COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT: This article is an attempt to formulate comprehensive ideas for EFL teachers based on the results of the studies by Sandra J. Savignon, a professor in the Program in Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at the Pennsylvania State University. The professor is popular with ELT teachers worldwide with her groundbreaking researches in the field of Second Language Acquisition. The paper provides an overview of the reasons why EFL teachers need to question their use of old simple memory-based methods and consider about the learners' communicative competences in a deeper and meaningful manner. Own practical experience with developing communicative competence in Uzbek students in addition to a theoretical base is revealed in this work.

Keywords: EFL, communicative competence, CLT, *communicative activities, grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences.*

Introduction

Communicative competence is one of the basic needs of EFL learners. Today's classrooms provide lessons based on various language teaching methods. And Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT), also called Communicative Approach (CA), plays a vital role in enhancing communicating abilities in the target language. Tracing back to teaching English as a foreign language in the 1960s, this approach has already proved its effectiveness since it emphasizes oral and written interaction above all.

Conceptual underpinnings of Communicative Language Teaching

The article of "Communicative Competence" by Sandra J. Savignon records the origin and basic features of the term of communicative competence. The "Army method" (audio-lingualism) appeared in the world of

linguistics when there was an urgent need for the US armed forces to have speakers of foreign languages during and after the World War II. Due to limited time, linguists discovered a new method which focused on lots of dialogues and repetition of grammatical patterns. Usage of tape recorders arose to get the learners to listen to the correct pronunciation by native speakers who were seen as an ideal. As reported by Savignon (1972), this method, ultimately separate from previous grammar-translation and behaviorism, as well as an unsuccessful experience of a language teacher prepared scientists to study communicative conditions of language use. After Chomsky (1959) determined the term of "linguistic competence", sociolinguist Hymes (1972) developed a new term "communicative competence" and claimed that language use is not about only grammar, but appropriateness in certain social contexts should also be taken into consideration in teaching a foreign language. In communicative language teaching, learners' choice and needs, learner autonomy play a role (Candlin, 1978). To become communicatively competent users of a language, learners are engaged in group activities, and tasks which enhance both oral and written communication. Spontaneity in role plays and games does not decrease grammatical accuracy level of the learners. In accordance with Canale and Swain (1980), CC consists of strategic competence, grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence. Grammatical competence means apprehension of syntax, morphology and phonology rules. Whereas sociolinguistic competence is understanding that some words may denote a different meaning in particular situations. Strategic competence is ability to continue communication by paraphrasing when the speaker does not know/remember certain phrases. As noted in the article, teachers need to bring communicative experiences into their lessons more.

According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence is the ability not only to apply to grammatical rules of a language in order to from grammatically correct sentences but also to know when and where to use these sentences and to whom. We use the language to accomplish some function, such as arguing, persuading, or promising within a social context. Since communication is a process, it is insufficient for students to simply have knowledge of target language forms, meanings, and functions. Students must be able to apply this knowledge in negotiating meaning (to understand each other). Duff (2014) states that this approach involves describing one's daily routine, interviewing peers, discussion of current local events and world news, exchanging emails with one another, and others. Furthermore, from my experience I would recommend using activities or tasks more that raise students' self-confidence, such as speeches on a favorite book, TEDx talks in the classroom context, shooting a video clip on a friends' meeting in a café, dialogues, creating a movie on culture and traditions in groups, conveying personal opinions in a debate, or peer feedback on a presentation. These project-based or conversation-based communicative activities assist in promoting communication among the group of language learners and analyzing the language they are using.

Communicative competence is the core focus of Communicative Language Teaching method. It is a set of the most important skills needed in language learning and acquisition. Communicative competence is comprised of four sub-competences. The grammatical competence is the aspect of communicative competence that encompasses the knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence grammar semantics, and phonology. The discourse competence is the ability of understand and create forms of the language that are longer than sentences or, in other words, it emphasizes the connection of sentences and the forming meaningful series of utterances. The sociolinguistic competence is the knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language and discourse. It requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used: the roles of the participant, the information they share, and the function of interaction. The strategic competence is to know how to recognize and repair communication breakdowns, how to work around gaps in one's knowledge of the language, and how to learn more about the language and in the context.

Brown's (2007) description of CLT

Brown (2007) explains the features of Communicative Language Teaching in the following way:

1- Classroom goals are focused on all the components of communicative competence. They are grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences.

2- Engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes.

3- Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.

4- Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.

5- Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.

6- The role of the teacher is facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others.

Authentic language is one of the key elements in Communicative Language Teaching method. It is a language as it is used in a real context which should be introduced to language learners. Being able to figure out the speaker's or writer's intention is part of being communicatively competent. Students should work with language at the discourse or suprasentential (above the sentence) level. They must learn about cohesion and coherence, those properties of language which bind the sentences together. Games are important because they have certain features in common with real communicative events – there is a purpose to the exchange.

Also, the speaker receives immediate feedback from the listener on whether or not she has successfully communicated. Having students work in small groups maximizes the amount of communicative practice they receive. Students should be given an opportunity to express their ideas and opinions. Errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Students' success is determined as much by their fluency as it is by their accuracy.

Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, teaching young adult learners in an EFL context requires specific skills on the part of the language teacher. Reflecting on your own experiences as a language teacher is a part of formal instruction. Is your teaching emphasizing memorization of lists of vocabulary separately or L1-L2 translation? Is it face-to-face communication in the target language that you spend much of the class time and creating socially secure environment for conversations to take place? However, as in all educational settings, the EFL teacher needs not only to keep the attention on the coursebook, to provide as meaningful language lesson as possible.

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