TEACHING ENGLISH AND ITALIAN FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

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Abstract:
Teaching foreign languages for specific purposes requires an appropriate knowledge of the field in discussion (Economy, Business, Law, Medicine, Psychology, IT, etc.), of its specific system, terminology and characteristics..
The present paper contrastively highlights the main characteristics of English and Italian medical psychological language. In the second part, the paper consists of a lesson built on the English version of a psychology text taken from Psychology London, an online bilingual magazine written by various specialists in psychology.

Keywords: teaching, special purpose language, English/Italian for psychology, characteristics

JEL Classification: I0

1. Introduction

The definition of languages for specific purposes (LSP)[1] has been long discussed. According to Berruto (1987: 150), languages for specific purposes are: "una varietà diafasica o situazionale della lingua, detta anche *sottocodice,* che si contraddistingue per un lessico specialistico afferente a un particolare settore di conoscenze o a una determinata sfera di attività"[2]. Balboni (2000) considers LSP as a linguistic variety used in scientific and professional sectors in order to help professionals communicate accurately. Luca Serianni (2003) defines the technical language as follows:

> (...) la varietà di una lingua naturale, dipendente da un settore di conoscenze o da un ambito di attività professionali, (...) che viene usato da un gruppo di parlanti più ristretto a quelli che parlano la lingua base e risponde allo scopo di soddisfare le necessità comunicative di un certo settore specialistico.[3] (Serianni, 2003: 80)

Dita Gálová offers a clear explanation for the necessity of LSP specialists: "globalization of the world economy requires professionals and specialists in various areas to communicate effectively in foreign languages. The success is conditional on their ability to manage language and cultural barriers, i.e. on the language skills and competences with respect to their professional areas". (2007: viii)

On the other hand, Jesus Garcia Laborda (2011: 103) defines LSP as "the teaching of a language as a second or foreign language for certain groups of students to whom the syllabus, tasks, and methodology is especially tailored to their interests and needs".

2. Some characteristics of English and Italian for medicine and psychlogy

The LSP discussed in the present paper is English and Italian for medicine and psychology. The paper contrastively highlights the main characteristics of English and Italian language for medicine and psychology relying on the classifications of Berruto

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[1] For different aspects regarding languages for special purposes see also Holden (1992), Hutchinson/Waters (2006), Kenedy/Bolitho (1991), Kriston (2014: 31-39), Petcovici (2013: 582-585).

[2] "a situational or diaphasic variety of language, also called sub-code, which is characterized by a specialized vocabulary relating to a particular field of knowledge or to a particular field of activity". (Berruto, 1987: 150)

[3] " (...) The variety of a natural language, belonging to a field of knowledge or to a professional environment, (...) that is used by a limited group of speakers as compared to those who speak the common language and has the purpose to meet the communication needs of a certain specialised field." (Serianni, 2003: 80)

(1987), Holden (1992), Serianni (2003: 94-98, 2005: 257-268), Wulff (2004: 187-188), Hutchinson, Waters (2006), but also on personal observations resulted from the analysis of the online bilingual articles from the *Psychology London* magazine.

Here are some of the main characteristics of English and Italian language for medicine and psychology identified especially by the above mentioned linguists:

a) the use of foreign origin terms (Greek, Latin, French):

(1) Ingl. *asthenia* - It. *astenia* from *astheneia* in Greek;

(2) Ingl. *perception* - It. *percezione* from *perceptio, -ōnis* in Latin;

(3) Ingl. *cirrhosis* – It. *cirrosi* from *cirrhose* in French.

Very often, in the Italian texts there are also English terms such as (4) *bypass, caregiver, flashback, rebound,* etc.

b) the use of terms with affixes:

(5) *psycho- / psico-:* Ingl. *psychopatia* - It. *psicopatia;* Ingl. *psychotherapy* - It. *psicoterapia;*

(6) *-osi / -osis*: Ingl. *hypnosis* - It. *ipnosi;* Ingl. *leukocytosis* - It. *leucocitosi,* Ingl. *neurosis* - It. *nevrosi;*

c) the use of acronyms:

(7) Ingl. *AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome* – It. *SIDA - Sindrome da immunodeficienza acquisita;*

(8) Ingl. *HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus* – It. *VIDU - Virus dell'immunodeficienza umana.*

Italian often chooses the English acronym instead of the Italian one.

d) the use of eponyms:

(9) Ingl. *Asperger's syndrome* – It. *sindrome di Asperger,* Ingl. *Down's syndrome* – It. *sindrome di Down,* Ingl. *Hutchinson-Gilford syndrome* – It. *sindrome di Hutchinson-Gilford;*

e) the use of specialized terminology**:**

(10) Ingl. *psychosis* – It. *psicosi,* Ingl. *hypnosis* - It. *ipnosi;*

(11) Ingl. *obsessive-compulsive disorder* - It. *disturbo ossessivo-compulsivo;*

f) the use of semi-specialized terms:

- common words in specialized contexts:

(12) Ingl. *The rebound effect following the suspension of stimulants include psychosis, depression syndrome and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. –* It. *L'effetto rebound a seguito della sospensione di stimolanti includono: psicosi, depressione e la sindrome da deficit di attenzione e iperattività.*

- formal synonyms for common words:

(13) Ingl. *Due to the vast variety of symptoms caused, anxiety can be very debilitating and therefore it is always advised to seek help and support. –* It. *A causa della grande varietà di sintomi causati, l'ansia può essere molto debilitante e pertanto è sempre consigliato di chiedere aiuto e sostegno.*

f) the use of passive voice:

(14) Ingl. *attachment behaviours are gradually organized in a "behavioural system" whose features depend on the caregiver's interactional style -* It. *i comportamenti di attaccamento vengono gradualmente organizzati in un "sistema comportamentale" le cui caratteristiche dipendono dallo stile interattivo del caregiver;*

3. Teaching proposal

The second part of the present paper describes an English lesson based on a psychology text and designed according to the sequences of a teaching unit, indicated by Diadori (2009: 306): motivation, general comprehension, analysis, synthesis, reflection and reinforcement. The lesson is held with the students in psychology in their 1st year of study. The required level of English is B1.

3.1. Motivation

In order to guide students' expectations and to activate some of their previous knowledge, during the motivation stage, students may be invited to watch or listen to a real session of psychotherapy or to watch a scene from a movie dedicated to therapy and counselling such as *A Beautiful Mind* (2001), *Couples Retreat* (2009), *It's Kind of a Funny Story* (2010), *Inside out* (2015), etc. At this stage, students are already aware of the fact that the English lesson is somehow related to their specialization and interests.

3.2. General comprehension

The students are divided into groups and handed cards with a paragraph taken from the English version of the article on *Attachment* (see Annex 1), taken from the online magazine *Psychology London*:

(15) *The child, observing the adult's reactions to the behaviour, will build expectation responses and change the behaviour accordingly (for example, a child will learn that the mother is available to play if she looks at her, the child will then respond with a smile to the mother's sight).*

(16) *John Bowlby, a British researcher trained in psychoanalysis at the beginning of the twentieth century proposed this theory in order to explain the behaviour between children and mothers.*

In groups, the students are asked to speculate about the paragraphs and to identify the main topic of the whole text. The teacher may write on the board keywords of their ideas before handing them the full text on attachment from the psychology magazine.

For the general comprehension of the text there are a number of activities to be used in such a course:

- True-false exercises:

(17) *The concept of attachment was introduced for the first time by John Bowlby, a British researcher trained in psychotherapy at the beginning of the 20th century.*   T/F

(18) *(…) all human beings are genetically orientated to social life and everyone is able to behave in such a way to facilitate the creation of affective bonds.*   T/F

- Multiple choice exercises:

(19) *The attachment system, by requiring parental care, aims to obtain adult _____ and protection;* a) *distance*   b) *interest*   c) *proximity*   d) *loneliness*

- Word order exercises:

(20) *an / is / that / attachment / constant / is / bond / affective / time / bond / in (Attachment bond is an affective bond that is constant in time.)*

- Fill in the gaps exercises:

(21) *The _____ aim of this bond is not only to _____ protection, but also to guarantee the child's _____, by stimulating social processes and promoting _____ exploration.*   *(environment, ensure, adaptive, wellbeing)*

3.3. Analysis

This stage of the lesson takes into account grammatical aspects such as:

a) exercises that aim at the morphological and syntactic features of psychological text:

- the use of simple present (in definitions and descriptions) and simple past (for the history of different concepts):

(24) *Attachment bond is an affective bond that is constant in time and is addressed to a specific person*

(25) *According to this perspective, all human beings are genetically orientated to social life and everyone is able to behave in such a way to facilitate the creation of affective bonds.*

(26) *The concept of attachment was introduced for the first time by John Bowlby, a British researcher trained in psychoanalysis at the beginning of the twentieth century.*

- the use of passive voice:

(22) *The concept of attachment was introduced for the first time by John Bowlby.*

(23) *(...) these behaviours are put into action by the child by instinct;*

- the use of infinitives and gerunds:

(27) *The adaptive aim of this bond is not only to ensure protection, but also to guarantee the child's wellbeing, by stimulating social processes and promoting environment exploration.*

b) exercises that aim at the lexical features of the psychological text:

- identification of specific terms and phrases (specific terminology as well as common words used with special meanings in specialized contexts):

(28) *attachment, imprinting, personality development, epigenetic systems, attachment bonds, channelling and assimilation concepts, associative learning, innate relational desire, attachment behaviour;*

- identification of the origin of terms and affixes such as:

(29) *psychoanalysis, epigenetics, innate, attachment, adaptive,*

- transformation of sentences from psychological language into everyday language:

(30) (…) *anxiety can be very debilitating and therefore it is always advised to seek help and support – (…) anxiety can be exhausting and this is why people should ask for help and support;*

- identification of synonyms and antonyms for various terms:

(31) *attachment – connection, bond, joint, link, tie;*

$\neq$ *alienation, animosity, aversion, estrangement;*

- defining certain terms:

(32) *channelling* - the practice of professedly entering a meditative or trancelike state in order to convey messages from a spiritual guide. (www.dictionary.com)

c) exercises that aim at the structure of the medical-psychological text. The text used in the class (annex 1) is a descriptive text with a specific structure: a brief history of the attachment theory, a short presentation of its founder, followed by the definition and description of different types of attachment with examples. The text is designed for specialists or future specialists in psychology and for accuracy reasons, the new concepts are defined and placed on separate paragraphs.

3.4. Synthesis

In the fourth stage of the lesson, the synthesis, students are supposed to develop in writing or speaking the argument of attachment.

They may be divided into two groups and start a debate on the following topic:

Can attachment behaviours be manipulative? Can children manipulate their caregiver? While supporting their points of view they have to use their grammar, vocabulary, speaking and communicative skills. Students may also be asked to write an argumentative essay on the same topic.

3.5. Reflection and reinforcement

In the reflection stage, students may reflect on the register and general characteristics of medical and psychological texts.

The last stage of the lesson, the stage of reinforcement, refers to the free will of students to look for psychological texts and to find additional information on the topic of attachment or on other psychological concepts such as *anxiety, stress*, etc.

3. Conclusion

The present article has tried to emphasize some characteristics of the medical psychological texts as well as to enlist a number of the teaching activities that can be conducted on these specialized texts with the specific purpose of improving language acquisition. There are definitely numerous other teaching activities that can be used starting from the same text, which have not been described in the present paper such as the translation of the text or producing a glossary of terms related to psychology etc.

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Sources

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Annex 1

Attachment

The concept of attachment was introduced for the first time by John Bowlby, a British researcher trained in psychoanalysis at the beginning of the twentieth century. He proposed this theory in order to explain the behaviour between children and mothers.

Bowlby pursued his interests on the relationship between mother and child when, after the Second World War, he began to work in the children department at the Tavistock clinic in London: during this period, he started to be interested in the effects of separation and on the influence of the quality of the relationship between child and mother on the child's personality development.

Bowlby was influenced by Lorenz's studies on imprinting, Waddington's epigenetic studies (in particular channelling and assimilation concepts – 1977) and by the hypothesis that different kinds of developments may arise from different types of environmental factors. He began to conceive the relationship between child and caregiver as based on biological factors. According to this perspective, all human beings are genetically orientated to social life and everyone is able to behave in such a way to facilitate the creation of affective bonds.

According to Bowlby's Theory, attachment is an essential biological system that will have an influence on relational and emotional processes related to the child's survival. The attachment system, by requiring parental care, aims to obtain adult proximity and protection; this would then promote the child's development.

It seems appropriate to describe some of the concepts related to the attachment theory:

Attachment bond: an affective bond that is constant in time and is addressed to a specific person. During childhood the attachment bond can manifest during potentially dangerous situations, and it is not determined by associative learning (or rather, the child does not learn how and when to use this kind of behaviour, it emerges instinctively: the relational desire is innate and stems from natural selection processes (Cassidy, 2011).

The adaptive aim of this bond is not only to ensure protection, but also to guarantee the child's wellbeing, by stimulating social processes and promoting environment exploration. Affective features of attachment bond are related to the child's wish for his caregiver's presence and to the discomfort he feels when this person is not present.

Attachment behaviours: these behaviours are put into action by the child by instinct; these behaviours allow him or her not only to attract the caregiver's attention in case of necessity, but also to regulate distance and closeness. Some attachment behaviours are, for example, smiling, crying and vocalizing. These change in time as the child learns how to use them in effective ways.

The child, observing the adult's reactions to the behaviour, will build expectation responses and change the behaviour accordingly (for example, a child will learn that mother is available to play if she looks at her, the child will then respond with a smile to the mother's sight).

Attachment system: attachment behaviours are gradually organized in a "behavioural system" whose features depend on the caregiver's interactional style (in particular, on her sensitivity and her ability to respond in an appropriate way to the child's signals) and on the evolution of the relationship through time.

Adult's effectiveness to be used by the child as a secure basis for environmental exploration, and the quality of attachment bonds between child and caregiver, mostly depend on the quality of interactions between child and adult through the time (Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1982).

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