpose* related to the practical use of language both oral and written, and also, a *ritual purpose* associated to ceremonies and ancient chants. More recently, another definition comes from Halliday (1973) who defines language as *an instrument of social interaction with a clear communicative purpose*. Moreover, Brown and Yule (1973) established a useful distinction between two basic language functions, thus transactional and interactional, whose communication purpose was mainly to maintain social relationships through speech.

Regarding *participants*, according to Johnson (1981), oral communication is depicted as *an activity involving two (or more) people in which the participants are both hearers and speakers having to react to what they hear and making their contributions at high speed*. In the interaction process, he adds, *each participant has to be able to interpret what is said to him and reply to what has just been said* reflecting their own intentions. We are talking, then, about an interactive situation directly related and dependent on the communicative function and the speech situation involving speaker and hearer. The way participants interact in a communicative event has much to do with social psychology as social life constitutes an intrinsic part of the way language is used.

### 1.3. LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR.

As we may perceive, language pervades social life. It is the principal vehicle for the transmission of cultural knowledge, and the primary means by which we gain access to the contents of others' minds. Language is involved in most of the phenomena that lie at the core of *social psychology*, thus attitude change, social perception, personal identity, social interaction, and stereotyping among others.

Just as language use is present in social life, the elements of social life constitute an intrinsic part or the way language is used. Linguists regard language as an abstract structure that exists independently of specific instances of usage. However, *any communicative exchange is situated in a social context that constrains the linguistic forms participants use*. How these participants define the social situation, their perceptions of what others know, think and believe, and the claims they make about their own and others' identities will affect the form and content or *their acts of speaking*.

### 1.4. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO ORAL DISCOURSE. THE ROLE OF PRAGMATICS ON DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND CONVERSATIONAL STUDIES.

One of the most important elements in communication is meaning. Meaning can be interpreted by means of propositional content of an utterance, and it constitutes the domain of semantics. However, meaning is more than a semantic form, and goes beyond the field of Semantics. When meaning comes from the context rather than from syntax and semantics it is called pragmatic meaning. Thus, the study of what a speaker means to convey when using a particular structure in a particular context is called the study of Pragmatics. This view of language comes from linguists such as Halliday or Hymes, who considered language more than a set of structures.

According to this view, the meaning produced by the use of language is beyond the propositional content of the utterances. Thus, elements such as mime, body position, length of pauses, pitch voice, stress... integrate themselves with the propositional content in order to produce the desired meaning. The lack of linguistic knowledge, as denoted by silence, hesitations... is also part of the communicative process.

According to Brown (1994), discourse analysis, a branch of linguistics and, in fact, an extension of the linguistics model, deals with language in context beyond the level of the sentence, enabling us to follow the implications of a given utterance. It contributes towards an understanding of cognitive processes. These analysis are conceived both as a grammar of discourse as it is *socially oriented*, and also, as a linguist application concerning *cohesion and coherence*. The Prague School linguists had introduced discourse into the agenda of mainstream linguistics through the functional linguistic study.

Also, many studies of spoken language have been carried out from a mainly sociological or **sociolinguistic perspective**. This is true, for instance, of the influential tradition called **Conversation Analysis** which is the sociological counterpart of discourse analysis whose practisers give an autonomous status. It is a branch of ethnomethodology where *talk*, which is rule governed, becomes the object of an investigation of social structures and relations, and the structure of a conversation is identified, focusing on the devices for managing the interaction and constructing joint meaning. Conversational mechanisms are, thus **turn-taking** and the **notion of adjacency pairs**. Besides, conversational analysis is used as a means of understanding second language

acquisition of *communication strategies* (Faerch and Kasper 1983), including the *negotiation of meaning* and the *compensatory strategies* non-native speakers use when they have an incomplete knowledge of a foreign language.

In the study of *interaction phenomena*, the following phenomena have been described recently as follows: turn taking and different types of sequences such as sequences of topics, speech acts, and subactivities (Brown & Yule 1983). In the area of feedback, the most extensive studies have been studied before under different headings, such as interjections, back-channelling, return words (Sigurd 1984), reactives, and response words. There is potentially a close interrelation between discourse and conversational analysis and *pragmatics* (Searle 1969), taking into account social and cognitive structures.

It is worth noting, then, that communicative intentions cannot be mapped onto word strings. Rather, speakers must select from a variety of potential alternative formulations the ones that most successfully express the meanings they want to convey. As a result, for the addressee, decoding the literal meaning of a message is only a first step in the process of comprehension; an additional step of inference is required to derive the communicative intention that underlies it. Approaches that focus on the role of communicative intentions in communication reflect what will be called the *Intentionalist paradigm* (Krauss & Chiu 1993). Fundamental to the intentionalist paradigm are two sets of ideas that are basic to pragmatic theory: *speech act theory* and the *cooperative principle*. Both concepts are to be reviewed respectively within the framework of discourse analysis and conversational analysis.

#### 1.4.1. A Speech Act Theory.

*Speech act theory* was inspired by the work of the British philosopher *J. L. Austin* whose posthumously published lectures *How to do things with words* (1962, 1975) influenced a number of students of language including the philosopher *John Searle* (1969, 1985), who established *speech act theory* as a major framework for the study of human communication.

They maintained that, when using language, we not only make propositional statements about objects, entities, state of affairs and so on, but we also fulfil functions such as requesting, denying, introducing, apologizing, etc. Summing up, just as linguists tried to understand how speakers might be able to produce an infinite number of sentences given a very finite set of rules, philosophers tried to understand how an infinite number of sentences could reflect a finite set of functions. For instance, by saying *I apologise*, the speaker is doing something beyond what is being said: he has performed an apology.

So in his book *How to do things with words* (1962), Austin identifies three distinct levels of action beyond the utterance itself. He distinguishes the act of saying something, that is, the locutionary act, what one does in saying it, that is, the illocutionary act, and finally, what one does by saying it, that is, the perlocutionary act. Let us look at this example:

*Someone with a knife addressing to a person on the street and saying:*

*'Give me the money'*

The locutionary act is the utterance as a sign: 'Give me the money'

The illocutionary act is the pragmatic meaning of the utterance, the intention the speaker wants to give: *a threat*

The perlocutionary act is the effect produced by that utterance on the listener: *running, being frightened...*

Some years later, in 1977, Searle, disciple of Austin, went further and classified the illocutionary acts in:

- ✓ Directives: the speaker tries to get the hearer to do something (e.g. ask, command, request, challenge, order, compel, oblige...)
- ✓ Commissives: the speaker is obliged to do something, to a certain extent, in the course of an action (i.e., guarantee, promise, swear..)
- ✓ Representatives: the speaker is committed, to a certain degree, to the truth of a proposition (i.e., affirm, bet, believe, report, conclude...)
- ✓ Expressives: the speaker expresses an attitude about a state of affairs (i.e., congratulate, apologise, deplore, thank, welcome...)
- ✓ Declaratives: the speaker alters the status quo by making the utterance (e.g. I resign, I name this child...I now pronounce you husband a wife...)

#### 1.4.2. Grice's cooperative principle and conversational maxims.

The English language philosopher **H. Paul Grice** (1969) was not the first to recognize that non- literal meanings posed a problem for theories of language use, but he was among the first to explain the processes that allow speakers to convey, and addressees to identify, communicative intentions that are expressed non-literally, as for him, meaning is seen as *a kind of intending*, and *the hearer's or reader's recognition that the speaker or writer means something by x is part of the meaning of x*.

His insight that the communicative use of language rests on a set of implicit understandings among language users has had an important influence in both linguistics and social psychology. In a set of influential papers, Grice (1957, 1969, 1975) argued *that conversation is an intrinsically cooperative endeavor*. To communicate participants will implicitly adhere to a set of conventions, collectively termed the **Cooperative Principle**, by making their messages conform to **four general rules or maxims** where speakers shape their utterances to be understood by hearers. Thus, the maxims are quality, quantity, relation and manner.

First, **quality** envisages messages to be truthful; **quantity**, by means of which messages should be as informative as is required, but not more informative; **relation**, for messages to be relevant; and manner, where messages should be clear, brief and orderly.

#### 1.4.3. Conversational Analysis and Turn-Taking.

A main feature of conversations is that they tend to follow the convention of **turn taking**. Simply, this is where one person waits for the other to finish his/her utterance before contributing their own. This is as much a utilitarian convention as mere manners - a conversation, given the aforementioned definition, would logically cease to take place if the agents involved insisted on speaking even when it was plain that the other was trying to

contribute.

It is, additionally, comforting to know that the other person respects your opinions enough not to continually interrupt you. The best example of this occurs in the Houses of Parliament - a supposed *debating* chamber which is often anything but, due to the failure of the members to observe the turn-taking code. Note, however, that a person rarely explicitly states that they have finished their utterance and are now awaiting yours. Intriguing exceptions to this are in two-way radios, where many social and psychological cues are lacking, and thus it is more difficult for speakers to follow turn-taking.

The potential for one to reply can be missed, deliberately or not, so that the first person may contribute once more. Failure to realise this can result in an awkward *pause* or a cacophony of competing voices in a large crowd.

#### 1.4.4. Conversational Analysis and Adjacency Pairs.

Another fundamental *feature of conversation* is the idea of *adjacency pairs*. Posited by Goffman (1976), an example would be found in a *question-answer* session. Both conversing parties are aware that a response is required to a question; moreover, a particular response to a given question. I might invite a friend into my house and ask: "Would you like a biscuit?" To which the adjacency pair response is expected to be either "Yes" or "No". My friend may be allergic to chocolate, however, and place an insertion sequence into the response: "Do you have any ginger snaps?" the reply to which would cause him to modify his answer accordingly.

In the above consideration of turn-taking, such observations may be used in our social interactions when the second agent did not take their opportunity to respond to the first, and the implication is that they have nothing to say about the topic. But perhaps the transition relevance place was one in which the second agent was in fact selected, but failed to respond, or responded in an inappropriate manner.

This infinity of responses is what makes language so entertaining, and in the above cases the speakers might make inferences about the reasons for *incorrect responses*. These may be not to have responded because he did not understand the question, or not to agree with the interlocutor. As Goffman notes, a silence often reveals an unwillingness to answer. Non-preferred responses tend to be preceded by a pause, and feature a declination component which is the non-acceptance of the first part of the adjacency pair. Not responding at all to the above question is one such - and has been dubbed an attributable silence, thus, a silence which in fact communicates certain information about the non-speaker.

Once we have introduced a theoretical framework on the various theories and research on oral discourse, we shall examine the components of spoken discourse under different headings in order to provide a relevant account of the communicative event. In our next section, the first heading appears under the name of *elements and rules governing oral discourse*, where the notions of a speech theory, cooperative principles and their implications will be under revision.

## 2. ELEMENTS AND RULES GOVERNING ORAL DISCOURSE.

Given that it is possible to separate a text from the communicative event in which it occurs, we may go on to explore the relationship between text features and components of events. These can be described in terms of rules governing oral discourse, norms or, following Grice's terminology, maxims.

### 2.1. ELEMENTS GOVERNING ORAL DISCOURSE.

Elements governing oral discourse are approached in terms of a **communicative event**, which is described as a sociocultural unit where the components of which serve to define salient elements of context within which the text becomes significant. Also, communicative behaviour is not limited to the creation of oral texts, and correspondences are likely to be found concerning paralinguistics, kinesics and proxemics in oral interaction.

#### 2.1.1. Linguistic elements.

Regarding the linguistic level in oral discourse, the phonological system is involved and is concerned with the analysis of acoustic signals into a sequence of speech sounds, thus consonants, vowels, and syllables. At this level, we find certain **prosodic elements** which provide us with information about the oral interaction. Thus, stress, rhythm and intonation. Also, routines are to be dealt with, but in a further section (Halliday 1985).

Regarding **stress**, it is present in an oral interaction when we give more emphasis to some parts of the utterance than to other segments. It is a signalling to make a syllable stand out with respect to its neighbouring syllables in a word or to the rest of words in a longer utterance. We may establish a distinction between two types of stress markers, thus *primary stress* and *secondary stress* within the same word. Primary stress is the main marker within the word and secondary stress is a less important marker.

Another important element which characterizes oral interaction is **rhythm**, which is determined by the succession of prominent and non-prominent syllables in an utterance. We will observe a quick and monotonous rhythm if prominent and non-prominent syllables take place in short equal units of time, though not easy to find in authentic speech. On the contrary, rhythm will be inexistent and chaotic if longer and irregular units of time take place in an utterance or speech act.

The third prosodic element is **intonation**, which is characterized in general terms by the rising and falling of voice during speech, depending on the type of utterance we may produce. In case of statements, we will use falling intonation whereas in questions we use rising intonation. Intonation and rhythm play an important role when expressing attitudes and emotions. As a general rule, speakers use a normal intonation when taking part in an oral interaction, but depending on the meaning the speakers may convey, they will use a different *tone* within the utterance. The tone is responsible for changes of meaning or for expressing special attitudes in the speaker, such as enthusiasm, sadness, anger, or exasperation. Three types of intonation are involved in a real situation. Thus, falling and rising tones, upper and lower range tones, and wide and narrow range of tones. Respectively, they refer first, to certainty, determination or confidence when we use falling tones in order to be conclusive whereas indecision, doubt and uncertainty is expressed by means of rising tones to be inconclusive. Secondly, excitement and animation on the part of the speaker is expressed by upper range tones whereas an unanimated

attitude corresponds to lower ranges. Finally, in order to express emotional attitudes, we use a wide range of tone whereas in order to be unemotional, we rather use a narrow range tone.

### 2.1.2. Non-linguistic elements.

As they speak, people often gesture, nod their heads, change their postures and facial expressions, and redirect the focus of their gaze. Although these behaviours are not linguistic by a strict definition of that term, their close coordination with the speech they accompany suggests that they are relevant to an account of language use, and also, can occur apart from the context of speech, spontaneous or voluntarily.

Conversational speech is often accompanied by **gesture**, and the relation of these hand movements to the speech are usually regarded as communicative devices whose function is to amplify or underscore information conveyed in the accompanying speech. According to one of the icons of American linguists, Edward Sapir, people *respond to gesture with extreme alertness, in accordance with an elaborate and secret code that is written nowhere, known to none, and understood by all* (Sapir 1921). Gestures are then, to be classified in different types, such as *emblems* or *symbolic gestures* as essentially *hand signs* with well-established meanings (thumbs -up and V for victory, pointing, denial, and refusing). In contrast, we may find simple and repetitive rhythmic hand movements coordinated with sentence prosody, called *batons*, as using head and shoulders. Also, unplanned gestures that accompany spontaneous speech, called *gesticulations*, *representational gestures*, or *lexical movements*, related to semantic content of speech in order to describe things like size, strength or speed.

Concerning **facial expression**, it deals with an automatic response to an internal state although they can be controlled voluntarily to a considerable extent, and are used in social situations to convey a variety of kinds of information (smiling and happiness). Changes in addressees' facial expressions allows the addressee to express understanding concern, agreement, or confirmation where expressions such as smiles and head nods as considered as back-channels.

In relation to **gaze direction**, a variety of kinds of significance has been attributed to both the amount of time participants spend looking at each other, and to the points in the speech stream at which those glances occur, such as staring, watching, peering or looking among others. As proximity, body-orientation or touching, gazing may express the communicators' social distance, by means of looking up to or looking down to.

The primary medium by which language is expressed, speech, also contains a good deal of information that can be considered nonverbal. A speaker's voice transmits individuating information concerning his or her age, gender, region of origin, social class, and so on. In addition to this relatively static information, transient changes in *vocal quality* provide information about changes in the speaker's internal state, such as hesitation or interjections. Changes in a speaker's affective states usually are accompanied by changes in the acoustic properties of his or her voice (Krauss and Chiu 1993), and listeners seem capable of interpreting these changes, even when the quality of the speech is badly degraded, or the language is one the listener does not understand.

## 2.2. RULES GOVERNING ORAL DISCOURSE.

A communicative competence theory accounts for rules of usage and rules of use in order to get a

proficiency level within the framework of social interaction, personal, professional or educational fields.

Then, **rules of usage** are concerned with the language users' knowledge of linguistic or grammatical rules (linguistic or grammatical competence) whereas **rules of use** are concerned with the language users' ability to use his knowledge of linguistic rules in order to achieve effectiveness of communication, that is, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competences. Rules involve two different implications, thus, the achievement of communication effectiveness, and their appropriateness in specific social and cultural contexts.

### 2.2.1. Rules of usage.

As we have previously seen, language is the principal vehicle for the transmission of cultural knowledge, and the primary means by which we gain access to the contents of others' minds. It is also considered as the ability to speak and be understood by others. This involves an ability to produce and therefore, understand the same sounds produced by others. The ways languages are used are constrained by the way they are constructed, particularly the linguistic rules that govern the permissible usage forms, for instance, grammatical rules. Language is defined as an abstract set of principles that specify the relations between a sequence of sounds and a sequence of meanings, and is analysed in terms of four levels of organization. Thus, the *phonological*, the *morphological*, the *syntactic*, and the *semantic* levels which, taken together, constitute its **grammar**.

Firstly, the **phonological system** is concerned with the phonological knowledge a speaker has in order to produce sounds which form meaningful sentences. For instance, an analysis of an acoustic signal into a sequence of speech sounds, thus consonants, vowels, and syllables, will allow the speaker to distinguish plural, past, and adverb endings, as well as to recognize foreign accents that are distinctive for a particular language or dialect or produce voiced or voiceless stops, fricatives or plosives sounds in their appropriate contexts.

Secondly, the **morphological system** is concerned with the way words and meaningful subwords are constructed out of these phonological elements. Morphology involves internal structures by means of which the speakers are able to recognize whether a word belongs to the target language or not. This is achieved by means of morphological rules that follow a regular pattern, such as suffixes and prefixes. These rules that determine the phonetic form of certain patterns, such as plural, regular simple past or gerunds, are named *morphophonemic rules*, as they are applied by both morphology and phonology.

Thirdly, the **syntactic system** is concerned with that part of grammar which stands for speakers' knowledge of how to structure phrases and sentences in an appropriate and accurate way. As mentioned above, knowing a language not only implies linguistic knowledge but also the ability to arrange the appropriate organization of morphological elements into higher level units, such as phrases and sentences.

Finally, the **semantic system** is concerned with the meanings of these higher level units. Semantics is concerned with the linguistic competence in terms of a capacity to produce meaning within an utterance. The arbitrariness of language implies to comprehend sentences because we know the meaning of individual words.

### 2.2.2. Rules of use.

From a discourse-based approach, the notion of *use* means the realization of the language system as

meaningful communication linked to the aspects of performance. This notion is based on the *effectiveness for communication*, by means of which an utterance with a well-formed grammatical structure may or may not have a sufficient value for communication in a given context.

Regarding rules of use in order to get a proficiency level in a language, they are concerned with the language users' ability to use his knowledge of linguistic rules, that is, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competences.

Concerning **appropriateness**, any language presents variations within a linguistic community. Each member speaks or writes in a different way and their acts of speaking are imbedded in a discourse, both conversation and narrative type, made up of a coherently related sequence of acts and appropriateness in context. Besides, these types of discourse have a formal structure that constrains participants' acts of speaking and each person chooses the language variety and the appropriate register according to the situation, thus the issue, channel of communication, purpose, and degree of formality.

Another discourse device is **coherence** which deals with the use of information in a speech act regarding the selection of relevant or irrelevant information, and the organization of the communicative structure in a certain way, such as introduction, development and conclusion. The amount of information may be necessary and relevant, or on the contrary, redundant and irrelevant. Unnecessary repetition of what is already known or already mentioned stops communication from being successful at comprehending the important unknown parts of the speech act. Speakers are intended to select not only the structure of the content of messages but also to organize information in a logical and comprehensible way in order to avoid break downs in communication. Regarding **cohesion**, there is a wide range of semantic and syntactic relations within a sentence in order to relate our speech act forming a cohesive unit by means of reference, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical organization. Firstly, according to Halliday, **reference** relates to *a participant or circumstantial element introduced at one place in the text that can be taken as a reference point for something that follows*, such as the definite article (*the*) and personal pronouns (*he, she, we, they*). **Ellipsis** is defined as *a clause, or a part of a clause, or a part of a verbal or nominal group, that may be presupposed at a subsequent place in the text by the device of positive omission*, like in short answers (*Yes, I can; No, I don't*). Since **conjunction** is *a clause or clause complex, or some longer stretch of text, it may be related to what follows it by one or other of a specific set of semantic relations*. According to Halliday, *the most general categories are those of opposition and clarification, addition and variation, and the temporal and causal-conditional*. The continuity in a text is established by means of **lexical cohesion** through the choice of words. *This may take the form of word repetition; or the choice of a word that is related in some way to a previous one either semantically or collocationally*. Many researchers, among them, Widdowson (1978) claimed that, in a speech act, cohesion and coherence must be described in terms of rules of use and depicted as procedures concerning grammatical devices. He envisages cohesion as a rule of use, and coherence to be a rule of usage.

### 2.2.3. Conversational Studies.

Conversational studies demonstrate how spoken English adapts to incorporate many functions and accommodates a vast variety of registers and contexts in a speech act. Cultural influence on speech and the implications of this for the second language speaker are two main tenets within current speech and communication theories. Conversation is the main means by which humans communicate, and is thus vital for full and rich social interaction. An obvious definition of conversation is a process of talking where at least two participants freely alternate in speaking as they interact with their social environment.

There is potentially a close interrelation between discourse and conversational analysis and **pragmatics** (Searle 1969), taking into account social and cognitive structures. They are interrelated with language in use, and in particular, with communicative events and communicative functions, the role of speech acts where language is an instrument of action. In fact, conversational analysis with its sociological origins and its emphasis on social interaction, regards all its work as concerned with social action.

This tradition on cultural studies was first introduced in a language teaching theory in the early 1920s and improved in the 1970s by the notion of the **ethnography of communication**, a concept coined by Dell Hymes. It refers to a methodology based in anthropology and linguistics allowing people to study human interaction in context. Ethnographers adhering to Hymes' methodology attempt to analyse patterns of communication as part of cultural knowledge and behaviour. Besides, cultural relativity sees communicative practices as an important part of what members of a particular culture know and do (Hymes 1972). They acknowledge speech situations, speech events, and speech acts as units of communicative practice and attempt to situate these events in context in order to analyse them.

Hymes' (1972) well-known **SPEAKING heuristic** where capital letters acknowledge for different aspects in communicative competence, serves as a framework within which the ethnographer examines several components of speech events as follows. S stands for setting and scene (physical circumstances); P refers to participants including speaker, sender and addresser; E means end (purposes and goals); A stands for act sequence (message form and content); K deals with key (tone and manner); I stands for instrumentalities (verbal, non-verbal and physical channel); N refers to norms of interaction (specific proprieties attached to speaking), and interpretation (interpretation of norms within cultural belief system); and finally, genre referring to textual categories.

Within a conversational analysis, we find mainly two features of conversations. First, what we understand under the convention of **turn taking**. Simply, this is where one person waits for the other to finish his/her utterance before contributing their own. The potential for one to reply can be missed, deliberately or not, so that the first person may contribute once more. Sacks (1978) suggests that, historically speaking, there is an underlying rule in conversation, as Greek and Roman societies had within an oratory discipline where *at least and not more than one party talks at a time*. For him, there are three main levels in turn-taking. The first level refers to the highest degree of control he can *select the next speaker either by naming or alluding* to him or her. In a second degree of control, the next utterance may be *constrained by the speaker* but without being selected by a particular speaker. Finally, the third degree of control is to *select neither the next speaker nor utterance* and leave it to one of the other participants.

Another fundamental **feature of conversation** is the idea of **adjacency pairs**, proposed by **Goffman** (1976) and later developed by Sacks (1978). By this concept, a conversation is described as a string of at least two turns. An example would be found in a question-answer session where exchanges in which the first part of the pair predicts the occurrence of the second, thus 'How are you?' and 'Fine, thanks. And you?' Both conversing parties are aware that a response is required to a question. Moreover, a particular response to a given question is expressed by means of greetings, challenges, offers, complaints, invitations, warnings, announcements, farewells and phone conversations.

Furthermore, another contribution to conversational analysis, as we have previously mentioned, was Grice's (1967) **Cooperative Principle**. He proposed a set of norms expected in conversation, and formulated them as a universal to help account for the high degree of implicitness in conversation and the required relation between rule-governed meaning and force. Therefore, Grice analyses cooperation as involving **four** categories of **maxims** expected in conversation. Thus, the first maxim is **quantity** which involves speakers to give enough and not too much information. Secondly, within **quality**, they are genuine and sincere, speaking truth or facts. The third maxim, **relation**, makes reference to utterances which are relative to the context of the speech. Finally, **manner** represents speakers who try to present meaning clearly and concisely, avoiding ambiguity. They are direct and straightforward.

Within conversational structure, another distinction is identified by Brown and Yule (1994), and it is the one between 'short turns' and 'long turns'. They define them as follows: *A short turn consists of only one or two utterances, a long turn consists of a string of utterances which may last as long as an hour's lecture...what is required of a speaker in a long turn is considerably more demanding than what is required of a speaker in a short turn.* As soon as a speaker 'takes the floor' for a long turn, tells an anecdote, tells a joke, explains how something works, justifies a position, describes an individual, and so on, he takes responsibility for creating a structured sequence of utterances which must help the listener to create a *coherent* mental representation of what he is trying to say. Besides, what the speaker says must be coherently structured. Possible examples of **everyday situations** which might require longer turns from the speakers are such things as narrating personal experiences, participating in job interviews, arguing points of view, describing processes or locations and so on.

### 3. EVERYDAY ROUTINES AND FORMULAIC SPEECH.

Everyday routines and formulaic speech follow a tradition on cultural studies, called an **ethnography of communication**. Also, they deal with the terms coined in the 1960s by the philosopher J. L. Austin, in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), to refer to acts performed by utterances which conveyed information, in particular to those which require questions and answers as a formulaic speech. Within **a speech act theory**, we may distinguish a conventional semantic theory by studying the effects of *locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutory acts*. They mean respectively, performative utterances on speakers and hearers that result through or as a result of speech, secondly, acts that occur in speech, and thirdly, responses which hearers called perlocutionary acts.

There are a wide range of kinds of speech act. Among the most relevant surveys on speech act theories, we shall mention John R. Searle, who in his work *Speech Acts* in 1979, recognizes five types. Firstly, *representative*

speech act, where speakers are committed in varying degrees to the truth of the propositions they have uttered, by means of swearing, believing, and reporting. Secondly, *directives*, where speakers try to get hearers to do something by commanding, requesting, or urging. Thirdly, *commissives*, which commit speakers in varying degrees to courses of action by means of promising, vowing, and undertaking. Fourthly, *declarations*, whereby speakers alter states of affairs by performing such speech acts as I now pronounce you man and wife. Fifth, *expressives*, where speakers express attitudes, such as congratulating and apologizing.

According to Austin (1962), in order to be successful, speech acts have to meet certain conditions. Thus, a marriage ceremony can only be performed by someone with the authority to do so, and with the consent of the parties agreeing to the marriage. Speech acts may be direct or indirect. For instance, compare *Shut the door, please* and *Hey, it's cold in here*, both of which are directives.

Also, according to Seaville and Troike (1982) in his work *The Ethnography of Communication*, linguistic **routines** are *fixed utterances or sequences of utterances which must be considered as single units*, because meaning *cannot be derived from consideration of any segment apart from the whole*. The routine itself, they add, fulfils the communicative **function**, and in this respect is performative in nature. In order to make effective discourse productions, learners need to approach their speeches from a conscious sociolinguistic perspective, in order to get considerable cultural information about communicative settings and roles. Routines are also analysed in terms of **length**, from single syllables to whole sentences, such as 'See you!' and 'I am looking forward to seeing you again!' A sequence of sentences may be memorized as **fixed phrases**, and consequently, some of them are learnt earlier and others, later. For instance, the first routines a student learns in class are commands, such as 'Sit down or stand up', requests, such as 'May I come in, please?' or 'Can I have a rubber, please?'. Routines structure is mainly given by a sociolinguistic and cultural approach to language.

Non-native speakers may not grasp the **nuances** regarding a certain type of utterance patterns, such as **greeting** routines or **phone conversation** patterns, which have no meaning apart from a phatic function and introductory sentences. Within an educational context, main researches on the field of **cross-cultural rhetorical considerations**, such as Holmes and Brown (1987) and Wolfson (1981), point out that it is not the responsibility of the language teacher *qua linguist* to enforce foreign language standards of behaviour, linguistic or otherwise. Rather, it is the teacher's job to equip students to express themselves in exactly the ways they choose to do so—rudely, tactfully, or in an elaborately polite manner.

Understanding routines require a cultural knowledge because they are generally abstract in meaning and must be interpreted at a non-literal level. What we want to prevent them being unintentionally rude or subservient. Without overstressing the constraints on participants, it is clear that space-time loci, organisational context, conventional forms of messages, and preceding communications, in fact all components of communicative events, serve to increasingly restrict the range of available choices.

Thus, Holmes and Brown (1987) address three types of failure. Firstly, a pragmatic failure which involves the inability to understand what is meant by what is said. Secondly, the pragmalinguistic failure which is caused by mistaken beliefs about pragmatic force of utterance. Finally, the sociopragmatic failure which is given by different beliefs about rights and mentionables. People usually reject consciously **routines** and rituals when they

are meaningless and empty of meaning, thus condolences, funeral rituals, weddings, masses and invitations among others.

Another instance is brought about by Wolfson (1981) in developing sociocultural awareness.

According to this model, this type of awareness will lead to a discussion of the differences between the cultural and social values of a first language learner and the foreign language community. He goes further on studying cross-cultural miscommunication in the field of compliments, when learners from a different cultural background do not understand certain behaviour rules from the foreign language target culture. Hence, ritual contexts involve formulaic language with great cultural significance. The meaning of symbols cannot be interpreted in isolation but in context. For instance, a funeral ritual is different in Europe and in America. Both routines and *formulaic speech* meaning depend on shared beliefs and values within the speech community coded into some kind of sensitivity to cultural communication patterns.

The literature on cross-cultural communication breakdown is vast, as it is related to a number of aspects such as size of imposition; taboos; different judgement of power and social distance between different cultures; and different cultural values and priorities. Therefore, important pedagogic advantages may be expected from further developing this approach. These include more realistic learning activities, improved motivation, new types of achievable objectives, and the potential to transform a passive attitude to authentic texts into an active engagement in developing the effectiveness of communication practices in a classroom setting.

#### 4. SPECIFIC STRATEGIES IN ORAL COMMUNICATION.

In this section we address the fourth area of Communicative Competence. In the words of Canale (1983), strategic competence is *the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or due to insufficient competence*. This is quite a complex area but in a simplified way we can describe it as the type of knowledge which we need to sustain communication with someone. This may be achieved by *paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance, guessing as well as shifts in register and style*. According to Canale and Swain (1980), strategic competence is useful in various circumstances as for instance, the early stages of second language learning where communicative competence can be present with just strategic and socio-linguistic competence.

This approach has been supported by other researchers, such as Savignon and Tarone. Thus, Savignon (1983) notes that one can communicate non-verbally in the absence of grammatical or discourse competence provided there is a cooperative interlocutor. Besides, she points out the *necessity* and the *sufficiency* for the inclusion of strategic competence as a component of communicative competence at all levels as it demonstrates that regardless of experience and level of proficiency one never knows *all* a language. This also illustrates the negotiation of meaning involved in the use of strategic competence as noted in Tarone (1981).

Another criterion on strategic competence proposed by Tarone (1981) for the speaker to recognize a meta-linguistic problem is the use of the strategies to help getting the meaning across. Tarone includes a requirement for the use of strategic competence by which the speaker has to be aware that the linguistic structure needed to convey his meaning is not available to him or to the hearer. As will be seen later, strategic

competence is essential in conversation and we argue for the necessity and sufficiency of this competence.

## 5. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING.

According to Hedge (2000), since the introduction of communicative approaches, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become one of the main goals in European Language Teaching. **The Council of Europe** (1998), in response to the need for international co-operation and professional mobility among European countries, has recently published a document, *Modern languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. A Common European Framework of reference*, in which the acquisition of communicative and pragmatic competence in a second language is emphasised. Both contributed strongly to the development of 'the communicative classroom', **increasing the emphasis on teaching the spoken language**.

Although students recognize the importance of developing communicative skills in the target language, they often have a passive attitude towards speaking in the classroom. Students generally have fewer problems in taking short turns, since they are required to give minimal responses to participate in a conversation with the teacher or classmates based on simple exchanges. They tend to be reluctant, however, to *expose* themselves in the classroom, making it very difficult to get them to speak at any length. My concern derives from the problem of how to **actually get learners speaking** in a meaningful way in the classroom.

The Spanish Educational System states that there is a need for learning a foreign language in order to communicate with other European countries, and a need for emphasizing the role of a foreign language which gets relevance as a multilingual and multicultural identity. Within this context, getting a proficiency level in a foreign language implies educational and professional reasons which justify the presence of foreign languages in the curricula at different educational levels. It means to have access to other cultures and customs as well as to foster interpersonal relationships which help individuals develop a due respect towards other countries, their native speakers and their culture. This sociocultural framework allows learners to better understand their own language, and therefore, their own culture.

The European Council (1998) and, in particular, the Spanish Educational System within the framework of the Educational Reform, establishes a common reference framework for the teaching of foreign languages, and claims for a progressive development of communicative competence in a specific language. Students, then, are intended to *be able to carry out several communication tasks with specific communicative goals within specific contexts*. In order to get these goals, several strategies as well as linguistic and discursive skills come into force in a given context. Thus, foreign language activities are provided within the framework of social interaction, personal, professional or educational fields.

Today, the area of spoken language studies is a rapidly growing research field, but it is still true that, for most languages in the world, detailed and comprehensive studies of spoken language are lacking. There is a great need for better general theories of the structure of spoken language and its function in human communication in different social activities.

Today, pronunciation teaching is experiencing a new resurgence, fuelled largely by the increasing awareness of the communicative function of suprasegmental features in spoken discourse (Brown and Yule 1983).

In the late 80's, researchers called for a more *top-down* approach to pronunciation teaching (Pennington 1989) emphasizing the broader, more meaningful aspects of phonology in connected speech rather than practice with isolated sounds, thus ushering pronunciation back into the communicative fold. Materials writers responded with a wealth of courses and recipe books focusing on suprasegmental pronunciation (Bradford 1988, Gilbert 1984, Rogerson & Gilbert 1990). A closer look at such materials, however, reveals that, with notable exceptions (Cunningham 1991), most commercially produced course books on pronunciation today present activities remarkably similar to the audiolingual texts of the 50's, relying heavily on mechanical drilling of decontextualized words and sentences. While professing to teach the more communicative aspects of pronunciation, many such texts go about it in a decidedly uncommunicative way. The more pronunciation teaching materials have changed, it seems, the more they have stayed the same.

## 6. CONCLUSION

To **conclude** with, I would like to say that speaking is a language skill that uses complex and intricate forms to convey meaning. In many ways, through its nature, it is the most difficult of all the language skills to study. Speech is where language is most instantly adaptable; it is where culture impinges on form and where second language speakers find their confidence threatened through the diversity of registers, genres and styles that make up the first language speaker's day to day interaction. Language represents the deepest manifestation of a culture, and people's values systems, including those taken over from the group of which they are part, play a substantial role in the way they use not only their first language but also subsequently acquired ones.

Students should be encouraged to talk from a very early stage since, from a *linguistic* point of view, as spoken language is relatively less demanding than written language. When promoting oral communication in the foreign language classroom, teachers should provide learners with the opportunity to interact in the L2, giving them genuine material which may rise their interests and contribute to conversation. Moreover, students should be provided with strategies and techniques to overcome the possible problems in communication. Conversational analysis gives a fascinating insight into the implicit communicative rules which guide our social interactions.

This unit is of relevant importance because language represents the deepest manifestation of a culture, and people's values systems, including those taken over from the group of which they are part and which play a substantial role in the way they use not only their first language but also subsequently acquired ones.

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