

# **The Application of Communicative Competence in the Field of Language Teaching**

## **1. Communicative Competence for the Foreign Language Student**

As we have pointed out earlier, when Hymes proposed his theory of communicative competence he was mostly concerned with analysing social interaction and communication within a monolingual (and probably monocultural) group. It was Canale and Swain (1980) in North America and van Ek (1986) in Europe who first developed the idea of communicative competence in language teaching, in their seminal article “Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing” (1980). Many researchers followed the footsteps of Canale and Swain and presented models of communicative competence that are to be focused on when teaching foreign languages.

### **1.1 Canale and Swain’s (1980) and Canale’s (1983) model.**

Canale and Swain (1980) defined communicative competence as a formation of knowledge and skill the speaker needs to communicate. They added, communicative competence refers to the link between the knowledge of grammar rules and knowledge of language use. According to their understanding, there are three types of knowledge: grammatical knowledge, knowledge of how language should be used in society in order to communicate and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions combined together with respect to discourse principles.

#### **Grammatical competence**

It is concerned with the knowledge of language code (lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology). Moreover, grammatical competence has an important role in any communicative approach because it offers learners the opportunity to express an appropriate literal meaning of utterances.

#### **Sociolinguistic competence**

It is to master socio-cultural rules and discourse rules. It concerns with communication within context. Canale and Swain stated that Socio-cultural rules of use will specify the ways in which utterances are produced and understood appropriately with respect to the components of communicative events outlined by Hymes.

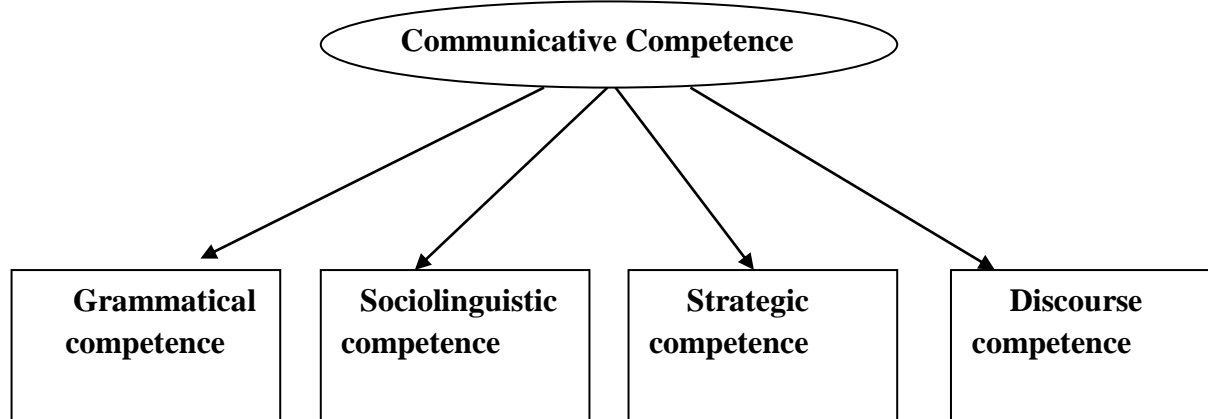
#### **Strategic competence**

Is a set of communicative strategies help to improve the ability to communicate and to put into use when communication breakdowns. These strategies are related to two types: grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence.

#### **Discourse competence**

This component was added by Canale (1983) to the Canale and Swain (1980) model. He made a distinction between discourse and sociolinguistic competence because in his opinion, this last component relates to socio-cultural aspects, while discourse competence concerns with cohesion and coherence.

*Canal and Swain's (1980) and Canal's (1983) model of communicative competence.*



### **1.2. Bachman (1990) communicative language ability (CLA).**

Bachman (1990) proposed a communicative competence named the communicative language ability (CLA), which is concerned with language testing. This model consists of language competence, strategic competence, and psycho-physiological mechanisms.

#### **Language knowledge**

Language knowledge is considered by Bachman as a domain of information memory that gives the language users the ability to create and interpret discourse in language use. He classified language knowledge into two categories, organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge.

#### **Organizational knowledge**

It refers to the abilities to produce or comprehend grammatical utterances or sentences in order to form texts. As well, these abilities are of two types: grammatical and textual. Grammatical knowledge includes knowledge of vocabulary, Syntax, phonology, and graphology. It is the ability to produce and understand formal utterances or sentences. Hence, the second ability; textual knowledge; it

Communicative Competence

Grammatical Competence

Sociolinguistic Competence

Strategic competence

Discourse competence

The belief is that Canal and Swain's (1980) and Canal's (1983) model of communicative competence refers to the capability of producing comprehending texts that are cohesive and coherent.

#### **Pragmatic knowledge**

It is the ability to create and interpret discourse, and it is also the speaker's or writer's ability to make their purpose achieved through their utterances. Besides, pragmatic knowledge is divided into functional and socio-linguistic knowledge.

#### **Functional knowledge**

Bachman (1990) called it "Illocutionary competence"; it can be introduced by referring to speech act. For instance, "a sentence such as „its cold in here“, for example, may function as an assertion about the physical atmosphere in a room, as a warning not to bring the baby in, or as a request to turn on the heater. One of these is a different speech act

## Sociolinguistic knowledge

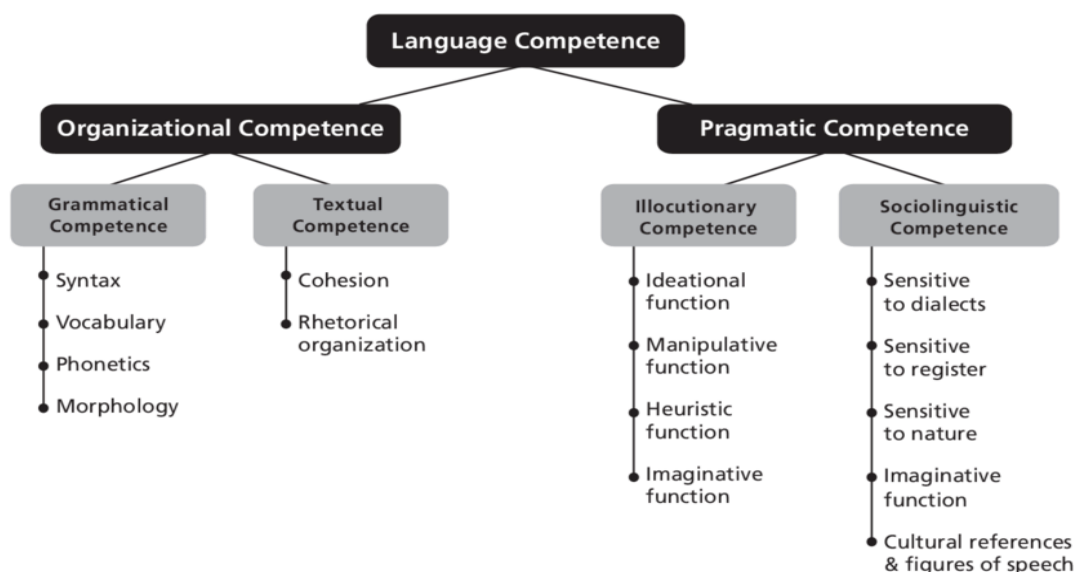
It knowledge is the knowledge of producing and interpreting appropriate utterances in appropriate context. In other words, it is concerned with controlling the conventions of language use that the features of its specific context determine. Bachman (1990)'s sociolinguistic competence is composed of knowledge of the aspects dealt with genres, dialect, registers, natural or idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and figures of speech

## Strategic competence

According to Faerch and Kasper (1984), there have been two essential approaches to define communication strategies that are interactional and psycholinguistic definitional. Bachman (1990) extended Fraech and Kasper's formulation to provide a more general description of strategic competence. Therefore, he included three components in strategic competence: assessment, planning, and execution.

## Psycho physiological Mechanism

Psycho-physiological Mechanism "refers to the neurological and psychological process involved in the actual execution of language as a physical phenomenon (sound, light). Strategic competence is a set of meta-cognitive strategies. This view is basically derived from Sternberg's description of meta-components in his model of intelligence. These strategies are involved in planning, monitoring, and evaluating individuals' problem solving therefore they hypothesized that their meta-cognitive strategies are involved in language use and virtually in all cognitive activity. The three areas of meta-cognitive strategies operate are goal setting, appraising, and planning



*Bachman,,s (1990)model of communicative language ability (CLA).*

## 2. Teaching methods that enhance communication skills

Since 1970, researchers tried to find adequate approaches to facilitate the process of teaching and learning a target language. It had been observed that mastering linguistic structures is not enough; it should be combined with communicative competence (Desai, 2015, p.48). Hence, communicative competence is applied in many approaches in the field of language teaching: Direct method, communicative language teaching, audio-lingual method, and competency based approach.

### 2.1. Direct method

Direct method (DM) is most widely known of the natural methods. It is originated in France and Germany, and became later known in the United States. The target language in DM focuses on communication inside classroom by avoiding translation and the use of the native language. Communicative competence plays an important role in the DM. Its implementation can be achieved inside classroom by using the target language. For instance, the instructions must be given in this latter. The learner is actively involved in using the language in realistic everyday situations. Likewise, speaking is taught first before reading and writing, and vocabulary is learned by using objects, pictures. Grammar is taught inductively i.e. learners find out the rules through the presentation of appropriate linguistic forms in the target language. In addition, reading aloud, self-correction, conversation practice, and dictation are techniques used to make an effective communication in the classroom.

### **2.2. Audio-lingual Method:**

The emergence of the audio-lingual method (ALM) was due to the increased attention to the foreign language teaching in the United States at the end of 1950's. Most of methods were still linked to the reading method and a radical change in teaching foreign languages methodology was needed. The learner must possess the second language as the native speakers do. The teacher's role in this method is central and active; he gives the target language model, controls learning, corrects and monitors the performance of the learners. The learners are viewed as organisms that can be directed by skilled training techniques to produce correct responses. They put forward that the learners' role is responding to stimuli, therefore they play a reactive role and have a little control over the content or the style of learning. They are not engaged in initiating interactions because they are afraid of making mistakes.

### **2.3. Communicative Language Teaching**

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is an approach to the teaching of second and foreign languages. It has served as a major source of influence on language teaching practice around the world. Thus, CLT approach is accepted to be the best hypothetical model in English language teaching since the mid 1970s. Communicative language teaching was considered as an acknowledged methodology in language teaching because it is derived from multidisciplinary practice that involves psychology, linguistics, sociology, educational and philosophical research. Therefore, language carries not only functional meaning but also a social one. The focus of CLT is on success rather than failure. The students are encouraged to rely on their own ingenuity and performance skills –namely their strategic competence when speaking. It emphasizes on the learner. The communicative approach to language teaching starts from the theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what *Hymes (1966)* referred to as "communicative competence."

#### **Characteristics of CLT**

The most important characteristic of CLT is the use of the target language as a normal medium for classroom management and instruction, understanding of English through active student interaction, role play, games, and information gaps. Then, a crucial feature of the communicative method is that it operates with stretches of language above the sentence level, and also with real language in real situations. Communicative approach is much more pupil-orientated, because dictated by pupils' needs and interests. Focus is on functional/ usable language. To go to a foreign country, prepared for reality they encounter there. Success

depends on the ability to do something with language. So, language used in the whole context is more useful than only studying the parts of it.

At the level of language theory, Communicative Language Teaching has a rich, if somewhat eclectic, theoretical base. The key principles of CLT. They are as follows:

- Classroom goals are focused on communicative competence. The target language is a vehicle for communication not only the object of study.

- Language techniques are designed to engage learners to use the language for meaningful purposes.

- Fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep the learners engaged in language use. Accuracy can be judged not in abstract but in context.

- Students have to use language productively and receptively as these are needed in authentic communication.

- Students should be given opportunities to be coached on strategies for how to improve their comprehension, their learning style and process.

- The teacher acts as a facilitator in setting up communicative activities and as an advisor or guide during the activities. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others. Although CLT has many characteristics, it has its strength but also challenges.

#### **2.4. Competency Based Approach:**

The competency- based approach (CBA) is also called the pedagogy of integration or an outcomes approach. In this approach, the learner will use all his knowledge about grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and pronunciation to communicate effectively in real life situation. Moreover, the linguistic, communicative, and sociolinguistic competences are required .i.e. the learner should know what to do, when, where, and with whom. CBA is an approach that seeks to link between the classroom and every day real life, so that the learner learns in the classroom the knowledge and things that he will use to solve problems in real life in different situations. The CBA focuses on the learning outcomes, it pays more attention to what the learners are expected to do rather than to what they are expected to learn about. CBA defines the educational goals as being precise measurable description of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that learners should have at the end of a course.

CBA has several features and characteristics, the first one is the competencies are stated in specific and measurable behavioral terms. The second feature is the contents are based on the learners' goals i.e. outcomes or competencies. In addition, the learners continue learning until mastery is demonstrated. Another feature is that the approach makes use of an unlimited variety of instructional techniques and group work. It centers on what the learners need to learn, which is the application of the basic skills in context such as listening, media, and real life materials adapted to targeted competencies. In addition, it provides learners with immediate feedback on assessment. The instruction or teaching within the CBA is paced to the needs of the learners. The last characteristic is that it gets learners to demonstrate mastery of the specific competency statements or objectives mapping of some competency objective or statements .