

Teaching language functions



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Introduction

There are many different languages in our world that are different. And each language has its rule. Language function is a part of the language. Also, each language has its function, which is used to communicate. Moreover, language function makes us to communicate correctly. If we don't know about language function, the sentences that we talk to other people will not complete. Although they can understand, but it can change the meaning. As we are teachers, we should be careful in teaching the function of language because if we teach a wrong function, it means that the students will receive a wrong language system, too. Therefore, the teachers should be careful about the usage of verbs or tenses, phrases, structures and vocabulary because these are the main factors that we can make our students to write or speak English correctly. Nowadays, there are many ways to teach the students to learn language functions. Some students think that language functions are boring. Then, they don't want to learn. However, we should use the better teaching technique for our students.

Parker (2009) suggests that function is what the language used in language learning such as requesting, apologizing, ordering etc.

In my view, I think that the function of the language is something to control the meaning or expression of the communication.

The language functions.

When we talk about language functions, we are talking about the reason we use a language. Basically, the function of language is used for communication; we use the language to give and receive messages between

ourselves. We can break this down into language functions. When we communicate with language, we can:

Compare and Contrast

Make a complaint

Express love or anger

Persuade someone

Give advice

Ask for something

Ask for something politely

Hide the truth (lie)

Warn

Give information

Explain a process

Apportion blame

Avoid saying anything and so on.

Each language function can be associated with certain grammatical forms.

For example, we often use modal verbs in a polite situation,

Might I borrow your pen?

Compare this to when the language function is one of demanding:

Give me your pen!

Although each language function deals with one main communicative need, it can cover different situations.

For example, “ Asking for information & directions” can be used not only in the context of tourists finding their way round town, but also with new employees who need to find their bearings in a large firm. The same goes for “ Instructing others”. Here the relevant language will be about giving orders, making strong suggestions etc. these can be used at work and also outside work at a hotel, when hiring a car, ordering a meal, etc.

There are 3 types of the language function such as:

First of all, informative languages function: essentially, the communication of information. They are:

- The informative function affirms or denies propositions, as in science or the statement of a fact.
- This function is used to describe the word or reason about it.
- These sentences have a truth value. The sentences are either true or false.
- Secondly, expressive languages function: reports feelings or attitudes of the writer or speaker, or of the subject.

For examples:

- Poetry and literature are among the best examples, but much of, perhaps most of, ordinary language discourse is the expression of emotions, feelings or attitudes.
- Two main aspects of this function are generally noted: evoking, certain feelings and expressing feelings.
- The last one, directive languages function: language used for the purpose of causing overt action.
- The directive function is most commonly found in commands and requests.
- Directive language is not normally considered true or false.
- Example of this function: “ Close the windows.” The sentence “ You’re smoking in a nonsmoking area,” although declarative, can be used to mean “ Do not smoke in this area.”

How to teach language functions.

The teacher should understand with the function of language clearly. In teaching, the teacher must give the students an example in each function. Moreover, the teacher may give them a situation that they can express the language function. For example: a student is at the restaurant, she wants to order something for her lunch. What will she say to a waiter? This is an example that the teacher may give to their students to think what the girl will say in order to order something. Therefore; ordering food is a function language.

Parker (2009) explains that introducing students to the function of language, the teacher can give them to perform tasks or talk about the past, present, or future. Although, the beginner level can learn how to greet people. The <https://assignbuster.com/teaching-language-functions/>

important thing to remember when teaching function language, the teacher should:

1. Remember that the function does not appear in isolation. A request, or incitation, needs a reply. So, to give the students for a task, the teacher should teach in appropriate pairs.
2. Intonation is very important in speaking English when the function of language is presented. The tone in speaking and emphasis is just as important as the particular choice of words. For example, “ Could I have your attention, please? It is used when we speak in class, even though it is spoken as a request, is a demand. “ Could I have ... the spaghetti? Which is spoken in a restaurant, would be a polite request.
3. Remember the aspect of appropriacy. It is very important that the students must be careful of different situations which either for called formal English or allowed for a less formal option. In a restaurant, “ Can I have the spaghetti?” It is less polite than “ Could I have the spaghetti, please?”

Moreover, he says that one function can have many different language functions. Here are the examples of different functions:

1. If you say anything, I will tell your parents. (Function-Threat/Warning)
2. I'll do the hovering, if you do the washing up. (Function-Negotiation)
3. I'll go to the shops for you. (Function-Offer)

And one function can be expressed using several different language structures. For example:

1. If I were you, I'd (2nd conditional)

2. Why don't you (Present tense – question – negative)

3. You should / ought (Modal/auxiliary verb)

In addition, to teach a language function, the teacher may give the students some tasks or talk with them about the situations. The teacher should allow the students to study in the role play. In each situation, the students ought to tell the functions of language. To do like this will help the teacher know the students' ability in using language function.

Examples of language function.

There is an example of teaching language function for students that I have planned to teach about these topics. In each topic, I write the functions of language that they will learn.

Topics & Functions

There are example situations to use language function at various places.

Introductions and commands.

Vocabulary

I'm – I am

It's – It is

Let's – Let us

Don't – Do not

The example's tasks.

What's the real meaning?

The dialogue below shows the different exchange between the student and teacher.

Ann: I can hear the phone.

Paul: I'm watching TV.

Student: Why does Paul say "I'm watching TV"?

Teacher: Because he's is doing it now- at the moment of speaking.

Student: But John is there – he can see that Ann is having her lunch.

Teacher: Exactly. It's happening now.

Student: But why?

The feedback

The teacher does not focus on the functional meaning of Paul's utterance. In this context, Paul is making an excuse – "I'm not going to answer the phone because I'm having my lunch". It is only focused on the grammatical meaning of the structure Paul uses, does not to make this clear.

Key Skill

Understanding the underlying social meaning of certain utterances is at the heart of functional language. We often use language because we want to perform some kind of communicative act like making a request or offering advice. The expressions that we use to achieve this are known as functional exponents.

Research

According to Saichon Deeprasit, research on Analysis of Language Functions of Authentic Materials Based on Communicative Language Teaching. The purpose of this research was to analyze the language functions of authentic materials which had not been developed for educational purpose. Authentic materials were firstly analyzed into themes, topics and sub topics. Then their language functions were analyzed and developed six lesson plans for high school students. She used 70 authentic materials which were analyzed within 12 themes and the language functions were analyzed following 6 language function groups and 6 lesson plans were developed according to the highest frequency of occurrences found in each language function group. The language functions of imparting and seeking factual information; reporting including describing and narrating were the highest frequency of occurrences (84. 29)

From the research, it was found that in teaching language function, the students need to report, describe and narrate.

It is a secondary research because the researcher has study from the language functions of authentic materials. (Saichon: Analysis of Language Functions of Authentic Materials Based on Communicative Language Teaching)

Conclusion

From this research I think that it is very important for the teacher in teaching language function because it is based on communication. Most of the students do not understand with the function of language. Sometime, the

students don't know when they are used in the situation and how they should talk with a receiver.

In my research, there are about the meaning of language functions, how to teach language functions and the examples of language functions.

I am teaching grade 11 and the English textbook consists of 8 language functions, Introducing people, Giving an opinion, Giving directions, Making arrangements, Making a phone call, In a café, Buying a train ticket, and Giving advice. My students can communicate in English from these various situations both inside and outside classroom. They know not only what functions they can use with those situations, but also the language culture. For example, they can tell the tourist the way to Nong Prajak Park, or they can introduce their new friends to a foreign teacher. They also understand the appropriateness in using the language in formal or informal way. To illustrate, they said, " May I come in, please?" to get a permission from the teacher to enter the class whereas they said, " Can I use your pen?" to their friends. Besides, they can use the certain vocabulary according to the situations. They use the word, " pay attention" which means to be interested in. On the contrary, " pay a lot of money" which means to spend money.

Through my learning experience with Ajarn Steve Graham, language functions have benefited me in various ways. First of all, I can communicate in various situations by using the knowledge from the classroom to apply using them in reality. Moreover, on reading skill, I can cope with skimming, scanning, or even speed reading. In addition, on writing skill, I can express my ideas, agree or disagree from the articles both in the textbook and the

one on his website, “Harmony at all cost?” Secondly, the comic section interests me in choosing the characters and making the dialogue which I think I won’t have a chance to create this language function by myself. Most importantly, I have a good opportunity to express my opinion and discuss the interesting topics such as the educational system in Thailand and I can produce the target language from reading and writing skills through speaking skill.

Language function is one of the major factors that ESL students need to learn. The potential communication has been created from the classroom first and the most success will consequently happen in the real world.

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