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**PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND
GRAMMATICAL PARADIGMS OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE**

ABSTRACT

This applied linguistic exposition, a non-empirical study, attempts to establish a logical relationship amongst certain characteristics of language phenomena, language needs and formal language assimilation. This has necessitated a skewed philosophical definition of what could be regarded as philosophical in language applicable to French studies at the tertiary level of education. Selected theoretical premises involving biological features are applied to potential language use directly applicable to French language form and behaviour, academic disciplines and institutions; further attempt in our probe is made on how already acquired grammatical notions of advanced students of French could be expanded beyond the traditional confines of the usually dreaded normative grammar. The treatise rolls off with pedagogical reflections, in the light of earlier applied linguistic dialectics, involving a further definition of language needs in respect of advanced students, specifically the scope for functional linguistic assimilation with a view of perfecting French as a communication tool and as a medium of acquiring knowledge and studying other components of French studies in tertiary institutions.

**PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND
GRAMMATICAL PARADIGMS OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE**

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INTRODUCTION

We wish to posit that the term "language philosophy" is not being discussed here as an extension of orthodox philosophical treatise in respect of the various domains of philosophical speculations, that is, as a branch of philosophy per se, precisely, within the domain of our concept of the philosophy of language our spring-board logically reposes upon "how words mean and how they relate to the world" (Searle, 1979).

In other words, our observation post in this exercise should enable us appreciate how philosophical characteristics of language, in terms of how its organic growth, ecological, sociological and semiotic determinants in linguistic symbolizations, could profitably be exploited for didactic purposes in a language education such as French as a foreign language. The purpose, therefore, of this paper is to demonstrate directly or indirectly how advanced students' insights into certain permanent operational features could lead language users to recognise the meaningfulness of speech segments or expressions along with the grammaticality of the syntactic combinations of the latter.

Such philosophical determinants of French lexical and grammatical structures, for example, are most effectively exploited between the two phases of linguistic consolidation and maturation of advanced students of French; the linguistic assimilation stage referred to here roughly coincides with the current tertiary academic level during which lectures in translation, background studies and literary appreciation are conducted entirely in French.

Thus, in the discussion that follows, we shall attempt to achieve the above objective, to establish a logical relationship amongst certain characteristics of language phenom-

ena, language needs and formal language assimilation in a foreign language teaching and learning situation.

THEORETICAL BASIS AND ASSUMPTIONS OF LANGUAGE PHENOMENA

French, like any other language, is a human phenomenon, a vital communicative tool for survival and sustenance, either as an individual or in relation to other members of a social group; similarly, like a well established foreign language such as English, the French language functions vertically in the precise codification of messages or information, expression of desires, feelings, commands, for recording or obtaining information. Of course, it functions horizontally in response to certain institutional or socio-cultural exigencies. These are some of the basic insights into which our students of French as a foreign language should be introduced at the intermediate linguistic level of studies. These insights are only (belatedly but fortunately) brought into focus during the year-abroad scheme, started off in the middle-ages and still practised by Sorbonne, Oxford, and Cambridge Universities.

In terms of other philosophical paradigms, a foreign language or any other like French operates like an organic growth (the biological theory of behaviour) and is comfortably transferable into a new embryonic receptacle (the student) in a completely new habitat (whether indigenous or foreign) and, therefore, it is far from being hereditary. This is why language instructors in beginner classes should psychopedagogically lead the learners to believe that being a foreign language does not make French difficult to assimilate; with the initial confidence driven in by the teacher, the linguistic basics gradually take roots, as it were, in the habitat as the speech zones of the brain become more and more receptive to the "strange sounds" and novel syntactic configurations.

The non-hereditary feature of language is further demonstrated by multilingualism within a geographically coherent or political entity thereby giving rise to a large population of bilinguals and multilinguals. These immediately remind us of translation, another vital aspect of our French language studies; this is considered crucial because bilingualism is associated with "languages in contact" along with its twin-sister, contrastive analysis, another domain of endless linguistic dialectics, where, for example, Humboldt's theory of cosmogony generates debates on how different cultures perceive and give meaning to the physical world (Mounin, 1973).

Precisely, Humboldt's theory about the world and words is based on a premise similar to "word against object" (Steiner, 1975), on the simple phenomenon which reveals language to be proverb-laden and ruthlessly allusive; in which case the culture and the anthropological features of a given group interact and harmonize to give the linguistic code its plenitude and authenticity in terms of "naming" and "meaning" objects and concepts.

The above variables of language phenomenon are some of the major components of "ordinary language philosophy" (Katz, 1979) and would seem to reveal major preoccupations of words to be "meaning" and "use" in which thought, speech patterns, ecology and culture are in an intimate alliance in a communication process. Such semantic determiners are no doubt crucial when French students groap between two linguistic codes in an English-French translation exercise (Izuagie, 1990) as the amateur translators are confronted with two "surface structures" and two "deep structures".

A FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS' NEEDS AT TERTIARY LEVEL

Language as a collection of communication symbols denotes, connotes and describes simultaneously nearly all that is humanly perceptible and conceivable. Taking together all the various components of French studies involving all literary genres, translation, textual criticism, contrastive analysis, background studies or courses in francophone and French civilisation, one wonders what aspects of human experience have never been subjected to deliberate conceptualisations both by the French language instructor and the student. In which case sufficient maturity in the language is crucial for effective consumption of the above courses in which higher order verbiage in contemporary French is a determining factor. According to Doughty (1973) all that is central in nearly all teacher-student interactions has always been the need:

"to use it (language) explicitly for
educational ends within the school
what we require and use intuitively for
personal ends within the family and
the community" (emphasis mine).

This is what our students are made to experience when they are sent to a francophone country on a year-abroad programme; any French degree programme where this is omitted makes a parody of the time-honoured psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic

tunings they are expected imprint in our students' linguistic skills.

In which case the ensuing linguistic demand is either language for living or language for learning. Side by side with linguistic skills required for a meaningful study of the various components of French studies in terms of the different shades of metalanguage, advanced student of French at the degree level are also expected to acquire skills to enable them operate across the various compact groups of language users in a francophone community (language registers). This latter demand on the French language is again replicated in the artificial compartmentalisation of school disciplines as our year-abroad student must have observed in a French lycee'.

This is why lecturers and students are compelled to constantly operate across "isoglossical borders" on account of this multiplicity of linguistic roles the language user has to assume in everyday life. Says Doughty,

"An individual who has to enter into
a very large number of relations of
many different kinds will have a much
greater need for a wide variety of ways
of speaking ..." (emphasis mine).

This obviously implies language for living perspectives. But in spite of the ambiguity in the notion of language for living and language for learning, and despite the fact that the tempo of

change in a given society tends to overtake current language use, it becomes imperative for the instructor to lead the crusade for providing the required linguistic "isoglosses" in everyday life which are neatly comparable to the intralinguistic frontiers that confer the distinctive nature of the mentalanguages of school disciplines or more precisely, the specificity that demarcates the parlance of the respective components of French studies; similarly, the large number of "relations" the student has to enter into in respect of the latter implies that advanced learners have much greater need for a wide variety of ways of speaking when they move from a translation to a literature class, from a grammar class to that of French phonetics or from a "critique litteraire" class to that of "cours de la culture et civilisation francaises".

PHILOSOPHICAL FEATURES OF LANGUAGE

Philosophical features in our context should be interpreted to mean certain biological

and sociological foundations that could be rationally applied to the teaching and learning of French in terms of "naming" and "meaning" and this shall include a brief analysis of a number of grammatical realities beyond the traditional morphosyntactic rubrics. Certain genetic features and cultural anthropological paradigms have invariably conferred upon language forms and functions an appreciable amount of describable philosophical contours.

Bio-physiological configuration of speech behaviour:

First and foremost, the organic nature of language observable in embryonic structures at various levels seems to justify our claimed biological format of speech code (Jacob, 1976). The term "biological" here should be interpreted to mean language behaviourism in the process of formulation at source (the cortical regions) via a set of speech organs in which "encoding" completes the first phase of a speech act usually triggered off by one of two or more interlocutors; and, as we know, the cycle of the speech act is completed when the "encoded" message is relayed by microwaves to the auditive speech organs of the interlocutors; a split second action conducts coded messages to the appropriate cortical regions charged with interpretation or deciphering, that is, "decoding."

These physiological configurations in terms of speech formulation and transmission processes lend credence to why we insist on teaching and examining in French, thus requiring students to endeavour to think in and respond in French in order to facilitate perception and interpretation at the speech zones of the brain. These zones need to be sufficiently stimulated at the earlier and intermediate levels of French as a foreign language.

Obvious genetic properties of the combinatory behaviour of speech realities

Jacob (1976) observes a grand comparable design between the basic components of linguistic structuralism and hereditary patterns in biology; the theory upon which this is based insists that there is reciprocal infiltration of vocabulary in the metalanguage of both heredity and the fundamentals of theoretical linguistics, for example, the integrative relationship between the first and second articulations (Martinet, 1975). In other words, as Jakobson (1973) has clearly demonstrated, linguistic models are discernable in biological matrix. The linguistico-biological filiation is exemplified by the fact that hereditary grains are represented in four major categories of structure (Jacob, 1976): visible structural alignments of cellular patterns, chromosome, genes and molecules of

acids would seem to transform the living organism into a kind of symbolised or coded information. This is immediately comparable to the relationship between a phoneme and a phrase or a sentence, a phrase or sentence and a text in the same way we relate a gene to a nucleic fibre of a living organism.

In practical terms, in the domain of functionalism and structuralism, a symbol or code in isolation is meaningless except in combination with others to convey meanings, transmitted or in latent form. Here we are comparing a genetic message to a linguistic message that are analysed in terms of functions, combinability and generation of infinite number of forms, the determination of linear posture of linguistic messages by the physical structures of speech organs, etc. The relevance of all of the above centres around the necessity, based on a purely psychopedagogical tenet, of providing the students with an insight, latent at the intermediary stages of linguistic assimilation, into how words operate in a speech flow or in a printed sentence pattern in respect of the constellation of units around key functional words or syntagmatic nuclei, side by side with defining and/or non-defining phrases - adverbial, prepositional and adjectival.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC FOUNDATIONS APPLIED TO FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

In our introduction above, we referred to the vertical function of language in terms of codification of messages or information, expression of desires, feelings, commands, etc; the vertical axis presupposes the horizontal concept in which language spins from the embryonic individual right across and around all social strata. Within the embryonic context of the individual, a student of French as a foreign language hopefully assimilates the basics of current registers of the code; a language class per se in terms of the straight-jacket lexical and grammatical structures is hardly potent enough to pedagogically respond to the demands of the French language when the foreign student listens to a French broadcast or sojourns in a francophone community. It is only through deliberate, systematic and consistent exposure of the foreign language to institutional adjustments of the French code, for example, could a learner meaningfully operate horizontally from his embryonic individual linguistic inventory blending his current competence with the respective parlance of cultural and institutional spheres of the target language. This is because through the extreme institutionalisation to which the high status of language is constantly subjected, the linguistic code invariably transforms itself into social languages or languages of institutions and cultural

paradigms. Such sociolects and/or ecolo-cultural language varieties have become a social as well as an intellectual communicative consumption with each societal stratum ruthlessly imposing its semiotic prescription. Thus, for example, the language of the press has demonstrated the symbiosis between language and societal reality; the sum total of what may be termed journalistic language is the ruthless investment of the press in the parlance and semiotic patterns of all social strata.

These institutional and anthropological tenets of communicative language properties are heavily loaded in "textes culturels" and "textes litteraires" (Ginestier et al, 1973) of the students' study package. The term "textes culturels" triggers off a question "comment connaitre la France?".

If our knowledge of contemporary France implies "somme anonyme et collective des attitudes et habitudes mentales des Francais," (Beaujour et al, 1961) then it equally means "every day Franch" and "everywhere French". Similarly, if the "somme anonyme et collective" are invariably incapsulated in "everyday French" and "everywhere French," the French language instructor's maximum pedagogical investment in "textes culturels," and "textes litteraires" logically leads the learner, it is hoped, to a much deeper appreciation and understanding of connotative edges to speech patterns and heavily loaded stylistic imageries of contemporary French.

Grammatical Realities Beyond the Traditional French Morphosyntactic Rubrics

The sum total of these subtle initiations of foreign language students into how language use spins spontaneously from the individual to blend with sociological, cultural and anthropological contours in "naming" and "meaning" results in a philosophical background this paper has been trying to describe and analyse; this method of deliberate study of language use and function in a rather macroscopic view could also be forced on how syntagmatic clusters in a French sentence function; in which case the established notion of a grammatical function may not be based on the dogmatic application of the rubrics of traditional parts of speech. This involves a higher order linguistic analysis and is most effective with students tackling advanced French grammatical structures.

French grammar, as we know, bristles with a multitude of rules and almost with an equal number of exceptions. The curricular backgrounds and learning opportunities of many of our single or combined honours students of French are so heterogeneous to

the effect that a good number of them in their final year are still unable to grapple with some elementals of grammatical structures.

This is why this paper submits, because it is practicable and without much strain, that on a platform of psycholinguistic "sensibilisation" in terms of guided observation and analysis, students could be provided with an insight into a more rational concept of the interrelatedness of syntactic units; this is in terms of the grammatical functions these units fulfil by virtue of their syntagmatic positions and not the functions normally conferred upon them by the demarcational rubrics of the traditional parts of speech.

In terms of morphology, what functions as a noun could be distinguished from a verb simply by the nature of the functional units that precede the former (Sauvageot, 1963). Precisely, in spoken French, a speech sound or a series of the same speech sound changes its function by virtue of the preceding determiner. A word preceded by the article or by any other nominal determiner (demonstrative, possessive, etc) could be said to be functioning as a noun:

Une part
la part
sa part /PAR/
cette part
quelques parts, etc

Conversely, still in the spoken form, when each of the above determiners is replaced by a verbal determiner (that is, a personal pronoun), /PAR/ in the above models no longer functions as a noun;

je pars
tu pars
il part /PAR/
on part

Our genetic principle concerning the cellular molecule discussed above appears to have been confirmed here in the sense that isolated paradigmatic categories may not be the ultimate determiners of meanings or functions. We witness here how a personal pronoun, the article and the demonstrative fulfil the same grammatical function by virtue of their sheer syntagmatic combinations.

The same linguistic principle is applicable to the French word "savor" (the spoken word) /SAVS/ which may function as a verb or as a noun all depending on the

paradigmatic or syntagmatic units that are made to precede it: LE, NOUS, CE NOTRE, NOUS LE, The same seems to hold when either the word PORTE or COUPABLE immediately falls into verbal and nominal territories normally denied them by the dogmatic compartmentalisations of the age-long parts of speechd (Sauvageot, 1963):

COUPABLE

le coupable
un coupable
des coupables

LA PORTE

il ouvre la porte
il la porte

The grammatical philosophy upon which the above is based is nothing other than linguistic structuralism involving paradigmatic and syntagmatic clusters being made to operate freely in spoken French; the grammatical insights students are being made to observe and perceive are not necessarily pinned down to grammatical rules that genetically constitute a bugbear to foreign students; even L1 French language users are groaning under the heavy yoke of their grammatical dogmas.

SUMMARY

Within the limited provisions of this short write-up, we have tried to explore certain philosophical properties that characterize language in terms of how words operate to mean and relate to the physical world. The skewed philosophical definition and features of language have been conducted along specific biological behaviours, sociolinguistic foundations, notional grammaticalities that are readily applicable to advanced lexical and syntactic structures of French as a foreign language in our University College of Education and Departments of Languages or French.

Definitions of language meaning and use in terms of structuralism, situational language and rational grammaticalisation of structures would seem to have justified a parallel definition of students' language needs in respect of French studies. Specifically, with reference to the horizontal configurations and functions of language, we have tried to demonstrate how sociolinguistic dynamism and ecological paradigms could be manipulated to enrich the students' linguistic arsenal as a foreign language user.

PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of our discussion on how languages operate and blend with a diversity of human experiences for communication purposes, it is difficult not to imagine that our pedagogical focus shall be on the academic and/or professional expertise of the language instructor who must consistently direct the mental activities of the students; language function or use has been the leitmotif of this short essay, which, by implication stresses elegance of diction whether in an ordinary French language class or in the metalanguage used to discuss other components of French studies.

Growth in Reading and Growth through Reading

The metalanguage constituencies of French studies readily relate to French sociolects or the ecological imprints of language growth and use which, unfortunately, are hardly physically transportable into a language classroom. Thus, students and teachers have very little choice; in addition to the current fast disappearing year-abroad programme which is naturally endowed with pedagogical "immersion" prospects (Hawkins, 1982), carefully organised alternatives in the form of a vigorous "reading culture" in the Departments appear to be a ready investment in a foreign language learning revolution.

The banner of the departmental crusade for a "born again" reading culture should display the motto "growth in reading and growth through reading" involving extensive and intensive reading, drama and films:-

- (a) With a modest acquisition of basic vocabulary and grammatical structures, students should be exposed to a wide variety of printed materials; these in turn progressively introduce the learners into a diversity of language registers as represented in magazines, news papers, periodicals, etc. The type of practice in which these materials could most effectively be used is "rapid reading".
- b) Reading to solve problems: This is intensive reading par excellence that normally characterizes "practical criticism". Selection sources are unrestricted provided they are within the range of contemporary French; these should include prose, drama, poetry, political institutions, religion, history, leisure, sports, industry, rural and urban life, Paris as the rest of France and the

francophone world.

- c) Reading for pleasure generally involves assorted collections from which students could borrow modest size editions that could be read in a couple of days.
- d) **French Films:** These include types covering historical and cultural issues, detective and science fiction, selections that provide concrete experience about the geography and life in modern France; these short metrage types should include "literature on the screen." Of course, there are special methods for preparing students for all varieties of films, either for pleasure or as teaching aids.

Specific Students' Language needs:

It is difficult to contest the fact that language is an integral part of intellectual development. This naturally elevates and constitutes language into a phenomenon of constant creativity. Thus, teaching French in French is a primary psychological investment into the assimilation of French as an instrument of intellectual development; this is demonstrated by several university departments of French where the latter is expected to be used as a dynamic means of establishing relationships amongst the various branches of French studies; it is hoped that all instructors consciously exhort their disciples to participate actively in the use of the relevant metalanguage of all the courses dispensed in the department.

Finally, the second level of definition of students' language needs reposes squarely on the demands of the French society. A francophone society makes specific demands upon our students' claims as accredited users of the language when they find themselves in that speech community during their "year-abroad" exercise. Therefore, the demand upon our final year students of French is dual in terms of linguistic competence that should be commensurate with their supposed cultural and academic status.

This paper feels that anything short of the above renders the first university degree in French a parody of a foreign language education. The above language philosophical dualism is based on a premise which maintains that the target society of the foreign language (French) expects specific language activity from our graduates as beneficiaries of a formal education while we, their teachers, expect a particular brand of language from them in conformity with their status into which we have heavily invested.

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