

Nurturing Learners' Communicative & Met communicative Potential First Year LMD Students at Djillali LIABES University as a Case Study

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Introduction

When people communicate, they do more than exchanging information (Sanford & Roach 1986); they use metaknowledge about interpersonal relationships and the nature of communication to manage the dialogue (Roach & Nickson, 1986). When two interactants engage in a dialogue, one necessary task is to regulate the relationship between them. Communication theorists state that when people talk, they communicate on at least two different levels simultaneously: at the most direct level, they communicate the content of the utterances; and also at a more subtle level they communicate their wants and perceptions. This second level of communication is called metacommunication (Watzlawick et al 1967).

It is quite interesting that before behavioural scientists began to wonder about these aspects of human communication, computer engineers had come across the same problem in their work. It became clear to them that when communicating with an artificial organism, their communications had to have both report and command aspects. For instance, if a computer is to multiply two figures, it must be fed this information (the two figures) and information about information: the command multiplies them.

Among the most productive areas for application of this perspective has been the study of field language development, where it includes „discovery of how cultures themselves shape acquisition „ (Hymes 1987:224), and the study of classroom interaction in relation to community patterns of communication. Scholars in the field foreign / second language teaching generally use the term “communicative competence” in a narrower sense, which means the ability to use language appropriately in communicative interaction.

This paper intends to display an in-depth analysis about communicative and metacommunicative abilities at the pioneers of the new system called LMD which means (Licence.Master.Doctorate) implemented within the Algerian university recently. It raises equally the problematic of rigid interaction between the speech partners in the classroom environment (the teacher and his/ her learners) and all what can break down the interactive process. Flexible interaction might allow smooth delivery and an ease to monitor the speech. Hence, the feasibility of

adopting a combination between nurturing communicative competence and using metacommunication is targeted throughout this research study.

1.1.Literature review

In order to speak a language correctly, one does not need to learn its vocabulary and grammar, but also the context in which words are used. In this way, the American anthropologist, (**Dell Hymes June 10, 2004**) presents what he calls the SPEAKING model of speech analysis: In the SPEAKING model the following aspects of the linguistic situation are considered:

S: Setting and Scene: The setting refers to the time and place while the scene describes the environment of the situation.

P: Participants: This refers to who is involved in the speech including the speaker and the audience .

E: Ends: The purpose and goals of the speech along with any outcomes of the speech.

A: Acts Sequence: The order of events that took place during the speech.

K: Key: The overall tone or manner of the speech.

I: Instrumentalities: The form and style of the speech being given.

N: Norms: defines what is socially acceptable at the event.

G: Genre: The type of speech that is being given.

Hymes was inspired by Noam Chomsky's distinction on linguistic competence and performance. He proposed that we should study the knowledge that people have when they communicate, what he calls communicative competence. It tells you whether an utterance is appropriate or not within a situation. According to **Chomsky (1965)** linguistic theory is primarily about the language of an ideal speaker – hearer in a completely homogenous speech community who knows its language perfectly, and unaffected by grammatically irrelevant conditions, such as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying this knowledge of the language in actual performance

Hymes coined the term “communicative Competence” in 1966, in a proposal to broaden the scope of knowledge and skills embodied in Noam Chomsky's definition of linguistic competence (**Chomsky 1965**). Hymes argued that speakers who were able to produce all the grammatical sentences of a language would be institutionalized if they went about trying to do so without consideration of appropriate contexts of use, and of the socially and culturally determined norms for production and interpretation .Hymes's proposal was quickly adopted both by sociolinguists and by applied linguists in the field of foreign/second language instruction.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, CC entails the linguistic knowledge, the interactive skills, and the cultural knowledge as it was demonstrated so far. This broad scope of communicative competence takes into account not only the language code and its referential meaning, but also how discourse is constructed

and organized in different contexts as well as the speaker's knowledge and role (relationships within the society).

The amplification of language study demands that we reconceive how we approach metalinguistic and metacommunicative issue since "word and meaning" are not pre-existing super – concepts. The focus is on the uses to which English speakers on the one hand, and linguistic theorists, on the other, the analysis will therefore serve as an example of the more general contrast between how an average person and how a professional linguist treats metalinguistic messages.

If speakers can readily make sense of metaphorical expressions, then it would seem that they are obviously not interpreting such expressions on the basis of the literal context. Thus, the understanding of metaphors is no less than the understanding of individual words, cultures, and contexts. Identity of meaning and word interpretation can be highlighted by the sense they convey, or the implicit entailments that could generate.

In stead, deliberately asking speakers questions about wordhood provides a means whereby necessary forms of social and communicative knowledge (imagined, stereotypical or real) can be brought to the surface and articulated in a form that becomes researchable **McGregor (1990)** writes, such knowledge "Could only have been deduced or based on guess from necessary forms of social and linguistic knowledge, Whether this knowledge was based on real or imagined interactional experience" (108).

Hamilton & Barton (1983) conclude that the use of the metalinguistic terms was frequently idiosyncratic and that people gave the impression that they had picked up isolated pieces of information and terminology as they progressed through school.

Since what people think language is, how it works, informs linguistic behaviour, this research has highlighted the relevance that words (or rather words about words) have for the language users themselves. This involves looking at, not as an abstract, invariant, concept meaning, but rather what is metalinguistically meaningful for individual language – users in particular situations.

1.2 Research questions

The study intends to answer the following research questions:

1. How could we activate the learners' communicative abilities?
2. Is there a way to raise their metacommunicative awareness?
3. Is the combination between nurturing communicative competence and using metacommunication conducive to flexible teacher-student interaction?

1.3 Research hypotheses

The formulated hypotheses are as follows:

1. We predict that the activation occurs by adopting some impulsive approaches.
2. The provision of a genuine situational atmosphere might converge with their

metacommunicative awareness.

3. The combination has a pivotal importance in conducting to symbiotic teacher-student interaction.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The target population is 1st year LMD, a promotion of 60 university students. They are learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), are native speakers of Algeria, and study at Djillali LIABES university of Sidi Bel -Abbes. Their age range is between seventeen and nineteen .LMD students are selected on the basis of their availability, because all of them have had good, sometimes excellent scores in English in the Baccalaureate examination. As a first promotion belonging to the LMD system, it was a prerequisite for acceding to the new experiment. In order to follow an empirical path, two tools sustain this modest research: a questionnaire and an interview. They comprise four sections; each section entails questions and topics of discussion respectively. Overall, they turn around the broad educational spectrum and yield to a cluster of implications to be interpreted in the coming interpretations.

2.2. Tools

In both the questionnaire and the interview addressed to the target population, students did not know in advance which topic would be selected and they had no choice in the matter. If topics were given in advance, it would lead to attempts at rote –learning a topic, consequently, to unnatural responses. In order to be equipped with an absolute fairness vis-à-vis the respondents; they were given enough time to process the language then performing the final deliveries.

3. Procedures

Spontaneous university conversations are in fact a good place to deal with naturalistic observation of spoken interaction. A general problem in discourse analysis is that students look at data and do not know what to say. There are so many things which might be commented on: a great range of phonological, lexical or syntactic features, as well

paralinguistic and non verbal behaviour. All of which can contribute to conversational organization. When almost anything might be relevant, we need some way of focusing the attention. The questionnaire and the interview administered for LMD learners triggered several mechanisms and made them at work. The learners could show that they are in communicative touch and able to adapt their language and their linguistic knowledge according to situations. In order to approach them linguistically, it seems relevant to introduce the students' ability to use language under the umbrella of "Communicative Language Ability". Thus communicative ability has become a goal and communicative practice in its turn has become part of classroom procedure. In this respect the components of CLA, as identified by a number of researchers.

4. Results

4.1. Oral Achievements

a. Interview Revelations

LMD participants demonstrated different sometimes divergent attitudes and replays towards the proposed topics. Attitudes mean metamessages to express their easiness or uneasiness vis-à-vis the tackling or the extension of certain topics. They managed to metacommunicate successfully their tendencies and embarrassments. The interview generated some immanent linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours encapsulated in grammatical, verbal and non-verbal, and translation ability levels of treatment.

4.2. Written Achievements

b. Questionnaire Revelations

As a matter of reinforcement, a questionnaire was administered to find out the latent abilities and lacks of the target population. Respondents replayed amply in conversational skills, vocabulary enrichment, and in receptivity rate, but they were a bit economic in the debating point. In fact some of them avoided displaying their view points and going further in the last part of the section.

5. Discussion

The ability to communicate effectively in English is now a well – established goal in E.L.T. However, students can identify personal needs to communicate in spoken and written English and seek opportunities to perform and improve in the target language. Even in an improvised atmosphere, learners might be offered a multitude of settings where they can learn a lot. **Abbs and Freebrain (1986)** emphasize on this point “ To be able to operate effectively in the real world, students need plenty of opportunity to practice language in situations which encourage them to communicate their needs, ideas and opinions ” (1).

The concept of what is meant to know a language and to be able to put that knowledge to use in communicating with people in a variety of settings and situations. One of the earliest terms of this concept was communicative competence (**Hymes 1972**). It encompasses the social and cultural knowledge needed in order to understand and use linguistic forms. This view therefore entails not only knowledge but also ability to put that knowledge into use in an authentic communication.

The first urge and need for the learners as noticed is to perceive and understand the utterance i.e. to answer implicit questions of: What did the teacher say? And what does it mean? Then, he/she proceeds to decipher it, this means that the interpretative machine starts. Perceiving and understanding the utterance complete the communication cycle, without completing the basic cycle, very little learning will take place.

Assimilating the language system requires that students understand and retain its functional rules and units in deep memory for future use in producing and performing new utterances.

The assimilation of the system does not require that all the rules be made explicit, since many are acquired without conscious realization, but it does require that the system be assimilated for functional use. The development of the basic skills, skill means facility and ease to use the language for communication in order to carry on the linguistic functions simultaneously with intentional thinking. The learner performs at the skill stage before we can say that the language has been mastered. The typical use of language involves analyzing, socializing, obtaining, and giving information through which several mechanisms are activated. The learners can thus show that they are in communicative touch and able to adapt their language and their linguistic knowledge according to situations and encounters.

6. Conclusion

This paper has considered the nurturance of metacommunicative awareness at EFL learners as well as accounting their communicative potential. It was committed to present three research questions and three hypotheses as well. The answers started with the possibility of activating the students' communicative abilities, in parallel, it displayed ways to raise their metacommunicative awareness; and the feasibility of adopting a combination between nurturing communicative competence and using metacommunication which might be conducive to harmonious teacher-student interaction. The combination can offer flexible interaction and may equip the learner with a cluster of convergent pilot learning reflexes: as the ability to understand linguistic structures and vocabulary. Moreover, it allows the development of the ability to relate the linguistic forms to appropriate non- linguistic knowledge, in order to interpret the specific functional meaning intended by the teacher.

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