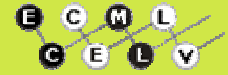




ICOPROMO

Intercultural competence for professional mobility
*Compétence interculturelle pour le développement
de la mobilité professionnelle*



Language and reality

**Communicating
across cultures**

Language awareness

Rationale

Languages capture reality in different ways. This different distribution affects human communication.

Learning Outcome

The participants are expected to realize the difficulty involved in establishing a one-to-one correspondence between a term in one language and its counterpart in another.

Competences:

Awareness-raising of the different ways in which different languages capture reality.

Time

40-50 minutes:

- Introduction: 5 minutes.
- Web search / getting help from a Spaniard: 5 minutes.
- Reading the examples before completing the table: 5 minutes.
- Completion of the table: 10 minutes.
- Group discussion of outcomes: 10 minutes.
- Final discussion: 5-10 minutes.

Participants

Up to 25

Materials required

Handout

Computers with Internet connection / one Spanish native speaker.



Procedure

1. Begin this activity by highlighting the different ways in which languages capture reality.
2. Get participants to read the example of 'the day' and to explain the different distribution of the 24 hours in Spanish and English (Learners should consult the Internet or ask a Spaniard).
3. Get participants to read the other examples and to fill in the table. Monitor the activity by being available for possible questions.
4. In groups of 3 to 4, participants compare their answers and discuss the issues raised in the final part of the activity.
5. Discuss the different insights that can be gleaned from the different contributions.

Reference

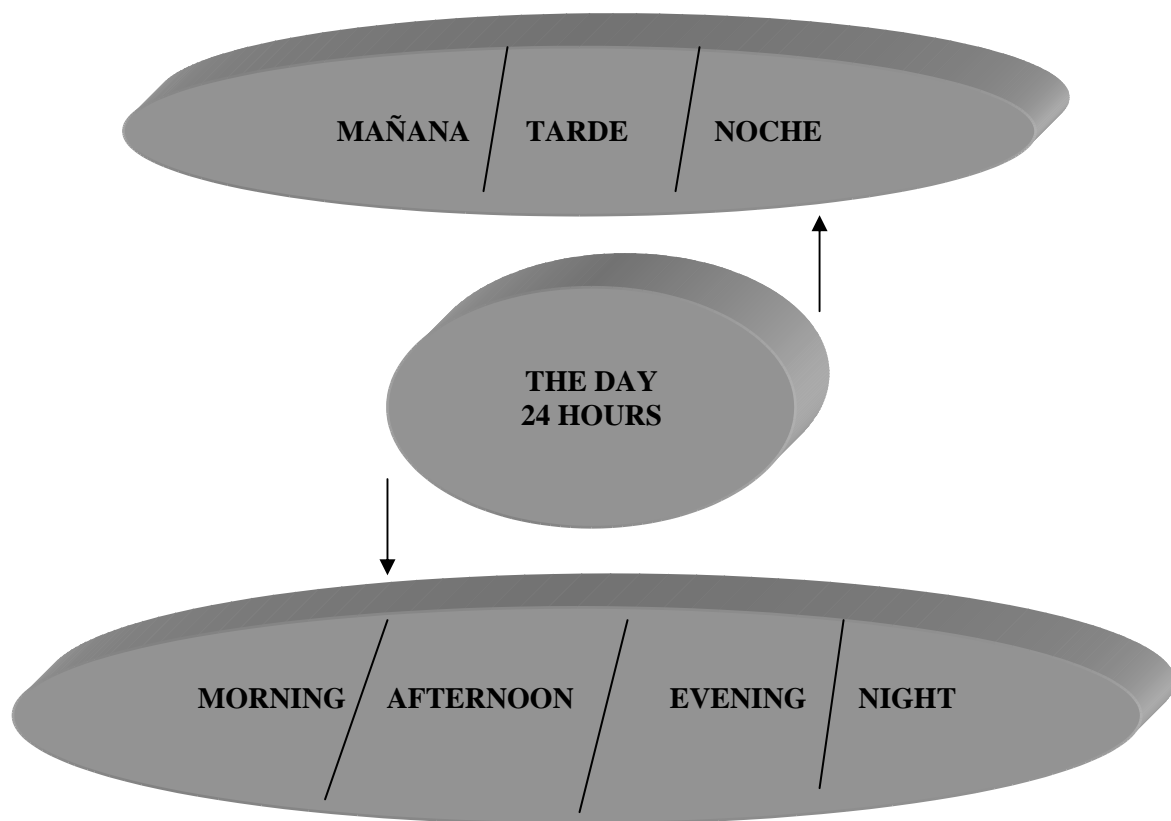
Lipka, L. 1990, *An Outline of English Lexicology. Lexical Structure, Word Semantics and Word-Formation*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.



Handout:

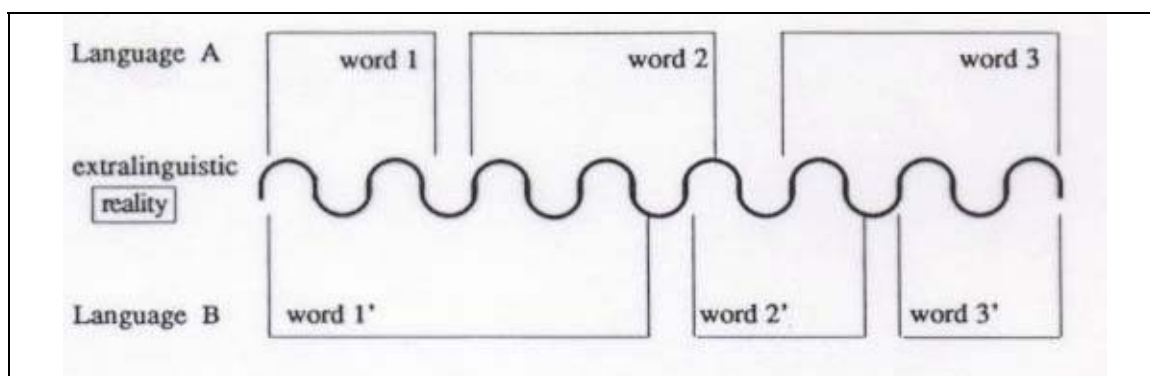
LANGUAGE AND REALITY

Languages capture reality in different ways (Lipka, 1990; Jackson, 1988), that is to say, even though reality is ‘out there’, languages categorize it in different ways. The following example illustrates how ‘the day’, the distribution of ‘24 hours’ is classified differently in Spanish and English:



Consult the Internet or ask a native Spanish speaker and try to explain the different distribution of the 24 hours in both languages. Compare the four English terms that refer to the different parts of the day with the counterparts in your mother tongue (if English is your mother tongue, compare them with a foreign language).

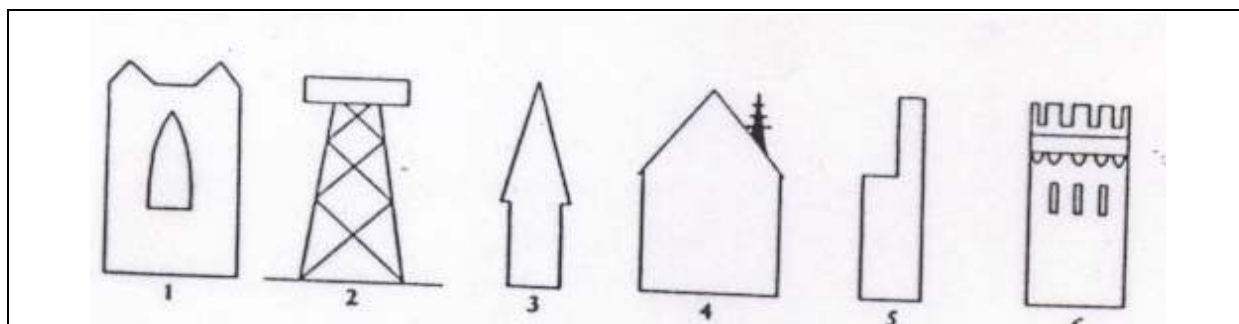
The relationship between language and reality has been examined for decades. Lipka (1990: 49-54) states that in the world we find no clear-cut boundaries, that is to say, there are no ‘pre-existing categories in reality’. Hence, the same reality is labelled and categorized by means of languages; since languages are the privileged tool cultures and people have at their disposal to make sense of the world, each culture, by means of its language/s catalogues the extralinguistic reality in a different way. Lipka (1990: 49-54) illustrates this phenomenon in the following way:



Similar examples to the one expressed above are:

Pork + pig (English)	Porc + cochon (French)
Ser + estar (Spanish)	To be (English)
Tower + steeple + turret (English)	Turm (German)

In the case of the German word 'Turm', Lipka (1990: 49-54) states that, even though all the objects represented below can be termed 'Turm', objects 3 and 4 would not be called 'tower' in English since in English a tower must not be pointed and must start out from the ground. Therefore, other English words such as 'steeple', 'spire', 'turret' or 'pinnacle' would define objects 3 and 4; these terms, together with the word 'tower' would enter the realm of the German word 'Turm'.



Write further examples between your mother tongue and English (if English is your mother tongue compare it with a foreign language). If possible, illustrate your answers with pictures or drawings:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Now discuss these issues. Illustrate your answer with examples.

- a) **What relevance does this aspect have for foreign language learning?**
- b) **What implications does it have for translation?**
- c) **How does it affect intercultural communication?**