

Decoding Communicative Competence and Performance with Reference to the Second Language Learning.

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Abstract:

Communicative competence and performance have proved its relevance in second language learning in school as well as higher education. Communicative competence denotes to both knowledge and skill when interacting in actual communication situation within and/or outside the culture. Through a basic knowledge of which communication aptitudes are essential for acceptable functioning in intercultural society, educationalists find this theory and application of communicative competence very beneficial. The present paper focuses on the concept, development, challenges, and the future of communicative competence. It highlights the socio-cultural and inter-cultural perspectives in the context of communicative competence. The researcher tries to provide the allusions of communicative competence for second language teaching

Key Words:

Communication, Competence, Sociolinguistics, Second Language Learning, Intercultural, Language Acquisition.

Introduction:

Michael Canale defined communication as,

An exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals though the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, oral and written/visual modes, and production and comprehension process.

The information transmitted in the process of communication is assumed to consist of conceptual, sociocultural, affective, and other aspects. The successful language use for communication assumes the development of communicative competence in the users of that language and that the use of language is controlled by the socio-cultural norms of the society where the language is used. It has been several decades since the communicative approach to language teaching first appeared in print in the field of second language acquisition.

Literature Review:

The researcher has read several books and research articles in journals in order to get a deeper insight into the research problem and to gain a thorough understanding of the texts to be examined. She has read and analysed the works of Noam Chomsky, D.H. Hymes, Ferdinand D Saussure, M. Canale, and M. Swain etc. to understand the concept, development and the background of the term communicative competence.

Methodology:

The paper uses a qualitative desktop research to provide the tools to explore, analyse, evaluate, and interpret information and ideas in communicative competence with the special context to L2 teaching and learning. Works by critics, books from different disciplines, journals, the internet, media sources and different publications will also be extensively referenced to build knowledge a more comprehensive definition of communicative competence.

Communicative Competence and Performance with Reference to the Second Language Learning:

Language competence is closely related to the communicative competence and performance. Communicative competence is the learner's skill to make communication through a language as a social and cultural reality. The notion of communicative competence is initially coming from Chomsky's distinction between 'competence' and 'performance.' The previous is the linguistic knowledge of the idealized native speaker. It is a distinctive biological purpose of the mind that allows people to generate the unlimited set of grammatical sentences that establishes their language, and the latter is the actual use of language in tangible circumstances. According to Chomsky, competence means the collective knowledge of the original speaker-listener set in a totally standardized speech community. This kind of fundamental knowledge qualifies a user of a language to create and comprehend an infinite set of sentences out of a finite set of rules. That is why transformational grammar offers a clear interpretation of this implicit knowledge of language structures which is usually not conscious but is essentially understood.

Dell Hymes, an American linguist, criticised the theory given by Noam Chomsky into linguistic foundation. According to him, the Chomskian concept of linguistic competence is too superlative and limited in the context of sociocultural aspects. Hymes responded to Chomsky's noted division between the competence of "an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly," on one hand, and "errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance," on the other (Chomsky 3). Hymes found this distinction as a contemporary interpretation of a tradition leading back to Saussure and even Humboldt, and interrogated the ranking of linguistic competence, that is, "tacit knowledge of language structure" (271) over performance, or "imperfect manifestation of underlying system" (272).

Hymes integrated linguistic theory with communication and culture to include the following aspects:

1. Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible;
2. Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available;
3. Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is needed and evaluated; and
4. Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what it's doing entails (qtd. Walean 13)

Communicative competence is therefore viewed by Hymes as the interaction of Grammatical, Psycholinguistics, Sociocultural, and probabilistic schemes of competence. Communicative competence considers social rules, contextual suitability, unstable, and affective factors aside from the structural elements of language. The relevance and efficiency are not concerned of linguistic grammar, but they are related to sociolinguistic correctness, that is, the ability of speakers to say the right thing in the right situation in order to get what they want (Yorio, 1980). The notion of English as an international language (EIL) and the L2 (target language) learning are perceptions which are in line with communicative use of language adapted to the need's purposes of the L2 learner.

Canale and Swain further developed Hymes' concepts about the 'communicative competence' in 1980. They worked and introduced the theoretical model of 'communicative competence.' Their perception of 'communicative competence' discusses "the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of rules of language use" (Canale & Swain 6). Canale and Swain's model of 'communicative competence' contains three spheres of knowledge and skills. They are 'grammatical competence,' 'sociolinguistic competence' and 'strategic competence.' Grammatical competence denotes to precise knowledge of sentence structure and vocabulary. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the language user's skill to produce and understand language in different social contexts. Strategic competence refers to the ability of using language to achieve communicative goals and enhance the effectiveness of communication.

Canale views communicative competence as "the underlying systems of knowledge and skills required for communication." The communicative competence is, then, distinguished from what Canale calls "actual communication," which is defined as "the realization of such knowledge and skills under limiting psychological and environmental conditions such as memory and perceptual constraints, fatigue, nervousness, distractions, and interfering background noises" (Canale 5). As far as performance is concerned, Chomsky's performance and Canale and Swain's actual communication idea to roughly the same phenomenon of pronouncing sentences in real communicative conditions.

Taking into consideration of second language teaching and learning, it is vital to distinguish that rules for appropriate conduct of speech differ significantly from one society or culture to another. This means that although second language learners have communicative competence in their own language, it is not necessary that they will be able translate this ability into successful interaction with native speakers of the target language. The former apprehensions the extent to which communicative functions (e.g., inviting, requesting,

commanding, questioning etc.), attitudes (including politeness and formality), and ideas are judge to be proper in each suitable situation. The last concerns the extent to which a given meaning (including communicative function, attitudes, and ideas) is represented in a verbal and/or non-verbal form that is proper in each sociological context. However, not only the appropriate form and setting must be learned but also the underlying values of culture will alter an interpretation of what is meant by a particular form even if used in the right setting. Without the acquaintance of the central values of a culture, the second language learner may never understand properly what message the speaker is really trying to send.

The communicative approach seems to have become identical with liberal and ground-breaking language teaching. The communicative approach is then discussed to as the identification of behaviours of people considered successful at what they do, specifically, the identification of the features of good communicators. The communicative approach is an ongoing process of expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning. Moreover, it is a self-motivated process. It depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more people who share ideas, information, emotions etc. It can be said to be an interpersonal rather than an intrapersonal characteristic. Further, the communicative approach is closely related with competence and performance, where competence is a presumed underlying ability and performance is the overt manifestation of that ability. Competence is what one knows, while performance is what one does.

Communicative language teaching includes developing language ability through interactions implanted in meaningful settings. This method to teaching provides authentic opportunities for learning that go beyond repetition and memorization of grammatical patterns in isolation. A central concept of the communicative approach to language teaching is communicative competence.

The communicative competence can be achieved in L2 learning by including role-play, speech activities, situational communication exercises, using audio-visual recordings etc. The Communicative competence includes the following aspects of language knowledge:

- 1) Developing the ability to know how to use language for a series of different determinations and circumstances.
- 2) How to differ our use of language according to the setting and the participants that is to realise when to use formal and informal speech.
- 3) Use target language appropriately for written as opposite to spoken communication. To know how to produce and understand different types of texts e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations, memos etc.
- 4) And most importantly, understand how to uphold communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge by using different kinds of communication approaches.

To attain the above-mentioned communicative competence and performance, it is necessary for the L2 learners to focus on text-based instruction, a genre-based approach and practice well.

Conclusion:

To conclude, communicative competence has been defined and deliberated in many ways by linguists of several grounds. However, there is one thing in common that is seen in the writings of all these researchers that is the linguistic, or grammatical competence should be measured just one aspect of overall competence an individual has with language. Through the change of emphasis from grammar to communication within linguistic theories as the field of sociolinguistics developed, L2 language teachers and researchers, too, have shifted the object of their linguistic investigation accordingly. Although academicians have been aware of the need to improve students' communicative competence and try out new designs to contribute to meeting that need, there seems to be still a long way to go. In the context of target language, it is required to develop a model of communicative competence that considers the exact circumstantial, social, and linguistic features of non-native learners.

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