

The Importance of the Communication Competence in Teaching English as a Second Language

Vanesa MAGHERUȘAN
Romanian-American University

Abstract

Communication competence is a person's capacity to convey their thoughts, beliefs, plans, emotions and intentions through verbal and non-verbal means and to receive and understands the messages received through the process of communication.

Keywords

communication, competence, English, skills.

Communication competence is a person's capacity to convey their thoughts, beliefs, plans, emotions and intentions through verbal and non-verbal means and to receive and understands the messages received through the process of communication.

The communication competence is that capacity that allows students to acknowledge and produce statements accessible to their level of perception and operation, that are grammatically correct and appropriate to the context in which the communication occurs. For a comprehensive inter-human communication, however, the communication through language is an insufficient prerequisite. Extra-verbal (non-verbal and paraverbal – metacommunication) means of communication convey a wide range of information that, using only spoken language, would not be conveyed or would be only partially conveyed, in particular as behavior and emotions are concerned.

The notion of competence is subject of various approaches depending on the field under debate. Education, however, requires a specific approach and the sciences of education offer several definitions for such notion.

Thus, the notion of competence is associated with a situation, range of situations and with the experiences of a person or group of people. The development of competence is substantiated through the use and coordination by a person or group of people of multiple resources such as personal resources and resources specific to certain circumstances and context. A competence is built in case of full and socially acceptable processing of situations and it results from the dynamic processing of such situations. A competence is not predictable, therefore it cannot be predefined; it depends on a person or group of people, their knowledge, understanding, imagination, resources, constraints and obstacles encountered in different situations.

In conclusion, a short definition of competence would be that it is the result of a full processing of a situation by a person or group of people in a given context. The competence is the result of a dynamic process, specific to a certain situation, but can be adjusted to different situations. Ph. Jonnaert notices that a competence is defined by *context, person or group of people, situation*: situation and its family of situations; *range of life experiences* of a person or group of people; *context of actions*: types of actions including a certain number of actions carried out by one or several people; *context of resources*: resources spent to develop the competence; *context of evaluation*: results, transformations occurred during various situations and criteria indicating that the processing of the situation is complete, successful and socially acceptable.

Following the analysis of the notion of competence, we distinguish the following *characteristics*: it is not expressed directly and is closely related to the subject's activity and context; it is structured in a dynamic way, has a meta-cognitive dimension, which is, at the same time, individual and collective.

The concept of *competence* is used to refer to academic achievement. In the opinion of several authors, competence is a capacity that manifests itself, and the latter is based on information support. Also, competence consists of a pool of resources: *savoir-dire, savoir-faire* and *savoir-être*. Competences are structured as sets of knowledge and skills acquired through learning that allow the identification and resolution of problems in various contexts of a certain subject.

According to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, the communicative competence includes the following components: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic.

Linguistic competence is a key component of communicative competence. In other words, use of language in verbal-meditative activities (e.g.: Use the verb *to see* for different meanings: to visit, to consult, to disclose/discover, observe). C. Prigorschi details the components of the communicative competence and the *linguistic competence* is one of the activities that contribute to develop the *four skills of language comprehension and oral and written expression*, according to the knowledge of lexical items, rules of morphology, syntax, grammar, semantics and phonology needed to practice them.

Another component of the communicative competence is the *pragmatic competence*, representing the readiness to send the communicative message in a communicative situation (e.g.: Make sentences with the following words: software requirements, software contracts, contract price, price offer etc.).

To communicate is not enough to know the language, the linguistic system and produce grammatically correct statements - called by scientists as N. Chomsky *linguistic competence*, but to know how to use them according to social context; we with different interlocutors, in different circumstances or for different intentions.

According to Parks, „communicative competence is the degree to which individuals meet their goals within the limits of the social situation, without risking their skills or opportunities to pursue other individual important goals.”

For J. de Vito, the communicative competence refers to “personal knowledge on several social issues of communication”.

Other approaches of the communicative competence focus on the ability to express communicative behavior according to actual situations. According to Spitzberg and Cupach, the communicative competence concerns the ability to prove proper communication in a given context and Habermas noticed that each act of communication means: intelligible utterance, proper social relations, and the speaker's experience.

Opposed to these approaches, McCroskey et al. (1984) see the communicative competence as different from behavior/performance: "The communicative competence requires not only the ability to properly perform correct communicative behaviors, but also to understand those behaviors and cognitive abilities that make possible a choice between behaviors". An attempt to unite these perspectives is found in F.K. Jablin et al. (1994), who characterized the communicative competence as set of abilities, primary resources employed by communicator in the communication process; these resources include strategic knowledge (about the rules and norms of communication) and capacities (characteristics and abilities such as coding and decoding abilities).

The communicative competence means one's ability to rule on a thing, based on a deep knowledge of the issue in question and uniting personality dimensions acquired after a training process.

In the opinion of some researchers, "*competence* is a dynamic concept, it involves a process of manufacture, it is a complex notion that paradoxically cannot be learned as such in school/college, but that "comes alive" in concrete situations. We note that competence cannot be formed during schooling, but we conclude that there may be elements of competence that contribute later in the life to the formation of competence. The researcher Miron Ionescu in his work *Instrucție și educație* defines the competencies as such: "integrated assemblies of capacities and skills of application, operation and transfer of acquisitions, enabling the efficient conduct of an activity, use of functional knowledge, principles and skills acquired in different formal and informal contexts". The researcher emphasizes the praxiological side of competences, enabling their functionality in different activities, which are necessary not only in formal education but also in the implementation of activities related to non-formal and informal education. In the same respect, Ph. Perrenoud says: "Competences involve the integration and adaptation, mobilization and transfer of knowledge to different situations, regulation of resources and thought and action strategies gaining more and more finesse in relation to the plurality experience gained. Some competences are disciplinary, others are on the border of several disciplines and others are trans-disciplinary". A. Stoica and R. Mihail define competence as "acting availability of the student based on well-defined resources, but also on previous experience that is significantly enough and organized. It materializes in the student's performance, largely predictable based on previous performance". Researchers mention the acting side a subject whose competence is formed; the design of activities, to see the final result, the solutions proposed to the problem in various fields; activity planning, forecasting expected results, activity strategy development, creative and

autonomous operation in various life situations are materialized in the student's performance.

L. Șoitu highlights some features that a person competent in communication should have. One of these is the presence of a *wide range of behaviors*. The need to communicate motivates the research for solutions and efforts to preserve relations. L. Șoitu states that communication can become ours only if it passes by you and me and offers a chance to other connections. A second feature is from R. Adler, *cognitive complexity*, which means the ability to develop different, but comprehensive scenarios for each communication situation. This allows interlocutors to integrate each other in a universe that may become common.

The communicative competence contains the full set of personal skills: *to know; to know what to do; to know to be; to know to become*; it is a result of both science and art (mastery), as there is no ideal way of communication. An essential feature of the communicative competence is the *relational dimension*. Communication is limited, every time, to the satisfaction of both parties. The competence of one party is not enough if the interlocutor lacks some minimum abilities.

Summing up those above, we notice that several personality traits are shaped: *attitude, attitude, skill, ability, knowledge*. Most often, skills have its name in relation to those actions in whose formation are included. Skills that are formed based on language are called verbal. In the educational process, students' speaking will be noticed in the communicative act.

In the opinion of L. Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, *communicative competence* requires a regulated relationship between the data of the communication situation and the manner of selection of the linguistic material. Here we encounter the concept of *idiolect* (belongs to U. Ecco), which is the inventory of verbal skills of an individual in a certain period of their life. R. Jakobson, however, does not consider that the utility of the concept is necessary, arguing that everything is *socialized*.

When we talk about the communicative competence, we can distinguish two approaches: behavior and cognition. A third perspective, identified as an alternative, is brought by the ecological model: according to it, the communicative competence is a result of the dynamic interaction between the environment and the development of individual / group / organization; the development of the communicative competence is influenced and influences in its turn the environment in every process that occurs.

The formation and development of the communicative competence is supported by the formation and development of the following four types of integrative skills: (1) understating oral messages; (2) oral communication; (3) understanding written messages; (4) written communication. These skills are supported by the following types of behaviors: (a) receiver; (b) speaker; (c) reader; (4) writer (namely written communication).

With the help of the communicative competence, students will be able to learn the skill to understand verbal messages and decode written messages; to notice and learn the structure and operation of the fundamental elements of communication in

the construction of various types of messages; to integrate rules of message construction and conventions of social interaction through language, producing and reproducing correctly verbal and written messages; to apply correctly and motivated knowledge learned to successfully learn communication tasks in oral and written code.

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