

## METALINGUISTIC AND META-REFERENTIAL ASPECTS IN DIDACTIC COMMUNICATION

**Cristian ARHIP, Assistant Professor, PhD, University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Iasi and Odette ARHIP, Professor, PhD, Ecological University of Bucharest**

*Abstract: Glottodrama is a project of didactic research which, besides the indisputable original aspects, offers the opportunity to determine and to comment upon the aspects of meta-referential theory (Werner Wolf, 2009) being applied in didactic strategies. These are meant to help students to learn a foreign language or, in certain social contexts, the Romanian language as a foreign language. This project includes obvious interdisciplinary features and it is an indicative example for the application, in Romania, of the Lifelong Learning Programme of European Union. Being coordinated by the Laboratory of Linguistic Research of Culturiana Publishing Company, it aims to experiment with innovative methodology that integrates communicative glottodidactics and the dynamic theatrical performance. A theoretical inspiration can be found in E. Goffman' theory of social drama. The project provides training organization based on drama-parts classes, the teaching activity being conducted by two teachers: a language-teacher and a drama-teacher. The activity during the classes, the staging of different scripts with a more powerful and meta-referential feed-back accompanied by detailed comments and analyses of the filmed and recorded materials allow a more accurate assessment and a rapid progress. Theoretically, it offers an interesting example for applied meta-reference also on the didactic process and not only in the established artistic fields.*

*Keywords: meta-reference, part, innovation, language, didactics, drama.*

The present paper deals with the meta-referential aspect in didactic communication. Theoretically, the meta-referential approach involves a move from a first cognitive or communicative level to a superior one at which the referents become self-reflexively signs or meta-signs. This human capacity to watch, see, act and, verbally and mentally, interpret itself is very interesting, defining for the essence of a human being. Many meta-researches were applied first of all to literature and poetry, but also to other different arts afterwards. Painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, music, dance, theatre, film, computer games, etc. have been provided with attractive and apprehensive studies. The main objective of this paper is to prove that the same thing is possible and consistent for the didactic communication when a distinct method is used.

The paper focuses upon the glottodrama method which is used to teach a foreign language via linguistic and theatrical devices (Colibaba, 2013). Glottodrama is a project developed by the European Union under the Lifelong Learning Program. It is coordinated by the Laboratory of Linguistics of Culturiana Publishing Company from Italy. In Romania, the project is applied at EuroEd Foundation and at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Iasi (in the second term of their first year of medical study) and it involves teaching a foreign language through theatrical and linguistics strategies and procedures. The students have two teachers; one is teaching the language (grammar, vocabulary, speaking aspects, etc.) and the other one is initiating the learners into drama and acting techniques. The didactic

context becomes a more inter-active, effective and interesting one. The non-verbal communicative forms are very important and highly used in this teaching-method (Vladutescu, 2012). The cultural and social connotations are also brought to the forefront of the activities. The student gets close to the desired didactic objective: to identify mentally with the other language. All the newsworthy aspects regarding the teaching activity were presented in several papers of the teachers applying the methods (Colibaba, 2013).

This paper reveals and comments upon the meta-referential aspects which involves the teachers or the trainers. Both of them deal with a kind of Pygmalion effect because of the quite clear existential splitting. They lean between mimesis process / the craft of copying the behavior (*eikastiké*) and simulation / the art of making a show (*phantastiké*). The latter assumes an autonomous existence. Pygmalion story is the founder-myth of simulation and it involves magic and technique. From the point of view of artistic anthropology, the teachers and students performing glottodrama experience also a transgression of the reality. The shifting roles of the canonic characters in fiction become slices of lives cutting loose from the real persons involved in the didactic process. However, real persons and their different characters/parts share the same eagerness for education and the intellectual ability to pursue their linguistic objectives.

Each event-story renders a particular linguistic and communicative pattern, helping the students to cross the threshold between reality and simulative context. They are enriched with many-folded personality and they watch themselves in the filmed materials as in a mirror. A divided self is exposed in different milieux or settings showing social and physical details which are different of its own. The stories come from reality, but a simple stereotype is not much to build a story on. The stories come together with linguistic aspects and casts of the faces. Pygmalion statue is animated by the words and ways of expression. The stagy simulated world reduplicates the whole world, turning it into a sign and referring to itself. Therefore, we appreciate that this an interesting meta-referential aspect revealed in the didactic process. It is a self-contemplation activity similar to other postmodern cultural displays. It resembles a musing of a painting in which the artist himself appears. The philosophical and ontological aspects are also approached from a different perspective. Disclaiming the baroque notion of the world seen as a stage, glottodrama suggests another angle: the fictitious events and contexts are intentionally experienced as real life-situations and this kind of tackling the ontological aspect is a very believable. The drama-input encourages the students and the teachers to improvise outside the guidelines, but all of them are aware of the fact that it is only a policy for linguistically enrich themselves through various parts. Unlike arts and media, the metalepsis phenomenon or mise en abyme structure is not present (Genette, 1972). The teachers enforce self-consciousness through a plethora of strategies aiming at encompassing foreign verbal, non-verbal signs, and other symbolic relationships that support a specific discursive meaning. All of them are waiting for the semiotic field to inform heuristically about themselves as screenings in a different linguistic universe. They are aware of their intentional and directed changes and they only need to discover their own nature enjoying becoming true to their newfound self. They are beneficial owners of the Pygmalion effect.

Pygmalion effect is an effect of the double which suggest quite different processes of mediation and exchange. The verbal and visual signs refer to themselves. Meta-reference is a

special case of self-reference (Jannidis, 2009). The meta-referential characteristics involved in the didactic process of glottodrama focus on quite modern and copious disciplines: pragmatics, kinesics, haptics, proxemics. They allow to the students to perceive acutely life and culture of different civilizations in which they enter linguistically and theatrically. This meta-referential entrance may be read in two opposite ways: an absolute hyperbole of creative teaching-methods and an exceptional staging of real life. Diverse portraits and social contexts intermingle with the inner openings and the intimate personal spaces. The border between reality and drama, between native language and foreign language is intentionally blurred. The teachers modeled their students through real-life situations and ludic fallacy into doubles of themselves speaking amazing fluently the studied language. The usual uncertainty, ambiguity and shyness disappeared and they were replaced by joyfully playing dramatic, histrionic parts, but remaining inside the same self. The concealed didactic process can produce infinite linguistic identities of only one psychological and physical being which collates meta-reference. It goes one step further in the educational field.

### **Bibliography**

Colibaba, Anca Cristina (2013). *Teaching Foreign Languages Through the Glottodrama Method*. Contribution presented at EHB Conference.

Genette, Gérard (1972). *Discours du récit*, in *Figures III*. Paris: Seuil.

Jannidis, Fotis (2009). *Metareference in Computer Games*, in *Metareference Across Media*, (ed. Werner Wolf). Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi.

Stoichita, Victor Ieronim (2006). *Efectul Pygmalion. De la Ovidiu la Hitchcock*. Bucuresti: Humanitas.

Vlăduțescu, Ștefan (2012). *Persuasion as a Form of Influence*. *Revista de psihologie a Academiei Române*, 58(1), 57-64.