Open Access| Peer Reviewed

SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING TO JOURNALISM STUDENTS: SECRETS BEHIND LANGUAGE GRAMMAR

Teacher: Khalikova Dildora Shakirjanovna

Uzbek State World Languages University

English faculty -3, The English methodology department

Abstract: As a field of study that involves the interaction of both language and society, sociolinguistics has contributed to help foreign language teaching achieve a greater understanding of the nature of language, as well as its manifestations, along with the understanding of the nature of society. The idea above mentioned has implied better preparation on the foreign language teacher's part, and a more complete and complex exposure to the target language and the evolving factors in it, on the students' part. Nevertheless, it is important to question whether both teachers and students' sociolinguistic competence and performance are balanced enough to determine if the people they interact, teach and learn from are salient 'knowers' and users of the language

Key words: Competence, language, teaching, sociolinguistics, grammar, knowledge

The idea of competence and performance arose as Chomsky's generative grammar theory appeared. Chomsky defined competence as the grammar one knows without being necessarily aware of it (linguistic knowledge); whereas performance was defined as the way people use that linguistic knowledge when communicating (Coupland, et al 1997).

In terms of sociolinguistics, competence and performance could be defined as follows: Competence is the knowledge of a language grammar as well as the factors behind it (connotation, levels of formality, style, register, among others). Performance is the actual use of the sociolinguistic knowledge one possesses when interacting in society (Hudson, 1988). However, for the purpose of this paper, we will only focus on sociolinguistic competence.

It has been said that it does not matter how well a person knows a language's grammar, if he or she does not know how it must be used for successful communication, or how people use it in their native environment. Disadvantages between language learners and native speakers become evident when learners have only been presented with artificial, outdated situations that offer limited or null information on how the language is used at the time it is being learned. E.g. Let us consider a Spanish textbook that includes passages depicting Mexican contexts involving Nuevos Pesos (as Mexican currency was denominated after the

big 1994 devaluation, while it is currently called Peso). If a Spanish teacher were to use such textbook in the present, not only would the learning environment not be current, but also irrelevant. The example above mention superficially demonstrates the information that might hinder a learners' progress, but if one dug deeper, one might find expressions that are no longer used as well.

Grammar makes language work, but it does not provide all the meanings deposited in concepts that exists in different contexts due to different styles, degrees of formality, and language varieties (Hudson, 1988). Language is social, people form society, and it is within this system where language becomes riches, undergoes evolution and contributes to the creation of knowledge. Thus, while it might seem a rather optimistic thought, aiming a language appropriately should eventually contemplate the idea of willing to participate in the creation of new understandings within the social core of the culture where the language is spoken.

Language learners encounter fragments of knowledge at all times: every time that they learn how to state a hypothesis, a possibility and to refute a statement, for example, they are being active participants in the consolidation of the shared knowledge in the classroom. Thus, language and the act of learning a foreign language for the journalistic purposes will cause learners to question their convictions and already learned information; the extent to which they use their own language correctly, and will also enable them to visualize how the students of journalism can use the language they are using and their mother tongue to communicate new ideas.

Thus, in order to have successful performance, the students of journalism have to become aware of the vast possibilities in which communication is taking place. Learners need to be sensitive to the contexts to which their linguistic knowledge has prepared and readied them; they have to be conscious of the potential contribution they can make by simple using language effectively; and most importantly, the students of journalism must be intuitive of the ways in which one interaction will take them to a plateau where different interactions will occur. As it can be seen, sociocultural competence goes beyond grammar, connotation, levels of formality, style, register. It is neatly a power that stimulates knowledge and empowers learners to co-construct new paradigms through communication.

At this point, it is important to question how well the students of journalism use the knowledge they possess; how prepared they are to embrace new knowledge; whether they can be perceptive enough to realize they have come across new knowledge; and whether the language classroom can host the production of such knowledge. The most obvious appreciation one can make is that knowledge will emerge in the environment where its structure is addressed (facts, examples, details, hypothesis, thesis, etc); and since certain language structures can directly promote addressing elements of knowledge structure (second conditional in English can be used to study hypothesis), one can logically think that a language classroom that invites and welcomes reality and information beyond the learners' mother culture and that of the

language they are learning, will certainly have scope to help the students of journalism use language for greater purposes than classroom communication.

By using language as a means to communicate while exploring different scenarios, the students of journalism will observe how meaning happens, how language changes to accommodate new discoveries, how language transforms according to social movements, and how language will always be ready to be a significant tool when innovating. For example, how many languages have a word for 'software'? In Spanish we use the words as it is for there is no official term yet; how has the meaning of the word gay changed from Shakespeare's times to the present? How will scientist name different inventions? And how will one know when using X word is no longer appropriate?

As it can be seen, consolidated sociolinguistic competence will serve as the foundation for the students of journalism to be able to change as language evolves. While it is not easy to visualize how a language's grammar has such a strong impact on the learning of new information, one can simply see how tenses affect the information and data we acquire, which, in other words, explains how real, true information can be erroneously conveyed, hence hindering one's quality of knowledge. Let us observe these statements where wrong grammar or a specific element of sociolinguistic competence is wrongly used:

Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California are part of Mexico- Correctly structured sentence but wrong fact caused by the incorrect use of the tense.

Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California were part of Mexico- correct statement and fact, with correct tense.

(To a senior professor, in Mexico, in Spanish) Explica por favor nuevamente! – correct request in terms of tense and structure, but inappropriate in terms of social context, degree of formality and verb form choice. The correct form should be: Explique por favor nuevamente! The use of third person singular in Spanish can be used to denote formal you – usted.

From the three examples above, while a limited appreciation, one can see how sociolinguistic competence does have a significant role in the way language is used to communicate, to interact, share and acquire new knowledge. For this reason, while interaction with native speakers might be a reliable tool that will help learners understand the way language is used in a sociolinguistically successful manner, experimenting with different situations and with a wide range of information might also help students devise means to use their sociolinguistic knowledge to fulfill the needs of the situation the students of journalism are presented with.

As discussed previously, materials specifically generated to teach a foreign language can superficially help the teaching-learning process to explore relevant and significant language use beyond the way native speakers utilize it. Likewise, it has been argued that while direct exposure and immersion in the target language can further enhance learners' skills, it is also the quality of information being addressed what will help construct different learning

scenarios where grammar structures, subject-specific terms and a wide range of structures be used in order to communicate ideas that matter.

Upon stating the above, it is important to point out that language classes based on books or with limited explorations are purposeless. It is recognized that teachers encounter several complications and difficulties when attempting to prepare a class architecture that favors the presence of those sociolinguistic elements that will allow students to become linguistically and culturally aware. It is even clear how having a native speaker as a teacher does not guarantee a fully successful exposure to all the societal and linguistic traits that can help learners develop language skills that will render interactions that will handle knowledge.

Thus, in order to transform the foreign language class into an environment where the students of journalism will become acquainted with ideas and information that will enrich their backgrounds and will nurture their linguistic potential, it is important to regard the foreign language class not as the fountain from which students will drink off knowledge, but as the glass of water that will help quench their thirst. In other words, as a simple stage for students still have to test the language skills and the information they have acquired in the real world, in their own significant context, and with the people who are relevant to them. The focus, it is important to note, is that students own their language, their skills and the information they acquire and it is only them who will witness how effective their learning has been.

This paper has handled sociolinguistic competence beyond the definition initially offered for the students of journalism. Yet, considering the elements this concept embodies, one can see how difficult and practically futile it would be to address those items (grammar, connotation, levels of formality, style, register) in isolation for it is their togetherness and intimate link what nuances language purpose, intention and meaning. Each of these fundamentals is an ingredient that contributes to the general picture of a given language, to the value system that exist in it, to the degrees of truth it handles, to the systems in which concepts are associated within it. In other words, that is why those essentials, altogether, help define language as an instrument of knowledge.

Clearly, information exists in different and diverse formats, and this represents an advantage in the foreign language class, as each of these presentations is a resource for the skills that practiced in class. For example, audio-recorded data are great exemplars for listening comprehension; historical printed documents (or newspapers) are outstanding reading comprehension; scientific and technological developments recorded in multimedia are great scenarios for oral and written debates. These examples are clear illustrations of the way language is used to study, document, question and write about the nature of our evolving society.

For this reason, as a conclusion, it is important to note that learning a language includes learning everything behind the language and beyond the grammar. Thus, conversely, the gradual language acquisition and development transform students into learners and modifiers of information that will inevitably gain knowledge other than linguistic for, ultimately,

language, the way it is used, and how it transforms culture is knowledge that transcends a specific subject, in essence.

The list of used literature:

1. Coupland, Nikolas and Adam Jaworsky (1997) Sociolinguistics. St Matin's Press: NY Hudson, R. (1988) Sociolinuistics. OUP
2. Trudgill, P. (editor) (1984) Applied Sociolinguistics. Academic Press, London
3. Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, fast and slow. London: Penguin.