Module: Linguistics

Level: L1- FILA

Time Allotted: 90 min

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Lecture 8: Language as a Means of Communication

1. **Introduction**

Among the main functions of human language is communication. Since it is a main tool of communication, language has a highly important role in human‘s life. Does communication belong to human beings only? As a system, it is possessed by other creatures as well, such as animals and plants. Thus, what is communication? According to Crane, et. al. (1981:3—4), communication is a process in which information is transmitted from a source—the sender—to a goal—the receiver. The communication process requires:

1-a source or ***sender*** (encoding process),

2- an addressee or ***receiver*** (decoding process),

3- a ***channel*** which acts as the medium and carrier of,

4- a ***message*** which is usually in a recognizable form of text or utterance made up from the inventory of,

5- a ***code*** shared by both sender (encoder) and receiver (decoder).

6-communication is usually about a particular ***topic***,

7- within a ***physical and social context*** common to the participants in the communication situation.

 A comprehensive model of communication

 7- context

 1-Sender 3- channel 2-receiver

 5-code

Encoding decoding

 environment 1 environment 2

 4- message

6- topic

 Examples of communication situations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Situation1 | Situation 2 |
| 1-sender: doctor | 1-sender: teacher |
| 2-receiver: patient | 2-receiver: students |
| 3-channel: face to face | 3-channel: face to face |
| 4-message: spoken when the doctor explains the pathology to the patient/  and written when he prescribes the medical drugs relevant  to the patient's disease | 4-message: spoken when the teacher explains the lesson and written for the dictation |
| 5-code: French, Arabic, English | 5-code:French, Arabic, English |
| 6-topic: topic discussion | 6-topic: topic discussion |
| 7-Social/physical context: private   cabinet or hospital  | 7- Social/physical context: school or university |

In another way, O‘Grady et. al. (1993: 496) state that communication is a matter of passing or exchange of information—distinguishes what is living and what is non-living in nature. Communication is found even in the apparently passive world of plants; trees, for example, have been found to pass on information about advancing predators by means of chemical signals.

Related to the human communication system, we should note that there are three systems of human communication. The three systems are in the form of *speech, writing*, and *gesture*. For most people, speech is the basic system of communication. Writing, however, allows the preservation of communications over space and through time, and its great importance in human history and in complex societies would be hard to overestimate. The role of gesture is less obvious. Among the deaf, of course, it may replace speech as the principle form of communication; but for most people it is an important supplement to speech. Together these systems allow us to communicate in a variety of situations with subtle shades of meaning (Crane et. al., 1981:14).