

GSJ: Volume 7, Issue 6, June 2019, Online: ISSN 2320-9186

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# **LANGUAGE NORMS IN TEACHING PEDAGOGY: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE CODE, LANGUAGE CONSTRUCT AND LANGUAGE CONVENTION.**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper takes a look at language norms with the major principal variables that control it. The concept of language **code** and its pedagogies in teaching English language from onset is examined. Language **construct** is highlighted in teaching pedagogy. Also, the language **convention** is considered along with classroom interactions. The linguistic norm is one of the essential characteristics of a language, ensuring its functioning and historical continuity as tacit agreements in society and an acceptable standard that users of a language are expected to reach. It is believed that norms guide and control the mutual intelligibility of a language in the society of its users. The more the society is dynamic the more norms of its language change. Therefore it is recommended that the language pedagogists must be seasoned professionals who can design and interpret the language programmes (the curriculum) and domesticate the contents of it to promote the full utilization of the language of instruction for the growth of the society in all fields.*

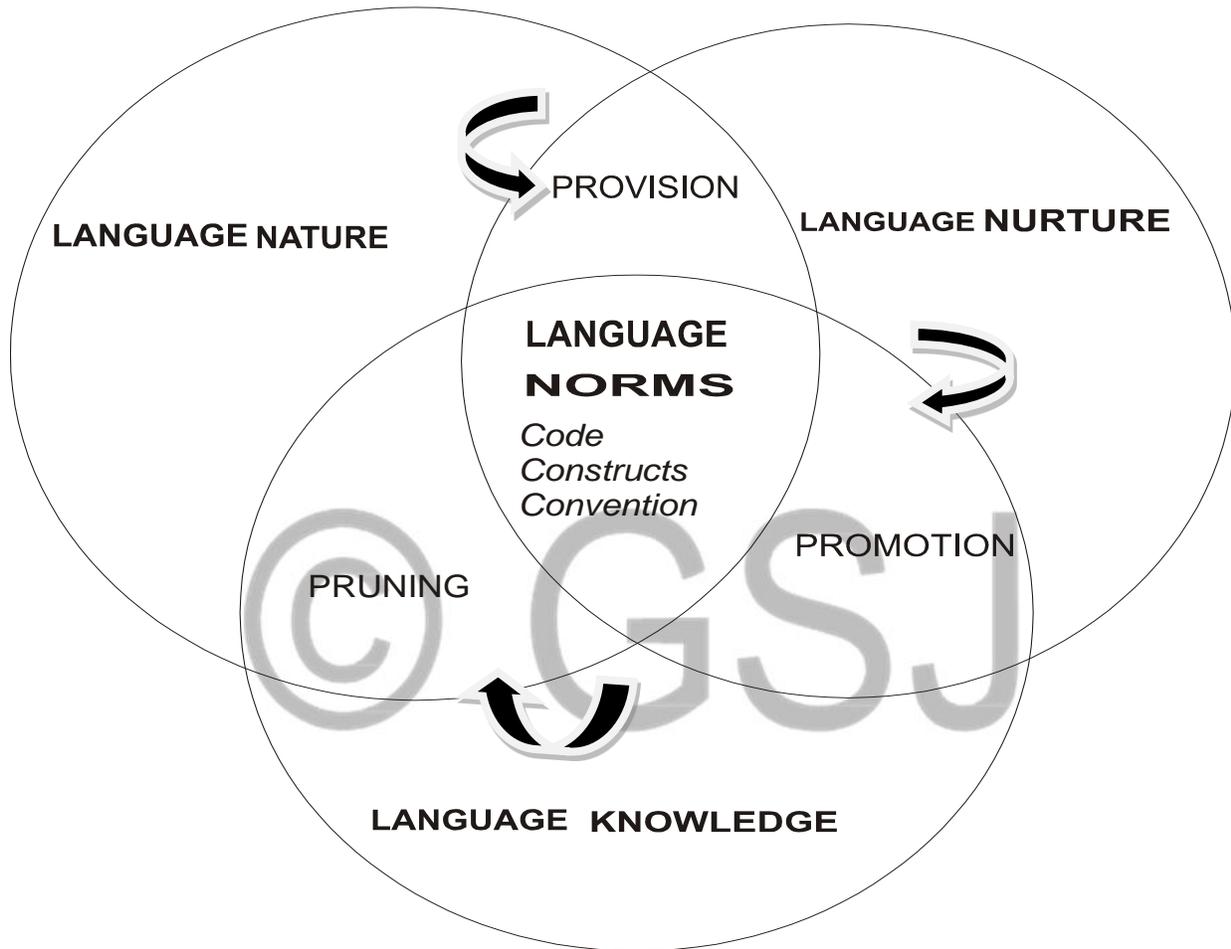
**KeyWords:-** Language, Norms, Code, Construct, Convention, Mutual Intelligibility and Pedagogy.

## **Introduction**

Language development in an individual must be compared with norms rather with other individuals. Language deals with the community of the speakers and it is a tool community holds together for super identity and tribal assimilation. Language thrives in its norms and norms help to make language distinctive and through which the tribal boundary is marked off. At every component of language considerations: Phonetics (sounds), Grammar (Syntax), Meaning (Semantics) and Function (Service), unique tribal language colour is identified which separates one language from the order. Although these look like a set of rules but its development is subtle and the demise tacit.

A number of factors needs to be taken into consideration when deciding on a particular norm in the case of teaching of English language as an international language. English Language is taught as a foreign (EFL) or as a second (ESL) language; the standard native version of English Language was transferred to the colonies to solve the initial communication problems and to enhance the rapid development and execution of colonial agenda. The historical development of the language and its unprecedented spread across the globe have given rise to a number of very different contexts to which the same paradigms cannot necessarily be applied. In this respect, it is important to examine the situation in the outer circle with the varied linguistic situation in the expanding circle. The “endo glossic” language purists may find it difficult to agree with complete assimilation of foreign linguistic culture.

The paper discusses three variables: language code, language construct and language convention. These elements, in the development of language, will be considered in the paper as demonstrated by this diagram:



***Linguistic Model Showing the Relationship among Language Nature, Nurture, Knowledge and Norms***

## ***Characteristics and Functions of Language***

Since a single dimensional definition of language cannot reveal all aspects of language, its characteristics and functions are central to this article. Santrock et al.(2005) categorise language by its infinite generativity and organizational rules in which infinite generativity refers to the power of language in producing endless number of concepts, words and meaningful sentences. Organizational rules refer to the grammar of language that is universal (Chomsky, 1968 cited in Malim & Birch, 1998, Mills, 2007). In another perspective, language is characterized by the syntagmatic and paradigmatic properties (Wiley, 2006). Syntagmatic property is related to sentence configuration and paradigmatic is the process of word selection as dictated by sense relations in lexicon choice procedures.

The process of choosing words or concepts is a cognitive feature of language by which individuals organize their thoughts and ideas through a meaningful way (Mac Whinney, 2011). This characteristic creates an inquiry regarding the relationship between language and thought (cognition).

Normative concept is one of the features that characterized language. Wittgenste in Peters,(2012) categorises language by three distinctive but inter related characteristics including normative, contextual and performative features.

The feature of language as normative refers to normative expectations related to norms, rules and laws as practised in a language community. In this process, the dispositional procedures function in combination with desires, intentions and expectations within a network agreed upon in a coherent linguistic village to create social norms (Splitter, 2011). Based on cooperation, individuals form habits, share goals, build language models, pursue intelligibility and flow

with the dynamism in language norms (Tomasello, Carpeter, Call, Behne & Moll, 2005). This can be done in collaboration with language code, construct and convention through a well developed language pedagogy.

Simmel(1995 cited in Elder- vass, 2010) defines a norm circle as a group of individuals who are committed to endorse and enforce a specific norm. This group of people has the same commonalities and cohesion in their ideas and beliefs which give them enough power to create norms, endorse and act norms as in language conventions. These commonalities and cohesion are originated in their natural language including meaningful concepts. Norms determine how members of a group should behave or should be punished if they do not follow the lay down norms. The ideas of obscene language/moral and immoral tone in expression, taboo and the likes are the peculiarities in subtle ways that constitute the norms of a language. What is acceptable in one language may be forbidden in the other. These norms may be formal such as discursive rules (e.g. editorial rules in an academic journal-Elder-vass, 2012) or may be implicit (Parks, 2004). When norms are formed, the behaviours of members are governed by them and the survival of a group depends on its contents.

The importance of communication is often overlooked. Despite our great prowess in communication, misunderstandings and mistranslations are common place. It is arrogant to believe that one can travel the world and expect that all of mankind can understand one's native tongue. In order to travel all over the world, whether for business or pleasure, a desire and willingness to adapt to new cultures and methods is necessary. Adaptability, of course, includes the ability to communicate with new people in various dialects. Being unable to communicate

in a country is akin to living with a serious impairment; it will be a difficult attempt and near impossible action, to adapt and get along with new people if there is no way to communicate with them according to the acceptable norms of the group of people concerned. Inability to communicate with people in the new environment hastens the acquisition and learning the language of the people, since all avenues of interactions and channels of sharing ideas with these people are blocked.

There is a significant difference between spoken and written language in this respect, while in spoken language, the linguistic norms are more inconsistently applied by native speakers, in which language the norms are more rigid and much more easily identified. Norms and the deviation from them imply the question of correctness of language use: the prescriptive linguistic norms usually operate with the correct-incorrect dimension, while the descriptive linguistic norms (or sociolinguistic norms) tend to focus on the appropriateness or inappropriateness of a certain linguistic form. Language norms meticulously demonstrate the culture of the people. The features of the norms differentiate them from other tribal linguistic ethics.

### ***The Conceptual Analysis of Language Norms***

Norms are ways of behaving that are considered normal in a particular society. Literary norms represent a special kind of linguistic culture. They become established during the emergence and evolution of a literary language in the

course of national development. The specific features of the norms of a developed literary language are the relative stability and unity of linguistic means and their functional and stylistic differentiations. The orthographic and grammatical norms of a literary language are usually marked by relative stability while the lexicon permits great freedom of usage. On the whole, an established literary norm does not exclude the variation of individual linguistic means but in the standardized national language, variants usually fulfill various stylistic functions. The variants here take care of different registers attached to different fields of human operations like Medicine, Aviation, Military, Religion etc. The formation and subsequent evolution of literary norms are determined by both spontaneous and conscious normalization processes. An important role in the establishment, maintenance and dissemination of literary norms is played by literature, school, the theatre and especially by radio, television, the press, and other mass media.

The literary norm is recorded in normative grammars and dictionaries, which are periodically revised in conformity with changes in the language itself and in society's evaluation of its means. Changes often occur in language norms as a result of the dynamic nature of the society of its users.

### ***The Origin of Language Codes***

In computer communication and engineering, one will often come across standardized two-three letters or numeric codes for languages. These two sets of

codes are used together to indicate the 'locale' and formatting preference of a document of an author or of a user. These codes as used in computer systems today, mostly originate from an international standard known as ISO 3166 country codes by the international organization for standardization (ISO). These codes are based on the older UN M.49 standard country or area codes for statistical use from the United Nations Statistics Division. For example, the language code "en-Au" combines the language code for English with the country code of Australia to form the language Australian English. ISO 3166 doesn't include any codes for geographical regions that are not nations. (ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency c/o International Organization for Standardization, 2015). In the same manner, slangs and other forms of language use that belong to a circle evolved as a result of certain happenings and development. People outside the circle who are unable to decode the sign may see it as occult form of communication. Common word used truly in a language may assume another meaning as adopted by the members of a group that belong to the same language community.

### ***Language Codes***

A language code is a code that assigns letters or numbers as identifiers or classifiers for languages. These codes may be used to organize library collections or presentations of data, to choose the correct localizations and translations in computing, and as a shorthand designation for longer forms of language-name.

Language code could be described as established symbols peculiar to a people that are meant for communication within the group of a speech community. It is a conglomeration of signs and symbols based on tacit agreement within a speech community for effective communication purposes. For instance,

In English language, we have twenty six letters of the alphabet that serve as symbols arranged together for teachers and students to communicate effectively in the classroom. Language code scheme attempts to classify the complex world of human languages, as manifested in various gabs of dialect, idiolect, slang etc. Most schemes make some compromises between being general and being complete enough to support specific dialects.

Every language, including English language (that exists in the written form) selects some symbols for its sound system. For example, the sound /k/, in English could represent letters K, C as in Kick and Care etc. These symbols form the alphabet of the language as they occur in different combinations (according to a well laid out system) to form meaningful words. Language codes are used in a peculiar way as tacitly agreed upon by the native speakers. Users adopt them to signal to software of the languages they hold in common. Software tries to use them to assist their users in getting language variants of document and resources that they can understand. There is a pool of sounds produced by human languages as compiled by language experts. This is phonetics. Individual language picks the ones available in its domain and forms its own phonology.

Traditionally, language is viewed as a code. In this view, language is made up of words and a series of rules that connect words together. If language is only viewed in this way, language learning just involves learning vocabulary and the rules for constructing sentences. This understanding of language is, however, a very narrow one. It sees language as fixed and finite and does not explore the complexities involved in using language for communication. It is a social practice of meaning-making and interpretation. Language learners must acquire sufficient

vocabulary and grammatical awareness of this in communication process of a language. They also need to know how that language is used to create and represent meanings and how to communicate with others in such a way that correct ideas and intension will be shared with good understanding. This is the concept of mutual intelligibility as essence of communication in language use and its requirement for the development of awareness of the nature of language and its impact on the world (Svalberg ,2007).

Our understanding of language, as language educators, becomes part of our professional stand and, as such, influences our language programming as contained in the curriculum, the planning and the classroom pedagogies. When teachers' view language as code, it makes acquiring vocabulary and grammar the primary concern of language teaching and language learning.

### **Language Construct**

A language construct is a syntactically allowable part of a programme that may be formed from one or more lexical tokens in accordance with the rules of a programming language. In simpler terms, it is the syntax or way a programmed language is written. The term "language construct" is often used as a synonym for control structure and should not be confused with a function. The syntax of a language suggests the acceptable orderly arrangement of words on the line of choice (syntagmatic axis). There are always varied alternative arrangements of any grammatical unit of language construction available in human expression but whatever alternative that attracts our choice, the prescriptive rules must prevail. In classroom situation, ample opportunity is given for free expression through which adherence to the formal acceptable construct is observed.

This involves learners in analysis and in talking analytically about language. Kramersch (1993:264) notes that: “talk about talk is what the classroom does best and yet this potential source of knowledge has not been sufficiently tapped, even in communicatively oriented classrooms”. Learning to communicate in an additional language involves developing an awareness of the ways in which culture inter relates with language whenever it is used (Liddicoat, Papademetre, scarino & Kohler,2003).

Language is man’s basic tool without which it would be difficult for human being to live together, think, act and share ideas together as earlier stated. Language makes it possible for many to engage in social conversation, transfer ideas, thoughts and feelings through writing of books, mass communication in media organisation and developing social and linguistic units or communities. In linguistics, we sometimes might seem to treat language as though it was nothing to do with people. It is seen as a sealed system, subject to its own rules.

In developing a professional ability to language teaching, it is important to consider how language as codes or symbols and language as social practice co-occur in the curriculum. Learners require learning skills which will give them independence as users and analysers of language(Svalberg, 2007). In developing language capabilities, students need to develop their own experiential knowledge and good practical understanding of the codes and also to come to see language as a medium of communicating between people. These goals need to be present in language teaching and learning from the beginning of language teaching learning.

For example, English language construct is the practical usage of the language which could be seen in the various ways by which English language is being used to promote academic performance of students in the various chosen fields. Language is used to express and connect ideas so as to enable the users to interact in the world and foster social activities, create and maintain relationships, develop and project a personal identity, express opinions and engage in the views of others. Language sharing through an established norms that generate mutual intelligibility attract changes and development both positive and negative to our world; this phenomenon is absent in animal world.

Control of spelling, grammar and punctuation is required by students in all curriculum areas for the development of clear and effective listening and speaking, reading and writing. Students need to understand that choices in grammar, punctuations and vocabulary contribute to the effectiveness of texts. To support understanding of increasing levels of language dynamism as used in various texts, explicit teaching is required in relations to the features of language, for example, vocabulary acquisition, sentence development, multimedia elements, illustrations through diagrams and graphics, punctuations to control sentence flow, figurative use of language, imagery that creates good scenery, connectives for coherence in thought, topic sentences that anchor the main points and active and passive voices that demonstrate moods.

Good choices in language features and text structures together define a type of text and shape its meaning. These choices could vary according to the purpose of the text, its subject matter, audience and mode or media of production.

The essence of language is in society-not the brain itself. When the society switch to a particular pattern of language use in vocabulary, syntax or semantics the grammatical purist, should abandon his orthodoxy and promote the society or better to say the more popular version as embraced by the people displaced the personal preference of the language Purists. This is the common sense in the use of language in all ages. We are engaged in the ever changing dynamics of the language throughout our lives, creating and recreating ourselves and our identities all the while using language as a tool. We explore its social role to its properties and its relations to the human mind and brain that allow people to communicate among themselves according to the norms of the society on its language of wider communication.

### ***Language conventions***

When language codes are generated, they are put into chains of structural arrangements which are the constructs and when this is established and stabilized over time, it becomes the convention in such a language community. Conventions are the formally and informally agreed-upon ways we use language, whether spoken or written. The system of any language is purely arbitrary in the sense that there is no absolute direct correspondence between the structure of a word and the thing it stands for. The combination of letters g.l.a.s.s.e.s, for example in English, stands for an instrument used for reading. Why could it not be l.a.s.s.e.g.s or a.s.s.e.g.l.s? Well, it could also be l.a.s.s.a.g.s. or a.s.s.e.g.l.s and there is nothing special about the combination g.l.a.s.s.e.s except that it has now become a convention: a convention that cannot be easily changed. As stated here,

language conventions are not easily changed, yet it is not impossible to do so. Words go on changing meaning and new words continue to be added to a language with the changing needs of the community that use them. New ideas come through several outlets: education, transportation, trade and tourism, war, marriage etc. As a result of these, vocabulary bank keeps on growing. Some words are dropped; others are added on continuous basis.

The language convention tests assess spellings, grammar and punctuations. Literary knowledge and skills are essential for effective communication across all learning areas. However, the tools of language, including language conventions, are explicitly developed in the language learning area.

The language convention tests focus on the use and knowledge of language conventions in written standard. These skills are essential to the development of reading and writing. The contents of the language conventions tests particularly complement the writing tests where spelling, grammar and punctuation are explicitly assessed in context. However, students' understanding of language conventions is also necessary for reading.

Understanding language convention enables students to describe how language works, to make meaning as they speak and listen, to read and to be able to use language to make meaning as they write. Understanding how language features vary according to purpose: the purpose allows students to critically analyse texts in order to appreciate, interpret and create well-constructed texts. Knowledge about the conventions of language need to be taught: explicitly, contextually and regularly.

The teaching of language conventions need to be supported by practical implementation of students' knowledge and skills as they construct meaning. Once students are conscious of how different linguistic elements are formed, they are in a better position to manipulate these structures to create clear, well-structured, unambiguous sentences. And in their reading, they are able, in a better way, to perceive meaningful chunks of language rather than to read each as a discrete unit.

National minimum standards describe some of the skills and understandings students are generally expected to demonstrate at a particular level of schooling. There are two sets of minimum standards for language conventions: minimum standard for spellings and minimum standard for grammar and punctuations. This is because it is not possible to establish a single assessment scale for all these areas. The standards are intended to be a snapshot of typical achievement and do not describe the full range of what students are taught or what they may achieve.

### ***Conclusion and Recommendation***

Language norms in teaching pedagogy discussed are important in making language code, construct and convention to yield good results in language classroom pedagogies. Consequently, these outcomes provide people with a sense of agency by which individuals feel more active and work towards the objective of achieving educational goals of things students are expected to learn through language pedagogy. This is possible if the educational system focuses on

the existing code, construct and conventions in language to shape the students linguistic attitude towards effective learning in any language programme.

The tripod that constitutes language norms in language study are code, construct and convention. For better language pedagogy, sufficient exposure is needed in order to build the acceptable linguistic culture in the learners especially in second language situation. Therefore, language learning environment must be rich enough to present inevitable needed codes in form of the vocabulary of the language to the learners. Rich vocabulary bank helps language users to decide on appropriate alternatives for free expressions of ideas. The services of professionals that are competent in modern language pedagogy must be secured. *The Language of Wider Communication (LWC)* can be domesticated in order to be relevant to the environment. For example, English language has become the world language. Many nations like Nigeria have adopted it as their LWC while the first language ( $L_1$ ) functions as domestic language of identity. It will be ridiculous to imitate the Britain and use the language the way it is used in Britain. The programme of teaching it must create room for domestication of the codes in such a way that *Global Mutual Intelligibility (GMI)* will not break down.

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