

THE 21ST CENTURY BREAKTHROUGH: SPECIFIC TECHNICAL SKILLS IN THE COMPETENCE IN LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION IN THE TEACHING- LEARNING PROCESSES IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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The digital age creates new forms of knowledge and therefore changes the educational system in an attempt to bring education and students' training closer to the new social demands. The mass media no longer include just the radio, the television or newspapers, but also include digital media in disseminating information. In this sense, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are new forms of expansion. In the Spanish context, the current educational legislation introduces basic competences understood as theoretic-practical knowledge that will enable students to solve everyday life situations. One of the eight basic competences of the Organic Act 2 / 2006, of 3rd May, of Education, is the linguistic competence in communication, particularly relevant in the development of communication skills. Given the importance of different objectives in Elementary school stage attributed to the area of Spanish Language and Literature, we consider it important to analyze possible ways to include new digital materials in order to develop this competence through the analysis of the language system elements. This research shows the development of the competence in linguistic communication in the analysis of media texts, in particular, of political discourse. The need to contribute to the formation of values and understanding of the political sphere in a nation requires the use of new media to motivate the student approximating him to current trends. Digital newspapers offer the possibility of working the basic competences, in particular, and especially, the competence in linguistic communication and the information processing and digital competence. Specifically, the analysis of discourse markers in media texts is presented.

Keywords: teaching-learning processes, basic competences, ICT, mass media, discourse markers, political discourse

The media are closely interrelated. On radio programmes the contents of the press and television programs are reviewed and discussed. Articles published in newspapers and magazines also tend to occur in a very summary form on television news programs. Consequently, it may be somewhat artificial to

reflect on the subject matter by considering each of these media separately. We consider it more interesting to dwell upon them together from two points of view that are inseparable because in reality they occur together: first, the contribution of social media to greater and better understanding between citizens of different European countries, which amounts to saying that the media can help achieve a more united Europe; secondly, there are also risks in a malicious, aggressive and damaging use of such media to the European Union. These are the two sides of the coin that we will try to examine here.

It is clear that the media have enormous power to create views from one country to another and about their own idea of the European Union. We understand that the main limitation that these media have as opinion-makers is the fact that we find a Europe with a variety of languages and the lack of knowledge of a second and a third language by many Europeans, as is the case among many of the Spaniards. The fact that French, English, Italian, German... newspapers are reaching our kiosks does not mean much if they are not read because these languages are unknown. For this same reason, neither can the broadcasts of other European countries be listened to. Curiously, this major obstacle of languages is less in the case of television, because, perhaps, that statement "a picture is worth a thousand words" is true. As regards the computer world, it seems that the English language is pre-eminent, on account of the U.S. technological power, and it is also assumed that all users know this language minimally to operate their computers (Eurydice, 2001). All this gives the Europeans varied information on European Community countries (Eurydice, 2010). But just as important or even more than such news are those which put on display images of industrial life, of the Stock Market, about fishing and agriculture,... because the latter speak of the level of economic development achieved by the different countries, which has implications for other members of the European Union.

Through the window to our Europe that the TV screen stands for, we are progressively forming an image of the various countries, which is like a glass of one colour or another with which we look our European fellow-citizens afterwards. We thus see, for example, a Germany educated and economically powerful, but also with problems of xenophobia.

Similarly, we see the cultural refinement of the British and their democratic tradition, contrasted against their continual refusal to return to Spain the controversial Rock of Gibraltar. That is, different TV channels offer us positive and negative aspects of neighbouring countries and, thanks to the small screen, even those inhabitants of remote villages in our country have references of nations which they have never visited, and come to form opinions about them, and with regard to what constitutes the European Union.

We must be able to distinguish what is real information from what is only personal interpretation or opinion. Thus, it should be noted that with regard to the European Union, some of these media are very favourable, tending to give a positive and pleasant idea regarding what this commitment to their respective countries means. However, other will insist upon more negative aspects, the risks of this way of understanding Europe. Both groups tend to value information according to their political beliefs and to the parties that also defend them (Buckingham, 2002). These differences between the responses of media to events happening in Europe, depending on the political ideology that everyone has, are seen mostly on economic issues, because money is still one of the issues that weigh more in European integration, to the point that "the Europe of merchants" has been intended to refer to a union between countries that aims to be much more than that.

Moreover, we must remember that these differences in the way to see Europe from the media get bigger when for example, the news given by newspapers from different countries on the same event are compared. So, when our country clashed with Canada on the issue of fishing for Greenland, the British newspaper "The Times" and the French "Le Monde" gave the news being more inclined to the Canadian side than to the Spanish, perhaps because both Britain as France wanted to appear as non-confronted with Canada, even if it meant not to support another European country, Spain, in its dispute with another located in the Americas.

However, both European newspapers and television channels have reported alike, coinciding in their comments, when dealing with matters in which the economic interests of different countries are not important because it is all about humanitarian issues. For example, the front pages of "The Times" or the "Daily Mirror", when they gave the news of the horrible massacre at the village school in Dunblane (Scotland), reflected the same horror as the French "Le Monde" or Spanish "El Mundo". I think that it is logical that regarding such dramatic issues there is total agreement among journalists, because there is no other concern than telling what happened in the best possible manner and without having to comply with political ideologies.

Digital media of social mass-media in the teaching-learning process

While the mass-media have been traditionally associated with the printing press, in twenty-first century society, with increasing frequency, these media are finding support in the Information and Communication Technologies (Marqués, 2000). If the conventional way to access news used to be through television and newspapers, ICT offer great opportunities for access to this information.

ICT are introduced in education with the Organic Act 2 / 2006, of 3rd of May, of Education, an act, moreover, that presents a dual challenge for the professionals of education. On the one hand, they face new challenges that arise in the classroom, the result of the growing multicultural population. On the other hand, they must be updated and trained in the new socio-educational demands. Educational reforms, new challenges to be faced by the teacher, student diversity, the necessary training of students to facilitate their incorporation into the world of work, the symbiosis education-profession, among other factors, promote the creation of the concept of basic competences.

This Act implements the concept of *basic competences*: "Of particular interest is the inclusion of basic competences, because it must allow a precise characterization of the training that students should receive" (Preamble of the Organic Act 2 / 2006, of 3rd of May, of Education). While the introduction of this expression meant drastic procedural changes at different stages of compulsory education, its implementation seems to have failed reaching that limit. The core competencies include expertise in the different curriculum content, globalizing knowledge and extending it to other facets of everyday life. A competence refers to the following: a) conceptual knowledge, b) procedural knowledge, c) attitudinal knowledge, d) metacognitive knowledge.

The evolution of the education system is a true reflection of the transformation of society. In the 70's, the focus was on developing the student's abilities. In the twenty-first century education should approach the

technological and sociological development (De Pablos, Area, Valverde & Correa, 2010), being necessary the introduction of the term *competence* in an attempt to reconcile education and society. To reach all this, the current education legislation prescribes the development of the curriculum project, included in the school policy, and also educational and didactic programming regarding the development of different expertise. Specifically, these competences, implemented in the 2007/2008 school year, aim at improving the teaching-learning process and at giving the student a comprehensive education. However, the incorporation of competences to the scope of education means not only changes at the organizational level, but also within the curriculum. It will require teachers to restore their learning processes, tailoring them to the current educational needs.

ICT are conceived not only as a resource, as a kind of communication, but also as a working tool (Area, 2004). In this sense, many schools are implementing various programs to work on basic competences, one of them, perhaps given priority, is the linguistic communicative competence. Therefore, the media find their place in ICT, thus being accessible through any Internet connection.

Far from modifying the curriculum structure of the education system, in daily practice teachers are constrained by the requirements of the Educational Authorities, but the development of basic competences continues to be the implementation of the old procedural contents. If until 2007, teaching schedules contemplated conceptual, procedural and attitudinal contents, now we shall currently find content and basic competences, which, although it apparently can raise the idea that in the classroom students are given a context before a theoretical explanation for a concept is provided, are still being acted upon in the same way.

However, the legislation promotes the introduction of methodological principles in order to develop basic skills in each of the stages of the educational system. Specifically, in the Autonomous Community of Aragon, the Aragonese Curriculum, in the Order of May 9th 2007, of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, by which the curriculum of Elementary education for the area of Spanish Language and Literature is specified, sets the goal of Elementary Education.

In this sense, the linguistic competence is part of the objectives of this stage of compulsory education, being understanding and spoken and written expression the priorities in language acquisition.

Learning a language involves acquiring the necessary linguistic competence to be able to be successfully involved in different situations of everyday life. So that students can learn a language, they must internalize not only those structures that enable them to communicate with others, but they must also acquire pragmatic elements that may facilitate their interaction. Therefore, teachers in Elementary Education stage should use materials that may encourage communication among the students and help them to develop their thinking. Those texts should somehow reflect social relations, political trends, economic situations, etc. That is, texts which are real, which occur in society, which are transmitted by the media. The closer the reality that we work upon in the classroom, the easier it is for students to acquire knowledge. In this way, the teaching of a language, even if is other than the mother tongue, is not confined to the teaching of grammar, but it includes pragmatic aspects. Linguistic competence can provide students with communication strategies that facilitate communication and expression.

It is important to examine the other competences that the current legislation implements, as long as they are interdisciplinary and can contribute to global education characteristic of this stage of compulsory

education. Of the eight competences established by legislation (linguistic competence, mathematical competence, competence in knowledge and interaction with the physical world, information processing and digital competence, social and civic competence, cultural and artistic competence, competence of learning to learn and autonomy and personal initiative) (Order 9th May 2007), the information processing and digital competence is very useful, especially in the area of Spanish language and literature. Not only for the endless amount of access to information that the student may have when working with texts in digital form, but also by the type of exercises that Information and Communication Technology can provide.

If we start with the assumption that the legislation states regarding the use acquired by new digital media, the introduction of such technologies in the teaching-learning area of Spanish language and literature, will result doubly motivating for students and beneficial for the teacher. In fact, the goals established by current legislation for the level of Elementary Education reflect this interest in increasing the use of media texts through digital media.

Considering the curricular requirements and objectives of Elementary Education in the area of Spanish language, the teaching-learning processes should be developed by integrating data processing and digital competence in texts that may enable them to develop their own linguistic skills (speaking and listening and writing). The media are in line with legislative requirements and form a broad text typology that makes it possible the teaching of a language by developing the different elements of the language system.

Development of linguistic competence in a social media: political discourse

Mass media require, for their teaching, the acquisition of pragmatic elements in order to proceed with their analysis and subsequent learning. Of all the possible options in the field of pragmatics, the analysis of political discourse is the most difficult to acquire at different stages of compulsory education, especially on account of the lack of the student's interest in reading newspapers. Therefore, we will indicate some specific techniques, some key pragmatic elements that will enable to proceed in the classroom with the development of an activity based on the analysis of social media (a political speech taken from a newspaper) in a digital format, so that students can point to the connectors, discourse markers and other pragmatic elements. This will help the student to improve his language proficiency especially in written texts.

First, we must pay attention to cohesion mechanisms that give coherence to the discourse (Anscombe & Ducrot, 1994). They are helpful when analyzing a speech or discourse because, not only do they condition it, but they also guide the inferences made in the communicative process, depending on their morpho-syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties.

However, despite the fact that *discourse markers* have morphological restrictions, –they are unchanged–, and syntactic –they are peripheral elements in utterances–, they are classified according to the instructions that they convey, be *argumentative*, –which determine the orientation of the arguments–, *of formulation* –that determine the understanding of the discourse members that they introduce and present them as an element that transmits the speaker's communicative intention–, and *informative* –they provide information on the distribution of comments (Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004).

Discourse markers are classified into three groups. First, those structuring information. Their function is to regulate the information organization of the statements, to bring information instructions. They may be classified, in turn, into various types. Commentators present the discursive member introduced as a new comment, for example, *He said that he would buy the gift, because he was talking to him*. Those of order indicate the place that a member has in the overall discourse, and they present the whole of that discourse as an only comment and every part of it as a sub-comment.

There are two types of discourse markers of order: the opening markers – they open a discursive sequence, for example, *"First, I must warn you of the danger it involves"* - and markers of continuity, indicating that the member which preceded them is a part of a series in which they are but of which they are not the first to appear, *"Secondly, let me thank you for the confidence placed in us"*. The digressive introduce a side comment regarding the planning of previous discourse, for example, *"He was telling what happened, by the way, what good taste he had to choose"*.

Second, semantic and pragmatic connectors relate semantically and pragmatically a member of the speech with a former member (Fraser, 1999). Depending on their meaning, there are three groups: The additive connectors: they join a member of earlier discourse with another with the same argumentative orientation and, in thus way, they provide help to reach the conclusion.

In turn, there are two types: additive connectors linking those members of speech that are arranged in a same scale, for example, *"He is tall, even more than me"* and those which do not meet that condition, *"He is tall, apart from that, he is fat"*. Consecutive connectors: they present the member of speech in which they are found as a result or consequence of a previous member, *"We were heading to his town, so we went to greet him"*. Counter argumentative connectives: they link two members of speech, so that the latter is presented as a suppressor of the first, *"He said that he was going to study, but the note spoke for itself"*.

Third, the reformulatory discourse markers: they present the member of speech in which they are found as a new formulation of what was intended to be communicated through a former member (Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Nordahl, 1998). The speaker feels the need to introduce the second segment of discourse, because he believes that he was not accurate enough in the transmission of information in the first segment. The term reformulatory comes from textual grammar, although the Geneva School, directed by Roulet, has studied these elements in depth. They involve reformulatory instructions. Four types are distinguished: 1) reformulated explanatory markers: they present the member of speech that they introduce as a reformulation that clarifies or explains what is meant by the former member, *"John has called; therefore, he is going to come"*, 2) amending reformulatory markers: they replace a first member incorrectly presented by another that improves it, *"He promised to fix it; rather, that he would buy a new one"*, 3) reformulatory markers of distance: they present as not relevant to the continuation of discourse a former member of the one who receives them. With them shows the new formulation is shown as the condition of this prosecution, *"He confessed in private; in any case, he shall do so when called to the stand"*, 4) restated summary markers: the member they present in their speech comes as a conclusion from a former member: *"He was thinking of moving, in short, that he was going to live in Madrid"*, d) discourse operators: their meaning determines the discursive possibilities of the member of speech in which they are included, but without relating it in meaning to another former member. There are three types: 1) reinforcement

markers: their meaning strengthens as an argument that member of speech in which they are found, and limit the other arguments as triggers for the conclusion, "For convenience, he said that he would not do so, and indeed he kept his word "; 2) concrete operators: they present the member of speech in which they are located as an example of a generalization, "The exam will have specific questions, e.g.: What are the characteristics of literary works written in England during the Tudor dynasty?"; 3) formulatory markers: the member of speech in which they appear is presented as a formulation that successfully conveys the speaker's intention, "She insisted that we read the prescription prospect, but she read it herself at the consultation visit"; e) contact control markers: they show the relationship between the participants of the conversation, and of those with their statements, and they justify and reinforce the arguments of the speakers. They accept morphological variation and combining ability. Calls to maintain contact or hortatory formulas would be an example: "Man, drive more carefully".

In addition to proceeding with the teaching of pragmatic elements, we should provide students with a foundation to facilitate the semantic and pragmatic description of discourse markers for their further analysis: the grammatical categories they belong to, –coordinating conjunctions (*and, but*) or subordinating (*though*), adverbs (*however, as well*) and interjections (*well, of course, good*)– because some aspects of their syntactic behaviour can thus be predicted, and therefore, their pragmatic interpretation may be facilitated. Hence they may assimilate the concept of a “discourse pragmatically costly to understand”: thus, to properly use a marker depends on the effort to find a context in which what is said may be easily understood (Kebrat-Orecchioni, 1980).

Finally, cohesion is another linguistic phenomenon to be worked upon at the stage of Elementary Education. Studying cohesion relations in a discourse entails to being able to achieve optimal relevance.

With reference to the mechanisms of cohesion and coherence, Escoriza (2000), proposes a different view of discourse. He presents an analysis of a political text, exploiting the possibilities it offers, like the persuasive intent or the predominant appellative function, taking into account mechanisms of coherence and cohesion. The intention of this author is to emphasize the variety of mechanisms of analysis that a text of these characteristics provides. In this aspect, for example, it studies the temporal deixis, the lexis –structuring it nominal chains–, the discourse particles –text functions signaled by markers or particles–, and the articulation of the text into theme and rheme.

Not only will we be concerned about discourse markers and textual coherence, but also about other elements such as deixis. Blas (2000) proposes a study of political discourse, in particular the electoral debate, focusing on the use of personal deixis by the Socialist President Felipe González and the opposition, represented by the figure of José María Aznar. He considers it an interesting and novel approach because previous approaches have studied speech acts, but have failed to focus on face to face electoral debates. The tradition of studies of speech acts has made it possible to understand that discourse is a series of very specific speech acts. For example, Baltar (2000) proposes an analysis of the use of speech acts. The stage is a television discourse – watching speech acts which are not polite (directives and assertive) as an instrument that prevents benefiting the interlocutor, rogatives or requests in order to gain the attention of participants, and assertive, where politeness is a strategic role. Baltar (2000) presents this use of speech acts as an essential mechanism used to achieve

maximum effectiveness in communication. The novelty of this article is that it affirms, according to Sperber and Wilson (1986).

Íñigo Mora (2000) rejects the approaches that tend to analyze the political discourse by taking into account only one perspective, either social or cognitive, and calls for an analysis focused on Relevance Theory and the theories of politeness. A particular view, not so much linked to Relevance Theory, but to the conversation analysis approach is Ruxandoiu (2000). He undertakes an analysis of turn-taking that two speakers belonging to different political groups, one of which is in power and the other in the opposition, tend to follow with the help of the moderator of political debates on television. The study presented by Troemel-Ploetz (1994) on strategies that women use when they are in positions of leadership is curious, understanding by leadership, not only the top position within a political party, but also situations where they have power, either by giving lessons, or interviewing someone, or even joking. The purpose of this study is to analyze how these conversational strategies, managed with great skill, lead female success towards leadership positions. Wortham (1996) also has been interested in the study of deixis in speech acts. He considers that the deictic elements give evidence that the reference is context-dependent, the latter being very important for the analysis of political discourse. Hymes (1972) focuses on the field of ethnography of communication. He looks for analysis tools that may allow to account for the interaction between language and social life. Being mindful of the diversity of relationships established between linguistic symbols and social meanings, he aims to provide models that may account for the variety of speech acts. He starts with the idea that in the social sciences there are two scientific methods of analysis: positivism, – which aims to assess quantitatively what is being studied– and ethnography –which wants to discover the world of the interpretations of people in a particular social scenario that they are building daily. Using ethnography as a scientific method, and linguistics as theoretical background, Hymes (1972) intends to analyze the relationships established in particular speech communities. He rightly asserts that language itself does not have the same values in all social settings, but this will depend on personal values.

Conclusion

The didactic tradition in the teaching-learning processes in the stages of compulsory education is changing. Educational legislation in Spain since 2006 has introduced substantial changes in the curriculum of subjects. If teachers should traditionally deliver a series of contents set by legislation, currently teaching should also cover the provision of theoretical and practical knowledge which will enable students to function in everyday life situations. For this, the Spanish educational administration in 2006 implemented the basic competences and afterwards the Autonomous Communities adapt them to their reality.

In the Autonomous Community of Aragón, located in north-eastern Spain, the eight basic competences training should be directed to the comprehensive development of the student, providing and facilitating him the application of knowledge acquired at the different stages of compulsory schooling to everyday situations. This means that the contents the teacher has to teach must be impregnated with the new requirements demanded by society. In this digital era, Information and Communication Technologies have a great impact and offer an unlimited array of teaching resources for use in the classroom. The knowledge society expands and the boundaries

between one type of knowledge and another (for example, mathematical and linguistic) tend to disappear. In this context, the work of the teacher must combine the teaching of the contents the levels set by legislation and the use of digital media that may allow students to acquire a real and lifelong learning. This digital age is accompanied by national programs that implement ICT in different stages of the educational system (“School Program 2.0”).

On the other hand, the teaching of the eight basic competences requires well-trained teachers, who are able to use varied educational material that enables and facilitates the student’s understanding of concepts and promotes interdisciplinary learning. The development of linguistic communicative competence may be accompanied by various technological media, which, although they may offer other forms of access to information and thus the development of student skills, also allow students to work at their own pace of learning.

The curriculum design established by the teacher in the classroom will influence the development of teaching-learning processes. There is no universal recipe or solution in Education from which it is possible to deal with problems that arise daily in the classroom. The teacher must constantly analyze the reality of his own classroom and go modifying his teaching schedule in terms of the student’s learning, in terms of his formative evaluation. Only then significant learning is achieved, which is real and comprehensive for the student.

The teaching of specific content (e.g., discourse markers in the development of linguistic, communicative competence) must be accompanied by educational materials that allow students to make connections with other concepts and which increase their motivation for learning. Generally, social media use language difficult to understand for students of the Primary Education stage. For this reason, to introduce into the classroom activities that approach students to their social, political and economic reality, with texts adapted to their level, with the help of the teacher and with the necessary supplementary and reference material, contributes to the acquisition of competence in linguistic communication in the area of Spanish Language and Literature.

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