

# The Hermeneutics of Speaking

## What Linguistic Competence Consists of

Jesús Martínez del Castillo

Dept. of Philology, Almería University, Almería, Spain

Tel: 34-950-015-390 E-mail: [jesus.gerardo@ual.es](mailto:jesus.gerardo@ual.es); [apofansis@msn.com](mailto:apofansis@msn.com)

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### Abstract

Linguistic competence consists in the activity of speaking involving four dimensions: activity, knowledge (the competence to speak), the implicit valuation of the activity performed, and the creation of contents and forms in order for speakers to express and make themselves understood. Since speaking has three levels, speaking in general, speaking a particular language and speaking individually, it is necessary to find out the different types of competence relating to the three levels referred to.

**Keywords:** Elocutive knowledge, Idiomatic knowledge, Expressive knowledge, Congruence, Correctness, Adequacy

### 1. General Linguistic Competence, Elocutive Knowledge

There is a general linguistic competence independent from languages referring to speaking in general. This type of competence is ruled by the general principles of thought, the knowledge of things and the interpretation of expressions not defined or not fully defined linguistically in the particular language being spoken. The following examples have nothing to do with the language being spoken thus relating to something beyond the particular language spoken,

1) *The four political units of the United Kingdom are three: England and Wales.*

2) *The conductor drove the bus.*

3) *Heart attack; heartbeat; heart-throb.*

The interpretation of these examples has nothing to do with the potentialities of expression of the English language. Example 1 is to be interpreted in connection with the general principles of knowledge. Nothing can be four and three and two at the same time. Example 2 is against the knowledge or things. Conductors do not drive buses but control and lead them unless something extraordinary has happened in which case there must be an explanation in the

context or on the part of the speaker. And finally example 3 is to be interpreted in terms of the aspects involved and fixed or not in the language English. A heart attack is a disease. Grammatically it is expressed with the determination of the noun *heart* executed on the noun *attack*. The combination can be interpreted as "an attack on the heart" but this interpretation does not constitute a rule in the language since in other cases noun + noun combinations are interpreted in a different way. *Heart attack* represents a fact in the use of the English language. *Heartbeat* has the same formal structure, the noun *beat* modified with the noun *heart*. The interpretation however is different. It must be interpreted in accordance with the language use as well, "a beat by the heart". A *heartbeat* refers to the description of the function of the heart when pumping blood around the body. Finally, *heart-throb* refers to someone who is very physically attractive, nothing having to do with the organ in the body. The interpretation of *heart attack*, *heartbeat* and *heart-throb*, they all with the same grammatical structure, differs. The meaning of the expression cannot be guessed out with the mere fact of knowing how the language functions or how the things referred to are but with the use made in the language, that is, the usual interpretations having been made in language use. The conclusion to be drawn in the interpretation of these examples is that

- a) the grammatical elements of an expression are not enough to interpret all the expressions in the language,
- b) linguistic interpretations are to be made either in terms of the principle of knowledge and the knowledge of things, or
- c) in terms of the usual interpretations having been made in the tradition of speaking in the language spoken.

All these interpretations have to do with general linguistic competence to be called by Coseriu *elocutive knowledge* (<elocution). Elocutive knowledge is autonomous. It is not a kind of competence verified as common in different languages or even in all languages. On the contrary: it is a kind of competence underlying all languages, to be annulled in all languages and intentionally in texts if necessary.

### *1.1 Knowledge of the General Principles of Thought*

Any kind of speech if it is congruent with the general principles of thought and the way general principles of thought are interpreted in a particular speech community (=a language) does not attract other speakers' attention since it is the usual assumption expected. However, there are apparent exceptions from this assumed expectation in all languages in the world and at the same time there are restrictions valid for speaking in general. Example 1 is not incorrect but attracts people's attention because it deviates from the *principle of congruence* contradicting the number of political units stated. Other similar examples are:

- 4) *The main capital cities of Europe are three, Rome, Paris and London. London is a capital city in Europe therefore London is three*
- 5) *He has many students. John is a student of his. Therefore, John is many.*

The underlying principle with these examples is that an object can and cannot be in the same way at the same time. That is, speech must be congruent with the general principles of thought. But this topic is not certain under all circumstances. The general principles of thought underlying all languages are to be interpreted in a particular sense in the different

languages. For example:

6) *Speaker: Half the members present are stupid.*

The President: *I urge the speaker to abstain from insulting the honourable members of this committee and withdraw their words or leave the room.*

Speaker: *Half the members present are not stupid.*

Here the underlying principle is that if one part of a whole is denied the other part is not affected by the negation but not the other way round. Because of this both statements say the same.

The following example breaks the general principle that things are different from the description of them,

7) *Shakespeare, says History, was an actor.*

Since History is the interpretation of things happened, someone must have made such an interpretation of facts. That statement is against the knowledge of things. History is not the subject interpreting but the very interpretation of the fact designated. In the same way certain descriptions break the principle of the unity due of the story described. For example,

8) *This is a high quality car. The factory is very large. The engineers are very well trained. The firm deals in many world markets. The world markets deal with all types of merchandise.*

The text can easily be understood but lacks coherence. The following example is in connection with the object designated as well:

9) *The exercise was very easy and it was read by the teacher*

The problem here is that the object introduced was the exercise described as easy, nothing to do with the way it was distributed to students. This technique however is sometimes used with stylistic purposes, a device called *paronomasia*. The famous promise of Jesus to Saint Peter

10) *Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam et portae inferi non praevalent adversum eam* (Matthew 16, 18).

Another type of a text is constituted with the so-called *anacoluthon*, a break or change of direction in speech. A famous anacoluthon in English literature is in *King Lear*

11) *I will have such revenges on you both  
That all the world shall, I will do such things  
What they are, yet I know not  
(King Lear 2, 4)*

These expressions sometimes are rejected as incongruous and sometimes are re-interpreted. This omission is not because of any rule in any language but because the author considered it easy to be understood. Statements such as these, although are incongruous, do not invalidate the truth of the statement. Anyway the listener will do his best in finding a sense to the statement. In the same way it is possible for someone to say, for example, that *John is many* (example 5). When the speaker makes such a statement on purpose the listener will soon find a sense to the statement. The speaker may mean that John is equivalent to many students

since he is as capable as many of them, that John is much more intelligent than many of them, and so on. In this case the speaker has a particular intentional purpose and then the statement is to be interpreted in terms of the original purpose of the speaker. Or the speaker may mean that the text is in itself incongruous thus repeating the text as it had previously been said.

These examples reveal the role general principles of thought play in the competence implicit in speaking. Elocutive knowledge is a kind of competence letting speakers accept something as congruent and coherent or reject it as incongruous and incoherent. Its function consists in letting speakers know what is actually said, that is, letting speakers know the meaningful intentional purpose of the individual speaker. In speaking some assumptions are given for granted. Speaking thus must be coherent because the speaker confides in others (the *principle of confidence*, Coseriu 1992: 107-113). Elocutive competence underlies the cases of interpretation of expressions intentionally contravening general principles of thought.

### *1.2 General Knowledge of Things*

There is another kind of linguistic competence having to do with the knowledge of things. Many restrictions occurring in speaking in all languages have to do with the nature of things. In this sense those ideas not coinciding with the nature of things or expressing something assumed to be known are not usually said. If on the contrary things known are said it is assumed that they are said on purpose. For example,

*12) In a Belgrade hotel lift: To move the cabin, push button for wishing floor. If the cabin should enter more persons, each one should press a number of wishing floor. Driving is not then going alphabetically by national order (The European English Messenger, volume IV/1, Spring 1995).*

The following example is usually accepted because the listener assumes that it is said on purpose,

*13) He is so gravely ill that we have to wash him*

It is assumed to be true and thus accepted because of context. The usual expectation is that all individuals should wash up. Once the statement was said it is assumed that the action is exceptional. In this sense this statement does not call anyone's attention. That is, it reveals the competence underlying speech. But the following statement is considered incongruous,

*14) He is so gravely ill that we have to eat him*

This statement with a similar syntactic structure as the previous one is not said. The combination means something contrary to the knowledge of things. Listeners will always look for an interpretation possible to the statement said and accept the statements to be congruent and coherent. But the statement is against the knowledge of things. Things known are not usually said because people know the rules affecting the nature of things (Coseriu, 1992). In this sense general phenomena are interpreted. For example,

*15) It is sunny*

The statement does not state when and where it is sunny. It is to be interpreted as occurring here and now and sometimes not exactly here (in this room) but outdoors. In this sense speaking is *elliptic*. That is, in sentences like this one you do not say the circumstances affecting the topic said. In other words: the speaker does not say what he knows people do

but only the facts they do not know. The interpretation in such cases is made on the base of the general knowledge of things. The following example is quite common in English

16) *He is having his car repaired*

Needless to say the car is being repaired just now and by someone else, a mechanic perhaps. There are things that although they may not be known are implicit in the fact stated. The following instructions

17) *Go straight on; then go right, then right again, then you will see a tall building. Enter the building and you will find the conference room.*

Speakers assume that there is a certain order in the world both the speaker and the listener are in. In example 17 two streets were not defined, nor the conference building but given for granted and accepted although unknown to the listener. Speakers speak in accordance with these assumptions to be interpreted accordingly by listeners. The knowledge of the world order lets speakers alter it, deny it or suppose a new world order. To this respect in literature there are some examples of this device, for example, *Alice in Wonderland* or *Gulliver's Travels*. Another example. A student at the University of Almería, Spain, will never ask a mate living in Almería which river the speaker refers to, in

18) *We walked by the river*

Nor will anybody ask in London. But the river will be different in Almería and London, the same as in Vienna or Paris, but if speakers lived in Lyon, France, the river should further be specified. But if the statement was,

19) *The river is flowing*

it would probably disturb the listener's attention in London, Vienna, Paris and Lyon, not in Almería. The usual thing for rivers is to flow never ceasing to flow. However, and contrary to the usual thing the normal thing for the fact called river Andarax in Almería is not to flow. The extraordinary thing for river Andarax is to flow. Even the appellation of *river* to that fact of experience is a restriction. Speakers refer to the universe in the way supposed to be known in their speech community. Speakers may be scientists and know things in the world in an accurate way. But when they speak they will speak based on the knowledge supposed to represent the world order known in the speech community they are in. For example,

20) *The sun rises in the East and sets in the West*

On the other hand, there are certain things always supposed to exist with no necessity to specify how and why. This happens with the so-called parts of the body, family relations and in general with things and events the occurrence of which is the usual one. In this way you do not need to say that

21) *This child has a father*

The unusual thing would be the contrary, that a particular child did not have a father. In these cases, when it is needed to speak of such a state of affairs the reason for this unusual reality must be justified in some way or another in the context. In accordance with this you do not say

22) *A child with eyes; a man with legs; a woman with arms*

If you use these expressions you have to determine them not with the usual determiners (articles, demonstratives, numerals) but with determiners defining the required state of affairs. In this way you say

23) *I saw a child with beautiful brown eyes. There was a man with a broken leg. The man had only an arm. A woman with a broken arm.*

And even in these cases when the situation or context is determined in the way stated the usual thing can be said with a particular purpose:

24) *Be careful: this child has a father!*

especially if the speaker is its father and wants to warn the listener to be respectful with the treatment given to the child. And vice versa what is supposed to be known is not said. Sometimes if you say what people know you can be considered pedantic, offensive or ironic. Imagine the following dialogue.

25) *Younger brother: I wonder what clothes I am going to wear at the party. Shall I wear my new trousers or the old ones?*

Elder brother: *You are supposed to wear a jacket.*

Younger Brother: *I accept that I should wear a jacket but this doesn't object my wearing trousers!*

Sometimes in the tradition of speaking of a particular language you can find expressions not referring to the things they denote but referring to something else. It is the case of the following example:

26) Bus driver: *Hagley Road, 20! Hagley Road, 20! Who's Hagley Road, 20?*

Traveller: *It is me.*

That is, the bus driver would ask who is the traveller to get down at Hagley Road, 20. In a similar way you can imagine the following dialogue between two car drivers in a parking yard:

27) Car driver 1: *Who are you? I am the Rolls Royce at the corner, and you?*

Car driver 2: *I'm that black Mercedes over there.*

Summing up, general linguistic competence as far as the knowledge involved in speaking at the universal level (elocutive knowledge) manifests in the general knowledge of things conceiving things just as they are and in the usual verbal behavior thus excluding absurd. This lets speakers accept what is said as *congruent* thus rejecting the *incongruous*. General linguistic competence lets speakers not say the usual, normal or supposed. What is expected in accordance with the meanings used is excluded since that information is not necessary and could be considered important. General knowledge of things makes possible to interpret the intentionally *incongruous* as, for example, the identification of people and things (Coseriu, 1992).

### 1.3 Annulment of Incongruity in Languages

General principles of thought and general knowledge of things are valid beyond particular languages with no limits to them. But they can be annulled in language use in any language. If something is said in accordance with the *norm of a language*, that is, in accordance with the tradition in the technique of speaking, but incongruous in itself the norm of the language

prevails. For example, the principle of logic that double negation relates to an affirmation is valid before the diversity of linguistic traditions. Thus

28) *I did not say I saw nothing*

is equivalent to the affirmation that I saw something. But particular languages can annul this principle. In some languages the negation of what is denied is equivalent to an affirmation of the thing stated but other languages admit a double correspondence of this principle. In French double negation is usually required,

29) *Je ne veut pas*

In Spanish, Portuguese and Italian there is only a negation when the negative word precedes the verb but double negation is necessary when the negative word is behind the verb. For example,

30) *Nadie vino*

but

31) *No vino nadie*

This reveals that the application of the rule that double negation affirms belongs to the particular language being spoken. In Old English, the language spoken in “*Bretene*” from the 5<sup>th</sup> century to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, double negation was common:

32) *and þær nān hefeliċ ġe.feoht ne wearþ and Mierċe friþ nāmon wiþ þone here (The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, anno 868)*

(and nothing severe did not happen and Mercians had peace with this army)

In the same sense in the general linguistic level you can accept the principle that a noun in the singular cannot be interpreted as a unit but as a plurality even if the language admits a plural form to express plurality. When a language uses the singular to express plurality the distinction between plural and singular is annulled. Coseriu illustrates this device with the following example (Coseriu 1992: 138) in German:

33) *Ich, meine Frau und meine Kender: im ganzen fünf Mann*

In Spanish you usually say expressions like

34) *Vd. compra mucho coche por este precio*

That is and said in other words: you buy a car deserving the price it costs because it is high quality. In some languages an adjective must be in the plural when it refers to two coordinated nouns in the singular,

35) *Lexicología y lexicografía inglesas*

The point to emphasize here is that language does not describe real relationships in things but it merely *represents* them in the *conscience* of speakers. The examples given so far are typical examples of annulment of incongruity as far as the principles of knowledge are concerned. There are examples of annulment of incongruity with respect to the knowledge of things. The most representative example by Coseriu is the Spanish expression,

36) *Lo vi con mis propios ojos. Lo vi con mis ojos. Lo vieron mis ojos*

In accordance with the knowledge of things we all know that the organ of the visual system is the eyes, that one can only see with one's eyes so that it does not help to state if people have

eyes or not. The tradition in the technique of speaking however justifies these expressions in full. They are understood as the indirect but emphatic affirmation of the information given. That is, the interpretation is as follows: “I will give evidence of the fact I testify if someone dares to deny it”. The statement is a positive affirmation of facts seen (cf. Coseriu, 1992).

#### *1.4 Annulment of Incongruity in Discourse*

The cases of annulment studied so far belong to the tradition of speaking but in individual speaking, that is, in discourse annulment appears very frequently. There are three types of annulment in discourse: a) metaphorical b) metalinguistic and c) freakish.

##### 1.4.1 Metaphorical Annulment

In metaphorical annulment speakers annul coherence by virtue of expressive reasons. Metaphor is the deliberate application of the name of a particular thing to the name of another one. A metaphor is verified as a metaphor insofar as both meanings, the meaning of the thing designated and the meaning of the thing meant, are perceived at the same time as different and assimilated to each other thus creating a new meaning. A metaphor is something created at the moment of speaking, something not belonging to the idiomatic level of the activity of speaking but the individual level of the activity of speaking. It is not a kind of shortened or abbreviated comparison but on the contrary: comparison is an explicit metaphor (Coseriu, 1982). A metaphor is the creation of a new meaning perceived as new with the integration of both meanings involved. Example

37) *April is the cruellest month, breeding*

*lilacs out of the dead land, mixing*

*memories and desire, stirring*

*roots with spring rain*

(T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*)

##### 1.4.2 Metalinguistic Annulment

In metalinguistic annulment speakers merely say the incongruous of someone else:

38) *He says that April is cruel!*

##### 1.4.3 Freakish Annulment

Freakish annulment is the intentional statement of something absurd and incongruous. Speakers express their surprise because something incongruous is intentionally stated:

39) *Imagine a month being cruel! Nonsense!*

In annulment listeners recognize the intention of the speaker. The really important thing is that in annulment the intention of the speaker is recognized. The incongruous is said because the speaker has other purposes. Speakers feel confident about other people’s speech. The others are attributed capacity to speak at least in the same degree as the listeners who interpret the things said. And this constitutes one of the principles of the theory of speaking in connection with the general level of speaking, *the principle of confidence*.

If the principle of confidence is applied to the famous example by Chomsky (*Syntactic Structures*, 1957),

40) *Colorless green ideas sleep furiously*



the statement may be true in the following context. In the interpretation of this example the first thing to do would be to ask who said that statement, which the context was, and what the intention of the speaker was. This statement could be a poem or the illustration of a grammatical error. If any of these contexts was the case the statement could get sense. The referred to statement was said by Chomsky with the purpose of illustrating the contradiction between the contents stated and the rules in force in the grammar of English. Because of this, Chomsky says, the statement is not accepted. In the context stated by Chomsky, when he tries to explain the performance of language in accordance with grammar and its break in particular situations, the statement is true, that is, the sentence responds to the purposes and goals aimed at by its author: to illustrate that performance is not in accordance with the rules of grammar. The example has sense: it is an illustration of what it is not usually said but can be said intentionally.

## 2. Particular Linguistic Competence, Idiomatic Knowledge

Particular linguistic competence, that is, to know to speak a particular language (English, Spanish, Russian) primarily relates to the reality known as a particular or historical language. And this is the kind of competence admitted by Ferdinand de Saussure, Noam Chomsky and the great majority of modern linguists. Its justification thus is not necessary (Cosieriu, 1992). The only thing to do is to state the areas it encompasses, that is, to state its contents.

Particular linguistic competence does not coincide with synchrony since a language in its effective historical state has several states of the language occurring simultaneously, that is, a language has several synchronies. The problem thus is to determine the facts known in a particular language and the facts dealt with by speakers in a synchronic perspective. *Idiomatic knowledge* involves the varieties to be verified in particular languages and existing in the particular linguistic competence of speakers.

Particular linguistic competence relates to a unitary state of a language, that is, to the so-called *functional language*. A functional language is the language actually spoken (synchronic language) in a speech community, uniform under the point of view of the territory it is spoken (syntopic language), the level of speech (synestratic language) and the style of speech (symphasic language). This is the object of description in grammars and represents what De Saussure and Chomsky got through reduction by means of abstraction and idealization when using the concepts *langue* and *competence*. It is then the idiomatic competence implicit in the concepts of *la langue* or *competence*, the result of the different varieties constituting a historical language. Considering speaking as the language actually spoken at a particular moment of history (synchronic language) the following types of idiomatic knowledge can be found.

### 2.1 Diachronic Knowledge

The idiomatic knowledge of speakers is primarily synchronic and the description of it must basically be synchronic. The problem is to describe the particular linguistic competence that speakers apply as a technique at the moment when description occurs. What speakers know is undoubtedly synchronic but they at the same time know their language within a tradition with a dimension of time. They know about this tradition because of the speech of their forefathers or the elderly in their community and because of the written tradition in most languages. As a

consequence, they deal with diachronic aspects in their activity of speaking. Speakers manifest diachronic knowledge in comments such as

41) *That expression is no longer said. The elderly still say it. Grandfather says /led/ instead of /leid/ [for laid].*

This diachronic knowledge determines the attitude of speakers before facts relating to their language and the application of idiomatic competence. In languages with a literary tradition especially if this tradition is written the diachronic competence of speakers plays an important role in folk songs, ballads, reports and stories. In these types of speech expressions or rules no longer in use appear. In Spanish the relevance of theatre in the classic periods played a decisive role in the preservation of old and literary forms. Today in Spanish expressions such as the following ones can be found,

42) *Los políticos hacen caso omiso de sus promesas.*

*Caso omiso* is an old combination in Latin. It is the preservation of the Latin *absolute ablative*, with Latin words now functioning in Spanish. In the same way you can find

43) *Ipo facto cogí mi camino y me vine a casa.*

*Ipo facto* is another absolute ablative. Another one,

44) *Mutatis mutandis [once conditions are applied to the new situation] the story can be referred to the topic discussed.*

45) *He was cognizant of the problems ahead.*

A very amazingly interesting example of diachronic facts in the present state of the language in Spanish is,

46) *Mandan huevos.*

This expression comes from the Latin expression *opus est* (=it necessary to..., it is compulsory to...). Since Latin *ō* became Spanish *ue* and plosive *p* became fricative *opus* became *huevos* thus preserving its primitive –s ending, now being recognized as a homonym of the Spanish word meaning eggs, in the plural. At the same time the Latin verb *est* disappeared being substituted for the Spanish verb form *mandan* (= [they] order, in the plural, since *huevos*, the homonym referred to above, is assumed to be the subject of this verb). With this the original sense of the Latin expression, *mandan huevos* (=it is necessary to do something) was preserved. But the new expression immediately got connotative sense because of the similarity of *huevos* (in the plural=eggs) with the male sexual organ in humans. The expression is used today to express surprise and exasperation before the inevitable, the impossible or the difficult, *Mandan huevos. ¡No hay nada que hacer!*

Speakers know the facts of diachrony and are conscious of the diachronic dimension of language not the etymology of the words involved. The diachronic dimension must be included in the real linguistic competence of speakers. For speakers, diachronic facts are completely definite and known to them as archaic, facts of a diachronic dimension functioning because speakers appreciate the dimension of time. The problem in the analysis of linguistic competence is to determine how speakers know diachronic facts and interpret them in their use even when they may be wrong in their interpretation as in the case of

*mandan huevos.*

Diachronic facts represent functional facts present in the synchrony of speakers. In this way the coexistence of facts such as *ought to* and *should* in English, even in the speech of an individual speaker can be interpreted. With the use of such archaic forms the speaker wants to submit his speech to previous diachronic situations different from the present ones. A description of language limited to only one form does not respond to the effective linguistic competence of speakers since in synchronic competence several states of the language coexist.

Diachronic facts are not stylistic facts or facts at the level of speech, that is, elements functioning as variants to give a particular sense. They are operative and can give expressions and words new in the language. It is the case in Spanish of the formation of words with syllables in -o- coming from Latin -ō- and its derivatives in -ue-. In this way you say *Puerto Rico* but *portorriqueño*, *huerto* but *hortelano*, *Huesca* but *oscense*. That is, speakers know that words such as *puerto*, *puerta*, *huevo*, *hueso*, *bueno*, *Huesca* somehow come from old forms in *ō* although they may not know which ones. In this way when they create a new expression referring to these words they form it in -o-. An ordinary example,

47) *Actividad portuaria*

The same happens in English with the influence of Shakespeare in poems and ballads known by naïve speakers. As an illustration consider the style of Handel's *The Messiah*. Part I, 3, composed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century,

48) *Comfort ye, Comfort ye, Comfort ye my people,*

*Saith your God, saith your God.*

*Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem*

*And cry unto her that her warfare*

*Her warfare is accomplished*

*That her iniquity is pardoned*

*The voice of Him that crieth in the wilderness*

*Prepare ye the way of the Lord*

*Make straight in the dessert*

*A highway for the Lord*

*Every valley, every valley, every valley*

*Shall be exalted, Shall be exalted, Shall be exalted*

*And every mountain and hill made low*

*The crooked straight and rough places plain*

*Every valley shall be exalted*

*And every mountain and hill made low*

*The crooked straight and the rough places plain.*

Ballads and songs of this type are known to speakers who understand and use them when they like to use expressions with that type of stylistic value even in ordinary speech.

## 2.2 Variety in Historical Languages

In historical languages the two dimensions of *homogeneity* and *variety* can be found functioning at the same time. The description of particular linguistic competence tends to look for homogeneous systems perfectly delimited. Description considers variety as a type of variation more or less free within a functional language, that is, variation is due to different variants appearing when performing a unitary linguistic system. For example, variation in Italian is so great that some dialects in it vary much more deeply than the difference you can find between Portuguese and Spanish or between Danish and Swedish or Norse and even much greater than the difference you can find in Semitic languages. On the other hand, the degree of variety between languages is not uniform. The case of Spanish and Portuguese is very curious since the level of intellection between the speakers of both languages is greater in Portuguese. Spanish speaking speakers do not usually understand Portuguese. Italian speakers know the differences in Italian dialects. They use them in their linguistic relationships. The internal variety in a language is in fact of the same nature as the variety between historical languages or at least similar to the differences in cognate languages (=languages with a common origin, for example, English and German; French and Spanish). A historical language is an autonomous complex of traditions historically constituted defined as such by its native speakers and identified with an *adjectivum proprium* (Coseriu, 1992). In a historical language there are three types of variation:

- a) *diatopic* diversity, variety in the language spoken in the different territories the language is spoken. A unitary language in this aspect is a *dialect*;
- b) *diastratic* diversity, variety in the socio-cultural levels of in a speech community. A unitary language in this aspect is a *level of speech*; and
- c) *diaphasic* diversity, stylistic variety in accordance with the kind of situations in speaking. A unitary language in this aspect is a *style of speech*.

The three types of variation in historical languages are found in the activity of speaking combined with one another with different limits. The dimension of variety in opposition to the dimension of homogeneity responds to the fact that traditions in a language are to a certain extent unitary. In this way it is possible to verify the existence of systems more or less unitary in a language, that is, dialects, levels of speech and styles of speech. Every unit of the language is a unit only in one type of variation not in the three ones stated here. In this sense a local dialect may not have any syntopic differences but may have diastratic or diaphasic differences; or a level of the language may have diatopic and diaphasic differences; and a style of speech may have variety in the levels of speech and in the territories the language is spoken. A unitary language in all these aspects is a *functional language*, that is, a syntopic, synestratic and symphasic language (Coseriu, 1992).

## 2.3 Common Language or Standard Language

*Common language* or *standard language*, within a historical language, is that functional language considered to assume all purposes in a particular speech community. That is, it is a kind of construct not existing in itself but conceived as an abstract entity, a model to imitate. In English, for example, it encompasses not only the totality of dialects called "English" but the all purposes language for all individuals speaking the English language. Common

language in English today must include the so-called *world English*. Common language in Spanish should be conceived with a system valid for all purposes for all speakers of Spanish thus assuming that *zozobra*, for example, is not to be pronounced with sound /θ/ but both /s/ or /θ/. Standard language has an internal variety depending on the three dimensions stated above (cf. 2.3.) just in the same way as other functional languages. Standard language is formed through abstraction eliminating all primary forms of language and creating an abstract language out of all possible forms in the language. Standard language is not unitary in all aspects but can have variety in the three dimensions stated above. In the case of English or Spanish this is so because these languages are spoken in many and distant territories.

#### *2.4 The Functioning of Dialects, Levels of Speech and Styles of Speech in a Speech Community*

As said above, in a historical language there is a double dimension, the tendency to variety and the tendency to homogeneity. This double tendency causes different functional languages. The concepts *dialect*, *level of speech* and *style of speech* are relational. The problem with them consists in finding out how syntopic, synestratic and symphasic units in any case function in the speech community of a particular language. That is, a particular mode of speaking sometimes may function as a dialect or a style of speech. For example, in Arab countries the language of prayers and religious ceremonies is classic Arabic. Speakers use this language only in those circumstances. Speakers in these countries understand classic Arabic perfectly well but they do not speak classic Arabic. This was more or less the situation in Europe in the Early Middle Ages in so far as Latin was considered the language for some styles of speech, that is, the language of Church, religious services, administration, law and science. Because of this the concept of style of speech (in the examples) is determined by the fact that a particular mode of speaking (=a language) is used in particular circumstances (religious services only) (cf. Coseriu, 1992).

In the use of dialects, levels and styles of speech there is a rational ordering: a dialect can function as a level of speech, and a level of speech can function as a style of speech but not the other way round. Sometimes common language functions as a level of speech and another functional language can function as a style of speech. For example, English today is used as a second language in many countries (Bangladesh, Botswana, Brunei, Cameroon, etc.). This means that the speakers of the communities affected speak the native language when at home and daily affairs but speak English in commerce and official affairs.

In the United States this fact is given in communities of immigrants who speak the language of their original community at home but when they speak to someone not belonging to their family they will speak English. In the United States as well speakers belonging to the Black community use two functional languages, the English language and a style of speech usually called *Black English* used in some religious congregations.

#### *2.5 Particular Linguistic Competence and the Architecture of a Language*

Speakers know several functional languages. All speakers belong to several speech communities defined according to the three sets of variation, that is, diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic variation. Sometimes they speak different functional languages, sometimes they merely know those functional languages passively and sometimes they know something of

other historical languages. Every speaker, even those who do not speak any other language but their native one, knows something about other functional languages due to the knowledge existing of other functional languages in their tradition of speaking. This knowledge may be quite limited and vague and in most cases it does not coincide with objective facts of the language in question.

Diatopic differences are sometimes used as the written language with specific purposes. In old Greece different dialects were used for the different literary genres. This manifests that authors, readers and public in general knew more than one dialect. In Spain sometimes it is usual to tell a joke with a particular intonation and in a supposed regional variety of speech, in most cases Galician or Andalusian; or sometimes imitating the supposed jargon of peasants.

Naïve speakers primarily speak a functional language but at the same time they know about the diatopic varieties of their historical language and have some competence—however small it may be— about other historical varieties in their language. This idea can be applied to the diastratic and diaphasic dimensions in a historical language. All speakers know at least passively the differences in several dialects and levels of speech with a certain kind of competence that can in certain circumstances be applied. All speakers know and use different styles of speech, formal, informal, literary, administrative speech.

### **3. Individual Linguistic Competence, Expressive Competence**

#### *3.1 General Determinations of Individual Speaking*

Individual speaking, that is, speaking in as much as it produces texts, is determined by four factors: the speaker, the listener, the topic of conversation, and the situation. In speaking you can always find a *speaker* who applies the rules of discourse in whose speech you can verify the application of those rules. In speaking there is always a *listener* even in written texts. There are rules to address certain kinds of people, for example children, women, the elderly, authorities, etc. At the same time speaking is speaking about a particular *topic*. There are rules about the way of dealing with certain objects, for example, the topics in science (scientific articles in specialized journals differ in their structure from articles in human sciences), the objects in the daily life, imaginary objects, abstract and fictional objects and so on. Speaking is always performed in a particular *situation* or under particular *circumstances*, that is, speaking always keeps a specific relationship with the listener and the topic of conversation thus constituting a *situation*. There are rules concerning the particular types of situation. In this way it is quite different to make a speech in a lecture from making a speech about the information or diffusion of a particular linguistic problem or to speak about ordinary topics with friends. In all speech communities there are traditions in the way the different situations are to be expressed. The most general rules for speaking in situations is that speaking must be *adequate* to the listener, the topic of conversation and the situation. If this rule is accomplished it does not attract other speakers' attention because the adequate as well as the correct are expected (Coseriu, 1992).

#### *3.2 Rules for the Constitution of Texts*

The rules affecting *expressive knowledge*, that is, the individual speaker's competence, are extraordinarily numerous with different nature and different degree of compulsiveness. They

encompass both the general determinations of speaking and the rules for genres, types and classes of texts. These rules fix texts differently. The rules concerning the essential determinations of individual speaking are very general, free and specific. Speakers are cognizant of this problem and they would say things like,

49) *You should speak in a simple easy manner when speaking to children.*

*That is not the way you should speak to a lady using such nasty and obscene words.*

*That topic is very difficult to understand.*

*You should be more respectful with the elderly.*

*You should be precise and go straight to the points of interest.*

*The shorter the plot the better.*

*I did not raise the question since it was not opportune.*

So far there are no comprehensive and essential rules in the constitution of texts. For Coseriu, perhaps it is not possible to formulate a rule in a completely uniform and specific way. Something similar may mean the attempt to give a rule about the topics of conversation and the different types of literary genres. For example, the rules describing how to write a novel are so general and indeterminate that they are misleading sometimes. For texts of "news" just as news it is usually said that in order to be effective in communication and keep the readers' attention it is necessary to state the following wh-questions: *Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?*

In all languages there are texts to introduce a story. For example, in English the following example can be found:

50) *Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo...*

(James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*)

In Spanish in popular speech there is a very meaningful way of connecting paragraphs in a story:

51) *Entonces él agarra, pilla, coge, va y le dice: ¡pero si me estás echando el agua encima!*

*Agarra, pilla and coge are synonyms meaning "he catches"; va means he goes, an expression not meaning what it usually does in the text but expressing the meaningful intentional purpose of the individual speaker expressed in the following verb. The translation would be something like, "then after thinking over it he made up his mind and said, you are spilling water on me!"*

In English instructions for doing something are in the imperative but in Spanish the passive voice in the reflexive form is used:

52) *Se casca un huevo y se echa en un plato. Entonces se bate con un tenedor durante algún tiempo. Se le echa un poco de aceite crudo. Se bate de nuevo. De nuevo aceite, y se bate. Así hasta que se haga una crema desliada. Y ya tiene Vd. la mayonesa.*

That is, there is a tradition in saying things and that tradition involves peculiar rules and consequently a particular grammar. The rules concerning the general determinations of

speaking are very seldom formulated explicitly as rules but they are given for granted when individual speaking is evaluated.

A sonnet is a kind of a text admitting the formulation of rules. In the English tradition a sonnet is composed of quatrains and a couplet. The so-called Italian sonnet in the English tradition consists of an octet and a sestet. In the Spanish tradition sonnets are made of two quatrains and two couplets. The quatrains and the couplets are separated by a strong caesura.

Another type of a text is the syllogism, definite in the rules structuring it both in contents and form.

53) *All human beings are mortal. Socrates is a human being. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.*

But the rules affecting this type of a syllogism are historical, that is, born in a particular historical contingency. In India both the content and the form of syllogisms differ from the European ones. In India a syllogism has five terms: thesis, argument, example, application and conclusion. In the western tradition the syllogism consists of two premises, the major and the minor, and a conclusion (see example 53 above).

In all speech communities you can find certain texts representing the fixation of forms and contents. The rules and forms of these texts are valid for the whole speech community. A typical example of this type is greetings. The texts used for greetings in English deal with periods of time consistently. In English you say,

54) *Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening. Good night.*

The systematization of these facts in Spanish is less specific. You have a formula to be used in the first part of the day and another one including afternoon and dusk. In Spanish the period of night includes both the dusk and night. Other fixed formulas are:

55) *How do you do?*

*Quid agis? (Latin)*

*¿Qué tal? /¿Qué haces?/ ¿Cómo andamos? (Spanish).*

Both in Latin and Spanish these formulas cannot be used when you do not know the listener. In English the formula is used either if you know your listener or not. In all the cases mentioned the sense is more or less the following: "once I've met you and since I knew you before this moment, I reaffirm the relation of friendship between you and me".

### 3.3 *Autonomy of Textual Competence*

The problem at the individual level of linguistic competence is to know if expressive competence is independent from particular languages or if on the contrary it is part of idiomatic competence as a special form of it. There is a type of idiomatic competence having to do with the structure of texts. This type of competence belongs to grammar and lexicology. Under this point of view, a text does not constitute an autonomous level of a particular language but a level in the structure of the particular language in question. Particular linguistic rules are applicable, for example, in the so-called indirect speech. It is necessary to know Latin in order to get the meaning of

56) *Dicitur Caesarem vincisse Helvetios*

and have certain command of English to understand the type of a text in



57) *He told me to come*

In English there is a kind of numbering which has to do with grammar

58) *Peter and Bruce are close friends; the former is fifteen, the latter fourteen.*

That is, *the former and the latter* express a successive relationship of ordering, proper of ordinal numerals. A clearer example of this kind is the type of grammatical numbering in Latin:

59) *Primum, ... secundum, ... deinde, ... deinde, ... demum*

(first, second, then, then, the last one)

And even if you know Old English it is necessary to know the way of counting in texts such as,

60) *And þý ilcan gēare cōm fēorþe healf hund scipa on Temese-mūþan (The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, annal 851).*

Literarily it can be translated as “the aforesaid year the fourth half of a-hundred ships came to the estuary of Thames”, that is, “that year up to three hundred and fifty ships came to the estuary of river Thames”. The same expression appears in the annal 855:

61) *And hē rīcsode nigontēoþe healf gear*

To be translated as “and he reigned so long as the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> year”, that is, “he reigned for eighteen years and a half”.

There are rules and facts affecting the constitution of texts that at the same time belong to a particular language. These texts thus belong to the so-called text linguistics of a particular language describing the particular language at the level of texts. Coseriu calls this type of text linguistics trans-phrasic grammar, that is, the grammar going beyond the phrase (Coseriu, 1992). Now then not all rules for the constitution of texts belong to a particular language. Present-day text linguistics separates a *microstructure of texts* (the study of structure of texts in accordance with the rules of the language they belong to) and a *macrostructure* of texts (the structure of texts as such texts).

A text consists of sentences of a particular language, the structure of which belongs to the particular language. But a text in so far as it is a text is subject to the macrostructure of texts. That is, a text belongs to the structure of a language, for example, in the connection of sentences (microstructure) and at the same time it is structured as a text (macrostructure). On the other hand, there are texts constituted with a single sentence. These texts are in consonance with its microstructure, that is, the particular linguistic structure. But these texts constitute sentences, not texts. Just because a sentence functions as a text in particular situations it constitutes nothing in connection with the particular language it belongs to but a text (Coseriu, 1992). On the other hand, for a text to be a text it is not necessary for its microstructure to correspond with only a particular language. There are texts formed using elements of several languages, for example, in Spanish

62) *Ese es el quid [Latin word] de la cuestión* (that is the problem of the topic discussed).

Some texts can divert from the rules of the particular language and form units even functional units only valid for texts or on the contrary this type of texts would not appear. It is the case

of two short texts relating approximately to No and Yes occurring only in the opposition they form,

63) *m'm — mwhm*

And even you can see the structure of texts in the phoneme /æ/ in Spanish, a phoneme not existing in the language but appearing in deprecatory expressions just as a text,

64) *¡Ah! No me creo nada.*

That is, even from the point of view of a particular language texts can have their traditions. But the structure of a text as a text is not referred to a particular language.

The valuation of textual competence (expressive knowledge) is autonomous. Speaking is evaluated differently if the particular language is concerned or if the valuation is made on the composition of texts. When dealing with texts correction is ignored. The only thing to be evaluated is whether the text is adequate or not to the topic, adequate to the situation (opportune) or adequate to the listener (appropriate). *Adequacy* is thus the criterion of valuation of texts. This fact reveals that textual linguistic competence is autonomous in itself.

#### *3.4 Annulment of Incorrectness by Means of Adequacy*

The competence about the rules constituting texts is autonomous from idiomatic competence. This fact can be verified in the valuation of texts made in terms of the adequacy of the text to the three criteria of adequacy, the *situation*, the *topic* dealt with and the *listener* (expressive competence), a type of valuation independent from the criteria of correctness (idiomatic competence) and congruence (elocutive competence).

Adequacy can annul incongruity and incorrectness. The most typical cases of annulment in this sense can be found in texts in which particular expressions of a foreign language are used either to imitate foreigners or when speaking to foreigners. Speakers usually consider foreigners not to know the speaker's language. Because of this, speakers will abandon their idiomatic knowledge and reduce it not using, for example, the conjugation of verbs, saying onomatopoeic expressions to refer to things, or using gestures to refer to activities.

Speaking to foreigners is in connection with the problem of the birth of the so-called *lingua franca*, a language the function of which is establishing linguistic interchange between the members of communities with different languages. With the birth of new speakers learning a lingua franca this one gives birth to the so-called *creole speech*, a functional language constituted by speakers who use only the lingua franca thus abandoning the language of their forefathers. The most important motivation for the birth of these languages is the intentional reduction of the rules in force in the original languages.

For Coseriu, the phenomenon of reduction may be in connection with the birth of the so-called Romanesque languages. The deep changes occurred in Latin in the Early Middle Ages were motivated by Romans when they reduced their language in order to make themselves understood by foreigners (Coseriu, 1992). From my point of view, the birth of Romanesque languages has to do as well, together with reduction, with the introduction by Romans of a new mode of thinking in the different territories they colonized. The original people in those territories were illiterate. The Romans introduced writing, the Roman Law, army, administration, the roman monetary system, customs and learning. These factors

constituted a new mode of thinking strengthened with the adoption of a new religion coming from the Eastern Mediterranean whose preachers came from Rome and spoke Latin. It was the *substantive mode of thinking* with the implicit mode of conceiving things, the *substantive mode of being*. The new mode of thinking of invaders together with the reduced forms of Latin heard by the primitive inhabitants made them adopt new words, new expressions and new concepts about things. This process of changes happened in the middle ages was gradual. It lasted for the long period of time, when both Latin and the new languages coexisted (cf. an interpretation of the loss of inflexions in Old English in Martínez del Castillo, 2015).

Pidgin languages and after these ones creole languages are born because of reduction as well. As a matter of fact, pidgin languages are nothing but a lingua franca devoted to commerce and business. European colonists settled in certain maritime spots in America, Asia or Africa. European settlers could speak their language perfectly well but they addressed the native people there in a reduced form. Protected by the army and the new administration soon new trading spots emerged. The native people around the area, who spoke different languages and could not understand one another since they belonged to different speech communities, adopted the language they could learn from the colonists together with it the new mode of thinking implicit. Pidgin languages (pidgin, a word used for English *business*) are the reduced forms of a European language born in the contact between Europeans and speakers of different groups of languages. The urgent need for communication in commercial affairs between communities speaking different languages prompted the adoption of these reduced forms. When the first native people were born in the established trading spots they learnt pidgin language from their parents. Then a process started that would give rise to new languages. It is the case of the language in Haiti and Saint Lucia, for example.

Creole languages were not originated because of natural processes or because of incorrectness on the part of the native people in the colonies. Native inhabitants in the colonies tried to speak the European language in force in their territories. Nor are they born because of the influence of the local languages on the European language. The most important reason for the birth of these languages was the intentional reduction on the part of the very European speakers who reduced their language when they spoke to speakers of other languages (Coseriu, 1992).

Adequacy is the first criterion for the valuation of speech by speakers. Adequacy annuls incorrectness and incongruity. The annulment of incorrectness and incongruity occurs only when incorrectness and incongruity are intentional. In that case incorrectness and incongruity are tolerated and considered to be necessary.

Adequacy in itself is much more complicated than correctness and congruence. Correctness belongs to one of the many particular languages. Adequacy corresponds to different factors in speaking. A particular text may be at the same time adequate and inadequate but under different points of view. Complete adequacy, that is, adequacy under all points of view is highly improbable. This fact is usually indicated when, for example, the circle of possible listeners of a particular text is mentioned, for example,

#### 65) *Infantile literature.*

Texts can deviate from the rules of particular languages and can have units even functional

units valid only for texts in as much as they are texts. For example, the English word *milch* appears only in combination with *cow* or *goat*; in other contexts, the word *milk* is used. And the Spanish word *cien* can only be used in the expression *cien por cien* thus constituting a text. With other percentages the word *ciento* appears,

66) *Veinte por ciento.*

### 3.5 Valuation of Textual Linguistic Competence

The valuation of textual linguistic competence, that is, expressive competence, is autonomous. Speaking is evaluated differently either if it is referred to the particular language or to the structure of texts. Speaking referred to texts is adequate or inadequate in connection with the three factors determining texts. Speaking must be adequate to the listener, the topic and the situation. When speaking responds to the requirements of the topic it is *adequate* or on the contrary *inadequate*. Speaking when it responds to level of competence or the expectancies of the listener it is evaluated as *appropriate* or *inappropriate*. And when it answers to the exigencies of the situation it is evaluated as *opportune* or *inopportune*. The terms *adequate* or *inadequate* generally refer to the requirements of expressive knowledge, including adequacy, appropriateness and opportunity.

The autonomy of textual linguistic competence manifests in the fact that the different types of adequacy can annul congruence, as we saw earlier. But adequacy can annul even incorrectness. The most typical example of this type is the use of certain expressions of a foreign language introduced in a text. In the book of Whorf you can find the following text,

67) *A noumenal world [...] awaits discovery by all the sciences, which it will unite and unify, [...] a realm of PATTERNED RELATIONS [...] including au fond mathematics and music* (original underlining, Whorf 1956, 247-248).

Particular linguistic incorrectness is annulled as well when speakers address children thus creating cases of reduction,

68) *Corre, corre, que viene el gua-guá. El gua-guá muy malo y muerde al niño.*

The case of voluntary annulment of incorrectness when speaking to foreigners manifests in all languages. Reduction influences the internal evolution of languages. This fact appears in the history of the English language. Scandinavian people settled in the Danelaw in the ninth century spoke a Germanic language very similar to the so-called Old English spoken in England at the time. Both the English and Scandinavians were able to understand one another quite easily. In this way both groups of speakers did their best to let the other one understand thus reducing their respective languages. As a result, the English language spoken at the moment became quite a different language prompting with this the loss of inflexions, word-endings and the maladjustment of words and meanings, for example, *take* (ON. *taka* superseding OE *niman*, still extant in *numb*); *gate* (ON *gata*= 'way, road, street', for example, the place names in Leeds and York, *Briggate* and *Kirkgate*, refer to 'Bridge Street' and 'Church Street'. But similar forms in London, *Aldgate* and *Newgate*, mean 'gate' thus referring to old gates in the city wall); *bread* and *loaf* that mismatched their meanings (OE *hlāf*=bread and ON *braud*=fragment); and *anger* and *wrath* that meant the same (ON *anгр* and OE *wraþþ*) (Barber, 199), etc.

Reduction is always voluntary. Reduction may not be accurate. It can even be wrong but this fact is not worth considering in communication. The important thing is that reduction is systematic and speakers belonging to a particular speech community learn to reduce their language in the usual way of reducing it in their speech community. Reduction thus is traditional, that is, historical and systematic. In this sense you can see rules and tendencies in it. It is typical of Spanish speakers when reducing to emphasize syllables, as in *a-yun-ta-mien-to* but for an English speaker that emphasis is misleading.

In order to establish communication adequacy is the first criterion previous to correction and congruence. Adequacy can annul not only congruence but even linguistic correctness. But annulment is only effective if the break of correction or congruence is intentional, looked for, or wanted. If speakers speak incorrectly or incongruously but unintentionally then incorrectness or incongruity are not accepted. But if they manifest in some way or another that their speech although incorrect and incongruous is the kind of discourse wanted, looked for and intended incorrectness and incongruity are not only tolerated but accepted as the only kind of speech necessary in the situation.

#### 4. Conclusion

Linguistic competence can only be described through the interpretation of speaking. The linguistics of a language is thus hermeneutics, the interpretation of facts in terms of the human life.

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## Glossary

*A functional language*. It is constituted with the set of techniques functioning in a particular speech. A functional language is to be defined as a homogeneous language. It is thus a syntopic, synestratic and symphasic language. Functional languages can be many within a historical or particular language. In a functional language all forms are homogeneous, not analogous.

*Hermeneutics*. It is the discipline studying human problems and topics such as human. Since human topics are known before hand by human subjects themselves its study consists in interpreting what is previously known, that is, justifying what has already been made in terms of the human reality and the human life. Hermeneutics has to do with the human condition, subjects who are free and creative, transcendent and limited, historical and contingent.

*Historical language*. It refers to a language made in history, that is, any particular language.

*The norm of a language*. It is the language actually performed and constituted in a tradition in the technique of speaking. It is constituted by the set of forms, rules and contents referred to as accepted or correct in a particular language. The norm of a language opposes the system of

a language, the type of a language above, and discourse below.

*Speech community.* It refers to any particular language. All languages are supported by a speech community.

*State of a language.* It is a series of techniques of speaking functioning in a particular period of time, say the 16<sup>th</sup> century, or the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Variation is to be found in the state of a language. In a state of a language all facts are analogous, not homogeneous.

*Synchrony/diachrony.* They constitute two axes in the study of a language. Synchrony has to do with the language actually spoken. In this sense it belongs to a language as an essential aspect of it. It has to do with the axis of description. Diachrony has to do with the axis of evolution. In this sense it does not belong to a language but the evolution of a language, something having to do with the study of language (linguistics), not language.

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