

IDENTIFYING THE FUNCTIONS OF LEARNER'S LANGUAGE

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Abstract: *Language is the main tool for communication and learning in the classroom. Understanding how learners use language helps teachers identify both the progress and difficulties students face in the process of language acquisition. This paper focuses on identifying the functions of learner's language, analyzing how students use it for interaction, meaning-making, and expressing themselves in classroom contexts. By recognizing the different communicative and cognitive functions of learner language, teachers can provide more effective feedback and adapt their teaching strategies to learners' needs.*

Keywords: *learner's language, communication, interaction, language function, feedback*

Introduction

Language learning is a complex process that involves not only mastering grammar and vocabulary but also using language for different purposes. The way learners use language in classroom interaction reveals their understanding, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Identifying the functions of learner's language is essential for teachers to evaluate students' communicative competence and cognitive development.

According to Corder (1967), learners' errors and language use provide valuable insights into their internal learning process. Teachers can analyze learner language to understand how students construct meaning and how they apply linguistic knowledge in communicative situations.

Functions of Learner's Language

The learner's language serves multiple communicative and cognitive functions. Each function reflects a different purpose and level of language development. Some major functions include:

Communicative Function – Learners use language to express thoughts, feelings, and intentions. They ask questions, request information, and respond to others. This function is vital in building interaction and promoting classroom dialogue.

Metalinguistic Function – Students often use language to discuss or analyze language itself. For instance, they may ask, "Is this correct?" or "How do we say this in English?" This shows their awareness of language structure and rules.

Cognitive Function – Learners use language to think, reason, and reflect. Through speaking or writing, they organize their thoughts, clarify understanding, and internalize new knowledge.

Affective Function – Learners express emotions, confidence, and attitudes toward learning. Phrases like “I can’t do it” or “I like this activity” indicate their emotional engagement and motivation.

Social Function – Language allows learners to build relationships, cooperate with peers, and participate in group tasks. It develops social interaction and promotes collaborative learning.

Compensatory Function – When learners lack vocabulary or grammar knowledge, they use strategies such as gestures, synonyms, or simplifications to make themselves understood. This shows creativity and adaptability in communication.

The Role of Teachers

Teachers play a crucial role in identifying and supporting the development of these functions. By observing classroom interactions, teachers can recognize which functions learners are using and which need further support.

For example, if a learner often uses language for social purposes but rarely for metalinguistic reflection, the teacher can encourage activities that promote linguistic awareness. In this way, teachers can design tasks that balance communication and accuracy, such as role plays, problem-solving activities, or reflection tasks.

Conclusion

Identifying the functions of learner’s language is a key part of understanding the learning process. It allows teachers to go beyond error correction and focus on the communicative value of learner output. By analyzing how learners use language to communicate, think, and interact, educators can create more supportive and effective learning environments that foster both fluency and accuracy.

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