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Defining The Concepts “Competence” And “Communicative Competence”

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ABSTRACT

Competence is defined as communicative language ability - a concept comprised of knowledge or competence and capacity for appropriate use of knowledge in a contextual communicative language use. In this article, the concepts “competence” and “communicative competence” are defined and the models of communicative competence are discussed in language teaching and learning.

KEYWORDS

Competence, communicative competence, models of communicative competence.

INTRODUCTION

The concept “communicative competence” was introduced in the late 1960s. It was firstly introduced in “Aspects of the Theory of Syntax” written by Noam Chomsky 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. It means that competence involves “knowing” the language and performance involves “doing” something with the language. The scholars such as D.Hymes, M. Canale, H.G. Widdowson,

Savignon, 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.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

D. Hymes defines (1972, p. 283-284) "competence as the most general term for the capabilities of a person" and it "is dependent

upon both knowledge and use." He explains the direct relationship between general interactional competence and linguistic competence. The first competence defines the role of the second. He highlights the knowledge of distinction of verbal and nonverbal codes and their interrelation. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account "the concept of performance" while discussing development of linguistic competences. According to Hymes (1972), there are the three aspects of communicative competence:

- Grammatical possibilities in a language
- Feasibility
- Appropriateness

According to Canale and Swain (1980) and Bachman (1990), the following dimensions of the competence which are to be included in language teaching and learning:

- The grammatical,
- The psychological
- The social

D. Hymes (1972, p. 284) incorporated both "the rules of grammar and the rules of use" into the certain framework defined by answering question "Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible, feasible, appropriate and done?" Canale and Swain's (1980, p 27) model of communicative competence consists of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and communication strategies.

Canale (1983, p. 6) later added discourse competence. Zhuang (2007, p. 41) disagrees with the emphasis they place on appropriateness while restraining it just to the context and on the other hand, that they do not consider the grammatical accuracy to be equally important in the concept as other features. However, it is necessary to acquire sociolinguistic skills to complement "pedagogical application in communicative language teaching". The mentioned types of

knowledge are bound to be interlinked by the communicative approach. Canale and Swain (1980, p.27).

The third model of communicative competence was suggested by Bachman (1990, p. 84). It includes into language competence, strategic competence and psychophysiological mechanism forming communicative language ability. Zhuang summarises that the theoretical framework of communicative competence focuses on three components: organizational competence, pragmatic competence and strategic competence. Zhuang (2007, p. 42-43) describes organizational competence to be dealing with grammatical and contextual abilities. Pragmatic competence focuses as well as on "signs and the persons it refers to" and the relationship between them as on "the users of language and the context of communication".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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. Finally, Council of Europe in respect to these models identifies linguistic, Sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence which serves as aims of all teaching efforts with New Descriptors to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages newly issued by Council of Europe (CEFR, 2018 p. 132).

Four competence areas: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic.

- Linguistic competence means to use the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary of language .Linguistic competence asks: What words do I use? How do I put them into phrases and sentences?

- Sociolinguistic competence means –how to use and respond to language appropriately in the society. Sociolinguistic competence asks: Which words and phrases fit the setting and the topic? How can I express a specific attitude (courtesy, authority, friendliness, respect) When I need to?
- Discourse competence means to interpret the larger context .Discourse competence asks: How are words, phrases and sentences put together to create conversations speeches, email, messages, newspaper articles.
- Strategic competence is how to recognize and repair communication breakdowns.

CONCLUSION

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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