

Didattica della lingua inglese 1

Lesson 3
Grammar and vocabulary
Listen and make

About lesson 3

- In today's lesson we are going to...
 - Look at what language is made from
 - Grammar
 - Vocabulary
 - Communicative intention (=pragmatics)
- We are also going to focus on listening activities
 - Listen and make
 - Creative activities in the classroom

Before we start...

- How do you feel about teaching English?
 - How well your pupils learn English, and how they feel about learning the language, are very strongly determined by your attitudes and ability.
 - Read the nine statements, and say if you
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Have no opinion
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Then choose some of the statements and discuss your responses in small groups. Say WHY you feel as you do

Before we start...

I feel quite confident about my own use of English when I am teaching
Teaching English to young learners in my country is a waste of time
I am not sure whether I am using the most appropriate methods for
teaching young learners
I like meeting and making friends with people from English speaking
countries
I can't teach English effectively because of my heavy work load
I think English is an easy language to learn
I have a problem in teaching English because of a lack of appropriate
materials
My young learners are interested in learning English
I worry about my own level of English

Part 1

COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE

“But, Count,” I said, “You know and speak English thoroughly!” He bowed gravely.

“I thank you, my friend, for your all too-flattering estimate, but yet I fear that I am but a little way on the road I would travel. True, I know the grammar and the words, but yet I know not how to speak them”.

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Introduction

- Everybody knows that language is made up of two parts: **grammar & vocabulary**
 - Also known as **syntax & lexis**
 - a.k.a **structure & meaning**
- The real story is a bit more complex.
- In this lesson we are going to take a closer look at the things that combine to create a language.

Traditional view of language



Language = grammar + lexis

- The grammar-lexis dichotomy originated in Ancient Greece
 - The Greeks liked their dichotomies:
 - male-female; light-dark; good-bad; rich-poor
 - But life is a little bit more complex, and dividing everything into 2 parts isn't always appropriate.
- Today we are going to look at a tripartite division of language which follows the (mainly European and Slavic) linguistic traditions of the 20th & 21st centuries
 - grammar
 - vocabulary
 - **pragmatics**

What is grammar?

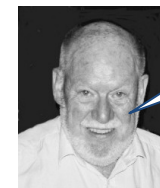
- We think of grammar as language **rules**
 - Grammar is more accurately language **structure** :
 - The sequence that the words appear in (**syntax**)
 - Subject *then* Verb *then* Object (SVO)
 - Auxiliary *then* Subject *then* Infinitive *or* Participle (QuASI)
 - SVO/ASI *then* Manner *then* Place *then* Time
 - The changes that are made to words depending on their relations (**morphology**)
 - Noun plural → + “s”
 - Verb from noun → + “-ize”
 - Past tense of (regular) verb → + “ed”

Grammar and language

- When you learn a foreign language as an adult, you learn grammar and vocabulary together
 - You feel that the grammar is more important (why?)
 - You feel that without grammar you won't be understood (why?)
- When you learn a first language, you start with vocabulary (single words and chunks)
 - The grammar emerges slowly as and when necessary
 - Mothers do not usually correct their children's grammar mistakes – only their vocabulary
 - Does this give you some food for thought? (=pane per i vostri denti)

Two views of grammar

- Look at the following (very different) citations.
Which one do you agree with the most, and why?



...by far the majority of text is made of the occurrence of common words in common patterns (John McH Sinclair)

Virtually every sentence that a person utters or understands is a brand-new combination of words, appearing for the first time in the history of the universe (Steven Pinker)



From grammar to vocabulary: chunks

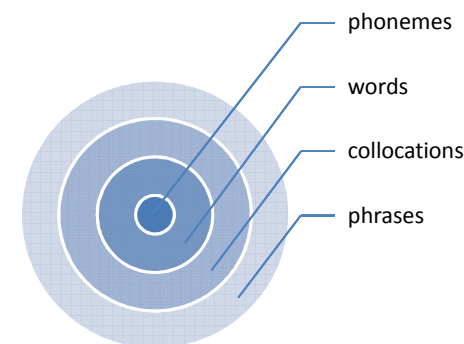
Word	Freq.
1 I DON'T KNOW	5,308
2 A LOT OF	2,872
3 I MEAN I	2,186
4 I DON'T THINK	2,174
5 DO YOU THINK	1,511
6 DO YOU WANT	1,426
7 ONE OF THE	1,332
8 YOU HAVE TO	1,300
9 IT WAS A	1,273
10 YOU KNOW I	1,231
11 YOU WANT TO	1,230
12 YOU KNOW WHAT	1,212
13 DO YOU KNOW	1,203
14 A BIT OF	1,201
15 I THINK IT'S	1,189
16 BUT I MEAN	1,163
17 AND IT WAS	1,148
18 A COUPLE OF	1,136
19 YOU KNOW THE	1,079
20 WHAT DO YOU	1,065

Table 2: Top 20 three-word clusters

Word	Freq.
1 YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN	659
2 AT THE END OF THE	332
3 DO YOU KNOW WHAT I	258
4 THE END OF THE DAY	235
5 DO YOU WANT ME TO	177
6 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE	102
7 I MEAN I DON'T KNOW	94
8 THIS THAT AND THE OTHER	88
9 I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN	84
10 ALL THE REST OF IT	76
11 AND ALL THAT SORT OF	74
12 I WAS GOING TO SAY	71
13 AND ALL THE REST OF	68
14 AND THAT SORT OF THING	68
15 I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT	63
16 ALL THAT SORT OF THING	61
17 DO YOU WANT TO GO	61
18 TO BE HONEST WITH YOU	59
19 AN HOUR AND A HALF	56
20 IT'S A BIT OF A	56

Table 4: Top 20 five-word clusters

An overview of vocabulary



An overview of vocabulary

- Sounds (phonemes) combine to make words
- Words combine to form collocations
 - Collocations are typical combinations of words, but they don't always appear next to each other or in a fixed sequence, e.g.
 - Pay attention (= *prestare attenzione*)
 - Black and white (= *bianco e nero*)
 - Not only but also (= *non solo... ma anche*)
- Words also combine to form fixed phrases
 - idioms, greetings, etc.

What is vocabulary?

- Most people think that vocabulary means “single words”

– Which of these is “a word”?

see you later	pencil	of course
Happy birthday!	postcommunist	won't
the grass is always greener	yes	15,423

– It depends on how you define “word”.

- Strictly speaking, only column 2 contains “single words”
- But your professor is a phraseologist, and therefore would consider them all to be single “lexical items” (i.e. “words”), because each one expresses a single meaning.

Words and meanings

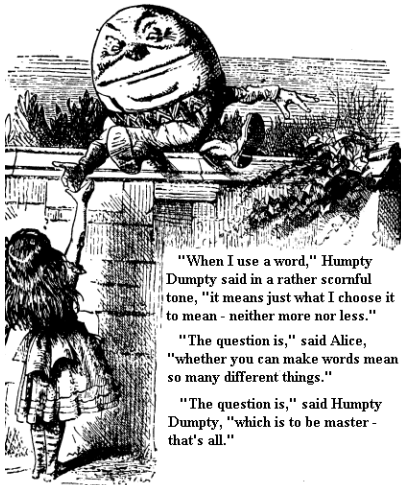
- Most people think that **words have meanings**
→ What does “match” mean?
 - It depends on the context!
 - match (n) = *fiammifero*;
 - [football] match (n) = *partita*
 - match (vb) = *abbinare* ...
- How would you react to the suggestion that, instead, **meanings have words** ...?

From semantics to pragmatics

*the meaning
of words lies
in their use*



(Ludwig Wittgenstein. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*, 80, p 109).



"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master - that's all."

What is pragmatics?

- Pragmatics is a type of functional meaning
 - It is concerned with what we try to do when we use language, rather than what words describe.
- The most important figure for the study of Pragmatics is HP Grice, but before we look at his work, let's think about what we use language for.

Functions of language

- M.A.K. Halliday (1925 -) provides this very useful (and simple) model of what we use language for:-

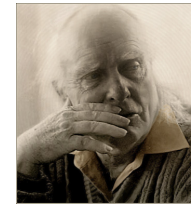


What we want	How we get it	
information	statement +	Question ?
goods & services	offer +?	Command !

- M.A.K. Halliday. 1993 (3rd edn). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Grammar*. c.f. **clause as exchange**

Grice's "cooperative principle"

- Now that you have seen what people try to do/get when they use language with others, we need to see how best they can cooperate.



- The cooperative principle is the principle that speakers try to co-operate with one another. When people take part in conversations they do so on the assumption that the other speakers will observe certain unstated "rules" (Grice, 1957)

Grice's "co-operative principle"

- The maxims of Grice's cooperative principle
 1. Maxim of quantity:
Make your contribution just as informative as required.
 2. Maxim of quality
Make your contribution one that is true.
 3. Maxim of relation
Make your contribution relevant.
 4. Maxim of manner
Avoid obscurity and ambiguity. Be brief and orderly.

A more complete view of language

