A State of the Art of Communicative Competence Theory

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Introduction

What is actually involved in learning a foreign language? What kinds of knowledge and skill to be mastered? The answer to these questions deals with language competence, that is, the knowledge of the language and the ability to use that knowledge to interpret and produce meaningful texts appropriate to the situation in which they are used. It corresponds with Ellis's (1996: 74) statement that the goal of learning a foreign language "is concerned with the ability to use language in communicative situations" and the point of language teaching is to help the students communicate or to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as "communicative competence".

In second language acquisition perspective the goal of learning a second language "is concerned with the ability to use language in communicative situations' (Ellis, 1996: 74) and the point of language teaching is to help the students communicate or to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as "communicative competence". In other words, the goal of second or foreign language teaching is the acquisition of communicative competence, that is, the ability to use the language correctly and appropriately to accomplish communication goals. The desired outcome of the language learning is the ability to communicate competently, *not* the ability to use the language exactly as a native speaker does.

The idea of communicative competence in language teaching is not really new. It got its first popularity in the 1960s and 1970s when communicative approach was initially adopted. This approach could be said to be the product of educators and linguists who were dissatisfied with the audiolingual and grammar-translation methods of foreign language instruction. They believed that students were not learning enough realistic, whole language; they were at a loss to communicate in the culture of the target language.

This paper tries to provide a review on the kind of knowledge and skill needed to be mastered in foreign language learning, that is, the communicative competence. Linguists often emphasize different components in their description of communicative competence. This discussion will cover the categorization of the knowledge and skill involved in language use offered by different scholars such as Dell Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), Bachman (1980), Bachman and Palmer (1986) Celce-murcia et al. (1995), and Pawlikowska-Smith (2002).

Hymes' Model

The notion of *communicative competence* was first coined by Hymes' (1972) as a reaction to Chomsky's (1965: 4) notion of *competence* and *performance*. Hymes reacted to Chomsky's description of linguistic competence and linguistic performance with his description of communicative competence in 1971 (as cited in Savignon, 1991). In Chomsky's theory, linguistic competence is "the speaker-hearer's knowledge

of his language" (1965: 3). Speaker and hearer are defined as those ideal individuals in a completely homogeneous speech community. In other words, it is the unconscious knowledge of languages and is similar in some ways to Saussure's concept of *langue*, the organizing principles of a language. Linguistic performance (the actual use of the language in concrete situation) refers to what we actually produce as utterances and is similar to Saussure's *parole*. However, Chomsky's description of language use was controversial, especially among sociolinguists since he was concerned with cognitive linguistics and so his description of linguistic performance was based primarily on a speaker's ability to produce grammatically correct sentences by using his or her preexisting knowledge of grammatical systems.

Hymes was an anthropological linguist who was interested in expression within speech communities and the interaction between social norms and communication. For Hymes, communication was more than speakers'regurgitations of grammar, "*how* something is said is part of *what* is said" (Hymes, 1986: 41). In other words, speakers must have more than simply linguistic competence in order to successfully and appropriately communicate in any given situation. The ideal speaker-hearer simply does not exist, because a completely homogeneous speech community is simply non-existent. The language used for communication in society is full of varieties that competence must be coupled with performance. Hymes described Chomskyan linguistics as a "Garden of Eden" view.

For Chomsky, the focus of linguistic theory was to characterize the abstract abilities speakers possess that enable them to produce grammatically correct sentences in a language (Chomsky 1965: 3). According to Hymes such a view of linguistic theory was incomplete, that linguistic theory needed to be seen as part of a more general theory incorporating communication and culture. Thus, to the notion of *competence* Hymes (1972: 278) added the 'communicative' element and described it as "…rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless. Just as rules of syntax can control aspects of phonology, and just as rules of semantics perhaps control aspects of syntax, so rules of speech acts enter as a controlling factor for linguistic form as a whole".

Hymes introduced the broader, more elaborated and extensive concept of communicative competence, which includes both linguistic competence or implicit and explicit knowledge of the rules of grammar, and contextual or sociolinguistic knowledge of the rules of language use in context. He argues that "we have then to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not and as to what to talk to about with whom, when, where, in what manner" Hymes (1972: 277). Therefore, a person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and ability for language use with respect to the following components: (1) whether or not something is formally possible (grammaticality); (2) whether or not something is feasible (natural and immediately comprehensible or easily understood); for example, *The cat that the dog chased died* is feasible, in the intended sense whereas *This is the man that hit the dog that chased the cat that died* is totally not feasible (Chomsky (1965: 10); (3) whether or not something is appropriate in relation to a context in which it is used; and (4) whether or not something is in fact done and actually performed. (Hymes, 1972: 281; Brumfit and Johnson, 1989: 14)

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Canale ans Swain's Model

Canale and Swain developed theory of communicative competence based on Hymes'work. Their initial framework was proposed in 1980 and included three main components: (1) *grammatical competence*: sentence-level semantics, morphology, syntax, and phonology; (2) *sociolinguistic competence*: socio-cultural rules of use, such as politeness and appropriateness, and rules of discourse including cohesion and coherence; and (3) *strategic competence*: the verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies a speaker uses to achieve a desired end result (Canale & Swain, 1980: 29 – 30). Canale later revised this framework in 1983 by breaking sociolinguistic competence into two separate components: (1) sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness of register, vocabulary and politeness norms) and (2) discourse competence (cohesion and coherence).

The four domains of communicative competence in Canale and Swain's Model can be described as follows:

(1) Grammatical competence or linguistic competence which refers to the ability to use the language correctly, how well a person has learned features and rules of the language. This includes vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence formation. How well does the learner understand the grammar of English? Teachers call this accuracy in language use. According to Canale and Swain, grammatical competence is concerned with mastery of the linguistic code (verbal or non-verbal) which includes vocabulary knowledge as well as knowledge of morphological, syntactic, semantic, phonetic and orthographic rules. This competence enables the speaker to use knowledge and skills needed for understanding and expressing the literal meaning of utterances.

(2) Sociolinguistic competence which refers to the learner's ability to use language correctly in specific social situations – for example, using proper language forms at a job interview. Socio-linguistic competence is based upon such factors as the status of those speaking to each other, the purpose of the interaction, and the expectations of the players. How socially acceptable is the person's use of English in different settings? This competency is about appropriacy in using language.

(3) Discourse competence which refers to the learner's ability to use the new language in spoken and written discourse, how well a person can combine grammatical forms and meanings to find different ways to speak or write. How well does the student combine the language's elements to speak or write in English? Teachers often call this ability the student's fluency.

Canale (1983, 1984) described discourse competence as mastery of rules that determine ways in which forms and meanings are combined to achieve a meaningful unity of spoken or written texts. The unity of a text is enabled by cohesion in form and coherence in meaning. Cohesion is achieved by the use of cohesion devices (e.g. pronouns, conjunctions, synonyms, parallel structures etc.) which help to link individual sentences and utterances to a structural whole. The means for achieving coherence, for instance repetition, progression, consistency, relevance of ideas etc., enable the organisation of meaning, i.e. establish a logical relationship between groups of utterances.

(4) Strategic competence which refers to strategies for effective communication when the learner's vocabulary proves inadequate for the job, and his or her command of useful learning strategies. Strategic competence is how well the person uses both verbal forms and non-verbal communication to compensate for lack of knowledge in the other three competencies. Can the learner find ways to compensate for areas of weakness? If so, the learner has communicative efficacy. These strategies

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include paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, reluctance, avoidance of words, structures or themes, guessing, changes of register and style, modifi cations of messages etc.
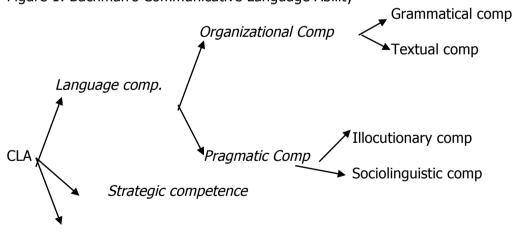
Bachman, Bachman and Palmer'Model

Bachman (1990) proposed the term communicative language ability (CLA) to replace the term communicative competence, claiming that this term combines in itself the meanings of both language proficiency and communicative competence. His theoretical framework included the following three components *(Language Competence, Strategic Competence, Psychophysiological Mechanisms)*, each with several hierarchical subcomponents:

(1) Language Competence
  a. Organizational Competence
    i. Grammatical competence: vocabulary, morphology, syntax, phonology/graphology
    ii. Textual competence: cohesion, rhetorical organization
  b. Pragmatic Competence
    i. Illocutionary competence: using and interpreting speech acts for specific functions (ideational functions, manipulative functions,heuristic functions, and imaginative functions)
    ii. Sociolinguistic Competence: sensitivity to dialect or variety,sensitivity to register, sensitivity to naturalness, cultural references and figures of speech
(2) Strategic Competence: (the 'capacity for implementing the components of language competence in contextualized communicative language use'. The strategic competence included three steps: assessment, planning, and execution.
(3) Psychophysiological Mechanisms: (neurological and psychological processes involved in the actual execution of language as a physical phenomenon.

(Bachman, 1990, pp. 87 – 108)

Figure 1: Bachman's Communicative Language Ability

In 1996 Bachman and Palmer revisited this model and made minor changes. In their new model, Bachman and Palmer (1996: 67) use the term 'knowledge' instead of 'competence'*.* They do not explain the change in terminology, stating only that "the model of language ability that we adopt in this book is essentially that proposed by Bachman (1990) who defines language ability as involving two components: language competence, or what we will call *language knowledge* and *strategic competence* which

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we will describe as a set of metacognitive strategies. In short, Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010) seem conceptually equivalent, aside from differences in labels and minor changes in the description of strategic competence. The terminology in the works of Bachman and Palmer from 1996 and 2010 is more consistent with that used in other models than was the terminology proposed by Bachman (1990). Bachman & Palmer's model of language competence (2010) is undoubtedly multidisciplinary and complex in nature. The introduction of affective factors is a major step in making the model quite complicated. Their conception can be briefly presented in the table below.

Table 1: Bachman, Bachman and Palmer'Model's

Bachman 1990 LANGUAGE COMPETENCE	Bachman and Palmer 1996/2010 LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE
ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETENCE Grammatical competence - Knowledge of vocabulary - Knowledge of morphology - Knowledge of syntax -Knowledge of phonology/ graphology Textual competence - Cohesion - Rhetorical organization	ORGANIZATIONAL KNOWLEDGE Grammatical knowledge -Knowledge of vocabulary - Knowledge of syntax - Knowledge of phonology/ graphology Textual knowledge - Knowledge of cohesion - Knowledge of rhetorical or conversational - organization
PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE Illocutionary competence - Ideational functions - Manipulative functions - Heuristic functions - Imaginative functions Sociolinguistic competence - Sensitivity to differences in dialects or variety - Sensitivity to differences in register - Sensitivity to naturalness - Ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech	PRAGMATIC KNOWLEDGE Functional knowledge - Knowledge of ideational functions - Knowledge of manipulative functions - Knowledge of heuristic functions - Knowledge of imaginative functions Sociolinguistic knowledge - Knowledge of genre (2010 only) - Knowledge of dialects/varieties - Knowledge of registers - Knowledge of natural or idiomatic expressions - Knowledge of cultural references and figures of speech
STRATEGIC COMPETENCE Assessment Goal setting Planning	*STRATEGIC COMPETENCE* Assessment / Appraising (2010) Execution Planning

Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell's Model

In 1995 Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell proposed a communicative competence model which represents an elaboration of the previous models. The major issue in this model is its sensitivity to discourse competence. Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) give emphasize on the dynamic aspect of the model and indicates that the different

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components in the model interact with each other. They believe that "It is not sufficient simply to list all the components…………; it is important to show the potential overlaps, interrelations and interactions, and to realize that discourse is where all the competencies most obviously reveal themselves. Discourse thus is the component in which (or through which) all the other competencies must be studied—and ultimately assessed—if one is concerned with communicative competence, which is not a hierarchical system of discrete competencies or abilities but a dynamic, interactive construct (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995: 145).

Celce-Murcia's model of communicative competence provides a comprehensive view of linguistic and cultural issues that may affect students' academic performance. The model suggests that some components can be employed more effectively in the classroom situations and according to the communicative needs of the specific learner group. This model is meant to inform syllabus design in communicative language teaching which includes five competencies: discourse competence, linguistic competence, actional competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence.

Discourse means stretches of language perceived to be meaningful, unified, and purposive (Cook, 1997: 6). It refers to the ability to interpret a series of sentence and the larger context and how suffice to construct longer stretches of language so that the parts make up a coherent whole. Richards (2001: 160) justifies that discourse competence refers to the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and of how suffice meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text. It includes cohesion, deixis, coherence, genre, and conversational structures.

Linguistic competence is the domain of grammatical and lexical capacity (Richards, 2001: 160). It is the mastery of linguistic code, the ability to use grammar, syntax and vocabulary of a language. Brown (2000: 247) justifies that linguistic competence encompasses knowledge of rules of phonology, morphology, lexical items and syntax.
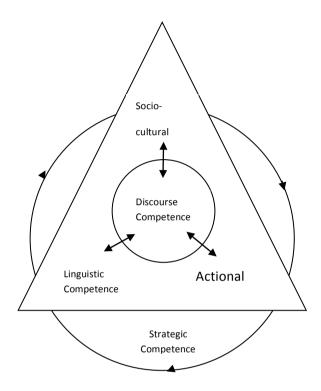
Actional competence refers to ability to choose speech act or knowledge of language functions (e.g. expressing and finding out feelings, suasion, asking for and giving information, complaining, greeting and leaving, etc.) and knowledge of speech act sets. Just as linguists have tried to understand how speaker might be able to produce an infinitive number of sentences given a very finite set of rules for sentences, philosophers have tried to understand how an infinite number of sentences might a very finite set of functions (Hatch, 1994: 121). The philosophers reasoned that since the number of things we do with words is limited, we ought to able to assign function to utterances. Hatch presents system of functions including directives, commisives, representatives, declaratives, and expressives.

Sociocultural competence refers to an understanding of social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose for their interaction Richards (2001: 160). In other word, it can mean how sufficient to use and respond language appropriately, given the setting, the topic and the relationship among the people communicating. Here are the points relating to sociolinguistic competence: Proper Topic, Non Verbal, and Cross Cultural Understanding.

Strategic competence refers to the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication. (Richards, 2001: 160). It is used to know how sufficient to recognize and to fix communication breakdowns, how sufficient to learn more about the language in context. In short, it is

the competence underlying our ability to make repairs, to cope with imperfect knowledge, and to sustain communication through approximation, paraphrase/ circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance and asking for help, as well as shifts in register and style. The following are the strategic competences that the students may use: approximation, generalization,　　　paraphrase, circumlocution, replacement, hesitation, avoidance, asking for Help, shifts in register and style. (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1995: 11-28). Their conception can be illustrated in figure below.

Figure 2: Celce-Murcia, et al.'s Model of Communicative Competence

Pawlikowska-Smith (2002)

Based on adaptation and synthesis of research on the acquisition of English as a second language and the previous research such as Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; and Celce-Murcia, et al., 1995, the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks developed an in-depth and operational model of communication proficiency for English as a second language. The framework is called Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and was used as a companion to the earlier publication: Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language for Adults. It was called Canadian Language Benchmarks because the framework also included levels of performance that students must meet in order to be considered "satisfactory" or "adequate" in any of the competencies (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002: 26).

CLB is based on a functional view of language, language use, and language proficiency. Such a view relates language to the contexts in which it is used and the communicative functions it performs. The focus of CLB is on communicative proficiency in English as a second language. Communicative proficiency is the ability to interact, express, interpret meaning, and create discourse in a variety of social contexts and situations (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2000: 5). The communicative proficiency consists of

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five distinct competencies with linguistic competence as one, yet fundamental, component of overall communicative proficiency. Linguistic competence is "the knowledge of the formal code of language on how to combine the elements of grammar vocabulary and pronunciation to produce well-formed sentences." (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002: 10). It is the foundation of language teaching and builds the skills that allow CLB, academic and essential skill tasks to be performed. Critical elements include syntax, morphology, lexicon, phonology and orthography (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002).

The communicative proficiency in CLB consists of five distinct competencies, which look very similar to the competencies discussed earlier by Celce-Murcia, et al. (1995), as follows: (1) Linguistic Competence: syntax, morphology, phonology, orthography, and the lexicon; (2) Textual Competence: cohesion, coherence, deixis, genre structure, and conversational structures; (3) Functional Competence: humor, using language for a specific purpose (e.g. teaching, warning, self-expression, persuading, etc.); (4) Socio-cultural Competence: rules of appropriateness and politeness, idioms and figurative language, non-verbal communication, cultural knowledge and references, knowledge of social contexts and relationships; and (5) Strategic Competence: planning for effective communication in a given situation, avoiding difficulties in communication, and recovering from communication breakdowns (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002: 8-23).

Closing

The question which always becomes the concern of foreign language practitioners is what should be involved in learning a foreign language and the answer deals with language competence. Scholars agree to use the term communicative competence to refer to the ability to use the language correctly and appropriately to accomplish communication goals. Thus outcome of foreign language learning is the ability to communicate competently.

The term communicative competence was first coined by Hymes' (1972) as a reaction to Chomsky's (1965) notion of competence and performance. Since then linguists provide explanation which often emphasize different components in their description of communicative competence, from Dell Hymes, Canale and Swain, Bachman, Bachman and Palmer, to Celce-murcia Dell Hymes. The latest construct by Celce-Murcia is motivated by practical goal in language teaching. Based on adaptation of previous research, the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmark developed an operational model of communication proficiency for English as a second language, called Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB).

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