



**IZKUNTZALARI GAZTEEN ELKARTEA ASOCIACIÓN DE XOVES LINGÜISTAS
ASSOCIACIÓ DE JOVES LINGÜISTES ASOCIACIÓN DE JÓVENES LINGÜISTAS**

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“Context and its role in achieving communicative competence: a discourse analysis approach to teaching languages”

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General realisation of the importance of context in language learning leads us to an observation that how we interpret language structural forms depends on number of factors, linguistic and also merely situational ones. Therefore, in the past decades the shift in teaching methodology –from a focus on the structural properties of the target language, to an emphasis on the expression and comprehension of meaning– can be observed. Even as early as in the seventies Hymes (1974) introduced the notion of “communicative competence” to refer to the use of language in social context. He claimed that, grammatical competence is only one element of the overall language knowledge native speakers possess and thus, communicative competence should combine sociolinguistic and contextual competence as well as grammatical one.

In this sense Discourse Analysis (DA) presents a multidisciplinary endeavour towards understanding of how language works. Under the common heading of DA many different disciplines are gathered, which find their unity in the description of language above the sentence, and an interest in the context and cultural influences affecting language usage. Although, as McCarthy (1991: 2) says: “Discourse analysis is not a method for teaching languages”, in this paper we claim that DA approach to language teaching can be of an utmost interest. With its context awareness, DA offers us a different perspective of what using a language outside the classroom means. Moreover, it can help us to tailor our teaching methods as well as materials to the real students’ needs.

