

CZU: 811.111(072)

## SEMANTIC DIFFICULTIES IN TEFL

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*It is often assumed that the problem of transmitting the ideas of the national or cultural group to members of another national or cultural group is principally a problem of language.....can always be solved by the use of the appropriate linguistic techniques.*

(Edmund S. Glenn)

Communication is the essence of our living and how to make it successful is a constant preoccupation of all the humans. Nobody can say exactly what the reason of misunderstanding is. There are opinions and opinions. An eminent professional philosopher, Professor Max Otto, and a very prominent layman, President Eisenhower, have stated that each man has a philosophy, even if he is not aware of this fact. They try to emphasize that people think in accordance with their patterns of thought, that have been inherited or developed. In fact, *we tend today to use the expression **national character**, which should not blind us to the fact that **character** is in reality the embodiment of a philosophy or the habitual use of a method of judgement and thinking<sup>1</sup>*-as Glen says. Association of ideas plays a great part in thought, thus each man s past. For example the word *colonialism* carries particularly irritating connotations only to Americans, Roumanians, it carries no such connotation to Frenchmen, Englishmen. That is why they do not understand each other's attitude. It is anchored in the history.

As you see the misunderstanding appears, because it does not embody the ideological position recognizable to one of the parts. Moreover it brings home the idea that there are two sides to every question.

A TEFL teacher takes a great responsibility, as he should implement in his students' minds this concept. I completely agree with Professor Karl Pribram's revolutionary idea of the existence of four patterns of thoughts. As both teachers and students are foreign speakers the only way to be more or less linguistically

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<sup>1</sup> Fawcett *The use and Misuse of Language:Oxford Press,1963-pp45*

correct is the attempt to use the four patterns. The great majority of teachers suggest that the students should think immediately in the Source Language, if he wants to achieve results. This is impossible, because the idea comes in the mother tongue. The teacher's purpose is to make his disciple use the patterns, if he wants to approach to this nation's way of thinking.

Universalistic Reasoning. It is based on the premise that the human mind is able to grasp directly the order of the universe. Reasoning is credited with the power to know the truth with the aid of given general concepts and to establish absolutely valid rules for the organization of the humans relationships in accordance with these concepts. Universalistic Reasoning proceeds from the general to the particular; it believes that general concepts possess a reality independent from their components. The sentences and the situations that enter this Pattern do not bring any problem to foreign speakers as General ideas are translated without difficulty. The only problem here is British and American metric equivalents.

### **British**

**1 fluid=0.03 litre**

1 gil=0.14 litre

1 pint=0.58 litre

1 quart=1.136 litre

1 peck=9.092 litre

### **American**

1 pint=0.55

1 quart=1.101litre

1 peck=8.81 litre

Nominalistic or Hypophetical Reasoning. Nominalistic philosophy rejects the belief that general concepts have a reality of their own; instead it considers them as names, as convenient categories, more or less arbitrarily established by human minds. Reasoning proceeds from the particular to the general. Here teacher should help the student to think globally. A foreign speaker should be taught history and structure. Thus for example: in French and English there is the concept of underground, but each of the languages sticks to its own peculiar word. French visitors to New York are in general highly critical about their subway. What repels them is not the dirt or the crowding, but the evident lack of the comprehensive planning in the geographical distribution of the lines. The argument is that the New York subway is the one which carries the greatest number of people the most rapidly over the greatest distances from home to work and vice-versa. The Paris Metro ,on the contrary, covers all of Paris like a spider web.

Convenient changeover stations make it possible to go from one monument to the other. At the same time it is extremely slow. For us, Roumanians, it makes no difference as we do not have Metros.

When I have mentioned above of global thinking I meant that the teacher's primary aim is to penetrate into the core and make the students understand it.

Intuitional reasoning. This type of reasoning stresses intuition rather than systematic cogitation. It is thus in a position to ignore some of the basic apposition between nominalism and universalism. This pattern is used at an advanced level where there is a very good linguistic practice. The great problem of foreign speakers is the preposition. Often students and teachers guess what preposition should be used. You may disagree that guessing is a good thing, but the native speakers do not think what they are saying. Maybe achieving this level you can consider that you have a feeling for the language.

Dialectic Reasoning. Dialectics are derived from universalism and it believes in the possibility of full understanding of the universe through reason. It can not be achieved with the aid of rigid concepts, it is an ever changing phenomenon. The teacher should explain to the students that there may be many variants, depending on age, experience, intuition, knowledge. One and the same text may be transmitted by one and the same person differently. We, foreign speakers, have the right to be a little bit mistaken.

To sum up, it appears that all the semantic difficulties that TEFL teachers and students come across can not be solved. Even an imperfect method of classification may greatly help in analyzing patterns of thought as they appear in different cases, and thus to make easier to overcome obstacles in communication. Finally, this does not mean that we, foreign speakers, and they, native speakers, understand each other.

## **Bibliography**

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