

Teun van Dijk's social interaction discourse and development of oral competence in high school students of the 20 de julio Industrial School in Puerto Wilches.

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Abstract

This reflection article presents important aspects on the incidence of Teun van Dijk's discourse theory of social interaction in the development of oral competence of ninth grade students. The work started from the identification of the problem, which is focused on strengthening students' orality, as well as optimizing social interaction through the adequate use of discourse. Based on this, we will proceed to an extensive documentation that was embodied in the theoretical framework in which the following aspects were taken into account: The theory of social interaction discourse, oral competence and oral expression that will be the basis for the methodological process and will be executed through a qualitative approach; action-research method, in which five teachers of the Spanish language area will participate, answering questions set according to the categories of analysis referring to social interaction discourse, dimensions of speech and discourse, and society. Likewise, nine ninth-grade students will enter the stage to develop a diagnostic test in which the aforementioned categories will be taken into account. It should be noted that the information collected will be recorded in a field diary that allows for a thorough analysis of the phenomena detected. As

for the results, it is expected that the didactic strategy will help develop students' oral skills and improve their communicative processes among students and between students-teachers.

Key words: Oral competence, discourse, everyday conversation, social interaction and society.

Introduction

The theoretical approaches underlying this research are of great importance, since they become the basis for the design of the data collection instruments, as well as for the approach of the categories of analysis and the confrontation (triangulation) with the findings that emerge here. In this sense, this section addresses aspects such as Teun van Dijk's discourse theory, orality, oral competence, oral expression and its characteristics, and the characteristics of oral discourse.

We begin by mentioning the concept of discourse, which, according to Van Dijk (2001), is a way of using language, which in turn is associated with ideas and philosophies of individuals or groups that are disseminated and supported by them. In this sense, he mentions that, in the concept of discourse, it is necessary to know who uses language, how they use it, why and when they do so.

According to Van Dijk (2001), discourse is a communication event that involves functional aspects to communicate ideas, beliefs and emotions as part of highly complex social events in specific contexts such as a meeting with friends, a phone call, a lesson in the classroom, a job interview, a consultation with the doctor, etc.

In education, discourse is immersed in all teaching and learning practices, and it is within the classroom that discourse becomes a social act, which, according to Mata (1993), requires special attention from structural and functional aspects of language. Thus, it demands from students the ability to use certain linguistic structures, as well as the use of different linguistic resources in appropriate contexts and situations. The above is reinforced by the author when he mentions that "competence in class is both an end in itself and a means to acquire other educational objectives, be they academic or social-interpersonal" (p.23).

Along with the above, Mata (1993) states that the classroom is a unique communicative context that demands high competence in the forms of oral and written expression, mentioning at the same time that the inadequate management of these competences represents difficulties to participate successfully in social interactions, which directly affects the learning processes.

In this regard, Mata (1993) points out that it is important that the student learns and grasps the rules that govern the classroom as

a space for social interaction, as well as the strategies that are followed to achieve certain objectives in that space. These rules require the use of language from syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects, and their mastery is essential for school success.

The postulates of Sentis (1997) are also related, who, when referring to discourse in social interaction, takes into account the context, mentioning that there is a relationship between the use of language with culture and behavioral norms. In this sense, social interaction is regulated by group norms, but is defined in terms of the actions of the participants. Social context implies cultural context: "if interaction is governed by norms, then it is culture that determines, to some degree, how participants must act with each other in order for the interaction to achieve its goals" (p.374).

On the other hand, Sentis (1997) refers to conversation as a means of social interaction in which discourse plays a preponderant role and which, in the same sense, is governed by textual, semantic, pragmatic and cognitive rules. In the same way, he points out some characteristics of this type of interaction, such as the fact that any person can participate in it; sociocultural relations are not unilaterally programmed; their topic is not previously fixed; it can be carried out in different contexts and have several possible functions.

Now, from the point of view of the Ministry of Education (MEN, 1996) they are understood as "the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes that people develop and that allow them to understand, interact and transform the world in which they live. In the same way, it reflects the thinking of Delors (1994), when he mentions that competences allow human beings to learn to know, to learn to do, to learn to live together and to live with others and to learn to be.



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Likewise, the Ministry of Education (MEN, 1996) argues that the notion of competence is related to school learning and lifelong education. Likewise, it is related to the transition from an education centered on content to an education centered on the question of the subject of learning and his or her world.

In the same line, the development of competences is related to the understanding of education as a process in which disciplinary knowledge cannot be conceived separately from the development of attitudes, values, skills, understanding, in the same way, the fundamental role of the construction of citizenship.

From a strictly educational point of view, the Ministry of Education (MEN, 1996) mentions that "basic competences constitute one of the parameters of what every child and young person should know and know how to do in order to achieve the expected level of quality in the educational system" (p. 11), with the basic competences being: scientific competences, citizenship competences, mathematical competences and communicative competences, the objective of the latter is "to train people capable of communicating assertively (both verbally and non-verbally), recognizing themselves as interlocutors who produce, understand and argue meanings in a supportive manner, taking into account the particularities of each communicative situation" (p.15).

According to the above, it can be inferred then that oral competence is aimed at the acquisition and implementation of discursive skills that help the person have an assertive communication, characterized by coherence, cohesion, appropriateness and coherence. Thus, the following sections expand on the concepts of orality and oral expression as determining elements in communication and in the educational act.

Methodology

The methodology to be used should be a qualitative approach. If we consider that the University of Pamplona offers a Master's Degree in Education focused on research in order to explore a theory of pedagogy of Linguistics applied to the educational field in general, and to the linguistic field in particular. Now, Hernandez Sampieri, Fernández Collado, & Baptista Lucio (2006) consider that:

The qualitative approach can be conceived as a set of interpretative practices that make the world "visible", transform it and convert it into a series of representations in the form of observations, notes, recordings and documents. It is naturalistic (because it studies phenomena and living beings in their natural contexts or environments and in their everyday life) and interpretative (because it tries to make sense of phenomena according to the meanings that people give them) (p. 9).

In other words, the qualitative approach shows us the different situations through various techniques that collect information, bringing with it a series of interpretations that range from the context to the way of seeing reality.

On the other hand, Stake (1995) cited by Ballester Brage (2004) mentions that:

The objective of qualitative research is *understanding*, focusing the inquiry on the facts;(...). The aim of qualitative research is to understand the complex interrelationships that occur in reality. (p. 236).

In accordance with these authors, it can be said that a qualitative approach is in charge of processing information from the population under investigation by taking it to the natural context, so it is more spontaneous and sometimes more accurate, that is, in this approach the researcher has an intensive deal with people through interaction, leaving aside a little subjectivity, i.e., it will not take into account their prejudices and beliefs.



In this research, the action research method was used, which, according to Lewin, as cited by Elliott (1996):

It is an activity undertaken by groups or communities with the aim of modifying their circumstances in accordance with a shared conception of human values by its members. It reinforces and maintains the sense of community, as a means to achieve “the common good”, instead of promoting the exclusively individual good (...) (p. 95).

That is, this form of research, initiated with some kind of activities collectively by individuals, groups or communities, will always seek the good for all, arriving at a reflective practice and thus establishing appropriate changes in a situation under study. In other words, this form of research basically consists of an introspective process in which the main factors being investigated are, on the one hand the theory, since it is this that is taken as the basis for the

procedure to be beneficial, it also corroborates being sustained and it can be determined if it is valid. On the other hand, we have the procedural part, in which the practice is carried out, develops the knowledge learned, that is to say the being and the know-how, this can be achieved thanks to the performance and skills of the researcher, from the different social contexts.

Key informants, are defined by Mendieta and Giovane (2015), as those people who talk about the research phenomenon, in relation to the whole, i.e., have extensive knowledge related to the context where the research activity is developed.

Now, the educational institution has about 1,500 students, approximately 100 teachers; a little more than 540 students from sixth grade to eleventh grade attend classes in the afternoon. They belong to socio-economic strata one, two and three; some families are located in rural areas of the municipality.

According to the above, 9 ninth-grade students of the afternoon classes were taken as key informants; this grade was selected in particular because, at this level, the topics addressed from the area of Spanish language are aimed at the development of communicative skills, the ability to relate adequately in a social environment, based on an appropriate speech act, and also based on cultural changes and thought development processes. Based on the above, Table 1 describes in detail the key informants with their respective coding, which is useful for the analysis of the results obtained.

Table 1. *Key informants*

INFORMANT	TYPE OF INFORMANT	CODE
High school Spanish Language teacher	Teacher	DLCB1-3
Elementary school Spanish Language Teacher	Teacher	DLCP 1-2
Ninth-grade students	Student	EGN 1-9

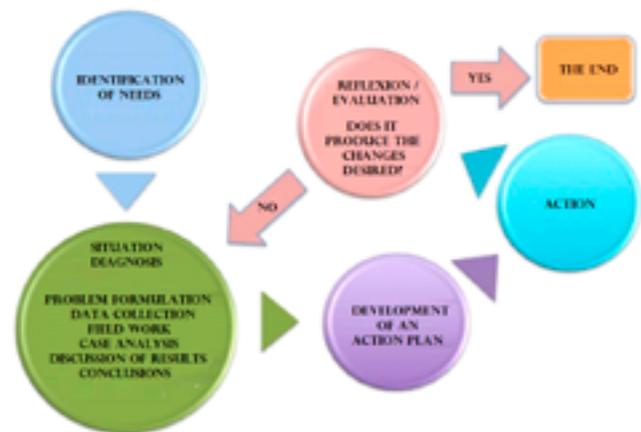
Source: Own elaboration.

With regard to the research phases, these are based on Colás & Buendía, (1998) who state that they are organized by cycles in the form of a spiral, organizing the process on two axes: a strategic one, constituted by action and reflection; and an organizational one, constituted by planning and observation. Both directions are in continuous interaction, starting from the identification of needs through the diagnosis of the situation, which takes into account the formulation of the problem, data collection, field work, data analysis, discussion of results and conclusions.

Next, the action plan or strategy is developed, the action is implemented, and from this, a reflection or evaluation is provided, answering the question "Does it produce the desired changes? Finally, research is concluded.

The phases of the methodology applied from action research are described in the following scheme, taken from Colás & Buendía (1998).

Figure 3. *Research-Action Scheme*



Source: Colás and Buendía (1994)

The above arises from a review conducted by Colás (2007) on action-research practices in Spain, where it was found that most of these are focused on teacher training and curriculum development. The functions assigned to it are aimed at curriculum design and development, training for change and innovation, and the generation of theoretical and metatheoretical knowledge of training processes.

Accordingly, the phases of this research are detailed below:

Cycle 1. Identification of needs: daily experiences in the classroom, identification of students' oral problems, taking into account causes and consequences, both socially and academically.

Cycle 2. Diagnosis of the situation: application of direct observation using a previously established format; establishment of priorities.

Cycle 3. Development of an action plan: design of a didactic strategy based on Teun van Dijk's theory of discourse as social interaction, in order to respond to the identified problem.

Cycle 4. Action: application of the didactic strategy to ninth-grade students of the “20 de julio” Industrial School in Puerto Wilches, Santander; permanent follow-up of the researcher teacher to the work developed by the students.

Cycle 5. Reflection: evaluation of the strategy according to the results obtained in its application. Proposals for improvement and continuity of the strategy.

The categories will also determine the limits and scope of the study, which is why, in the case of this research, the categories to be taken into account will be those described below:

Table 2. *Categories of analysis*

Categories	Subcategories	ID
Social interaction discourse	Everyday speech	DCT
	Social interaction in context	DSC
Speech dimensions	Locutionary act	ALV
	Illocutionary act	AILV
	Perlocutionary Act	APLV
Discourse-Society	Social Interaction	DIS
	Description and explanation of the conversation	SEC

In accordance with the stated objectives, the instruments to be used in this research are the interview, diagnostic test and field diary. In this order of ideas, it should be said that the interview is defined by Díaz, Torruco, Martínez and Varela (2013) as “a conversation proposed for a specific purpose other than the simple fact of conversing” (p.162), in the same sense, he argues that it is a technique of valuable utility in qualitative research, assuring that it is more effective than the questionnaire, since it helps obtain more complete and deeper information, as well as the possibility of clarifying doubts that arise during the process, which, from his own perspective, generates more useful answers.

For his part, Cerda (1991), points out that it is a conversation that has a defined purpose, and this purpose is given according to the subject under investigation. It is a transaction process of giving and receiving information, of question-answer, of sender-receiver, until the objectives proposed by the researchers are achieved. The functions of the interview are: to obtain information from individuals and groups, to provide opinions, and to influence certain aspects of a person’s or group’s behavior (opinions, feelings, behaviors, etc.).

The contributions of the authors mentioned above give a broad idea of the great usefulness of the interview, given that the general configuration of the questions allows the informant to explain and justify his answers. It also makes it easier for the researcher to analyze them.

It should be clarified that, in the case of this research, the interview will be applied to the teachers listed as key informants in Table 1, in order to know their appreciation of their students’ handling of orality. The analysis will be made by means of discourse hermeneutics.

As for direct observation, this is understood by Cerda (1991) as a technique that allows the researcher to perceive directly, without intermediaries that distort perception, the facts of objective reality, thus eliminating the subjective distortions typical of other indirect techniques. In the case of the current research, a direct observation of the students will be made in order to recognize in them some basic knowledge regarding rhythm, tuning and coupling.

It should be noted that the diagnostic test will be applied to ninth grade students of “20 de Julio” industrial school in the municipality of Puerto Wilches, Santander, in order to diagnose the way in which they develop their oral skills in the educational context and in their interaction with teachers and classmates.



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Finally, we have the field diary, which is defined by Valverde (1993) as an instrument for recording information used to “learn about reality, delve into new facts in the situation being addressed, give sequence to a process of research and intervention, and have data for subsequent evaluative work” (p.309). In this case, the field diary will be used to record the application process of the didactic strategy that will be applied in cycle 4.

Conclusions

Regarding the prospective, it is expected that students have initiative when performing oral activities, as well as active participation in the classroom, contributing their point of view, respecting and valuing the opinion of others, generating a socio-affective climate, which contributes to respect, positive, empathetic and democratic relationships. Now, based on the

prospective, it is concluded that Teun van Dijk's social interaction discourse theory takes into account important aspects of everyday speech, of a social interaction in context, in this case in the classroom, in addition to the dimensions of speech acts such as: the locutionary act, which is the physical act of issuing a statement, followed by an illocutionary act that contains the communicative intention and finally, the perlocutionary act which is the effect that the statement generates in the listener. Hence, it is inferred that social interaction is marked and influenced by discourse, which takes on different connotations according to the context where it is generated, while it is affected by aspects such as gender, ethnic affiliation and culture, including also age, voice, shape, size and even the hierarchical level within the social group; these aspects affect the communicative interaction of students.

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