



THE TEACHING OF THE FIRST (OR MOTHER TONGUE) LANGUAGE AS A CONTINUATION AND EXTENSION OF THE NATURAL WAY OF ACQUIRING IT: THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TEACHING METHOD COMPATIBLE WITH THE SPECIFICITY AND DYNAMICS OF THE LINGUISTIC PHENOMENON

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Abstract

The rapid progress that has been made in the field of linguistics, especially since the late 20th century, has led to a deeper and more substantial knowledge of language, resulting in the gradual emergence of new data both in the field of the general conception and interpretation of the linguistic phenomenon, as well as at the level of its analysis and description. These developments have also directly influenced the field of applied linguistics since, among other things, they have also created a series of favorable conditions for further improvement and modernization of the field of language teaching. With regard specifically to the case of the first communication code, we believe that the appropriate exploitation of the dynamic nature of language and especially of the period during which the process of language acquisition takes place, can lead to the creation of a new and more effective teaching model and this is the direction in which the present work primarily moves.

Keywords

First Communication Code, Form, Content, Language Acquisition, Holistic Nature of The Language Phenomenon, Dynamic Model of Language Teaching, Grammatical Sentences, Utterances

Introduction

Modern linguistic research, with its systematic penetration into the depths of the linguistic phenomenon, has demonstrated that language constitutes a broad, complex and multidimensional phenomenon which is organically linked to key areas of human life and which harmoniously combines a series of contrasts/distinctions such as limitation and the possibility of choices, regularity and anomaly, objective relationship and convention, system and use, form and meaning, synchrony and diachrony, right and wrong, formal and common, structure and function, grammatical sentence and pronunciation, etc. Despite the fact that there are still some unclear issues of the phenomenon, we believe that today we have a more complete picture of language, which provides a series of new data to applied linguistics and in particular to the field of language teaching, so that it can intervene effectively at the level of teaching practice. More specifically, while older teaching models limited their focus mainly to the production of grammatically correct speech, today, and indeed following the findings and recent findings of linguistic science that the communicative approach has implemented to a significant extent, the center of gravity has shifted to cultivating the ability to use language functionally, that is, to the pursuit of producing communicatively effective speech by exploiting the data of the environment to the maximum extent possible from the subject's point of view. Environment is defined as the set of conditions under which a linguistic message is produced and by which it is influenced. These conditions include both the communication situation and broader social and cultural factors. In fact, this broadening of the boundaries of the linguistic phenomenon seems to concern primarily the content, since the final meaning of each of the form elements used in speech emerges each time as a

result of a series of factors that are outside the grammatical system. This organic relationship of linguistic elements with external reality demonstrates that language does not constitute a static system of rules, as was believed in the past, but a dynamic set of co-functioning elements that is in constant flux, that interacts with the environment and that is characterized by a tendency for continuous evolution.

In contrast to the teaching models of the past, the modern scientific perception treats language as a creative action or energy, that is, as a naturally dynamic process, a finding that emerged largely as a result of the discovery of the processes by which language acquisition takes place in the family and close social environment of the child during the first years of his life. We believe that the knowledge acquired so far of the processes and stages that language acquisition goes through could, under specific conditions, lead to further improvement of the communicative model by adding complementary principles and teaching techniques that will be more compatible with the natural way of acquiring language. In short, since we know that normal individuals acquire their language through a specific process that has been scientifically studied and described with relative adequacy, then language teaching not only cannot ignore this process, but must follow it and exploit it appropriately, so that the school continues and accelerates the normal pace and manner of acquisition. This means, however, that in the case where the teaching method is not compatible with the nature of the language and, therefore, differs significantly from the normal way of acquiring it, it is bound to make it difficult and often hinder the further course of learning it, instead of facilitating and accelerating it. The above leads to the conclusion that the applied linguistics of our time must aim to improve the terms of the communicative model and specifically the scheme “language ► environment” must be expanded and take the form of “directed individual effort ► language ► environment”, which presupposes, among other things, the active involvement of the individual/student in the process of acquisition, the comprehensive course of which will largely arise as a result of his/her personal participation. Based on this renewed approach and aiming in this very direction, the present work is divided into two main parts, of which the first, entitled “Language as a dynamic and complex phenomenon”, provides the theoretical data that demonstrate the dynamic nature of the linguistic phenomenon, while the second, entitled “Language acquisition and language teaching”, refers to issues of applications and exploitation of recent theoretical data in the field of didactic applications.

1. Language as a dynamic and complex phenomenon

1.1 System and use

One of the main contributions of synchronic linguistics is considered to be the fact that it suggested a series of important distinctions for the linguistic phenomenon, which were necessary both due to the breadth of the phenomenon and due to the variety of its functions. Of these distinctions, we consider that the most important and at the same time the most useful for our case is the distinction between language as a system and use, for which we must make the following remarks:

First. Language becomes noticeable to speakers exclusively through use and indeed in the form of skill. In particular, language use, also known as the constitutional dimension of language, constitutes the visible, that is, the only accessible side of the phenomenon and consists of four individual skills, which as is known are listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Second. Language as a use is infinite and it is precisely this possibility of infinite production that raises the logical question of how speakers are able to master a phenomenon that has no limits. The answer to this question is that behind the infinity of uses there is a code consisting of given linguistic elements and combinatory rules according to which these elements are structured to compose messages, that is, to produce discourse. These elements and rules coexist and co-operate on an internal level known as the paradigmatic dimension. And while these elements have limits, that is, they are finite and therefore attainable, their combinatory possibilities based on the rules are infinite. Therefore, this finite set of elements and combinatory principles that provides us with the possibility of infinite linguistic production, constitutes a functional whole that is scientifically characterized as a linguistic system. In short, the general conclusion is that the infinity of uses is not identical with the linguistic system but constitutes the result of its operation as well as the appropriate exploitation of its principles (Mitsis 2015).

Third. The linguistic system, as an internal/psychological phenomenon, is not directly accessible to the senses and we could say that it constitutes the invisible side of language which is always approached indirectly, that is, hypothetically assumed based on the linguistic behavior of the subjects who know and use the language code. In short, the systematic organization of language, also known as the paradigmatic dimension, is perceived exclusively and only through the constitutional one and this simply means that the only path that can lead us to comprehensive knowledge, and therefore an adequate description of the internal linguistic organization, is to resort to the field of linguistic use.

Fourth. The previous findings make it clear that the process of linguistic acquisition has as its starting point the use of language. That is, each speaker, relying on the stimuli he receives from his linguistic environment and

with the contribution of the innate linguistic/mental structures that exist in humans, gradually reduces himself to the system of his language, which means that he creates, in an intuitive way, this internal mechanism which subsequently allows him to perceive but also to produce grammatically correct speech at the level of use (Mitsis 2004 & 2015). The whole process begins with use and ends there, creating and subsequently strengthening the intermediate level of the system, namely the field of organization and functional connection of linguistic elements according to the principles of the specific code. Under these conditions, it becomes clear that the constitution of the system presupposes the intervention of use while, at the same time, resorting to linguistic use presupposes the possession of the corresponding system. This close interdependence demonstrates that between the language system and language use there is a direct response and a special dialectical relationship, within the framework of which each of these two areas influences and is simultaneously influenced, feeds and is fed by the other, with the result that this dynamic process gradually leads speakers/users to an increasingly deeper and more complete language acquisition.

1.2 *Language as a combination of form and content*

Human language as a code for producing messages and a basic means of communication, constitutes primarily a mechanism for creating and transmitting meanings, i.e. a carrier of meanings (Chomsky 1984, Mitsis 2012 & 2015, Mwihaki 2004, Swan 2007). However, meanings are, as is well known, immaterial entities and in order to be able to be realized, they must acquire sensory content, i.e. be transmitted through an auditory or visual linguistic symbol which will represent them. Consequently, the necessity of the realization of meanings, i.e. the material rendering of the content of language, necessitates the existence of form, i.e. specific material means or types with which meanings can be declared and transmitted. The simultaneous presence and close interdependence of these elements in language, known as the relationship of form and content, constitutes, according to the findings of modern linguistics, an asymmetrical and complex process. In short, this means that one and the same meaning is not exclusively represented by a single element of form and, conversely, one and the same element of form does not exclusively denote a single meaning, as can be seen in the following example from the Greek language:

Relationship between form and content in language

(a) meaning:

“I divide a solid body into smaller pieces”

corresponding forms with which it is expressed:

/cut, separate, divide, mince, chop, slice, dismember, fragment / etc.

(b) form element/type:

/κόβω/ corresponding meanings of this element:

- (i) “divide a solid body into smaller pieces” (κόβω “cut” the bread)
- (ii) “reject a test subject” (κόβω “cut” the driving test)
- (iii) “reduce” (κόβω “cut” expenses)
- (iv) “cut in film” (κόβω “cut” scenes from the film)
- (v) “stop doing something” (κόβω “cut” the drink)
- (vi) “discourage somebody from doing something” (κόβω “cut” someone’s appetite)
- (vii) “buy” (κόβω “cut” a banknote/ticket)
- (viii) “alter and get moldy” (κόβω “cut” the milk/soup) etc.

We summarize by saying that language, as a broader system, has two individual systems or subsystems, one of which concerns the dimension of form and is called grammar, while the second, which concerns the dimension of meaning, is known as vocabulary. These subsystems are intertwined with each other in a complex and at the same time irregular way, creating a multi-level network that operates in constant interdependence with the data of the environment. More specifically, taking as a basis the example we mentioned above, it is understood that the successive attribution each time of a new meaning has the result of the word “cut” being included in another level of relations where it coexists with a new series of synonyms and antonyms, thus acquiring a different function or assuming a more specific use. E.g. in case (ii), its semantic field includes as synonyms elements such as: reject, do not promote, do not pass, etc., while in case (iii) it includes as synonyms elements such as: reduce, limit, shrink, restrict, etc.

The general conclusion is that words do not function as isolated or one-dimensional elements but are inscribed and correlated within the framework of a complex and multi-faceted holistic structure with the dynamics of which we must familiarize our students in a planned and methodical manner.

1.3 *Language and environment*

One of the most important developments that occurred towards the end of the 20th century in the science of language was the formation of a new model of description and analysis of language, known as the communicative approach. The proponents of this model, by emphasizing the function of communication, led linguistic research to gradually connect language with factors that are outside it (Gardner 2008, Hedge 2000, Hewings A. & Hewings M. 2005, Mitsis 2004, 2015 & 2020, Newby 1998). Therefore, according to communication theory, one of the main factors that contributes to the final interpretation of messages and, obviously, greatly influences the linguistic choices of speakers is the environment. In applied linguistics, the term environment refers to a series of factors that, without being fully integrated into the language system, nevertheless significantly influence the communication process. These factors are grouped into four levels and appear in the following forms (Hewings & Hewings 2005, Mitsis 2020):

- (i) linguistic environment
- (ii) paralinguistic environment
- (iii) situational environment or communication circumstance
- (iv) broader social and cultural environment

A linguistic environment is defined as the set of linguistic elements of the same form that occur together in the same unit of speech together with the specific element of interest to us. The linguistic environment is usually attributed to current language with the term context.

Paralinguistics is defined as a series of diverse phenomena which, while accompanying speech production, are not, however, part of the language system and therefore cannot be described with precision. This category includes intonation (or pitch movement), i.e. the varying oscillation of the voice (known as tone of voice/pitch movement) by which a series of information is transmitted such as question, curiosity, surprise, admiration, doubt, hesitation, approval, disapproval, threat, friendly, hostile or erotic mood, intimacy, irony, etc. To this category we must also add facial expressions and body movements, especially of the hands. These elements add to the purely linguistic message a series of additional information which the listener must decode and perceive adequately to achieve communication (Mitsis 2004).

As a situational environment or communication circumstance, we define the set of extralinguistic factors that are present during communication and contribute directly to the choice of form and the formation of the meaning of the message. The most important of these factors are the following: The interlocutors and their relationships, the place in which the communicative event takes place, the subject of communication, the purpose or goal of communication (i.e. the reason for which the individuals in question communicate), the method of communication (physical conversation, telephone contact, use of an artificial medium such as a computer, communication via written text, etc.) and the type of text.

Finally, by the term broader social and cultural environment we mean a series of principles and data of a social and cultural nature that contribute to the formation and interpretation of messages while at the same time determining their degree of social acceptance. This is of course the case because language is used according to rules that have been set in advance within the context of the linguistic community and which reflect forms of behavior that are expected by society.

More specifically, members of social groups are required to follow certain general standards or rules of behavior that have been organically integrated into their linguistic production. This means that the use by a speaker of linguistic structures or elements that are not in harmony with the respective communication and situation, that is, that violate general social rules, constitutes an unacceptable reaction, which is usually perceived as rudeness, indiscretion or offensive action, even when the language used is absolutely correct from a grammatical point of view. In short, linguistic behavior constitutes social behavior, because language contains and reflects principles, values, rules, laws and mentalities that characterize the social whole in its various manifestations, that is, in the economic, social, political, cultural, etc. field. Therefore, the correct use of language depends to a significant extent on adherence to the basic principles of the respective culture, that is, the particular way in which the specific linguistic community approaches and perceives, as we will see in the relevant chapter, the world, things and human relationships.

1.4 *Broadness and diversity: Reference to the multiple manifestations of linguistic variety*

Language in general constitutes a code, a means that is used primarily to satisfy specific needs of the linguistic community, the most important of which is the achievement of communication. However, the linguistic system as a use is not realized everywhere and always in the same way since, as is known, the basic characteristic of social organization is heterogeneity and differentiation. In short, the community is not compact, uniform or flat but is differentiated into subsets, subgroups, strata and classes that are distinguished by particular characteristics, that have a different educational or economic level, that have different needs, perceptions and behavior and that are characterized, finally, by a specific attitude both towards the social whole as a structure and hierarchy, and towards

the other social groups. All these differentiated perceptions, needs, attitudes and aspirations, according to the recent findings of linguistic science, are ultimately reflected in language, which is the mirror of social and other differentiations. Consequently, the more differentiated a society is, the more differentiated the language that this society uses appears (Mitsis 2019).

Linguistic heterogeneity or non-uniformity that appears within one and the same language is scientifically characterized by the term linguistic variety. In fact, the phenomenon of linguistic variety, which constitutes a basic property of natural languages, extends to two basic dimensions: (a) The dimension of space, known as horizontal or geographical variety and (b) the social body, known as vertical or social variety.

The first case classifies local idioms and dialects of the language, while the second includes the various uses of the language by individuals and groups that are related to social parameters. In this specific case, these are uses that are determined by purely social factors such as the group or social class to which the speakers belong, the educational level of each person, the data of each communication situation (who, when, where and for what purpose they communicate), their attitude towards the organized social group, etc. The result of vertical variety is: (a) the presence and use of the so-called social dialects or linguistic forms, such as e.g. the dialects of the marginalized, the language of the youth, the professional dialects, the scientific language, the dialects of technicians, etc., and (b) the existence of the levels of style of the language, that is, the various gradations in the exploitation of the expressive possibilities that the language provides through grammar, such as, for example, the familiar or simple language, the everyday or common language, the cultivated or systematic language, the highly demanding language, the poetic language, etc.

The above means that language as a use does not constitute a single, homogeneous and rigid whole, but on the contrary is characterized by an admirable differentiation, variety and flexibility that on the one hand allows speakers to adapt their speech to the situational data at hand (and therefore to communicate more effectively), while on the other hand provides individuals and groups with the opportunity to express, through the linguistic form they choose, a specific philosophy, perception or attitude towards the social whole and more generally the world that surrounds them (Crystal 1987 & 2010, Holmes 1992, Mitsis 1996, Richards et al. 1992, Trask 1995, Wardhaugh 1992, Yule 1985).

We add here that organized states, through this wide range of linguistic forms and dialects that arise as a result of linguistic variety, choose, for different reasons in each case, an idiom which is ultimately established as the official language of the state. This idiom, which is reduced to a common language, is surrounded by glamour, systematically cultivated by the press and writers, officially codified (by compiling grammars, dictionaries, etc.) and used exclusively in administration and education. Its promotion and prominence as an official means of expression imposes it on the consciousness of citizens as the most perfect and complete means of expression and provides it with social prestige to such an extent that a prejudice is often created both against the rest of the idioms and against the individuals who use them.

1.5 Language as a particular conception and expression of reality

The term language has a dual meaning and refers to both language as a general phenomenon and each individual natural language used at the level of a linguistic community. This distinction, however much it may seem to be the result of assumptions, is today a tangible reality, since scientific research has proven that every natural language has two distinct levels of structure. At a first level, it displays a series of elements, general structural patterns and functions that are common to all languages of the world and which are called 'universalia' by experts, while at a second level it displays a series of structural particularities and characteristics that make it noticeably different and distinguishable from all the others (Mitsis 2019, Babiniotis 1998). One of these characteristics - and for some perhaps the most important - is found in the particular way in which each linguistic community conceives, organizes and expresses, through language, the external world. In general, language is today viewed as an arbitrary system of signs which, according to Saussure, the founder of modern linguistics, "knows only its own order" and which, according to him, "constitutes a self-existent entity and a principle of taxonomy of the world" (Saussure 1916). These findings highlight the fact that the linguistic process is not a simple reflection of the relationships observed in the surrounding world, but a reorganization of experience, since each specific language analyzes, synthesizes and renders external reality in a unique way, a fact that has the consequence that there are no exact correspondences between different languages. All this means that a person, by mastering his native language, simultaneously acquires a particular way of seeing and perceiving the world, that is, the one that his language provides him, and his entire personality moves within the limits that it sets for him. Resorting to some simple examples that reveal that language does not describe but recreates, based on its own logic, external reality, we will begin with the case of gender. If language were a copy of reality, it would render, as a system, the natural gender of beings. However, it does not do so and instead uses the so-called grammatical gender, which is essentially a reversal and reorganization of the natural data in this field. In essence, the grammatical gender that predominates in the language is nothing more than an empty category that serves as a morphological indication for the correct syntax of sentences (Klairs & Babiniotis 2005, Mitsis 2015 & 2019). Also indicative examples are the different semantic divisions that are attempted from language to language both in the distribution of the spectrum of colors

and in the field of declaring the various degrees of kinship. Finally, the most characteristic property of natural languages that is related to the particular way of rendering experience is the existence of synonyms, that is, words that have approximately the same or similar meaning. Attempting a rough analysis of the function of synonyms, we must point out that each language, as a particular taxonomic principle, divides external reality in a unique way into semantic/conceptual fields, that is, into areas or sections that it hierarchizes, correlates and functionally integrates into its broader semantic system.

Although the content of each semantic field is largely expressed by a general word (what we usually call the basic word of the field), the need to specialize meanings, to be precise and to pursue a more qualitative communication has led languages to a process of dividing each semantic field into individual lexicons, each of which occupies a particular area of it. These lexicons, which specialize the general meaning and attribute characteristic aspects or nuances to each specific language, are known as synonyms. Synonyms are obviously products of convention and despite the inevitable overlaps between them, they differ significantly at the level of linguistic use, with the result that in many cases it is not possible on the syntactic axis to replace a word with one of its synonyms (Mitsis & Mitsi, 2022). However, to make this more understandable, we will mention a typical example from the field of synonyms of the Greek language that demonstrates the differences between them, and therefore their functionality at the level of use. More specifically, the semantic field related to the sense of sight includes, among others, the following words:

I see, I look, I gaze, I pay attention, I observe, I watch, I distinguish, I supervise, I am curious, I glance, I spy, I bathe, I see well, I squint, I stare, I face and many more that are difficult to be translated.

Starting from the word "I see", we would say that this is the member that constitutes the semantic core, that is, the basic word of the field with which it is generally stated that the subject has the ability to see (Mitsis 2012). One could therefore assume that knowledge of this word alone can cover the need for the expression of the specific meaning from the subject's perspective. However, the need for specialization of information and for achieving qualitative communication requires, in each case, the use of a specific word from the above series of synonyms, which are grouped as follows (Mitsis 2012, Babiniotis 2011):

(i) Based on the manner:

-When the subject simply turns his gaze to see, the action is expressed with the words I look, I behold ("thoro" in literature mostly).

-When he turns his gaze and keeps it fixed on a certain point, the action is expressed with the word I gaze.

-When the action is done with attention and in a gradual manner, then it is expressed stepwise with the words: I pay attention, I observe and I monitor.

-When, in addition to attention, the action is accompanied by some effort, then it is expressed with the words: I discern, I supervise, "epistato" and I observe.

-When the action is done with great attention and aims to acquire knowledge about the function and properties of the object, then it is expressed with the word I inquire or I pry "periergazome".

-When the action has an adverse effect or causes harm to someone, then it is expressed with the word "matiazo" meaning I look with bad energy (a specific Greek word).

-When the action is done in a secret manner and aims to collect important information, then it is expressed with the word "I spy."

-When the action is done in secret and has a basically erotic interest, then it is expressed with the word "banizo" I look with the purpose above (a specific Greek word).

-When the action is done with a favorable or positive mood towards someone or something, then it is expressed with the word "kalovlepo" meaning I look favorably upon (a specific Greek word).

-When the action is done with a bad or negative mood towards someone or something, then it is expressed with the word "stravokitazo" (specific Greek word)."

-Finally, when the action is not accompanied by any kind of effort, then it is expressed with the word "I gaze, I dawdle."

(ii) Based on location:

-When the subject looks across or in front of him, that is, if there is a specific location or direction, then the action is expressed with the verb: antrikrizo.

-When the subject looks far away and at a great distance, the action is expressed with the verb: agnatevo.

-When the subject sees from a point that allows him to have a wider view or perception of a space, the action is expressed with the verb: epoptevo.

-When the subject can see something that is distant and therefore confused, then the action is expressed with the verbs: diakrino and xehorizo.

-When the subject tries to carefully see something interesting that is very far away, then the action is expressed with the verb: kialaro.

We also note that the inclusion of words in the various semantic fields of the language, although it provides them with a first or initial meaning, does not, however, give them their definitive semantic content, which takes on its final load only at the level of use and, as we will see later, with the contribution of a series of additional data, both linguistic and extralinguistic.

1.6 Meaning as Use and the Contribution of Context: From Grammatical Sentences to Pronunciations

The grouping of meanings and the creation of related fields at the level of the linguistic system is the main process by which vocabulary is internalized and organized. However, as was shown by the previous examples, the internalization of vocabulary and its classification in the paradigmatic dimension of language is not enough to make it an essential feature of an individual's linguistic ability. As is the case with all elements of the linguistic system, vocabulary, in order to become an organic part of the speaker's behavior, must reach a point where it is used in a functional way in the constitutional dimension of language, in simple words, it has to take the form of a linguistic skill.

More specifically, vocabulary knowledge is considered structured and effective only when we are able to use it creatively, that is, when it contributes to creative perception and speech production, and therefore to more effective, more adequate and faster communication with our interlocutors. The integration of words into various lexical fields and generally into the paradigmatic dimension of language, while strengthening the processes of association and contributing to their faster retrieval and more effective recall, does not, however, ensure them a clear and predetermined meaning. We would even say that at this level, words are generally characterized by a lack of semantic precision and only when they are integrated into a specific environment, linguistic and situational, then and only then do they acquire a specific and clear semantic content. Outside of context, that is, without reduction to linguistic use, words do not constitute functional elements but remain fluid concepts and elements under formation, with an unclear and partly blurred semantic load. In short, the different meanings that one and the same word can take on arise from both the linguistic and situational environment in which it is embedded each time, and this ability is acquired only through linguistic practice, experience and use (Aitchison 1994, Mitsis 2004, 2012 & 2019, Jackson & Amvela 2000, Löbner 2002, Bakakou – Orfanou 2005, Saeed 2009).

For example, the different meanings that one and the same word has or can take ultimately arise from the environment and are learned only through linguistic practice and use. Let us take for example the verb "I see", the general meaning of which, according to the dictionary is: I perceive something with my sight. However, the final meaning that the word in question takes on each time depends on the environment in which it is part of, that is, on the context and the communication situation in the framework of which the utterance containing it is produced. Let us examine the following examples:

- (i) "I perceive something with my sight" (basic meaning)
- (ii) "I am born" (I see the sunlight, a Greek expression)
- (iii) "I am impatient" (I can't wait to.., Greek expression with the verb "see")
- (iv) "I suffer" (I have seen a lot in my life),
- (v) "I risk" ("vlepo ton haro me ta matia mou" Greek expression),
- (vi) "I despair" (I see everything black, a Greek expression)
- (vii) "I foresee" (I see developments, a Greek expression)
- (viii) "I examine a patient" (you need to be seen by a doctor)

- (ix) "I meet someone" (I see him every day at the office) etc.

Just as with the word, the same process is followed by broader speech units (e.g. phrases, sentences, etc.) which modify the basic meaning created at the system level and transform it, depending on the data of the environment, into a specific meaning. Referring specifically to the sentence, we would say that it constitutes, at the paradigmatic level, an abstract entity that operates on the basis of its general mental content and is known as a grammatical or logical sentence. This sentence, which is formed on the basis of the rules of grammar, simply realizes a logical content or a universal pattern that appears only at the system level. In order for this sentence to become, at the level of use, a carrier of specific meaning, it must take on the status of a communicative element. More specifically, the grammatical sentence, when it is inserted into a situational context and used to achieve a functional goal, then becomes an utterance, that is, a part of communicative discourse that acquires its definitive meaning in relation to the data of the specific environment within which it is uttered. In short, the meaning of an utterance, in contrast to the meaning of the grammatical sentence which is fixed, emerges each time as a result of its specific use or application. (Evans 2006, Jackson & Amvela 2000, Kanakis 2007, Löbner 2002, Mitsis 2016 & 2019, Mwihaki 2004, Saeed 2009, Swan 2007). Let us take as a relevant example the sentence:

today you were paid your salary

This sentence, based on the principles of logic and in accordance with the truth conditions, constitutes at the system level a statement of the speaker, who reminds his interlocutor that today he was paid by his job for the services he provided during the last month. However, this sentence, like any logical or grammatical sentence, acquires its definitive meaning at a second stage, specifically when it is used at the level of linguistic use to achieve a specific communicative goal, at which point it is transformed, as we mentioned, into an utterance. In this case, the above sentence can take on, as an utterance, among others, the following meanings:

- pay the car installment
- pay off the laundry bill
- buy me the fur coat you promised me
- pay the child's tuition
- take me to the theater, etc.

We therefore find that at the level of utterance, the rendering of the final content both in words and in higher speech units presupposes a dynamic process through which the logical meaning is transformed into a specific or definitive meaning. In short, the dynamics of language in this case lies in the fact that the meaning of the utterance is not defined in advance, but emerges each time as a result of its specific use or integration into given environmental conditions, which our students must not only realize but also practice accordingly, in order to become as effective as possible in the use of language (Carston 2002, Mitsis 2019).

1.7 Synchronicity and diachronicity: Linguistic evolution and the dynamics of error

A key characteristic of language that modern linguistics has highlighted is that it is a system that operates synchronically, while evolving in parallel with the passage of time. This characteristic demonstrates that language, like any other manifestation of human social behavior, can be understood and studied from the perspective of time in two ways:

- (a) As synchrony, that is, in the form that operates at a specific moment in time and allows speakers to communicate, and (b) As diachrony, that is, to be examined in its course through time, with the aim of establishing the successive forms (or synchronicities) that it took in passing from one historical period to another or others.

Of these two views, which must be clearly distinguished when analyzing and describing a language, we currently believe that the synchronic view has priority, because language as a system of relations and as an instrument of communication always functions synchronically. Speakers/users of language perceive it from this aspect only and use it from this perspective only, while diachronic developments constitute an unconscious process and at the same time a special form of knowledge that is accessible only to specialized researchers. We note here that, contrary to modern perceptions, the first theorists of modern linguistics considered that synchrony and diachrony are two different processes that operate independently of each other and, therefore, are not related in any way (Saussure 1916).

Despite the initial assessments, however, from the mid-20th century onwards, the absolute distinction between synchrony and diachrony is no longer accepted since, according to a number of newer theorists, the synchronic system of language, i.e. its grammar, could be characterized as a dynamic or fluid state, i.e. as a fragile balance of elements that are under constant reconstruction. In short, modern research, attempting to provide a

documented answer to the question "why languages change and by what processes linguistic changes are created and expanded", has concluded the following: Linguistic changes do not occur suddenly, nor do they affect the entire spectrum of language, but are individual in nature and continuous. More specifically, one or more speakers at some point, without realizing it, modify a linguistic element, which, according to the traditional understanding, constitutes a linguistic error. However, when this 'error', due to its intentional and functional character, is gradually adopted by other members of the linguistic community and becomes, through the so-called process of diffusion, accepted by a sufficient number of speakers, then we reach the status of parallel structure, which constitutes a form of linguistic variety and could be characterized as change in progress. This parallel structure, that is, the presence of a new element functionally equivalent to the old one, may over time not thrive and subside or coexist with the corresponding structure that it came to replace. However, if it is finally imposed at the level of linguistic use as a basic element, then it is natural that this specific linguistic change has taken place and this fact now gives a functional dimension to the concept of linguistic error.

Attempting a brief reference to the linguistic error, we would say that the current scientific understanding considers that, if one excludes some slips and some deviations that are of a random nature, the majority of errors do not constitute arbitrary or irregular use, as common perception understands it, but a proposal to simplify some structure or to overcome some difficulty based on pre-existing patterns and rules of language operation. The systematicity of this process lies in the fact that it does not operate randomly but is based on the principles of economy and proportion.

The fact that natural languages change over time is something obvious that emerges from the study of written texts from various eras, in which the presence of successive evolutionary forms or phases that each language has gone through is clearly visible. However, these changes occur gradually and at a very slow pace, which makes it, if not impossible, at least very difficult for speakers to detect them at a synchronic level. More specifically, the language of each new generation always shows some differences compared to the language of the previous one, but these differences (which are usually characterized as errors or as indications of linguistic weakness of the young) are usually subtle, a fact that does not directly affect the basic linguistic functions and primarily the ability to communicate. However, after a sufficient amount of time has passed, the accumulation of many individual changes causes qualitative changes that affect the entire or a large part of the linguistic system of a language, with the result that it has changed significantly and has passed to the next evolutionary stage, that is, it has acquired a series of new characteristics that significantly differentiate it from its previous form.

In summary, the functional role of error in the process of linguistic change demonstrates that language is not static, but is a fluid phenomenon that is under constant reconstruction and has the form of quicksand. Therefore, this dynamic that characterizes linguistic diachrony and has as its generative factor the violation of the rule, convinces us that error should not be treated as a disadvantage, but as a driving force and as a mechanism necessary for the renewal and evolution of the language, a fact that has a serious impact on the field of language teaching. With these data and indeed in the light of a dynamic perception of the linguistic phenomenon, students' errors can no longer be treated as negative elements but as beneficial indications of the way in which each student perceives and uses, as a creative speaker, the system of his language (Mitsis 2004, 2019 & 2020).

2. Language acquisition and language teaching:

2.1 The special characteristics of the language course

In order to understand the specificity of the language course, we must first distinguish between teaching and learning. Very often these terms are confused, resulting in misunderstandings, especially in the field of language teaching where the boundaries are not at first glance completely clear. We therefore clarify that the term learning generally means the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are capable of leading to a change in behavior, while the term teaching means the systematic intervention that aims to facilitate learning, each time creating the conditions required for this purpose.

Bearing in mind the above distinction, we will attempt to list a series of characteristics that differentiate the language course from all the rest, a fact that essentially presupposes a set of special pedagogical provisions and particular teaching techniques (Mitsis 2019).

The first of these characteristics is the fact that the child, when he/she comes to school for the first time, he or she doesn't come with no knowledge of any kind of language, but possesses his mother tongue in its basic structures and this allows him to cover his communication needs to a significant extent. The differentiation therefore in the case of the language lesson lies in the fact that learning precedes teaching, which does not happen in school with the other subjects, since in them teaching precedes and aims at their adequate assimilation. In short, language learning initially takes place outside of school and then comes its teaching, which obviously does not aim at first contact but at further cultivating, expanding and strengthening the language skills that students already possess.

The second characteristic of the language course that differentiates it from the rest is related to the breadth of language which is organically linked to every kind of knowledge. This multifacetedness of the language

phenomenon is also evident in the school environment where language is used by all other subjects, since it is the main means of carrying out their teaching process. However, between the language course and all the others there is a substantial difference in the way of handling, dealing with and using language. The difference lies in the fact that, while all other subjects handle language almost exclusively as a means of transferring knowledge, language teaching uses it, in addition to being a means, as well as the purpose of teaching. We could even say that the language subject, in which the means and the purpose are identical, treats it primarily as an object of study within the framework of a particular process that aims at its acquisition/learning through its own use. Consequently, treating language as a means and at the same time as the goal of the teaching process constitutes a notable peculiarity of the language subject.

The third special characteristic of the language course is that the achievement of its objectives is not based exclusively on the stimuli provided to students during its conduct, nor only on the material in language teaching books, but above all on the fact that it systematically exploits both the content of the remaining courses and any other circumstance or occasion that provides an opportunity for communication and participation of children in language activity. Consequently, the acquisition of the first language is not achieved exclusively through teaching but is largely related to the number of linguistic stimuli received as well as to the totality of relevant experiences that the individual has. In essence, language is not taught in the traditional sense of the term, that is, as an isolated object or as independent encyclopedic knowledge, but is cultivated as a generalized skill that requires continuous guidance and practice with the aim of systematically developing the students' ability to use it effectively in any field. Based on these data, the contribution of other subjects is considered very important in language acquisition, because each of them has the ability to strengthen students' linguistic skills in a particular area of knowledge. This systematic exercise of students in specific uses of the language contributes to their general linguistic and intellectual formation, that is, to the acquisition of linguistic proficiency, which is the main goal of the entire teaching process.

Finally, a fourth characteristic of the language course, which significantly differentiates it from the rest and is related to the particular nature and communicative character of the linguistic phenomenon, is the need to create situational environments during its conduct, that is, specific communication circumstances within the context of which the students' linguistic production is included. We reiterate that language, according to the findings of modern linguistics, does not constitute a common form of knowledge that is assimilated through direct teaching, but a skill that is gradually acquired through the active involvement of the individual in linguistic activity and, in particular, through his participation in real communication situations, in the context of which he must function as an authentic user of the language, that is, both as a transmitter and as a receiver of linguistic messages. In short, the development of communicative competence, which is a basic objective of the language course, requires, in the absence of authentic communicative circumstances, the creation of fictitious situational conditions in the classroom, within the framework of which the communicative event in which the students will participate will take place. In general, the linguistic activity carried out in the classroom must be functional, lively and experiential discourse with which the achievement of specific communicative objectives is sought each time within the framework of given environmental conditions.

In summary, we point out that the language lesson, due to its special nature, has a series of characteristics that make it distinct from all others, with which it is nevertheless organically connected to the umbilical cord of language. Its main goal is not the acquisition of knowledge about the language, but the development in students of the ability to communicate effectively, that is, the correct evaluation of the data of the communicative situation in which they are involved each time and the appropriate adaptation (or interpretation) of the messages produced.

2.2 Attempting to build a dynamic teaching model: Language teaching as a continuation and extension of language acquisition

From the foregoing, it becomes clear that one of the main goals of applied linguistics should be considered the creation of the necessary conditions capable of leading to the establishment of a modern model of language teaching that will be based entirely on the principles and data of linguistic science. However, in order to determine with scientific criteria the method of didactic intervention in the field of the mother tongue, applied linguistics must first and foremost clearly answer three basic questions:

- (a) By what processes does language acquisition take place in the child's family and close social environment during the first years of his life and in particular until he/she attends school?
- (b) Considering the fact that this is a code that is familiar and to a certain extent known to the student, should the mother tongue be systematically taught in school or not?
- (c) If the answer to the previous question is positive, then with what criteria could we search for the most appropriate, that is, the most effective teaching method for this specific case?

Attempting a brief answer to the first question, we would say that modern scientific research has shown that the internalization of the first communication code occurs rapidly, with the result that the individual/speaker, at the age of approximately six, has mastered its basic structures. The possibility of linguistic acquisition, if we take into

account the complexity of the linguistic system, constitutes a miraculous phenomenon which, according to researchers, cannot be interpreted except as the result of an innate ability on the basis of which individuals, starting from the stimuli of the linguistic environment, are gradually reduced, through an unconscious process, to the system of language.

In particular, research has shown that during the period of language acquisition, and especially during the period from 0-6 years, the child does not imitate the language of adults with precision, but relying on the various linguistic stimuli he receives from his environment, he returns to a first systematic conception of language, initially forming a nuclear and not very flexible system, that is, a simplistic grammar. This system is revised based on the new linguistic stimuli that the individual receives each time and is gradually improved until it is identified with the code of adults.

In short, children's language has, at every stage of development, a systematic character and this is achieved by continuous assumptions that the child makes about the way language is structured and functions. These assumptions are not conscious but are tested in practice as the child tests them during communication with his environment and, using the trial and error method, revises, reshapes, improves and sometimes rejects them (Mitsis 2015).

Consequently, the formation of the grammatical mechanism of language is carried out in each individual gradually, through successive stages of acquisition, each of which corresponds to a systematic whole, to a particular and autonomous grammar on the basis of which his linguistic activity is interpreted during the specific period of time.

In summary, language acquisition is a dynamic process undertaken by the individual himself, based on both the stimuli he receives from the environment and his own participation and effort to organize his entire experience. It is therefore an important achievement that should not be understood as an offering from adults to him, but as his individual feat and personal success.

Regarding the second question, the reservations and concerns that have been expressed from time to time about the feasibility of systematically teaching the mother tongue in school were mainly due to the fact that it is a code that is relatively familiar to the student, whose knowledge is gradually perfected through continuous use in his family and wider social environment. Given these data, the role of the school, which is evident in the practice of the traditional method, would simply be to bring the child into contact with the written word, that is, to systematically teach him reading, writing and spelling, which can be easily achieved during the first years of his studies in primary education (Mitsis 1996).

The complete and final answer to this question, however, was given by modern scientific research which, gradually revealing the complex nature and functions of the linguistic phenomenon, simultaneously highlighted the necessity of language teaching. More specifically, developments have shown that achieving high linguistic proficiency, which today constitutes the primary goal of the course, requires the possession of a series of elements, knowledge and special abilities which it is impossible for a native speaker to acquire relying solely on the linguistic stimuli of his environment.

In short, because language, as a complex system, has an enormous variety and many degrees of systematicity, this means that it is impossible to master it to a satisfactory degree solely through everyday communication with other people. In other words, in addition to the experience that is considered absolutely necessary, the simultaneous contribution of many other factors and processes is also needed, the most important of which is systematic practice through teaching, which aims primarily at expanding and improving the code that speakers create through natural acquisition. This becomes even clearer if one considers that the linguistic stimuli that any individual receives in their environment are coincidental and random, while the stimuli they receive during the teaching process are intentional, appropriately designed and organized in a way that leads to faster, easier and more effective achievement of the desired linguistic proficiency.

In summary, the main goal of language teaching is to start from the level at which the student is already at and to gradually and methodically lead him to the conquest of increasingly systematic or demanding forms and levels of his language, using the most appropriate teaching methods which he must seek (Danassis-Afentakis et al. 2002, Mitsis 1996, 2004 & 2015).

Regarding the third and final question, the answer that can be given within the framework of a modern teaching concept is that the teaching method must take into account the character of the linguistic phenomenon and adopt methods compatible with the natural way of acquiring the language (Mitsis 2025). As we have already pointed out, language is not a form of encyclopedic knowledge that is assimilated through teaching, but a skill that is acquired and gradually improved through the active involvement of the individual in linguistic activity. In short, language proficiency is achieved primarily through the use of a dynamic process, specifically through the young person's participation in real communication situations, in which they function as an authentic user of the language, that is, both as a transmitter and as a receiver of linguistic messages.

Therefore, attempting to briefly describe the philosophy or core of a modern and at the same time effective teaching method, we would say that it must primarily respect the natural way of acquiring the language. To put it more simply, since the native speaker acquires his language through a specific natural process, then the teaching

method cannot ignore this process, but must follow it in general terms and complement it appropriately, seeking to create an expanded and functional code that will allow the child to handle his language with ease and effectively address every communicative need.

It is certainly obvious that teaching, as is done in our daily lives, should be based on the communicative use of language, with the difference that in our case the stimuli provided to the child will be systematized and organized in a way that facilitates the faster assimilation of phenomena while, at the same time, they will gradually lead to an increasingly systematic conception of the linguistic code, which will again contribute to further improvement of the ability for linguistic use.

In summary, within the framework of a teaching method that respects the dynamic nature of the phenomenon and aims at its effective conquest, language must be treated primarily as a functional instrument and as a living process, that is, as a means for achieving communication and secondarily as a form or a system in itself. This is, as one can see, a new concept that conceives linguistic material as action or energy and, therefore, does not treat it statically, but transmits it through a dynamic, fertile and productive process whose general theoretical positions are briefly recorded in the next chapter.

2.3 The main teaching principles of the proposed dynamic language teaching model

For several decades now, especially after the cosmogonic developments that have occurred in the field of linguistics, “language teaching”, as we have already seen, has taken on a scientific status and has gradually begun to lead to the adoption of a series of renewed methodological principles which are contained in the following axiom: Language is not taught (at least in the traditional sense of the term) but is acquired through the active participation and direct involvement of students in authentic and purposeful language activity. This axiom, which also constitutes the compass of a dynamic type of didactic approach to language, is divided into a series of more specific principles which are summarized as follows (Mitsis 1996, 2004, 2015 & 2019):

(i) The aim of language teaching is to make students proficient speakers of the language. However, achieving proficiency requires the simultaneous development of both linguistic and communicative competence. The term linguistic competence refers to good knowledge of the system, while the term communicative competence refers to the ability to effectively connect the produced speech with the given communication situation.

(ii) To achieve the goal, language teaching considers as a basic prerequisite the simultaneous harmonious development of all individual language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills are developed and cultivated in all phases of teaching with the participation of students in diverse language exercises.

(iii) Language is acquired by the participation of students in well-organized language activity, which takes, as far as possible, the character of normal communication. And since in the classroom, which consists of people with specific roles, there is no variety of communication situations, this fact leads us to a technique that we would call situational simulation. This technique consists of creating artificial situational environments in which students are asked to participate in speech production based on given communicative conditions. Naturally, this technique can be served to a significant extent by the technological means available in education. More generally, we would say that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can be an important supporting tool for achieving the goals of the language course, either in the context of enhancing classroom teaching or developing new learning applications exclusively in an electronic environment.

(iv) For the most effective development of communication skills, the speech produced in the classroom must be adapted to the situational environment on a case-by-case basis and focus each time on achieving the intended functional goal (such as greeting, information, promise, advice, offer, exhortation, command, expression of opinions, etc.).

(v) The material on which the teaching is based is as useful as possible and always authentic. This means that it has been produced to satisfy real communication needs and not, simply, for didactic reasons. For example, if we need to study a letter in class, it should be an authentic and not an artificial creation that has been written by the teacher and is intended exclusively for didactic use. In this case, the text to be studied, as non-authentic discourse, will display functional distortion. That is, it will not possess the required communicative and experiential load, which makes it ineffective, if not detrimental.

(vi) Treating language as a dynamic phenomenon, among other things, imposes the priority of content over form, which obviously implies a renewed way of teaching vocabulary, specifically (Mitsis & Mitsis 2022):

(a) Vocabulary teaching must be fully harmonized with the general concept of the dynamic approach to language, within the framework of which vocabulary must be treated as the most important area of the language lesson.

According to the prevailing view, vocabulary organically strengthens all other language areas while, at the same time, contributing to the more effective and rapid achievement of a number of important teaching objectives.

(b) The teaching of words cannot obviously be, according to the current didactic concept, random or opportunistic but deliberate and selective. This means that vocabulary should be taught in a planned and programmatic manner, according to a hierarchy that progresses from the simplest and most understandable to the most difficult and complex.

(c) In particular, the vocabulary to be taught should not be chosen instantaneously or based on personal criteria, but should be the result of study and reflection that, on the one hand, will emphasize those words that are characterized as basic and functional, while on the other hand, will ensure that the vocabulary taught displays the required gradation while, at the same time, it will be related to the age, experiences and interests of the students.

(d) Taking into account the complex nature of lexical knowledge, we believe that adequate knowledge of a word is not achieved through a single but multiple contact with it. Therefore, the words being taught, depending on their difficulty and importance, must be returned to periodically in teaching on various occasions (e.g. in texts, in exercises, in conversation, etc.) and in different linguistic environments and communication conditions each time, because only in this way can the gradual familiarization of students with the various meanings that these words take on at the level of use be ensured.

(e) The necessity of expanding students' vocabulary, combined with the fact that this possibility is very limited in the classroom, necessitates the use of so-called vocabulary learning strategies. This is a series of deliberate, individual-type procedures with which teachers practice their students, so that they can enrich their vocabulary on their own, not only in the classroom but also beyond it.

(vii) The emphasis on the lexical field, that is, on the meanings of the language, necessarily leads to a renewed teaching concept for the field of grammar, since the precise statement of meanings is a matter of choosing the appropriate forms or grammatical types that will convey them. In the context of these developments, the center of grammar teaching is already noting a gradual shift from the traditional perception, namely the formal learning of formulas and rules, to a dynamic approach that focuses on the functional treatment of grammatical phenomena (Babiniotis 2022, Mitsis 2015 & 2025). This new perspective focuses on the organic connection of grammatical structures and formulas with environmental data and communicative goals, things that occur in normal communication in a completely intuitive way. Specifically:

(a) Grammar should not be seen as an end in itself but as a means to a more effective use of language. This means that learning grammar rules should not be a mechanical process but a largely conscious activity that has a creative character and is transformed into a communicative skill. Therefore, grammar is taught in a way that serves communication and not as encyclopedic knowledge.

(b) In order for grammar to acquire the required degree of conscious knowledge, the discovery of the principles and rules of the system must constitute a 'discovery' of the children themselves, which will be achieved in an inductive manner and indeed through the observation of specially selected parts of authentic speech, both spoken and written.

(c) Students must realize that achieving adequate communication requires the organic connection of grammatical structures with situational data. Consequently, a modern teaching model must approach grammar primarily from the perspective of the environment, since only in this way will students not only see the relationship of grammatical choices with the performance of functions and the achievement of communicative goals, but will also more easily approach the dynamic way in which grammar is used in the usual communicative process (Mitsis 2015, Newby 2003, Nunan 1998).

(d) In general, the teaching of grammar does not aim at the acquisition of self-existent or independent knowledge (grammar as an end in itself) but at the acquisition of a skill that leads to an awareness of the principles of the linguistic system and through this to effective use of the language. Consequently, grammar teaching is based on the use of communicative discourse or authentic texts and not on isolated formulas, sentences or artificial texts, that is, on elements that are not functional and do not have sufficient semantic and communicative load.

(e) Also, the teaching of grammar should focus primarily on the fluent use of the language and secondarily on the grammatical correctness of the produced speech. This fact means that the correct evaluation of grammar cannot be limited to the mechanical reproduction of a series of formulas or a grammatical example but to the assessment of the general possibility of utilizing the specific grammatical phenomenon at the level of communicative use of the language.

(viii) Finally, it is natural that the student is at the center of the teaching process of a dynamic model. This means that when organizing teaching, their language level, as well as their needs, desires, interests, abilities and personality in general, must be taken into account. Furthermore, the teacher, when selecting, presenting and negotiating the material, always takes into account the specific student audience to which he is going to address each time. In particular, the teaching process is organized based on both the class as a whole and each student individually, assuming, on a case-by-case basis, the character of, as far as possible, personalized teaching.

2.4 Epilogue

In conclusion, we reiterate that the dynamic nature of language arises from the fact that, although it contains a large number of elements, it nevertheless displays a high degree of internal organization and a completely hierarchical arrangement of these elements, which gives it a functional character and makes it a systematic whole. After all, the sense of unity of the linguistic phenomenon is what leads native speakers to use, in the process of communication, language as a total structure, that is, as a single medium or instrument without being aware of the domains, dimensions, levels and individual elements that compose it.

However, the holistic conception of language and its treatment as a single and simultaneously dynamic phenomenon, also implies a corresponding teaching method in which the functional utilization of said data will be foreseen. First of all, as a dynamic teaching method, we generally mean a holistic approach that connects the phenomenon being taught both with the other phenomena of language, as well as with a series of extralinguistic factors and data that constitute the so-called communicative environment. A similar concept obviously does not accept the linear approach that was a basic teaching principle of the traditional method but treats language learning as a multidimensional, dynamic, complex and not static process, characteristics that are partly evident in the new primary school language curricula in Greece that were drafted during the period 2019-2021 (Magoula et al. 2022b). It is precisely this new concept that we have attempted to provide with the present work the basic principles, hoping that it could constitute the beginning of a relevant reflection for a more effective achievement of the basic purpose of language teaching, which is the development of students' ability for effective communication.

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