

THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC COMPETENCE AS AN ASPECT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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Abstract

As a language teacher, teaching communicative strategies is critically important in second language acquisition since there may be higher possibility that learners come across uneasy situations while communicating. So as to compensate for breakdowns in communication there are several techniques advised such as reduction strategy, generalization strategy and paraphrasing strategy.

Key Words: competence, communicative, linguistic, pragmatic, sociolinguistic, strategic competence, breakdown, communication, paraphrasing.

The primary goal of language learning and teaching is to develop communicative competence in the target language. The introduction of communicative competence in second/foreign language research dates back to the early 1970s. The term *communicative competence* was coined by Hymes (1972) and Chiesa et al. (2019) defined it as the ability of a language learner about what, where and how to speak appropriately from the perspectives of culture, tradition and shared rules. According Chiesa et al. (2019), communicative competence is made up of the following four different subcategories:

Grammatical/linguistic competence is the ability to use grammatical, lexical and stylistic knowledge to oral and written context, yet this competence is not enough to reach a communicative goal as there are other important non-linguistic factors in building successful communication.

Pragmatic/discourse competence is the ability to understand and express intended meaning in context.

Sociolinguistic competence is ability to understand how different cultures choose grammar, syntax and stylistic while describing the same thing. Beyond this, the learner should be aware of different shared social rules and norms of the culture of the target language as they play an important role in communication.

Strategic competence is the ability to overcome breakdowns in communication due to lacking knowledge in linguistic, discourse and sociolinguistic competences through "paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance, and guessing, as well as shifts in register and style" (Canale and Swain, 1980, pp. 40-41).

Being one of the aspects of communicative competence (CC), strategic competence is the learner's ability to overcome difficulties when communication breakdowns occur (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, & Thurrell, 1995). This means that when the learner lacks knowledge in grammatical, sociolinguistic and discourse competences, strategic competence can be implemented to maintain effective communication. Canale and Swain (1980) viewed strategic competence as "the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or due to insufficient competence." Thus, strategic competence is considered to be an important skill that language teachers are recommended to teach.

Communicative strategies, also known as strategic competence can be used as compensate for communication breakdowns. Chiesa et al. (2019) note strategic competence allows learners to bridge the gap between what they can say and what they want to say. Due to lack of grammar or vocabulary knowledge, learners may pause or stop speaking to other interlocutors in the target language. In order to deal with such communication problems the following repair strategies can be implemented:

Generalization strategy is to replace a specific word with another commonly-used word without destroying a general meaning of the message. For example, we can use the word *thing* if we do not know or remember the word *needle*.

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Paraphrasing strategy is saying its functions or features instead of its exact name. For instance, if we do not know or remember the word *knife*, you can say it is a tool used to cut meat, fruit and etc.

Circumlocution strategy is using definitions or synonyms instead of saying a word or a phrase when you do not know it in the target language.

Professional literature has also stressed the importance of strategic competence in second language acquisition. Mariani (1994) asserted in his article "Developing strategic competence: towards autonomy in oral interaction":

Any person who is not a mother-tongue speaker or a true bilingual must necessarily rely on some incomplete and imperfect competence - this corresponds to the present stage in his or her interlanguage system.

Also, Mariani (1994) stated several benefits of such communication strategies. First of all, communication strategies enable learners to remain in conversation, supply them with more input and more opportunity to improve their interlanguage resulting in a positive impact on learning. Secondly, on the productive side, they can receive some useful feedback on their own performance, and on the receptive side, they can train some kind of control over their intake, for example, by allowing them to make their interlocutor change his or her utterances. In addition, communication strategies train learners in the flexibility they need to cope with the unexpected and the unpredictable. Furthermore, they help students get used to non-exact communication, which is perhaps the real nature of all communication.

As confirmed, teaching these strategies through different activities is critical for language teachers since they are responsible for successful language learning of their students.

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