

Methodologies and models in the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language

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ONOMÁZEIN 65 (September 2024): 183-199

DOI: 10.7764/onomazein.65.10

ISSN: 0718-5758



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Received: September, 2020

Accepted: January, 2021

Abstract

In this paper, the evolution of the main language teaching methods and their treatment of learning difficulties is succinctly presented. The different methodologies that have been tested throughout the history of the teaching of a second language (L2) are supported by different theoretical principles and hypotheses. The different theoretical linguistic models have presented, each one from their particular methodology, their approaches on how to develop such a process.

Keywords: methodological trends; L2; teaching; foreign language; Spanish.

1. Methodological trends

1.1. Grammar-translation method

One of the first methodological tendencies of teaching a second language (L2) is known as the grammar and translation method or traditional method, which dominated the pedagogy of languages in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is a pre-linguistic formulation because it lacks the basic principles that establish a linguistic basis: active use of language, on the one hand, and controlled planning and gradation of sentence models and general grammar, on the other. This method does not take into account the oral aspect of language. The language becomes an end in itself and guides learning towards metalinguistic reflection in terms of correctness *versus* incorrectness.

The presentation that was made of grammar was characterized by:

- fidelity to the Latin language,
- a predominance of lists of forms and examples of specific rules.

The inadequacy of this treatment was the methodology based on classifications and lists of adjectives, pronouns or verbs to maintain the Greco-Latin method. The method was mainly questioned because it exaggeratedly emphasized the memorization of word lists and because it prioritized translation practice detracting from language production. The excessive number of proposed rules meant that grammar became a memory test.

The method entered into definitive decline from the 1940s onwards, with the rise of structuralist methodologies.

1.2. Natural methods

In 1882, Viëtor (1902) published a booklet condemning the use of translation as a method of teaching languages and presenting grammar rules to learners. He suggested that apprentices should learn the language of conversation and not that of writing.

Natural methods arose at the end of the 19th century, when a group of European phoneticians constituted what became known as the Reform Movement, which sought to give greater importance to oral language compared to writing and to use texts as channels for the teaching/learning process.

1.2.1. Direct method

This model excludes the use of the speaker's first language (L1) from the teaching of L2. Language is considered to be a basically oral phenomenon and writing is its secondary representation, which must be developed according to the oral linguistic structures that

are intended to be taught. The teaching of grammar is based on the fact that it must be discovered through experience of the language under study.

It tries to reproduce the learning situation of the mother tongue in natural conditions. Implicitly the language is conceived as an inventory of signifiers.

Although the oral skill is fundamentally developed, the method also aims to develop reading and writing in L2. Translation is prohibited and is replaced by visual support (iconic resources and real references).

This method was criticized because it was considered that the inductive teaching of grammar was slow and insufficient.

1.2.2. Reading method

This method arose from two reports: one from the Modern Language Association of America (1898) and another from the Modern Foreign Language Study (1924). These reports limited the objectives of foreign language teaching so that it could be carried out within the time-frame allocated to L2 in formal education systems. As reading was considered to be the primary need of most students, it was decided to institute this as a basic objective.

The method shows some concern with the teaching of phonemes, but oral exercise is minimal or non-existent. The grammar taught is only necessary to facilitate direct exposure to L2, even when there is some emphasis on translation. Reading well in L2 does not favour the development of oral communication, so the search for a method that would combine skills more evenly continued.

1.3. Structuralist based methodologies

The influence of Saussure's studies and the development of structuralism were gaining ground.

The psycholinguistic perspective emanates from psychological behaviorism, a theory that summarizes linguistic phenomena through the binomial S-R (stimulus-response), in which the American structuralism of L. Bloomfield and behaviorism of B. F. Skinner, among others, is based. Learning does not occur from the innate competences of the human being, but from external components that act on the individual until it becomes behaviour.

Bloomfield (1933) considered that the spoken word more authentically represented language and writing was nothing more than an imperfect representation of oral language, so, to learn a language it was essential to practice oral skills and not to dedicate time to translation, which was an activity that tended to disorientate students. To this opinion, Bloomfield added others in *Outline guide for the practical study of foreign languages* (1942), which together with *Outline of Linguistic Analysis* (Bloch y Trager, 1942) constituted the theory of language teaching.

Fries (1945: 45) and Lado (1957) maintained that the most effective teaching materials were those with a structural basis “results of scientific research on language”, that is, those produced by linguists, not teachers. These materials were based on the conception that each language was reduced to a set of structures that could be learned or reinforced by mechanical manipulation of response-stimuli, which would be consolidated by continuous repetition. Linguists carried out comparative studies of the structures of L1 and L2 at the phonetic, morphological and lexical levels and tried to find out what structures offered “interference” due to their similarity to L2. To avoid them, structural exercises were developed, based on the association of linguistics and behavioural psychology, which, with its conditioning theory, proposed a mechanical process of habit formation through the scheme: stimulus => response => reinforcement, which would lead the student to the acquisition of the desired structures, based on the premise that “learning a new language means simply acquiring another collection of linguistic habits”.

1.3.1. Audio-oral approach

The audio-oral method is the structural method *par excellence* and has been used with increasing vigour during the fifties and sixties. Its motto is that language is speech, not written language and is theoretically based on behaviourism, that reduces human behaviour to a mechanical process of stimuli and responses and in the structural behavioural school of Bloomfield. It is characterized by emphasizing hearing, repetition and intensive memorization of structures. Bloomfield's philosophy is to present linguistic units that must be repeated until they become automatic habits so, that when the learner receives a stimulus, he automatically reacts to it and responds according to the training received, avoiding error and reinforcing the correct response. Such ideology, based on a coherent theoretical apparatus, was a breakthrough from a scientific point of view.

The audio-oral method has variants, the main ones being the situational method, the audiovisual method and the structural-global method. The situational method arose from the ideas of Firth and the British language theorists. The model does not exploit the use of language in situations of daily life that occur outside the classroom, but in the linguistic structures that constitute the purpose of the lesson. The audiovisual method, which maintains its fundamental basis in behavioural psychology, sees the educational process as the establishment of conditioned habits. The structural-global method has its origins in Saussure's structuralist conceptions that deal with the phonetic and acoustic unit. It delays the introduction of written materials in order to foster a global understanding of dialogues, whose vocabulary is statistically preset. However, each of these only adds complementary factors to the audio-oral method.

1.3.2. Notional-functional method

In the notional-functional method, communication is a concept determined by functions, that is to say, it emphasizes the way in which a certain form should be used to meet a spe-

cific communication need. In the words of Martín Peris (1996), language programmes isolate the traditional criteria for the selection and gradation of grammatical structures and are based on the description of grammatical categories. The didactic materials used reflect a more natural use of the language, in addition to encouraging a more active participation of students in the learning process. The written modality has the same value as the oral modality. Instead of working on repertoires of structures, lists of notions, such as time, space, quantity, etc., are worked on, as well as skills such as identifying the central point of a message, etc., and of functions such as asking for information, offering help, etc., being aware of different colloquial or formal registers, etc., and proposes creative exercises.

1.3.3. Communicative method

This method includes, in addition to the knowledge of forms, the development of creative procedures that lead to the use of language in context. In other words, the communicative method is based on the communicative needs of the learners, but the communicative situation is not subordinated to the achievement of linguistic purposes such as in notion-function-alism, but in linguistic and non-linguistic elements that integrate the communicative process so it is more related to pragmatics than grammar, which explains why it is more compromising with systematic deviations. It should be clarified that the communicative method does not exclude the grammar of the learning process, but grammar is only one of the components of communication and not the main one, which does not mean that some grammatical aspects cannot be explicitly explained in class. The communicative approach requires the use of language in a contextualized manner, with a focus on the function and progression of the course, and is regulated by linguistic functions deduced from the interests of the group of learners.

1.3.3.1. Task-based language learning

This type of education, also based on communicative acts, evolved in the 80s and developed during the 90s. It arose from the attempt to create a framework for the teaching of foreign languages. The procedural programmes seem to be directed towards three processes: that of communication, learning and the group process of a class community. Thus, the teaching of a foreign language should not focus merely on command of the content necessary for communication but must also integrate actual communication practice in a foreign language as a vital element of course design (Breen, 1987).

The foundation of learning is not centred on the content but on the process of interaction - negotiation of meaning through continuous questions to ensure that the learner controls the input, asking for clarifications, repetitions, etc.

The sequencing of tasks, whether communicative or learning, will be planned based on two criteria: familiarity with the learner's knowledge and communication skills (from the most familiar to the least), and the complexity inherent in the task.

Below, we present summary tables in which the didactic methods used today and the corresponding attitude that the teacher may have about them are carefully observed (Richards and Rodgers, 2003; Sánchez, 1997; Zanón, 2007).

TABLE 1

The most relevant language teaching methods (I)

METHOD	LANGUAGE THEORY	LEARNING THEORY	OBJECTIVES	PROGRAMME	TEACHER AND STUDENT	MATERIAL
AUDIO LINGUAL (from the 1940s in Europe)			Oral skill	Linguistic contrastive method	Control of learning	Teacher-centred
					Correction (negative view of error)	Recordings
					Learner takes a passive role	Language laboratory
SITUATIONAL (from the 1940s in the USA)	Structuralism	Conductivism	The four skills	Programacont estructural	The student repeats	Text book
				Word lists	Incorrect habits should be avoided	Visual props
					Teachers are the speaker models; they establish situations in which to use the studied structures	
NATURAL METHOD (1970S)	Language as communication	Innatism	Express oneself and understand the L2	Based on the four skills	Teacher as the main source of input information. They must create a relaxed climate in the classroom. Rich mix of activities	<i>Realia</i> (authentic materials; objects taken to class)
					Students should show the teacher their progress, their knowledge, their needs.	Visual aids (drawings, photos, images...)
TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE	Language produces mainly orders and instructions	Cognitivism	Oral competence at beginner level	Based on oral instruction	The student responds physically to the direction of the teacher	Real materials and objects: books, pens, paper, furniture...
					The teacher takes an active role: they decide what to teach and select the materials	
COMMUNITY LANGUAGE LEARNING (1970s)	Language as a social process	Interaction and environmentalism	Communicate in the L2	Open to students' election	The student decides what they wish to talk about	Summaries on the blackboard
					Group work and mutual cooperation	
					The teacher facilitates translation to L2	Projector
COMMUNICATIVE METHOD (1980S)	Language as communication	Environmentalism Interactionism	Described in terms of the four skills, from a communicative perspective	Notional-functional	The learner negotiates what to learn	Text-centred
					Little error correction	Task-centred
					Teacher as facilitator of the communication, independent participant, needs-analyst, adviser and group manager	Authentic material, or slightly modified

Note: The source is Fernández Martín (2009) (authors' translation).

TABLE 2

Other methods of difficult classification (I)

METHOD	LANGUAGE THEORY	LEARNING THEORY	OBJECTIVES	PROGRAMME	TEACHER AND STUDENT	MATERIAL	
GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION (TRADITIONAL) METHOD	Language as a set of rules	Memorization	Read literature in L2, analyze grammatical rules and translate sentences	Based on L2 literature	Corrections made	Literary texts	
					Taught in L1	Bilingual lists	
					The teacher is the authority	Dictionaries	
					The student is a passive agent		
DIRECT METHOD, NATURAL METHOD OR TRADITIONAL OR BERLITZ METHOD (C. XIX)	-	The L2 should be taught as is the L1	Intensive oral interaction	-	Only L2 is spoken	Drawings, mime	
			The four skills		The teacher acts to make her/himself understood	Text book (little used)	
SILENT METHOD (1970s)	Structuralism	L1 is learned differently from the L2	Basic oral and audio methods	Structural (grammar and vocabulary)	The teacher is silent and does not correct	Color strips, tables, graphics	
					The student learns autonomously	Gestures, objects	
						Silence	
SUGGESTOPE-DIA (1970s)	Structuralism	The student learns by their surroundings	Great conversational competence in short time	Duration: 30 days. Four hours per day. Six days per week	Teacher has (relaxed) authority	Classroom decoration	
					Infantilization of the student	Texts	
						The material should envelop the student	Background music
							Spacial distribution

Note: The source is Fernández Martín (2009) (authors' translation).

TABLE 3

Other methods of difficult classification (II): task-based method

METHOD	LANGUAGE THEORY	LEARNING THEORY	OBJECTIVES	PROGRAMME	TEACHER AND STUDENT	MATERIAL
TASK-BASED LEARNING	Language as a way of creating meaning	Processing of input and output	To carry out a final task for which the student needs linguistic structures, vocabulary and functions	Each didactic unit has a final objective	The student is attentive, participative and prepared to take risks	Teaching materials (drawings, graphics, texts...)
	'Do things with words'			Contents and results of the learning are specified		The teacher selects the tasks and the sequence in which they are to be carried out in the classroom
	Lexical unit	Includes real-world tasks and pedagogical tasks		Real (newspapers, television, Internet...)		
	Communication				Motivation produced by completion of tasks	

Medium for
conversation

Negotiation of
the difficulty
of learning

Note: The source is Fernández Martín (2009) (authors' translation).

2. Models

2.1. Contrastive analysis model

Contrastive linguistics was established as a science in the late 1950s, associated with the theory of behavioural structural linguistics. It centres on the effects that the differences and similarities between the structure of the mother tongue and the target language produce in the learning of L2, establishing a causal relationship between the degree of learning difficulty of the L2 and the degree of contrastive divergence with L1.

2.1.1. The first studies based on the contrastive analysis model

According to Muñoz-Liceras (1992), the first studies of contrastive analysis begin with the work of Weinreich (1953), which is dedicated to the study of the linguistic system of bilinguals. There was a move away from this author's approach because the models he presents are not aimed at the non-native system, but to the establishment of points that can be problematic for those who are learning an L2. It was Fries (1945) who instituted the model of contrastive analysis as a fundamental component of the teaching methodology of L2, stating that the most efficient teaching materials should be based on a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared to a description parallel to the learner's mother tongue. The start of the use of programmes based on the contrastive analysis model applied to the teaching of L2 goes back to the year 1945. This approach was codified by Harris (1951) and had great influence on the work of Lado (1957), who published a work that explained this approach and developed a methodology for this model.

The goal of the model was to elaborate a grammar resulting from the sum of the differences between the grammar of the mother tongue and that of the second language, a concern that arises from a didactic problem: to promote a working method that avoids errors. From this premise it is inferred that the results of the contrast serve as predictors of errors and difficulties, so teaching must be based on the elimination of the negative influence of the mother tongue and on the promotion of what is positively transferable.

Lado (1957) asserted that linguistic materials would be more productive if they were based on contrastive analysis, since it argues that learners tend to transfer and distribute the forms and meanings of their native language and their culture to the foreign language and culture, both in an active way, when they try to speak the language and behave

according to the culture, as receptively, when they try to understand the language and cultural norms of native speakers.

From a linguistic perspective, contrastive analysis rests on the formal descriptions that distributionism makes of the procedures of each language and maintains:

- formal description of languages in contrast,
- selection of the areas that will be compared,
- contrast of similarities and differences,
- reduction of possible errors.

In the specific case of learning foreign languages, which according to the behaviourist vision is the formation of a behaviour, it implies a new behaviour depending on the similarities and differences between the two languages. Consequently, it is alleged that the greater the difference between the systems, that is, as the more mutually exclusive are each other's forms and patterns, the greater the learning problem and the parts where interference may occur.

2.1.1.1. The strong version *versus* the weak version

Two versions for the contrastive analysis hypothesis can be presented: one strong or predictive and one weak or explanatory. For the strong version it is feasible to contrast the grammar, phonology and lexicon of an L1 with the system of an L2 in order to predict the difficulties that the learners of this L2 will have to face in order to speak and understand it and so that didactic materials can be developed and modified to make them interesting. The weak version starts from real phenomena provided by checking the linguistic interference of L1 with L2 and using such occurrences in order to establish similarities and differences between the two systems, insisting that the forecast is not equal to the results and that contrastive analysis can only interpret errors.

While the strong version is not very operative and raises doubts about its predictive power, the weak version stems from experience, which offers great possibilities for practical use.

2.1.1.2. Negative transfer/interference

The contrastive hypothesis states that learning the L2 is determined by the structural arrangement of the L1. In this way, the structures of the L1 that correspond to those of the L2 would be assimilated much more easily thanks to positive transfers, that is, to the use of the elements of L1 in the positive performance of L2, while in the opposite way the structures that present differences between the two languages would cause negative transfers/interferences. Of course, for a transfer to occur, there must be some resemblance between L1

and L2, because, when the two languages differ too much with respect to a given structure, the transfer is unlikely.

2.1.2. Criticism of the model

Most critics point out that Contrastive Analysis (CA) has not met the objectives defined in the 1950s. Sajavaara (1983: 38) lists some of the repeated criticisms that CA was subject to:

1. Too obvious and abstract results of difficult applicability in the teaching of a foreign Language.
2. Difficult resolution of all problems raised in learning because not all are linguistic in nature and CA ignores other components.
3. Lack of decision as to the linguistic theory to be used.
4. Confusion in the theoretical distinction applied.
5. Stativity, makes normative descriptions with the assumption that L1 and L2 are equal and that the student's position with respect to L2 is stable.
6. Ignores other components such as the psychological component and the pragmatic component.
7. Translation is an ambiguous theoretical concept.

Other criticisms of the contrastive analysis are the inadequacy of the teaching materials, the transfer of elements of other languages studied previously, retention capacity, the generalization of the application by analogy of rules beyond grammatical limits and even intralinguistic and developmental interference, which occurs within the internal structure of the language itself that is being learned. Many of the mistakes of L2 learners cannot be attributed to the influence of the L1 because they are repeated in the production of speakers of varied languages.

It does not mean that because the research model of contrastive analysis is criticised it is not valid, as it is the beginning of research in applied linguistics that focuses on the student and their learning process; it constitutes the foundations of error-analysis and allows to understand the current interlanguage studies and the analysis of the global production of the student of an L2.

2.2. The error analysis model

From the 1960s onwards, an innovation can be observed in the perspective of contrastive analysis and a reorientation influenced by Chomsky's theory of linguistic acquisition, which questions psychological behaviourism and Skinnerian language acquisition theory, bases of contrastive analysis. It postulates that language acquisition is not the result

of habit formation, but of a generation of rules. Chomsky's theory argues that the child does not acquire the L1 only by imitation of adult speech; their statements are their own creations, but at the same time universal, in the sense that all children at the same age produce more or less the same types of structures, overcoming the same types of difficulties regardless of the linguistic community in which they function. The existence in the mind of an innate language ability guides the individual in their interaction with the data in the language to which they are exposed, and can thus elaborate linguistic knowledge of L1. That unit of the brain responsible for the acquisition of language is what is known within the Chomskian theoretical model as universal grammar and it is thanks to the principles of this grammar that the child can both produce their sentences and interpret what they hear.

The first publications of Corder constitute the theoretical framework of the error analysis model. This model has as its starting point the year 1967, which was when Corder published the article entitled "The significance of learners' errors".

It is considered that during the learning period learners go through a gradation similar to that of the child who learns the L1 and, before becoming fully competent in the L2, they develop transient systems that cover errors that are due from interference with L1, as well as errors that are not due to either language¹.

Corder (1975) notes that errors can function as a source capable of indicating the areas of greatest difficulty and, at the same time, they can be used to review and produce teaching materials more adjusted to the needs of learners. Corder, like the transformational grammarians, shares the idea that the teacher cannot teach a language, but can only create conditions in which it develops spontaneously in the minds of the learners. He then proposes the systematic analysis of the corpus of errors produced by students when trying to express themselves in the language they are learning.

2.2.1. Systematic errors: evidence of stages of learning

It is important to know how to distinguish between systematic and non-systematic errors. The errors that are due to the lapse of memory, physical disposition and psychological states are considered non-systematic and have no interest in the process of learning a language, be it L1 or L2, since they are normally correctable by the speaker himself. Bryan Jenner (1976: 21) sums up the question in the following manner:

1 According to Selinker (1972) in the learning of the L2, the same mechanism is used as that in the learning of the L1, that had been latent.

The term 'error' is taken to mean some idiosyncratic or 'un-native-like' piece of language produced by a foreign learner. It also implies, to the Error Analyst, that this piece of language is produced regularly and systematically. Some errors are typical of groups of learners with the same mother tongue. Others are peculiar to individual students. An error is logical or 'correct' to the student (or he would not produce it) but not, usually, to the native speakers.

On the other hand, those errors that are the result of the underlying knowledge of the target language are systematic errors and show the language procedure that the learners are using. This systematic error/non-systematic error duality is an externalization of Chomskian discrimination between competence and performance, according to which systematic error is a deficiency of linguistic competence, while non-systematic error belongs to the level of action and occurs because of its inappropriate use of language skills, without indicating ignorance of the rules. It is to the systematic errors that the model in question is dedicated. Most researchers acknowledge that they are only in a position to evaluate competence and performance errors at the end of a comprehensive error analysis.

The difference between the contrastive analysis model and the error analysis model is that the latter model is not based on the contrast of the pairs of languages, the L1 and the L2, but of the real productions of learners in context.

The study of systematic errors allows the transitory competence of the learners to be assessed. Their linguistic production, therefore, must be understood as a true representation of their transitional linguistic competence.

Corder (1971) determines the different phases of development of an error analysis, in order to account for the competence that underlies the production of the students of an L2:

- In the first stage it establishes as necessary the recognition of the deviations that it classifies as a covert idiosyncratic sentence (a sentence that is superficially well formed according to the rules of the language, but that cannot be easily interpreted in the real context of speech) and a sentence that is clearly idiosyncratic (a sentence that is superficially poorly formed according to the rules of the object language and that to be understood force the sentence of the confrontation of the hypothetically produced sentence in the target language with the learner's mother tongue).

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- The second stage is the description of the language pairs arising from the comparison carried out in the first phase: that of the L1 and that of the L2, which would attempt to clarify what the learner meant.
- The last stage is the explanation. Here, we seek to understand how and why the diversion in the student's production is of a certain nature with the purpose of providing information about their communicative competence.

2.2.2. The concept of communicative competence

The new orientation is interested in the communicative competence of the student that comprises both the grammatical component and the pragmatic component. The notion of communicative competence is introduced by Hymes in the 1960s (1966) in response to Chomsky's linguistic competence, that had spoken of an ideal speaker-listener in a homogeneous linguistic community, unaffected by real-world contingencies.

By observing that Chomsky had not related the concept of linguistic competence to social interaction, Hymes (1972: 278) broadens his vision based on the assumption that "there are rules of use without which grammar rules are sterile". Hymes believes that the communicative competence of a speaker goes beyond their linguistic knowledge and clarifies that it is not enough to possess only the knowledge of the language, but also to know how to use it in the most diverse situations. Hence, one of the most positive consequences of the development of the concept of communicative competence is the emergence of applied studies on the expression of the knowledge of speakers related to their ability to adapt linguistic expressions to speech situations. The definition of communicative competence includes not only native speakers, but also foreign language learners. It is understood that in the process of learning an L2 it is essential to assume a participatory attitude (that of the 1st person) and not the attitude of a 3rd person (which characterizes the neutral and partial observer).

2.2.3. Research on error-analysis

Following the development of the concept of communicative competence, errors are studied according to the gradation of the obstruction of the communication and the efficiency that it produces in the listener.

Burt and Kiparsky (1972) distinguish global errors from local errors. Global errors are those that affect the general organization of the sentence, that is, those that affect its syntactic structure; local errors are limited to some constituent of the sentence and affect the minimum words and parts of the sentence. The former block communication, while Tomiyama (1980) corroborated the previous conclusions and added that if the listener is not able to correct an error, or if the correction distorts the message, the error must be considered as serious, since it hinders communication.

Johansson (1973) adds to the intelligibility the degree of irritation on the part of the recipient and the criteria of frequency and generality of the rule that is affected. He considers that lexical errors are the main causes of impediments to understanding.

Olsson (1977) emphasizes the communicative aspect of language and also considers that lexical failures can cause more communication problems than grammatical ones, because of the distorting consequences of the sense they can generate.

Research has been conducted on criteria to assess the severity of errors, highlighting Enkvist (1973), James (1977), Haley and King (1975), Chastain (1976) and Vázquez (1991); grammaticality (the relationship between sentence and grammar), acceptability (the relationship between the sentence produced and the value judgments issued by the listener) and contextualized acceptability (which means the appropriateness in the transmission of meanings in a context). Three criteria are established for the evaluation of the severity of the error:

- Understandable and acceptable error.
- Understandable but unacceptable error.
- Unintelligible error.

Applying these parameters in empirical research leads to the conclusion that it is the pragmatic errors that prevent us from saying what is wanted and hinders the communication processes and that global understanding is most affected by lexical problems, such as the use of words inappropriate to the context or the addition or omission of words, rather than to grammatical problems.

Other authors have examined error types according to the structural level and argue that lexical errors, rather than grammatical errors, seem to cause serious impediments to communication (Fernández, 1989). But they consider that using this model of analysis we can deduce which are the linguistic aspects that, when presenting difficulty, cause a greater break in communication. All these studies cover errors from the communicative point of view and have as their main objective the establishing of inventories of more frequent errors and assess the severity of each one of them.

3. Conclusion

In recent years, more weight has been given to the hypotheses according to which the learning of a second language does not only imply the acquisition and mastery of a linguistic system, but also the need to know the multiple communicative factors that favour positive linguistic exchange. From this point of view, the teaching of second languages must take into account both the *cognitive dimension*, focused on the transmission of knowledge and the assimilation by the student of a linguistic competence, and the *pragmatic dimension*, focusing on the acquisition and implementation of forms of communicative behaviour.

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