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COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AS A RESULT OF EF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Abstract: This article defines the concept of competence and communicative competence, outline of the development of the concept as a result of EF teaching and learning and applications of the final model of communicative competence referring the description of communicative competence in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) developed by Council of Europe.

Key words: competence, communicative competence, linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, socio-cultural competence, social competence, CEFR.

Language: English

Citation: Sarimsakova, D. (2019). Communicative competence as a result of EF teaching and learning. ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science, 12 (80), 166-169.

Soi: http://s-o-i.org/1.1/TAS-12-80-32   Doi: crossref https://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS.2019.12.80.32

Scopus ASCC: 3304.

Introduction

UDK 81-13

As we are living in an era of information technology, so today we are being drowned in the deluge of information. Gale of change has blown in the pedagogy of English Language Teaching (ELT). Modern multimedia tools (video cameras, computers, LCD projectors and etc) has initiated new possibilities into the classroom. Methods and approaches of teaching English have developed rapidly, especially in the last 50 years in both general education and language teaching. The results of prior theoretical and empirical researches and current discussions of language teaching methodology have emphasized the importance of providing opportunities for learners to communicate. Communicative language teaching (CLT) has been put forth around the world as the "new ", or "innovative" way to teach English as a second or foreign language. The essence of CLT is the engagement of learners in communication in order to allow them to develop their communicative competences. Our country also has launched a major initiative to improve English language teaching in its education system. One of the main goals is to develop communicative competence of its graduates. In the area of second language acquisition, communication, communicative competency and communicative language teaching are all key concepts. In this article I will discuss the results of prior theoretical researches concerned to the concept "competence", "communicative competence' and the applications of communicative competence to language teaching.

Materials and methods

The concept of communicative competence; and the theoretical framework of communicative competence: "Competence" is one of the most controversial terms in the field of general and applied linguistics. In methodology the term "competence" is used as characteristics of the achieved level of the language proficiency. The process of defining the concept "communicative competence" started in the late 1960s. This term was firstly introduced by Noam Chomsky[1] in his book "Aspects of the Theory of Syntax" to define 'competence' as an idealized capacity that is located as a psychological or mental property or function and 'performance' as the production of actual utterances. Clearly, competence involves "knowing" the language and performance involves "doing" something with the language. In other words, there is a classic distinction between competence (monolingual speaker-listener's language of knowledge) and performance (the actual use of

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language in real situation)[1]. The difficulty with this construct is that it is very difficult to assess competence without assessing performance. In an attempt to clarify the concept of communicative competence, H.G. Widdowson, Savignon, D.Hymes, M. Canale and M. Swain, Van Ek, Bachman and Palmer defined competence, communicative language ability as a concept comprised of knowledge or competence and capacity for appropriate use of knowledge in a contextual communicative language use.

According to Widdowson, communicative abilities have to be developed at the same time as linguistic skills. The reason is that students may know the rules of linguistic usage, but not unable to use the language. He distinguishes two aspects of performance: "usage" and "use". He explains that "usage" makes evident the extent to which the language use demonstrates his ability to use the knowledge of linguistic rules, whereas "use" makes evident the extent to which the language use demonstrates his ability to use the knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication[2]. In short, being able to communicate is more required than linguistic competence; it required communicative competence[3].

D.Hymes[3] defined the concept of 'communicative competence' as an ability to use grammatical competence in a variety of communicative situations. He distinguished two kinds of competence: linguistic competence and communicative competence. Linguistic competence deals with producing and understanding grammatically correct sentences, and whereas communicative competence that deals with producing and understanding sentences appropriately in real situations. Thus, Hymes coins a term "communicative competence" and defines it as knowledge of the rules for understanding and producing both referential and social meaning of language. This idea was also developed by M. Canale and M. Swain[4]. In their concept of communicative competence, knowledge and skill are needed for communication. According to them, there are three types of knowledge: knowledge of underlying grammatical principles, knowledge of how to use language in a social context in order to fulfill communicative functions and knowledge of how to combine utterances and communicative functions. Canale and Swain propose their own theory of communicative competence that minimally includes three main competences: grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence.

Grammatical competence includes knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence, grammar semantics, and phonology. They point out that grammatical competence is important for communication whose goals include providing learners with knowledge how to express views accurately[4]. *Sociolinguistic competence* is made up

of two different sets of rules: socio-cultural and discourse. The former focus on the extent to which certain propositions and communicative functions are appropriate within a given socio-cultural context, and the extent to which appropriate attitude and register or style are conveyed by a particular grammatical form within a given socio-cultural context. Rules of discourse are concerned with cohesion and coherence of groups of utterances[4]. Finally, *strategic competence* is made up of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that the speaker may resort to when breakdowns in communication take place due to performance variables or to insufficient competence. These strategies may relate to grammatical competence (how to paraphrase, how to simplify, etc.) or to sociolinguistic competence (for instance, how to address strangers when unsure of their social status).[4]

Later, Van Ek developed this new model of communicative competence through applying it to foreign language acquisition. He presented a framework for comprehensive foreign language objectives which included six dimensions of communicative competence, each of them called competence as well. These six competences are: Linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, socio-cultural competence and social competence

Linguistic competence: The ability to produce and interpret meaningful utterances which are formed in accordance with the rules of the language concerned and bear their conventional meaning ... that meaning which native speakers would normally attach to an utterance when used in isolation. [5]

Sociolinguistic competence: The awareness of ways in which the choice of language forms is determined by such conditions as setting, relationship between communication partners, communicative intention, and etc. This competence covers the relation between linguistic signals and their contextual or situational meaning. [5]

Discourse competence: The ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts.[5]

Strategic competence: When communication is difficult we have to find ways of 'getting our meaning across' or 'finding out what somebody means'; these are communication strategies, such as rephrasing, asking for clarification. [6]

Socio-cultural competence: Every language is situated in a socio-cultural context and implies the use of a particular reference frame which is partly different from that of the foreign language learner; socio-cultural competence presupposes a certain degree of familiarity with that context. [7]

Social competence: Involves both the will and the skill to interact with others, involving motivation, attitude, self confidence, empathy and the ability to handle social situations. [8]

We can observe that both proposals of Canale and Swain and Van Ek have some aspects in common. What Canale and Swain call grammatical competence is called as linguistic competence by Van Ek, but both of them have to do with grammatical rules; what Canale and Swain call sociolinguistic competence is split into sociolinguistic and discourse competence by Van Ek, but again they consider the same issues; and strategic competence, Van Ek probably took the concept from Canale and Swain. The main difference is Van Ek's incorporation of two more points of view, socio-cultural and social competence, which take into account values and beliefs, on the one hand, and attitudes and behaviours, on the other. Being a more comprehensive model and more suitable for communicative language teaching purposes, Van Ek's model is refracted towards the six Reference levels in CEFR. In other words, with regard to FLT the term "competence" was developed in the frame of researches done by the Council of Europe[9]. In the CEFR, communicative competence is conceived in terms of knowledge including three basic components-linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and pragmatic competence. See *Figure 1*.

Figure 1

Sociolinguistic competence and pragmatic competence envelop the other ones (discourse competence, socio-cultural competence, social competence) interrelated each other. Pragmatic competence concerns the knowledge of the functions or illocutionary forces imply in the utterances/discourse that are intended to be understood and produced, as well as socio-contextual factors, strategies of communication that effect its appropriateness. It involves knowledge of cultural factors such as the rules of behavior that exist in the target language community as well as socio-cultural awareness including differences and similarities in intercultural communication. This model of communicative competence emphasizes the importance of four language skills since they are viewed as a manifestation of interpreting and producing a spoken or written piece of discourse (text+situation).

Conclusion
A brief outline of the development of the concept and the final models of communicative competence of this article enables the following conclusions: From the moment of its introduction into the linguistic discourse, the notion of communicative competence has been constantly changed and adapted to the context of its use. The term 'communicative competence' was defined as knowledge and abilities/skills for use by theoreticians in the field of Applied Linguistics. This shows that a competent language user should possess not only knowledge about language but also the ability and skill to activate that knowledge in communicative situations. As illustrated in Figure1, communicative competence between the models of Widdowson, Canale and Swain, Van Ek that are frequently used at present. Especially the model of Van Ek which is the the final model of communicative language competence proposed in the CEFR. In the CEFR communicative competence is conceived in terms of knowledge including three basic components-linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and pragmatic competence.

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