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**The impact of teaching language functions in developing  
Learners' communicative use of language**

A Paper Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For B.A Degree in English English

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2021-2022

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

((أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِثٌ آتَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ قُلْ  
هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ))

«سورة الزمر: الآية 9»

## Dedication

To whom God has commanded us to honor her, to you ,my dear mother ,I dedicate this research to you; You have been my best supporter throughout my academic career.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my special thanks with gratitude to my supervisor who help me in fulfillment this research paper .I would like also to thank my friends who supported me throughout my life .

## Abstract

This research paper which is titled the impact of teaching language functions in developing learners' communicative use of language , consists of four chapters. The first chapter is an introduction about the subject, chapter two tackles definitions, theories of language Functions and the difference between language forms and functions. Chapter three is showing the features of Communicative language Teaching in teaching language functions. Finally chapter four is a conclusion that sum up the research paper.

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## **Chapter One :Introduction**

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Mastering language structures and language systems is not enough for learners to speak one given language. Learning a language means not only to understand its usage but also involves its effective use. To communicate, the ultimate goal of learning a language, implies that we are able not only to communicate using correct sentences but also to use these to perform a variety of non-linguistic but social acts such as to describe, to make requests, to ask questions, to give orders, to invite, to make offers, etc...These acts are called Language functions or the communicative functions of language. So, teaching of Language functions will certainly contribute to preparing learners to face real life situation .Teachers of English still put so much stress on forms that little emphasis is put on functions. Perhaps, the reason is that the students' urgent goal is to succeed in the end-of-the-year-test or examination, so many learners donot know which are the functions of Language and how they used communicatly. The question which is raised here is that: Is there an effect of teaching language functions on learners in enabling them to use language communicatively or not?

### **1.2 The Aim of the study**

This study aims to show the effect of teaching language Functions in empowering learners in using language.

### 1.3 Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that The teaching method that focuses on language functions has a significant impact on enabling the learner to use the language compared to other methods that focus on language forms. It is also hypothesized that using the communicative method in teaching is important than other methods since it is focused on language functions.

### 1.4 Limits of the Study

This study is limited to the impact of teaching language functions in developing Learners' communicative use of language in English.

### 1.5 Value

This study is important since it shows the impact of teaching language Functions in developing Learners' communicative use of language in English.

### 1.6 Procedures of the Study

1. Presenting a frame work about teaching language functions, and  
Language forms.
2. Showing the impact of teaching language Functions in developing Learners' communicative use of language
3. Presenting the findings of the research paper in the conclusion.

## **Chapter two:- 2.1 Definition of Language functions**

Language Functions means the purposes of people speaking or writing. (Blundel, 1988:40)

Language Functions means the uses to which we put language, such as: requesting information, expressing what people want to say, greeting and inviting. (Johnson, 1991:56)

Language functions is the reason for using language. At its most basic, the function of language is communication or usually called by speech function; people use language to give and receive messages between themselves. It is difficult to see adequately the functions of language, because it is so deeply rooted in the whole of human behavior that it may be suspected that there is little in the functional side of our conscious behavior in which language does not play its part (Newmeyer, 2000:89).

All the definitions of language functions which mention in many resources have the same meaning. Language Functions thus refer to the purpose in which we use language to communicate. Whether we are apologizing, expressing a wish or asking for advice, we use language in order to fulfil that purpose. Each purpose can be known as a language Functions, examples of Language Functions are: Greeting, inviting, making request, expressing likes and dislikes, agreeing / disagreeing, etc...

For all these reasons, it is clear that a language learner needs to understand the communicative function of a language in order to use this language in communication. It is worth mentioning that a function or a communicative function can be expressed by a formula or fixed

expressions and communicative or functional expressions. )  
Randriantiana, 2010:67)

## **2.2 Theories of language regarding language functions**

Functional linguistics is an approach to the study of language characterized by taking systematically into account the speaker's and the hearer's side, and the communicative needs of the speaker and of the given language community. Linguistic functionalism spawned in the 1920s to 1930s from Ferdinand de Saussure's systematic structuralist approach to language (1916).

Functionalism sees functionality of language and its elements to be the key to understanding linguistic processes and structures. Functional theories of language propose that since language is fundamentally a tool, it is reasonable to assume that its structures are best analyzed and understood with reference to the functions they carry out. These include the tasks of conveying meaning and contextual information. Functional theories of grammar belong to structural and humanistic linguistics, considering language as a rational human construction. They take into account the context where linguistic elements are used and study the way they are instrumentally useful or functional in the given environment. This means that pragmatics is given an explanatory role, along with semantics. The formal relations between linguistic elements are assumed to be functionally-motivated. Simon Dik characterizes the functional approach as follows:

In the functional paradigm a language is in the first place conceptualized as an instrument of social interaction among human beings, used with the intention of establishing communicative relationships. Within this paradigm one attempts to reveal the instrumentality of language with respect to what people do and achieve with it in social interaction. A natural language, in other words, is seen as an integrated part of the communicative competence of the natural language user.

Since the 1970s, studies by American functional linguists in languages other than English from Asia, Africa, Australia and the Americas (like Mandarin Chinese and Japanese), led to insights about the interaction of form and function, and the discovery of functional motivations for grammatical phenomena, which apply also to the English language.

Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a theory of language centred around the notion of language function. While SFL accounts for the syntactic structure of language, it places the function of language as central (what language does, and how it does it), in preference to more structural approaches, which place the elements of language and their combinations as central. SFL starts at social context, and looks at how language both acts upon, and is constrained by, this social context.

A central notion is 'stratification', such that language is analysed in terms of four strata: Context, Semantics, Lexico-Grammar and Phonology/Graphology.

Context concerns the Field (what is going on), Tenor (the social roles and relationships between the participants), and the Mode (aspects of the channel of communication, e.g., monologic/dialogic, spoken/written, visual-contact, etc.).

Systemic semantics includes what is usually called 'pragmatics'. Semantics is divided into three components:

Ideational Semantics (the propositional content);

Interpersonal Semantics (concerned with speech-function, exchange structure, expression of attitude, etc.);

Textual Semantics (how the text is structured as a message, e.g., themestructure, given/new, rhetorical structure etc.

The Lexico-Grammar concerns the syntactic organisation of words into utterances. Even here, a functional approach is taken, involving analysis of the utterance in terms of roles such as Actor, Agent/Medium, Theme, Mood, etc. (Halliday 1994 )

## 2.3 Language functions vs Language Forms

In general, form refers to the shape and structure of something. It can also mean the organization, placement and relationship between things. As such, language form refers to the so-called surface features of language and how these are arranged. The rules that govern how particular language features are arranged are the grammar of the language. Language form can be divided into at least two categories (Lahey, 1988:28)

### Morphology

Morphology examines how words are formed in any particular language. It focuses especially on their internal structure and how their meaning can be altered through the addition of prefixes and suffixes. A morpheme is the smallest element in a language capable of creating a distinction in meaning, as such it is central to an understanding of morphology.

### Syntax

Syntax refers to the rules that govern how words combine to create meaningful utterances. Morphemes combine to form words, words combine into phrases and phrases combine according to set rules into clauses.

Now, in spoken language we are additionally concerned with the ways in which sound is connected to meaning. This, therefore, introduces a third category:

### Phonology

Phonology is the study of the categorization of the speech sounds of a particular language and the rule system that governs how they are used to produce meaningful words. It describes the basic unit of speech in any

language as the phoneme and examines how speech sounds change when they are combined.

In addition, phonology examines other surface features of speech such as intonation, stress and pausing. There are also counterparts of these features in signed language, where the range and speed of movements (hand, arm, body, face) and hand configurations and emphasis, stress, pausing, and so on. (Lahey, 1988)

There is a correlation between forms and functions. structures and functions are not too completely separate categories of language which must be learned independently but are both ways of describing language: 'structures' describe what language is, whereas 'functions' describe what language does. This relationship between structures and functions manifests itself from the fact that one structure can have a variety of communicative functions and one function can be expressed by many structures (Doff, 1988)

A language Functions represent the active use of language for a specific purpose. Students use language functions in order to express ideas, communicate with others, and show understanding of content in an academic setting for example: giving instructions ,making requests ,defending an argument, describing processes ,comparing or contrasting things or ideas and classifying objects or ideas.

Language forms deal with the internal grammatical structure of words and phrases as well the words themselves. When one compares boy and boys, for example, or man and men, he or she is considering the relationship between different language forms or structures.

Just as a single linguistic form can express a number of functions, so also can a single communicative function be expressed by a number of linguistic forms.(Littlewood, 1981:45)

\_Examples of language functions

- Expressing needs and likes
  - Describing people, places, and things
  - Describing spatial and temporal relations
  - Describing actions
- 
- Comprehending text or speech
  - Retelling/relating past events
  - Making claims
  - Making predictions
  - Asking Informational Questions
  - Asking Clarifying Questions
  - Expressing and Supporting Opinions
  - Comparing
  - Contrasting
  - Summarizing

#### Examples of the Form of language

- Indirect/ direct object, subject/ verb
- Agreement, pronouns
- Nouns, pronouns, adjectives
  - Prepositional phrases
  - Present progressive tense adverbs
  - Past tense verbs, perfect aspect (present  
And past)
  - Verbs: future tense, conditional mode
  - Verbs and verb phrases in questions

- Questions with increasing specificity
- Sentence structure, modals (will, can, may, Shall)
- Adjectives and conjunctions,

## Chapter Three

Using the features of Communicative language Teaching in teaching language functions can improve Student's learning. The focus of language Functions according to CLT can improve learners' use of the target in the following ways:

### 3.1 The Whole is more than the sum of its parts

One of the most significant features of communication is that it is a dynamic and developing phenomenon. In other words it cannot easily be analyzed into component features without its nature being destroyed in the process. It is possible to identify various formal features of the way language is used communicatively and these can be studied individually. but the ability to handle these elements in isolation is no indication of ability to communicate. What is needed is the ability to deal with strings of sentences and ideas and in the oral modes processed in real life situations. (Richards,2005,23)

Thus, a crucial feature of a communicative method is that it operates with stretches of language above the sentence level, and operates with real language in real situations. Interestingly, this principle may lead to procedures which are themselves either synthetic or analytic. A synthetic procedure would involve students in learning forms individually and then practicing how to combine them; an analytic procedure would introduce complete interactions of texts and focus for learning purposes on the way these are constructed. So, language used in the whole context is more useful than only studying the parts of it. (Richards,2005,23)

### 3.2 The processes are as important as the forms

A method which aims at developing the capacity of the learners to communicate in a second language will focus at repeating continuously until they are able to communicate well in a target language. So that the learners are able to practice the forms of the target language, i.e. English within a given framework. It simply means when the language is used for communication, the language forms are used for a process of communication. There are three such processes – (Richards,2005,24)

### 3.3 Information gap

Communication is part and parcel of every human being. When two or more people are conversing in day-to-day life, one may know something which is not known to the other. The purpose of the communication is to bridge this information gap. In classroom situation pair work undertaken to complete an incomplete picture is the best example of transferring information as each member of the pair has a part of total information and attempts to convey it verbally to the other. (Richards,2005,24)

### 3.4 Choice

Another crucial feature of communication is that the learners have option, both in terms of what they will say and, more particularly, how they will say it. From the point of view of the speaker this means that s/he must choose the ideas which s/he wants to express with appropriate linguistic forms. Foreign language learners may face problems in making choice in this regard. (Richards,2005,24)

### 3.5 Feed back

This process is implicit in the above two processes. When two persons take part in an interaction, there is normally some aim behind communicating and in what way other person reacts is evaluated in terms of that aim. So, the strategies involved in this process are important.

### 3.6 Learning by doing

It is now widely accepted that education must be ultimately learner-centred more than the teacher-centered. The teacher may go on teach, but

if the learner is not making any effort, then there is no point of teaching. The teacher must involve the learner and must be judged in terms of its effects on him/her. Another consequence is that learning becomes to a large extent the learner's responsibility. The teacher helps, advises, and teaches, guides, the learners themselves have to learn. The learner has to be involved in the activity. Only by practicing, acting, actually doing, the learners can learn to communicate. (Richards,2005,25)

### 3.7 Mistakes are not always a mistake

While developing communicative ability of the learners, trivial mistakes of grammar or pronunciation does not matter as long as the learner gets his/her message across. In the initial stage of learning to communicate in a foreign language, mistakes are bound to happen. The learners commit mistakes because they are trying to do something which they have not been told or shown how to do, how to speak which they have not mastered. It means they are not really making mistakes. If the teacher corrects each and everything at every level, the learners may lose their confidence of using the language for communication. (Richards,2005,25)

## **Chapter Four :Conclusion**

Language functions ,which means the purposes of people speaking or writing, is the reason for using language. The function of language is communication or usually called by speech function; people use language to give and receive messages between themselves.

There is a correlation between forms and functions. Structures and functions are not too completely separate categories of language which must be learned independently but are both ways of describing language: 'structures' describe what language is, whereas 'functions' describe what language does. This relationship between structures and functions manifests itself from the fact that one structure can have a variety of

communicative functions and one function can be expressed by many structures

The teaching method that focuses on language functions has a significant impact on enabling the learner to use the language compared to other methods that focus on language forms.

Using the features of Communicative language Teaching in teaching language functions can improve Student's learning. The focus of language Functions according to CLT can improve learners' use of the target .

Using the communicative method in teaching is important than other methods since it is focused on language functions.

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