Methods of Teaching Spanish as Foreign Language To Albanian Students

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Abstract

Language teaching is in a continuous developing process in the auditorium and outside it. It includes various educational and linguistic disciplines which may change and be put into practice through methodological skills of teaching and learning of languages. As Richterich mentions: "One of the main features of teaching language, is undoubtedly its immediate adjustment in some difficult notions to reduce this problem and using them in more plentiful linguistic and educational interpretations (Richtérich, 1994, 113). *Nowadays, various proposals have been submitted, in order to change traditional patterns of teaching and to improve the exercises and activities considered old. Traditional teaching is adorned and enriched by other objectives such as: the development of logical thinking, the ability to summarize texts and increase the ability of understands another language and its literary texts*.

Keywords: *Method, teaching, communication, grammar, Spanish language*

1. Introduction

Teaching a foreign language (namely the Spanish one) and the methods used in its spread among Albanian speakers auditorium has been reviewed in this study paper. Developing and renewing the levels of linguistic analysis depends on the methods of teaching. Teaching of languages and cultures is built based on its complex nature, namely its basic components (teaching / learning of languages and cultures, teachers, students, publishers, authors of manuals, people responsible for language policy; didacticians; issues such as: Who?, To Who?, what?, why?, By what?, how? and under what conditions?) are built from of various, different, alike elements, that differ partially, associated with a coherence or with a particular approach. All of the above mentioned above lead to the need of creating different methodological levels which should also be considered as a complex set of difficulties.

Terms like: Grammar; Lexicon; Phonetics; Syntax; Morphology; Written and spoken skills; Culture; and methodological Discipline are our professional heritage, which would lead the learning process and make the student win the extent of linguistic autonomy. All these terms will be illustrated in the following through the methods of foreign language teaching, specifically the Spanish language in the Albanian auditorium.

1. Methods through grammar. (morpho-syntax, syntax-semantics, morpho-semantics)

1.1 Grammar through morphology

The method through grammar includes the streams of morphology, phonetics and syntax. In our case I will take in details these streams that affect today's didactics. These branches of grammar influence and enable efficient teaching for our students. In morphology, the components of a word are considered as microstructures break it into pieces and allow us to understand more clearly how the word is built. Even here, the process of teaching may be simplified with the help of tables or schemes.

The aim is to encourage students to be active by building and reconstructing themselves independently grammatical forms of the word. Learning grammar cannot function without the intervention of some notions of phonetics. They adjust the connections of vowels with consonants that often form the root, in the case of morphological standpoint; we can say the relation of the root with the ending of words.

Morphology also shares the same mechanisms to lexical components. Lexical origin that has to do with formation of words is attached to morphological derivation. The latter makes it possible that the words are separated into different categories, such as: noun, adjective, adverb, and verb. Morphology is also closely linked to the syntax. This was seen recently in the numerous modern language theories that it is often preferable to talk about morpho-syntax. This is seen in syntactic analysis of sentences, as will be treated in the following.

1.2 Grammar through syntax.

Classical languages are very flexible and the common order of words in a sentence (subject-verb-object) is difficult to apply regularly. In the study of classical languages is introduced the logical-semantic analysis and we have the presence of a new element called "predicate" that generally belongs to the category of the verb but may also be an adjective or an adverb. The predicate expresses an action or a state. Analysis of logical-semantic type of phrase provides a common link with all language understanding systems, and it helps to attain correct translation of the language. To do this, it is necessary to achieve a superior level of understanding of the native language to pass to its translation into a foreign language.

For a more efficient teaching process, it proposed the use of schemes in a tree form, or the so-called analysis of the sentence through syntactic tree. In the today's didactics, it serves to break down all the parts of a sentence ranging from a whole sentence as macrostructure up in specific parts of its microstructure, showing us the functions that each word has in a sentence. In this case we can say that one of the strengths of the language system is the ability to understand it and how a given foreign language works through syntactic analysis. This didactic method enables immediate understanding by the students and allows the establishment of links between minor phrases and connectors which accompany those forming composite phrases that enable the transition to a linguistic analysis of the text.

The grammar method is studied from another point of view, the *morpho-syntatic* one and it is also related to the use of language such as: verb forms and tenses, affirmative forms, linguistic forms which function as connectors and anaphora, the word order of the words in a sentence, parts of speech, etc. In this way, occurs the development of language and communication skills by introducing new models of language and what is their function in discourse. Inevitably, arises the question whether would it be possible to develop this functional and communicative perspective also in morpho-syntax? It is expected to learn not just identification and description forms of the language, but the reflection and analysis on the role of these forms in discourse and what can be the right options to use in concrete language situations. For this we must treat syntactic facts starting from a semantic and pragmatic look and what we might call *syntatic-semantics* or *morpho-semantics*. So let say that by the new teaching methods is considered important the combination and interaction of different strains of grammar. One of the latest trends in linguistics is the introduction of linguistic meaning as a key element in the analysis of grammatical phenomena.

Starting from the field of semantics and that of functional grammar linguistic studies aim to make a connection between the strains of semantics-syntax and morphology. Given this orientation, the basic structure of the sentence is not Subject-Predicate relationship or Nomination – Syntagma, Verbal - Syntagma but a semantic link between the verb and the arguments. The verb has the ability to accept a certain number of names that have functional notions.

Thus, for example the verb "sonrojarse" - "blush", accepts an argument ("Alguien se sonroja " - "Someone blushes"), the verb "redactar" - "edit" accepts two arguments: ("Alguien redacta <u>un</u> escrito " - " Someone edits an article "), and the verb " prometer "-" promise " accepts three arguments: ("Alguien promete algo a alguien "-" Someone promises something to someone "). Analysis of the types and value of verbs, their semantic roles have been brought by different authors such as Moreno Cabrera J.C. in the course of General Linguistics University with his volume titled "Theory of general grammar and syntax" (Moreno Cabrera, Juan Carlos, 1991); Gutiérrez Ordóñez, S., Iglesias Bango, M., and Lanero Rodriguez, C., in the volume "Syntactic Analysis 1" (Gutiérrez Ordóñez, s.; Iglesias Bango, M.; Lanero Rodríguez, 2002); Escandell, M.V. "Principles of the composite semantics" (Escandell Vidal, Maria Victoria, 2004).

Moreover, verbs according to their semantics nature, namely the type of context in which they are: action, process or state, assign arguments semantic roles. For example, the active verb "detener" - "stop" accepts an agent and a patient - or a subject and a direct object: "La policía detuvo al ladrón" - "The police detained the thief"; "El ladron fue detenido por la policía" - "The thief was banned from the police.
If we observe carefully the example above, we are able to recognize that the same semantic schemes can have different locations or forms of syntax elements in a sentence giving them different functions according to the location they have. This theory is also included in the so-called Transformational Generative Grammar which implements the transformation rule for the return of the active sentences to passive sentences modifying the function of the subject in the active into the agent in the passive one.(Memushaj, Rami, 2006, 253) This active function, is called *complemento agente* in Spanish, so the agent which does the action.

Over recent years there have been important advances in the study of lexical contents. In terms of lexical groups, lexis contains information about grammatical category and the so-called "the connection between predicate - argument".

A predicate is any lexical item that implies a process, an action or state and selects a group or arguments based on their lexical meaning. While an argument can be defined as a participant of a process, action or state and it is an essential condition of it to be accomplished to achieve. The typical example of the predicate is the verbs, while arguments can always be groups of words or syntagma. Focusing on the verb *pintar* - paint, it acts as a predicate to be formed of two groups of words. To formalize the idea of the structure predicate - argument: Pintar <1, 2>. So, we have two arguments defined by the predicate. Predicate gives a semantic value to the arguments it defines, the so called "thematic role". In this way, it can be noticed that again that, the argument that performs the action will be the agent, will be labeled as the patient (Rodríguez Ramalle, Teresa María, 2005).

As a conclusion we can say that syntax semantically base considers the verb as a central element in the sentence, which has the function to distribute roles. Grammatical syntax rules focus on fulfilling the functions of the various syntactic elements containing sentence. Therefore, we conclude that the relations between syntax and semantics cannot be ignored in teaching grammar of a foreign language.

Since the verb is the main element of a sentence and its meaning in a sentence designates a space that is formed of one, two or three nominal syntagma, it will have to dispose or regulate all syntactic analysis. In this case we have a total transformation of grammar activities that apply in the audience: activities that are used to identify and analyze elements of grammar in a sentence can be substituted by activity types such as, set next to each verb words or groups of words that it accepts (arguments), or to distinguish groups of words that require a certain verb knowing that by words or groups of words the verb takes different meanings.

1.3. Grammar through lexicon.

It should be paid special attention to the study of vocabulary in today's didactics. Without knowing the meaning of words we would not be able neither to understand the simplest sentences. On the contrary, a good knowledge of words allows us to know immediately the general sense of sentences. In this case we can say that a key objective of didactics should be the acquisition of lexical competence learner, attached it with other objectives as that of morphological competence and the syntactic one.

One possible approach that could be taken into consideration during the teaching of foreign languages may be the submission of some groups of words separated into schemes. Each of these groups has a common root. The aim of presenting the groups of words with a common root is that the student sees the linguistic processes that occurred to the "root" word which is transformed into different grammar categories: noun, adjective, adverb, verb, etc. In the list group the root words is highlighted with a color to differentiate for the first division of words considering the first category as the word it is derived from and then how it is composed. Through these groups we can distinguish words of relocation processes, namely the changing of words from one category to another, highlighting the verbs that derive from names and names which derive from verbs by adding suffixes.

These schemes with word groups is a new method and they are structured in such a way to avoid misunderstandings that may arise, seeing that a given term may correspond to different meanings in the dictionary. So, firstly let's try to follow a logical line of understanding the words, because this method allows us even at first glance to note the change and displacement of words that occurs from their origin, from suffixes or composition of words. Secondly, what is highlighted is that the meaning of words should not be the translated from a given term; this fact creates a false impression of a correct translation between the two languages. As I mentioned above, this is wrong and not productive in the field of didactics of foreign languages, so should be avoided at all costs during the teaching process.

For each root word is offered a meaning that allow us as researchers manage to understand in a more detailed level it and see the ways that the root of a given word to get gains meanings in different contexts it is located. So we note that from observing the meaning of new words including an understanding of their roots we come to understand changes that they have undergone. All this is done in order to be independent of vocabulary and achieve spontaneously development, as happens in children with native language, the vocabulary of a foreign language. Teaching through lexicon methods is characterized by simplicity of understanding and that of memorizing. A scheme with group of words with the same root allows us to understand possible changes inductively the words of a foreign language. Rich vocabulary is instinctively enlarged by making connections between words derived from the same root. For example: *amor; amar; amable*.

A word never appears isolated but is always shown in a given context. In this case we can say that the words are studied as part of a word liner. Each word contains different grammar information and different meanings based on the context it is used. Let's focus on the word "*way*" - "*manera*" in Spanish, and study it in a more detailed form, we will discover that this word appears in different grammatical contexts.

a. I like your way of writing. Spanish: Me gusta tu *manera* de escribir.
b. There is a way we can open this bottle. Spanish: Existe una *manera* para aprir esta botella.
c. Children need to learn good manners. Spanish: A los niños tienes que enseñar las buenas *maneras*.

So, studying words in contexts that it appears we come to learn a variety of grammatical structures and specific uses of their occurrence along the typical learning of a foreign language. In the above example, we note that in Spanish the word *manera* appears associated with the prepositions *de* and *para* and it is preceded by the adjective *buenas*.

With regard to teaching vocabulary in a manual language, I want to present below a description of a specific manual of Spanish language Prisma level A2 (Alonso, Raquel Blanco; Gómez, Raquel and Oliva Carlos, 2009), containing lexical, the topics appeared are believed to be selected based on the interest of students to a foreign language.

Chapter One: leisure, youth preferences; television and radio.
Chapter Two: the lexicon of social relationships (presentations and greetings)
Chapter Three: holidays and trips.
Chapter Four: personal experiences.
Chapter Five: historical events.
Chapter six: the Internet, e-mail address.

Chapter Seven: social events, weddings.

Chapter Eight: house, housework; schools.

Chapter Nine: news, press.

Chapter ten: stories, descriptive adjectives of physical appearance and character.

Chapter eleven: health centers, chemistry.

Chapter twelve: household tasks. The family life, the rules of coexistence.

The main rule to be applied in teaching vocabulary is the extraction of key words. From them comes out the topic of conversation and the student's knowledge about the topic is willing to speak and express as many words in the foreign language he learns.

Let's give another example of an exercise where the main focus is the lexicon and the topic of conversation is over the household and their description. Along with the lexicon in this activity students should use the vocabulary related to the topic and form sentences by listing words according to the rules of syntax in Spanish.

Figure 1. An exercise taken from the manual:*Español Lengua Viva 2*
Source: Martín Teresa & Jorge Carmen, 2007, 62

2. Methods through culture.

Teaching a foreign language also contains cultural dimensions. There are connections between teaching a foreign language and its culture. One of the principal objectives of foreign language didactics is to train people who have knowledge on history, literature and different arts. In other words, they are trained for another culture. Many teachers have considered this fact a goal to include it in the curricula of a foreign language concerning human values (Eşi, 2010, 140-146). The issue, students and teachers should concentrate the most is that the acknowledgement of the grammatical system should be accomplished by realising and studying its cultural characteristics. What I want to explain at this point of my study is the connection between language and culture and also I want to explain why the culture of a language should be part of teaching as well of the curricula of a foreign language.

Language should be considered as a social practice and that it is not as independent process. To be part of a culture means to share specific knowledge. These can be, for example formal and informal speaking, answering to the phone expressions, asking for a favour, writing a letter for different situations, etc. So, everyday language can be built from cultural habits.

According to Sapir: "Language cannot be divided from its culture, which is inherited from habits and beliefs that have established our lifestyle, too. Giving another meaning, language is a guide to social reality." (Sapir Edward, 1970, 207) This means that language is not a superficial process but it contains various internal processes, the ones the teacher should discover and present to the auditory, he should pass beyond this framework. The teacher should monitor and present many intercultural patterns of the language he possesses. This makes us think that culture and communication are inseparable processes because culture not only who we are speaking to, but what and how the communication should be extended. It also establishes the meanings, conditions and circumstances of how different messages are sent or interpreted.

Bordieu has considered language not as an autonomous construct, but as a system deriving from different political and social processes. According to him, language is a system of practices which include not only words and grammatical rules but also symbols, ways of communication, ways of addressing modes of reference, vocabulary and metaphors used to a given language (Bourdieu Pierre,1990, 52).

The main reason of teaching language through its culture is that the pupil should take control of studying the language and be independent making evaluations and questions on a given context for analysis. The student will also be able to organise and to make cultural connections of words and phrases in the foreign language.âWe already know that learning and understanding a foreign language includes not only learning its grammar system but its culture, too. Communication, in this case is considered intercultural so as to make the differences between various cultures. These differences are shown in every language, for example: when we should hush, use the right intonation, choose a relevant topic for a conversation, expressing regret, suggestions, complaints, refusals, etc.

Gestures, movements of the body, distance held between speakers are considered cultural facts of spoken language. Learners show delight when they know there is another way of expressing feelings, desires, and needs or when they read literature from another language. Learning a language from its culture helps learners help them to use original words and phrases. They can absorb different levels and adapt to linguistic situations. Though out teaching a foreign language,

we as teachers should be sensible toward the fragility of learners using techniques that promote language learning through culture. Various methods such as: reading, films, games, acting different roles in a situation, use various linguistic situations through listening; help the cultural process of the language being learnt in the auditory. From the experience as a teacher of foreign language I am convinced that the learner can easily learn through funny exercises or said otherwise playing with culture and comparing it to the mother tongue.

In didactics, there are different ways of learning through culture, some of them I could mention include: Group discussions on everyday life such as: family, life conditions, school, social relations, free time, etc. In this case, the teacher can invite foreigners in the auditory where each of them talks about their experiences in a foreign country. This is called the method of cultural assimilation, the aim of which is to find similarities and differences of each country. The aim of the culture assimilation is that the learner is able to understand the different cultural information he shares, even in special cases can urge an emotional influence on the interests and the cultural linguistics preferences of the learner. So, when the emotional linguistic is implied, the learner will be able to argument and evaluate the situations he prefers.

Figure 2: Exercise taken from the manual, *Puesta a Punto*
Source: Alfredo Gonzales Hermoso and Carlos Romero Dueňas, 2009, 24

The exercise illustrated in the above picture shows the timetables of everyday activities, asking the learner to compare them with the ones in their country. Grammatical elements included in this exercise are time adverbs, called at the same time, connection words (*por la tarde; en verano*); at the same time making comparisons of the timetables used in each country, as well adjective comparison degrees.Along linguistic knowledge, learners should be recognized with different nonverbal communication, such as gestures and facial movements typical in the target language. An interesting activity focusing on nonverbal communication is: the teacher presents some photos to the learners which show gestures and invites the learners to discuss about some questions: Which gestures are different from those of the mother tongue? Which of the shown gestures would be used or even avoided in the native language?
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Figure 2: Exercise taken from the manual, *Puesta a Punto*
Source: Alfredo Gonzales Hermoso and Carlos Romero Dueňas, « *Puesta a Punto B2* », Edelsa, Madrid, 2009, 17

Another activity would be the imitation of gestures: the teacher shows a list of some words which express emotions (happiness, fear, anger, suffering, fault, sadness. etc) and asks the learners to use facial gestures and facial movements to express these emotions.

The aim of the use of these didactics methods is that of the raise of the consciousness of the learner and also increase curiosity if the foreign language which is being studied. These will help to make comparisons between cultures, the aim of which is not to disregard them but to enrich the learning experience and be conscious that we are at the cultural globalisation phase, diversity still exists between cultures.

3. Methods through communication.

Traditional and communication teaching methods are projected to affect various processes of second language learning. That said, we should ask whether teaching through communication

affects the language system more than traditional teaching, thanks to the important role that communication plays in the teaching of foreign languages.

Along to the traditional type of teaching, it is recently practiced a new type of teaching method in our auditory based on processing of the given information in a foreign language in order to reproduce it through exercises by students. So the basis of teaching a language nowadays is no longer considered grammar but communication in the auditory, in other words, language practice through communication.

In the book entitled "Making communicative language teaching happens", authored by Lee y Vanpatten (Lee, James F. and Vanpatten, Bill, 1995), appear the following principles of teaching by means of communication:

1. Presentation of only a linguistic form in order to be memorized by the student. In this case, the student should focus only on a linguistic link, that of form-content.

   2. Pay attention to linguistic meanings; activities should not be mechanical exercises but activities where the student pays attention to the meaning of the sentence in order to complete correctly the given exercise. This principle is very important because the process of understanding a foreign language consists in establishing links between linguistic form and meaning.

   3. Exercises should start by the simplest level, which are sentences, and even to the level of discourse exercises, communication. Using firstly simple exercises, students are given more time in understanding the target linguistic form.

   4. Using spoken and written evaluation. This principle applies to the fact that there are students who have shown that they have more skills expressing themselves in writing and other students who have more explicit verbal skills.

   5. To get students to do "something", it means that he should not behave as a passive recipient of the foreign language. The teacher should not merely speak to the students, but they must be active participant in the exercises, projects; they should become involved actively to absorb the learned grammar as much as possible.

Since the '70s various professional specialists in applied linguistics and language teaching have recommended the use of communicative approach in foreign language classes. With the introduction of communication approaches, language teachers have included in their teaching methods exercises conducted for students through their communicative competence as a means to acquire the second language.

Moreover, according to Krashen, Stephen, Sferlazza, Victoria, Feldman, Lorna and Fathman (1976, 146-151) it is pointed out the need to provide comprehensive language information for students', through the use of a second language in class. This is because students have the opportunity to make the correct connection between form and meaning of the sentence in different exercises, which can produce a real exchange of information.

In parallel, a number of methods emerged from the communicative approach, are introduced to the students not only communicative competence but also descriptive competence.

Moreover, foreign language teaching has started to include functional and pragmatic elements. In most textbooks grammar is taught through traditional methods of teaching classics. Additionally, exercises are activities where the student produces linguistic structures. This kind of teaching is not

compatible with communication approaches, which, in other respects provides comprehensive information to the student.

In other words, the teaching of grammar should take part in the processes of understanding the language of which stands the links between form and meaning of words and sentences. This is achieved through the exercises of interpretation, continuing to other production exercises, where students will be able to adopt these forms and reach a fluent proficiency of a foreign language.
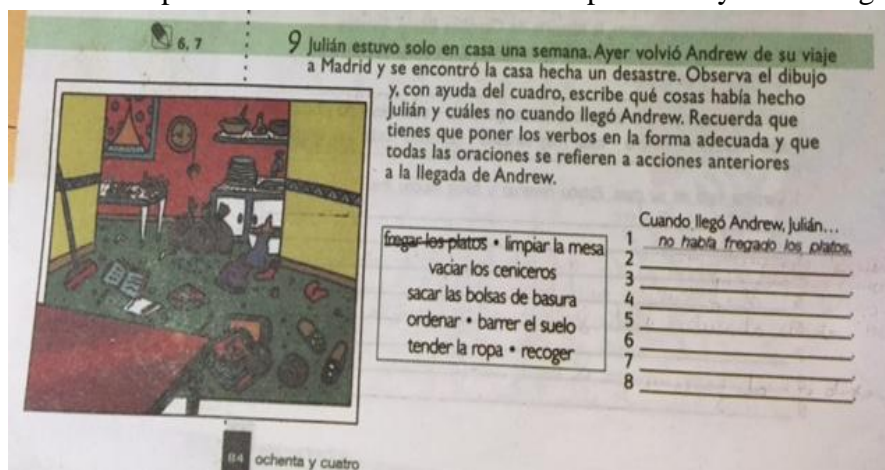

Figure 4: The exercise is taken from the manual *Es Español B2*
Source: VVAA. "*Español lengua viva 2*". Spanish manual for foreigners., Espasa Calpe, Madrid, 2002, 84

In the figure 4 it is illustrated a reproduction exercise through which students after observing the picture which appears, describe the events which happened in the past in their chronological order. Grammatical analysis of this exercise is the use of verbs in the past tense, and more specifically referring to previous actions that occurred at a given time in the past. In this case it talks about the use of verbs in the present perfect simple. (El *pretérito pluscuamperfecto).*

4. The method through action.

The method through action is considered more as a project that prepares students in a practical application. In this case the "project" may mean a city guide for foreigners, a research on the foreign population (the number of residents, lifestyle, what are the habits, etc.), or work on the organization of a magazine in a foreign language, etc. So the basic idea of this method is learning by doing, by applying real things to have a tangible result. This method arises the interest and motivates the student to use the language correctly facing unpredictable situations in the auditory, as happens with people who face different situations in real life.

Another positive aspect of this method is the fact that a good part of it takes place outside the auditory and is considered fieldwork in direct contact with the native speakers of the foreign language. This work - project requires an organized and precise planning of all activities that constitute it. The teacher plays an important role in this case when applies didactic principles in didactic activity (Eşi, 2010, 24-34). He is considered the project manager who organizes, assists and advises students and follows them directly in all steps. So the teacher must be able to guide the dynamics that arise in teamwork and have the technical knowledge to use websites, photography, techniques, data collection, etc.

A project consists of several stages for which are planned by the student as well as the teacher. They may be:

- Planning, preparation, presentation of ideas, discuss the objectives presented by the project; division into groups and duties that will meet each group;
- Implementation of the plan, collecting data from web or interviews conducted.
- Written presentation or presentation through an event or publication or through the distribution of material to work.
- Evaluation and verification of the project.

Popular types of projects are: -

Projects on textbooks: these include analysis of texts (newspapers, web, literature) and their reproduction criticizing on the text, acting on the given context, making analogy, etc. This kind of project can take place mainly in the auditorium. The example image below shows an exercise - project on textbooks, exercise a) requires the student to complete a questionnaire on the news and newspapers they read checking and then comparing the answers with each other; exercise b) requires that students read the titles of TV programs provided generally in Spanish television, asking if they know them and what are their favorite programs. Further we need to comment and to analyze with each other; exercise c) observes the practice of analogies. Comparisons of the programs broadcasted in Spain are made with the place where we live. This type of project on the text is an example of admission to tasks and develops communication and socio-cultural abilities.
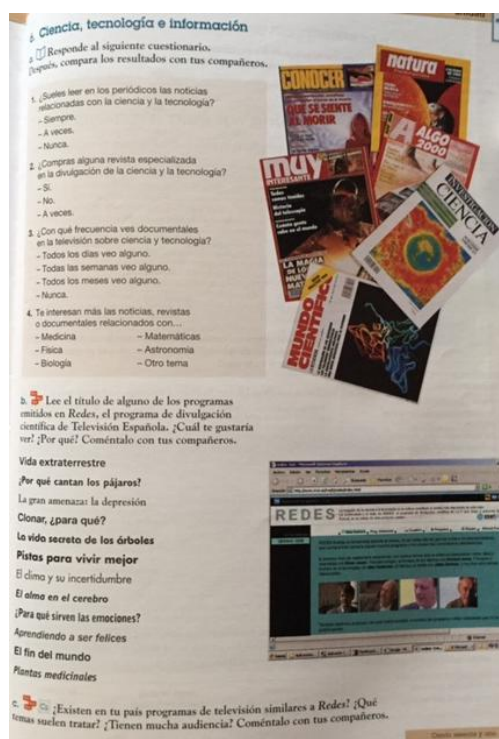

Figure 5: The exercise is taken from the manual "Español Lengua Viva 2"
Source: VVAA. *"Español lengua viva 2"*. Spanish manual for foreigners. Madrid, Santillana Educación, 2007, 161.

5. Conclusions

Currently, huge and qualitative steps have been done in teaching areas, not only at institutional level, but the diversity Of international educative interests is used to standardize learning and teaching process and evaluation of cultures as more as possible. Common European Framework of References for Languages, Teaching and Assessment shown from the European Council in 2001 has now made changes in the formulation of textbooks has introduced new laws by making proposals and suggestions on the continuous formation of the professors. (Common European Framework of References for Languages, 2001).

In conclusion I would like to recall that, as a teacher of foreign language, it is our duty to possess knowledge of a high level on the functioning of the Spanish language, know different theories of grammar, be critical to language and to offer our students a systematic, coherent, creative and productive linguistic analysis. Teaching grammar requires accuracy itself using elements that manage to regulate all levels of language learning. This is achieved by adapting to the interests and needs of our students in order to reach an expanded linguistic competence.

Nowadays, an important place in most of the teaching materials is mainly based on the communication and its development through tasks. The use and promotion strategies of learning through exercises which develop learner's autonomy of language, I think is an important element in the process of teaching - learning. The purpose of the learning activities is to promote learning itself, the use of language in the classroom, including original communication processes.

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