



APPLICATION OF LINGUISTIC, COMMUNICATIVE AND PRAGMATIC COMPETENCES FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract: The article discusses the development of the content of the concept of "competence" in the history of linguistics, as well as the methodology of teaching languages, analyzes the main concepts of scientists and presents the structures of linguistic competence by different authors. Based on the analysis, the definition of linguistic, pragmatic and communicative competences and the main stages of the formation of linguistic competencies in the process of teaching a foreign language are studied.

Key words: linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, language teaching competence.

Linguistic competence Chomsky (1965) emphasized the difference between linguistic competence, the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language and performance, the actual use of language in concrete situations, he points out that "linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such gram-matically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interests, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. "(p. 4). For Fodor and Garrett (1966), Chomsky's insistence upon the competence/performance distinction in linguistics amounts to a major methodological clarification. They claim that, if the object of the linguist's study is the behavior of speakers, the data the linguist will have at his disposal will be impoverished in two ways. First of all, the speaker's utterances are small, finite and fortuitous from the linguistic point of view and therefore a theory of the corpus would be arbitrarily related to a theory of the language. Furthermore, the relevant structural relations in the language would not be exemplified in the corpus and thus generalizations that are true of the corpus would not be true of the language. Secondly, there are features of the language such as grammaticality and ambiguity that speakers know about their utterances that would fail to emerge as features of a corpus the linguist is supposed to be studying. Therefore, a theory of linguistic knowledge must take into account this impoverished data and attempt on the one hand to "project" a finite corpus of utterances to a set of rules which describes the infinite range



of sentences and on the other hand to account for the speaker's intuitions concerning the language.

Just as Hymes reacted against Chomsky's concept of competence-performance and proposed communicative competence instead, Oller too attacked transformational generative grammar and proposed pragmatics as an alternative. Oller defines pragmatics as "the relationship between linguistic contexts and extra linguistic contexts. It embraces the traditional subject matter of psycholinguistics and also that of Sociolinguistics". Oller goes on to say that "pragmatics is about how people communicate information about acts and feelings to other people, or how they merely express themselves and their feelings through the use of language.... Such a definition of pragmatics is too wide in the sense that it fails to distinguish pragmatics from many other disciplines interested in functional approaches to language, including psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. Another definition favored in the literature equates pragmatics with the ability of language users to pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate. According to Levinson (1983) such a view enjoys much support among linguists and philosophers but unfortunately it involves many problems. This definition "would have as a consequence exact identity with a sociolinguistic construct in the manner of Hymes (1972) as a theory of communicative competence." ,p. 24). A more restricted view of pragmatics has been proposed by Katz and Fodor who suggest that pragmatics should be concerned solely with principles of language usage and-should have nothing to do with the description of linguistic structure. Katz and Fodor propose that a theory of pragmatics would essentially be concerned with the disambiguation of sentences by the contexts in which they were uttered. Such a definition would restrict the scope of pragmatics to performance principles of language use (to invoke Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance).

In the field of language learning and teaching, "linguistic competence may be thought of as the learner's knowledge of the structures and vocabulary of the language and his ability to produce and comprehend well-formed sentences in the language". (Fischer 1984 p. 35). In this sense the student's participation in the classroom is described by Fischer as rule-governed behaviour in which his attention is focused on the application of rules to derive correct grammatical forms. As far as pragmatics is concerned, Oller (1970) claims that it has definite implications for language teaching; for example, he indicates that pattern drills should be designed so that instead of manipulating purely abstract elements of a calculus - usually a paradigm of totally unrelated sentences illustrating a point of syntax - the student should be using language to respond to a paradigm of situations"...(p. 507). Oller goes on to say that pragmatics defines the "goal of teaching a language as inducing the student not merely to manipulate meaningless sound sequences, but to send and receive messages in the language. " (p. 507). Such a view of pragmatics coincides with that of communicative competence seen as the learner's use of "the language to send and receive messages in concrete situation and for specific purposes." (Fischer 1984 p. 36). Whereas for Fraser et al. (1980) pragmatic competence is only seen as a subcomponent to the more general level of communicative competence. It is



concerned with “the ability of the second language learner to use the language in a social context to perform the various speech acts of requesting apologizing and the like.” (78). Foreign language communicative competence, for Savignon (1972) is seen as the “ability to function dynamically in a truly communicative setting adapting to all of the informational elements in the context be they linguistic or non-verbal”. (p. 8-9). Thus, we can see that although communicative competence implies an underlying knowledge and a potential to communicate well, its definition is usually associated with actual performance in a social situation. However, opinions in the literature differ as to whether communicative competence should be distinguished from communicative performance and whether communicative competence should include grammatical competence as one of its components. With regard to this last point, Palmer (1978), Paulston (1974) and Widdowson (1971) among others consider that communicative competence should be distinguished from linguistic competence. In this context communicative competence is used to refer exclusively to knowledge or capacity relating to the rules of language use and the term linguistic competence used to refer to the rules of grammar. Widdowson (op. cit.) makes the distinction between usage, the language user’s knowledge of linguistic rules and use, the language user’s ability to use his knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication. He points out that “in normal circumstances, linguistic performance involves the simultaneous manifestation of the language system as usage and its realization as use. But we can separate one from the other if we wish by focusing our attention on one rather than the other.”

Now let us return to the second view of communicative competence i.e. The view which considers that communicative competence should be distinguished from communicative performance. A large number of researchers (Carroll 1961, Briere 1971, Canale and Swain 1980) point out that “communicative competence should be distinguished from communicative performance, which is the realization of these competencies and their interaction in the actual production and comprehension of utterances.” (p. 6). They emphasize that this distinction should be maintained at least for second language teaching and testing purposes. They claim that “teaching methodology and assessment instruments must be designed so as to address not only communicative competence but also communicative performance i.e. The actual demonstration of knowledge in real second language situations and for authentic communicative purposes.” (p. 6). The distinction is to be maintained. She points out that “although there is a theoretical difference between competence and performance, only performance is observable and therefore provides the basis for making inferences about a person’s underlying competence” . Another researcher (Rea 1985) claims that although the distinction between communicative performances is justified at the the opretical level, he found it confusing and misleading at the practical level. As far as language testing is concerned, he questions the commonly held distinction between “competence oriented tests” and “performance” tests and suggests instead a single category in practice, that of “performance”. By way of summary we could say that although for methodological reasons the literature on

language teaching and language testing gives the impression that linguistic competence and communicative competence (or for that matter pragmatic competence) are fundamentally distinct theoretical construct with few features in common, our view is that linguistic and communicative competence are complementary and neither „can occur without the other. Linguistic and communicative competence (or pragmatic competence) are not separate concepts with nothing in common, they are both part of the language or as Davies (1978) put it “linguistic competence and communicative competence represent different points along a single language learning continuum”. (p. 215). Canale and Swain (1979) would refer to this combined, overall proficiency as one’s true communicative competence. However, the distinction has to be maintained only for second or foreign language teaching of testing purposes, since foreign language instructional materials, methods and tests are often geared to elicit one rather than the other. Second language learners can experience either compartmentalized or integrated control of the two components of language. In the former case (compartmentalized situation), the foreign language learner will have a good control of the formal aspect of the language (phonology, vocabulary and grammar); but be unable to get his meaning across with ease. In the second case (integrated situation), a foreign language learner is willing to communicate or to get his message across while never controlling the grammar adequately. Therefore, linguistic and communicative competence must combine to produce, general, overall, language proficiency which we will refer to as integration. We believe that integration is the ultimate goal of a foreign language class.

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