# COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

**Khilola Pulatova**

Jizzakh State Pedagogical University

*Abstract. This article is dedicated to provide reader with necessary theoretical background when we defined the key concepts and supported them with references to leading research authorities in the field. The introduction of the term communicative competence briefly commented on possible difficulties which speakers of foreign language may encounter in communication and that brought us to summarizing reasons for why it is important to develop communicative competence in English language learners.*

*Keywords: communicative competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, school, classroom, English subjects, language, grammar.*

Communicative competence has been defined and discussed in many different ways by language scholars of different fields. The successful language use for communication presupposes the development of communicative competence in the users of that language and that the use of language is constrained 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 (SLA). In various types of language programs, language educators and curriculum researchers have implemented communicative-oriented teaching syllabuses to seek for more effective ways for improving students" communication skills to replace the traditional, grammar-oriented approach in the past. To some English educators, however, a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach is challenging to adopt in their classroom.

- As the current model, communicative competence, which is viewed as the basis of CLT, has been developed on native-speaker norms that are different socioculturally and educationally from those of the non native speaker (Samimy and Kobayashi, 2004). The idea of communicative competence is originally derived from Chomsky"s distinction between *„competence"* and *„performance"*. The former is the linguistic knowledge of the idealized native speaker, an innate biological function of the mind that allows individuals to generate the infinite set of grammatical sentences that constitutes their language, and the latter is the actual

use of language in concrete situations. By competence, Chomsky (1965) means the shared knowledge of the ideal speaker-listener set in a completely homogenous speech community. Such underlying knowledge enables a user of a language to produce and understand an infinite set of sentences out of a finite set of rules. The transformational grammar provides for an explicit account of this tacit knowledge of language structures, which is usually not conscious but is necessarily implicit. Hymes (1972) says that "the transformational theory carries to its perfection the desire to deal in practice only with what is internal to language, yet to find in that internality that in theory is of the widest or deepest human significance". Hymes (1972) considers Chomsky's monolithic, idealized notion of linguistic competence inadequate and he introduces 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 contexts. Hymes views communicative competence as having the following four types: what is formally possible, what is feasible, what is the social meaning or value of a given utterance, and what actually occurs. Hymes (1974), retaining the idea of Chomsky's underlying grammatical competence, looks at contextual relevance as one of the crucial aspects of one's knowledge of language and claims that meaning in communication is determined by its speech community and actual communicative events. In addition, 32 Hymes was inspired by Noam Chomsky's distinction on linguistic competence and performance. He proposes that the speakers should study the knowledge that people have when they communicate. Just like linguistic competence which tells one whether a sentence is grammatical or not, communicative competence tells one whether an utterance is appropriate or not within a situation. Hymes was among the first to use the term *communicative competence.* For Hymes, the ability to speak competently not only entails knowing the grammatical rules of a language, but also knowing what to say to whom in what circumstances and how to say it (Scarcella, Andersen, and Krashen,1990). Hymes was also among the first anthropologist/ethnographer to point out that Chomsky's linguistic competence lacks consideration of the most important linguistic ability of being able to produce and comprehend utterances which are appropriate to the context in which they are made. It is part of that ability to know when to use, *"Would you like to start now, Sir/Mom?"* and when to use, *"Hey, you wanna start now, Mike?"* The competence is that all the adult native speakers of a language process must include their ability to handle linguistic variation and the various uses of language in the

context. It should encompass a much wider range of abilities than the homogenous linguistic competence of the Chomskyan tradition. Canale and Swain (1980) define communicative competence in the context of second language teaching as "a synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social settings to perform communicative functions, and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principles of discourse". Canale (1983) 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" 33 (Canale, 1983: 5). As far as performance is concerned, Chomsky"s performance and Canale and Swain"s actual communication point to roughly the same phenomenon of uttering sentences in real communicative situations. Hymes views communicative competence as having the following four types: what is formally possible, what is feasible, what is the social meaning or value of a given utterance, and what actually occurs. It is Canale and Swain (1980) who define communicative competence in the context of second language teaching. Their view of communicative competence is a synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social settings to perform communicative functions, and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principles of discourse. Accordingly they explain the above-mentioned Hymes" four types of communicative competence in the following way. The first type, „what is formally possible", is the interaction of the grammatical system of competence. Hence the utterance *"the was cheese green"* is not grammatical. The second type, „what is feasible", is the psycholinguistic system of competence. The utterance *"the cheese the rat the cat the dog saw chased ate was green"* is grammatical but not acceptable in that its multiple center-embedded clause is difficult to comprehend in terms of human information processing. To make it feasible, the utterance must be changed to the right branching structure common in English as in *"the dog saw the cat that chased the rat that ate the cheese that was green"*. The third type, „what is the social meaning or value of a given utterance", is the socio-cultural system of competence. For example, if one says „*good-bye*" in greeting someone, it is inappropriate in a particular social context. And the last type, „what actually

occurs‟, is the probabilistic rule of occurrence that something is in fact done or actually performed. Canale and Swain‟s framework brings together various expanded notions of communicative competence (Scarcella, Andersen, and Krashen, 1990). In their view, communicative competence involves four areas of knowledge and skills. These 34 include *grammatical competence,* which reflects knowledge of the linguistic code itself and includes knowledge of vocabulary and rules of word formation, pronunciation, spelling, and sentence formation. Grammatical competence means the acquisition of phonological rules, morphological rules, syntactic rules, semantic rules and lexical items. Today it is usually called linguistic competence. Next, there is *sociolinguistic competence,* which addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the learning of pragmatic aspects of various speech acts, namely, the cultural values, norms, and other socio-cultural conventions in social contexts. They are the context and topic of a discourse, the participants‟ social status, sex, and age, and other factors which influence the styles and registers of speech. Since different situations call for different types of expressions as well as different beliefs, views, values, and attitudes, the development of sociolinguistic competence is essential for communicative social actions. Then, there is *discourse competence,* which involves mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified written text in different genres such as narratives, argumentative essays, scientific reports, business letters, etc. Discourse competence is the knowledge of rules regarding the cohesion (grammatical links) and coherence (appropriate combination of communicative functions) of various types of discourse. Canale and Swain emphasize that sociolinguistic rules of use and rules of discourse are crucial in interpreting utterances for social meaning, particularly when the literal meaning of an utterance does not lead to the speaker‟s intention easily. And there is *strategic competence,* which refers to the mastery of the communication strategies that may be called into action either to enhance the effectiveness of communication or to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to limiting factors in actual communication or to insufficient competence in one or more of the other components of communicative competence. Strategic competence is to do with the knowledge of verbal and non verbal strategies to compensate for breakdowns such as recognizing discourse structures, activating background knowledge, contextual guessing, and tolerating ambiguity. 35 As it is clear from the way their framework is described, their intention is to discover the kinds of knowledge and skills that an L2 learner needs to be taught and to develop

the theoretical basis for a communicative approach in the second language teaching based on an understanding of the nature of human communication (Canale and Swain, 1980). A communicative approach in designing a syllabus is a broad way to language teaching that focuses on communication as the organizing principle for teaching rather than a focus on the mastery of the grammatical system of the language (Richards, 2001: 36). The emergence of ESP with its emphasis on needs analysis as a starting point in a language program design is an important factor in the development of this current approach to language curriculum development. A second influence is the communicative approach to language teaching that emerges in the late 1960s and 1970s as a replacement for the structural-situational method. Communicative language teaching is a response to the changes in the field of linguistics in the 1970s, as well as a response to the need for new approaches to language teaching. Linguistics moves away from a focus on grammar as the core component of language abilities to a consideration of how language is used by speakers in different contexts of communication. The communicative approach relates to communicative competence which refers to the capacity to use language appropriately in 37 communication based on the setting, the roles of the participants, and the nature of the transaction. The communicative approach appears to have become synonymous with progressive and innovative language teaching. The communicative approach is then referred to as the identification of behaviors of people considered successful at what they do, specifically, the identification of the characteristics of good communicators (Savignon, 1997: 9). The communicative approach is a continuous process of expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning. In addition, it is a dynamic rather than a static concept. It depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more people who share something, or in other words, it can be said to be an interpersonal rather than an intrapersonal trait. 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. Hymes (1971) is concerned with the communicative approach as the integration between communication and culture, where members of the community will behave and interpret the behavior of others according to the knowledge of the communicative system they have available to them. This knowledge includes, but is not limited to, the formal possibilities of the linguistic code. So, an adequate theory of communicative competence must be sufficiently general to account for

all forms of communication. And Halliday (1970) has another perspective to the elaboration of the communicative approach, that of the functions of language. Halliday concerns with moving away from the purely formal or structural preoccupations that have dominated linguistic theory toward a synthesis of functional approaches in the study of language. Then, a theory of the communicative approach rests on a broad perspective of all culture as communication or meaning and it is the patterned relationship of social roles and social stetting to linguistic expressions. It is in line with Paulston (1974) who emphasizes the communicative approach. She points out that the communicative 38 approach is the social rule of language use. She views that communicative activities in language classroom are devoid of social meaning and it is impossible to engage successfully in interaction activities with no knowledge of the rules of the social use. A different perspective of the communicative approach is put forward by Widdowson (1978). He regards the communicative approach in language teaching as an ability to interpret discourse. The focus of an L2 study must be on the interpretation of discourse. The interpretation of discourse should relate directly to the needs and present knowledge of the learners. He adds that L2 acquisition will be most effective where the learners may rely on their existing knowledge of the world, that is, to interpret discourse or meaning.

The procedure for determining communicative competencies has been based on the current theories of English language teaching. The procedure for determining the tasks has been verified through needs analysis; they were classified into four competencies and ten task types. The figure below shows how the competencies and tasks, that has been identified in this book, are determined and classified into competencies and task types as the results of the needs analysis stage.

As indicated in the figure, there are four major communicative competencies and ten major tasks carried out during the teaching and learning processes. The communicative competencies consist of: a) grammatical competence, b) sociolinguistic competence, c) discourse competence, d) strategic competence. 1. The competency of grammatical competence consist of five tasks: a) spelling alphabets/letters and numbers, and pronouncing English sounds; b) understanding main words and functional words; c) understanding the rules of noun phrases & constructing and presenting description texts which describe objects by using noun phrases; d) understanding rules of word and sentence formations or structural skills: tenses, active and passive voices, direct and indirect speeches, degrees of comparison, gerunds and infinitives, affixes and derivatives, conditional sentences, relative/adjective clauses, causatives, use of wish, etc., e) constructing sentence types:

simple, compound, and complex sentences; and constructing sentence forms: statement, interrogative, imperative, request, and exclamation sentences. 2. The competency of sociolinguistic competence consist of three tasks: a) understanding English language teaching for elementary schools students such as interesting strategies: singing songs, playing simple film/drama, playing games/playing for fun; creating interesting media, etc. based on the socio cultural context; b) being able to teach by using English as the language of bilingual instruction in the social context of the elementary school level; c) producing appropriate utterances of self introduction. 3. The competency of discourse competence contain one task: combining grammatical forms and meanings to achieve texts in different genres in the form of different text types: poems, procedures, descriptions, reports, news items, narratives, recounts, spoofs, discussions, expositions, argumentatives, reports, letters, announcements, etc. 4. The competency of strategic competence consist of one task: being able to use relevant language contents such as language functions/English expressions 52 clearly in an organized and coherent way, according to the genre and communicative situation; selecting the relevant contents and expressing them using the appropriate tones of voice, body language, and gestures. For the purpose of analysis, each task is referred to as the competency with an understanding that the task was a part of the competency. Each task including the topics is integrated with the language functions/English expressions during the task completion.

As indicated in the figure, there are four major communicative competencies and ten major tasks carried out during the teaching and learning processes. The communicative competencies consist of: a) grammatical competence, b) sociolinguistic competence, c) discourse competence, d) strategic competence. 1. The competency of grammatical competence consist of five tasks: a) spelling alphabets/letters and numbers, and pronouncing English sounds; b) understanding main words and functional words; c) understanding the rules of noun phrases & constructing and presenting description texts which describe objects by using noun phrases; d) understanding rules of word and sentence formations or structural skills: tenses, active and passive voices, direct and indirect speeches, degrees of comparison, gerunds and infinitives, affixes and derivatives, conditional sentences, relative/adjective clauses, causatives, use of wish, etc., e) constructing sentence types: simple, compound, and complex sentences; and constructing sentence forms: statement, interrogative, imperative, request, and exclamation sentences.     2. The competency of sociolinguistic competence consist of three tasks: a) understanding English language teaching for elementary schools students such as interesting strategies: singing songs, playing simple film/drama, playing games/playing for fun;

creating interesting media, etc. based on the socio cultural context; b) being able to teach by using English as the language of bilingual instruction in the social context of the elementary school level; c) producing appropriate utterances of self introduction. 3. The competency of discourse competence contain one task: combining grammatical forms and meanings to achieve texts in different genres in the form of different text types: poems, procedures, descriptions, reports, news items, narratives, recounts, spoofs, discussions, expositions, argumentatives, reports, letters, announcements, etc. 4. The competency of strategic competence consist of one task: being able to use relevant language contents such as language functions/English expressions 52 clearly in an organized and coherent way, according to the genre and communicative situation; selecting the relevant contents and expressing them using the appropriate tones of voice, body language, and gestures. For the purpose of analysis, each task is referred to as the competency with an understanding that the task was a part of the competency. Each task including the topics is integrated with the language functions/English expressions during the task completion.

The task of understanding English language teaching for elementary school students such as interesting strategies: singing songs, playing simple film/drama, playing games/playing for fun; creating interesting media, etc. based on the socio cultural context is the first task of the sociolinguistic competence. English language teaching for elementary students is very important especially for the students of ESTD, because they will become elementary school teachers who would teach English subjects or would use English as the language of bilingual instruction in the classroom. So, in ESTD, understanding English language teaching for elementary school students belong to the important and basic competence in the teaching and learning process. The students should know children‟s characteristics and what competencies, topics, and tasks they have to deliver. The students also should understand interesting strategies well: singing songs, playing simple film/drama, playing games/playing for fun; creating interesting media, etc. based on the socio cultural context, and other aspects implemented in teaching English subjects or a number of subjects where English was used as the language of instruction. The next task is that of being able to teach a number of subjects by using English as the language of bilingual instruction in the social context of the elementary school level. The analysis of this task is drawn from the questionnaires, interviews, and the observation and filed notes of the classroom teaching and learning process. It is highly required and become the foundation skills when they would teach in elementary schools where all teachers should teach a number of subjects by using English as the language of instruction. To get the maximum result, one of the lecturers carry out this task in a „*classroom action research"* entitled

"*Improving Students Achievement of Speaking Skill through Role Playing in ESTD, Faculty of Education, State University of Yogyakarta.* In this case, the lecturer takes the students into the role as a teacher and as students. The result shows that there is a significant increase of the students" achievement of speaking. In addition, it could provide the 18 students with the competency of teaching a number of subjects by using English as the language of instruction. Producing utterances of self introduction appropriately is the next task identified in the needs analysis. The students are expected to improve their speaking skills through this task. Speaking is very important especially for the students of ESTD because they will be teachers who would use English for bilingual instruction in the classroom. So, in ESTD, the speaking skills belong to the important and basic competence in the teaching and learning of English. There are some methods or strategies implemented in improving speaking skills such as producing utterances of self introduction, retelling stories, describing things or objects, etc. Producing utterances of self introduction appropriately has been chosen as one of the strategies in improving speaking skills because the lecturers and students think it is not so difficult to do, where the students explain or give some information related to the students" real conditions; for example, the names, dates of birth, addresses, status, professions, etc. Besides, it consist of some simple sentences and some English expressions/language functions such as greetings, opening/asking permission, informing facts, closing, leave taking, etc. The competency of discourse competence consists of one task: combining grammatical forms and meanings to achieve texts in different genres in the form of different text types: poems, procedures, descriptions, reports, news items, narratives, recounts, spoofs, discussions, expositions, argumentatives, reports, letters, announcements, etc. This task is analyzed from the students" needs and the observation of the classroom teaching and learning process, where the students need to understand it well, because it is very useful for the students to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve texts in different genres both spoken and written. Combining grammatical forms and meanings to achieve texts in different genres in the form of different text types, both spoken and written texts, belong to the important skill in learning the English language. So in this case, the students are 19 expected be able to construct texts in different genres in groups or individually. The texts could be poems, prose, lyrics, procedures, descriptions, reports, news items, narratives, recounts, spoofs, discussions, expositions, argumentatives, reports, letters, announcements, etc. As elementary school teachers in the future, the students need a qualification, skill, or ability to make texts in different genres because some of them will teach a number of subjects by using English for bilingual classes or some of them would teach English subjects in their classroom. The last is the

competency of strategic competence, where there is one task: being able to use relevant language contents, such as language functions/English expressions, clearly in an organized and coherent way, according to the genre and communicative situation; selecting the relevant contents and expressing them using appropriate tones of voice, body language and gestures. Relatively the same with the task of understanding English language teaching for elementary school students, this task does not carry the topics and language function independently like the other competencies, but they are carried out integratedly in every task of the previous competencies. The analysis of this task is also drawn from the students" needs and the observation of the classroom teaching and learning process. At the beginning of every teaching and learning process, in every competency, and in every task, the lecturer give a slight general preliminary information about English expressions because it is needed and became the basic knowledge and skills when they will teach English subjects or a number of subjects where English is used as the language of instruction. So, in ESTD, mastering English expressions belongs to the important and basic competence in the teaching and learning of the English subject. The students should understand well about some English expressions, such as, how to greet someone, how to express what is in mind, etc. This competency focuses not only on English 20 expressions used by the lecturers, but also on those used by the students in the process of teaching and learning in the classrooms.

## REFERENCES

[1] Allen, J. P. B. (1984). "General-Purpose Language Teaching: A Variable Focus Approach". In C. J. Brumfit. *General English Syllabus Design* (pp: 61- 74). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

[2] Allen, J. P. B. (1984). "General-Purpose Language Teaching: A Variable Focus Approach". In C. J. Brumfit. *General English Syllabus Design* (pp: 61- 74). Oxford: Pergamon Press., M. and Swain, M. (1980).

[3]  "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing". *Applied Linguistics* Canale 1/1:1.- 47.

[4] Canale, M. (1983). "From Communicative Competence to Communicative Language Pedagogy". In J. C. Richards and R. W. Schmidt, (eds.). *Language and Communication.* New York: Longman.

[5] Celce-Murcia, M., Dornyei, Z., and Thurrell, S. (1995). Communicative Competence: A Pedagogically Motivated Model with Content Specifications. In *Issues in Applied Linguistics.* 6, (2): 5-35

[6] Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

[7] Curtain, H. and Dahlberg, C. A. (2010). *Language and Children, Making the Match;*
*New Language for Young Learners, Grade K-8* (4th ed.). Boston, MA.: Pearson Education, Inc.

[8] Candlin, C. N. (1987). "Towards Task-based Language Learning". In C. N. Candlin and D. F. Murphy (Eds.) *Language Learning Tasks* (pp. 5-22). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.