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A STUDY DICTIONARY OF SOCIAL ENGLISH. W. R. Lee.
Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd., 1983. Pp. vii + 173.

A STUDY DICTIONARY OF SOCIAL ENGLISH is a useful
collection of the most common ways of expressing
the "language functions" in everyday English.
Even though the emphasis is on British English,
there is a constant reference to the most signif-
icant differences between British and American
English forms.

It is divided into two main parts. Part I,
entitled Common Social Situations, lists and exem-
plifies thirty three functions. Among the ones
included are: advising, asking for information,
correcting, hoping, sympathizing, and offering.
One chapter is devoted to each specific function,
containing three basic kinds of information. First,
reference is made to the most common language used
to express the specific function. For example,
in defining advising, the author mentions forms
such as should, ought to, advise (verb), advise
(noun), think, recomend and why not as units strong-
ly associated with that function. Second, short
conversation samples are given. They illustrate the
use of the function in different situations; for
instance, advising is followed by eight dialogues
exemplifying the following contexts: advice from
a gardener, to an older or experienced person,
to a friend, dentist to patient, in the library,
teacher to student, guide to tourists. Third,
exercises at the end of each section are supplied
in order to apply the use of the function introduced,
based on concrete situations. Here is an example:

Somebody asks you for advice on how to improve his/her English. What would you say?

Lee also includes important sociolinguistic information about differences in usage, necessary for the development of a better efficiency of communication when using the English language. Throughout the book he clarifies when some specific linguistic forms are appropriate in informal, formal or colloquial situations. Attention is also given to various connotations associated with certain words; therefore he constantly indicates if a word or expression is rude, offensive, polite, impolite, tactful, unfriendly, or a taboo.

For non-native speakers of English who rarely were exposed to this type of information during their formal training in the language or who are still unaware of those differences, this dictionary is extremely valuable in the sense that the contents lead to a more accurate communication of meanings.

Part II, Further Social Situations. It is divided into six sections: I. Modes of Address, which presents interesting information as to how different people should be addressed in English, depending on different situations. II. Birthdays and other anniversaries. III. Eating and Drinking. IV. Greetings, Introductions and Leave-takings. V. Small Talk, including common remarks about the weather, holidays, and illness. VI. Delicate Enquiries, providing entries which are uncommon in most dictionaries. Among the topics presented are: asking about somebody's income, asking about somebody's occupation, asking about someone's religion/politics, asking about family affairs, and asking where the bathroom is. In general,

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Part II provides a rich source of verbal language, as well as a wide variety of behavior and cultural patterns.

In addition, the book includes a series of appendices whose purpose is to present other social situations also playing an important role in human interaction. Some of these are annoyance and anger, wishing people luck, and telephoning. English used at public meetings and travelling is given as well. There is a particularly interesting appendix called "rapport" expressions, "intimacy" signals and fillers. These aspects of the English language are rarely found in reference books or EFL textbooks. This unique dictionary provides information which is not available in other similar sources.

A Study Dictionary of Social English can be of special interest for English teachers who are presently using textbooks based on the notional-functional syllabus, since its entries, detailed explanations and dialogue samples can serve as an excellent reference. Besides, for those teachers who do not like to rely totally on a specific textbook, this sourcebook is an excellent tool for supplementing classroom material with additional functions and illustrative situations.

This dictionary is a practical means for people interested in refining their sociolinguistic competence in the command of the English language. This competence can only be achieved if we are familiar with the social rules of language use and social contexts in which that language is used. Only with such an awareness can we use particular utterances appropriately, and thus function successfully in different contexts. In this sense, Lee's work is not only fascinating, but extremely helpful.

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Cita bibliográfica.

Finocchiaro, Mary. The Functional-Notional Approach:
From Theory to Practice. Oxford
University Press. 1983.

Comentario:

En un intento por derrocar la hegemonía del
tan usado y anticuado método Audio-lingual con
su enfoque conductista, este libro se ha desarrolla-
do abaracando la mayor parte de los principios comu-
nicativos que deben prevalecer en la enseñanza
y aprendizaje de una segunda lengua. Este nos
muestra un enfoque que se opone a la pasividad,
falta de creatividad, automaticidad y posición
anticomunicativa de dicho método.

El aprendizaje de una lengua no se puede llevar
a cabo por medio de repetición de diálogos y oracio-
nes, de recitación de palabras y frases, ni de
entrenamiento automático en el cambio y combinación
de patrones gramaticales (ej. "She is a girl---
Is she a girl?"), sino que dicho aprendizaje debe
enfocar los aspectos comunicativos del idioma -
las funciones ("asking about health, telling to
be serious/not to lie", etc.).

Las funciones son las necesidades prácticas
del uso del idioma. Las usamos para llevar a cabo
algún hecho o acción por medio del lenguaje (usando
palabras o expresiones para lograr comunicar algo
u obtener una respuesta). Por lo tanto, las reglas
de gramática, pronunciación y entonación del idioma

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son sólo medios para alcanzar una meta, objetivo
o propósito.   Estas deben ser complementarias y
se usan para desarrollar determinadas funciones.
A la vez, reflejan el uso de ciertos conceptos
de espacio, tiempo, lugar, etc., denominados nociones,
preposiciones, adjetivos, etc.   Estas nociones
(conceptos y reglas del idioma) conjugadas con
situaciones específicas (at the library, at the
bank, in the park, etc.) son elementos indispensables
para llevar a cabo dichas funciones.

El enfoque Nocio-Funcional se rige por un
sílabo (contenido programático) funcional y no
por un sílabo gramatical (es el caso del Audio-
Lingual que define el contenido por la gramática
o estructura) o situacional (que define el contenido
por situaciones).   El sílabo funcional debe tomar
como elemento organizador las funciones, por ende
las nociones (conceptos y reglas) y situaciones
solamente son medios para comunicar o alcanzar
un propósito.

Aunque la adopción de un enfoque de este tipo
está un tanto lejana en Costa Rica, los principios
comunicativos y lineamientos generales pueden ser
de gran utilidad para cualquier profesor sin importar
tanto la metodología seguida.

Contenidos del libro.

1)-The last century in language learning and tech-
   ing: a brief overview.
2)-A Funtional-Notional Approach to language learning.
3)-Planning the curriculum content.
4)-Methodology.
5)-Teaching the discrete linguistic-cultural features
   (como enseñar la gramática y aspectos culturales).

6)-Developing the communicative abilities.
7)-Strategies; activities, tasks, techniques (técnicas y recomendaciones para enseñar).
8)-Learning resources and materials of instruction (cuáles y cómo se deben usar).
9)-Evaluation (principios, técnicas y guías para la evaluación).

NOTA: El libro se puede encontrar en la Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje, Universidad Nacional.
Profesor: Oscar Rojas, Area de Inglés, Escuela de Literatura, Universidad Nacional.