Communicative Competence in English as a foreign language

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Title: Communicative Competence in English as a foreign language.
Abstract
This article is an attempt to explore the term communicative competence in English as a foreign language. Communicative competence is the main aim for second and foreign language teaching, and its models have been created to include numerous perspectives of language such as the morpho-syntactic competence (lexical, gramatical and phonological aspects), the pragmatic competence (sociolinguistic,discursive and functional aspects), the process competence (intra-personal and interpersonal aspects) and the intercultural competence.
Keywords: Communication, EFL, Pedagogical Considerations, Communicative Competence

Título: La competencia comunicativa del inglés como idioma extranjero.
Resumen
Este artículo pretende explorar el término de competencia comunicativa en inglés como idioma extranjero. La competencia comunicativa es el objetivo principal de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, y su estructura se ha creado para incluir numerosas perspectivas del lenguaje. Esta estructura está formada por la competencia morfosintáctica (aspectos léxico, gramático y fonológico), la competencia pragmática (aspectos sociolingüístico, discursivo y funcional), la competencia del proceso (aspectos intra-personales e interpersonales) y la competencia intercultural.
Palabras clave: Comunicación, Inglés como lengua extranjera, Consideraciones Pedagógicas, Competencia Comunicativa.

INTRODUCTION

According to the European Parliament and The Council on key competences for lifelong learning, and in accordance with international studies, 'competence' is defined here as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to a particular situation.

To describe the idea 'communicative competence' we could look into the two words that compoud it, of which the word "competence" is the headword. Competence could be portrayed as the knowledge, skill or capability, while the word 'communicative' has the significance of conversation or interaction. So we could say that the communicative competence is a 'competence to communicate' that is,, having the capacity that permits the human being to have interchange of thoughts to fulfill communicative requests.

'Basic competences' are those that support personal fulfillment, social inclusion, active civic-ship and employment.

Following the proposal carried out by the European Union, the concept of basic competences appears in the RD 1513/2006, December 7th the concept of basic competitions. Eight basic competences have been identified: Competence in Linguistic Communication, Mathematical Competence, Competence in the knowledge and interaction with the real world, Treatment of the information and Digital Competence, Social and civic Competence, Cultural and artistic Competence, Learn to learn Competence, and Self-autonomy and initiative.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE

According to the Ministerial Order of the 9th of May of 2007, the learning of a foreign language contributes to the development of the linguistic competence in a direct way. The competences are in direct relationship with the competence of the information treatment. The technologies of the information and the communication offer the possibility of to communicate in real time with any part of the world and also the simple and immediate access to an

incessant flow of information that increases every day. The knowledge of a foreign language offers the possibility to communicate using it.

This area contributes in good measure to the development of the social competence. The languages serve to those speakers to communicate socially and, therefore, they are also a vehicle of cultural transmission. At the same time, the knowledge of another language and of cultural features different to the own ones contribute to the best understanding and valuation of the own language and culture and it favors the respect. Finally, this area collaborates in the development of the cultural and artistic competence, because of the cultural manifestations in artistic activities as the literature, the painting, the sculpture, the architecture, the cinema and the picture reflect cultural contents of historical and social reference of the community of speaking of the foreign language, so they constitute indispensable sources for the teaching and the learning of this language.

In the following lines I´m going to explain in a more extended way the competences of the area, that have been divided in blocks that form the outline of the curriculum:

THE MORPHO-SYNTACTIC COMPETENCE

It is understood as a group of knowledge and abilities that allow to understand and to express the meaning of messages. It embraces the domain of the verbal and not verbal code. It implies the acquisition of the following competences:

a) *Lexical Competence*. Knowledge and ability to understand and to use the vocabulary of a language adapted to the context, topic and purpose of the communication.

Using different resources, the students use the lexicon in familiar communicative situations, in a verbal and not verbal way, as for example: to say a word or a sentence, to represent actions, to make gestures, to relate words and enunciated appropriately with drawings, to label objects of the classroom, etc. Progressively, a systematizing of this learning of the lexicon is fomented helping the students to relate, to contain and to classify the vocabulary.

b) *Grammatical Competence*. Ability to apply the rules that govern the relationships among the elements of the linguistic code, to interpret and express meanings. The grammar's teaching in this educational stage is not an objective in itself, but a means to facilitate the understanding and production of messages in talkative contexts.

The development of the internal grammar of the pupils of foreign languages is based on a systematic exhibition to the language in a communicative context and not in the explanation of grammatical norms in an abstract way. The grammatical error is part of the learning process.

c) *Phonological Competence.* Recognition and ability to use phonemes, accent, rhythm and intonation adapted to the talkative purpose.

This competence contributes decisively to facilitate the understanding, expression and communication of messages in an intelligible way. A first step is to foment the perception of new sounds they don't already exist in the maternal language and different combinations of phonemes. Constant opportunities to listen by audiovisual supports should be offer.

THE PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

It consists on the necessary knowledge, abilities and strategies for the social use of the language, the coherent organization, understanding and expression of oral and written messages.

a) *Sociolinguistic Competence*. It refers to the knowledge and the abilities that contribute to the appropriate use of the language in talkative interactions according to the conventions of the linguistic and socio-cultural context of the language.

The student is able to identify some important elements of the context through the words chosen by the speaker, the voice tone, the expressions, etc. Some examples of the application of this competence could be: to avoid linguistic behaviors that can be perceived as inappropriate; the use and the election of the greeting, farewells; the use and election of the treatment (formal, informal, familiar) ;etc.

b) *Discursive Competence*. Knowledge of the rules that govern the organization, structuring and sequence of the linguistic and functional elements of the language, as well as the capacities to use them in the spoken and written way.

Examples of the application of those capacities could be: to answer spontaneous and appropriately to the speaker's talkative behavior; to organize the ideas appropriately inside the paragraph and the text; or the use of strategies to keep the communication.

c) Functional Competence. It consists on the capacity to produce enunciates to complete a certain talkative communicative intention. It embraces other functions (to identify, to ask, to answer, to request, etc.).

THE PROCESS COMPETENCE

It refers to the knowledge, strategies and intra-interpersonal abilities that allow assimilating the new learning.

a) *Intra-personal competence*. It includes the knowledge and regulation of personal factors, such as motivation, emotions and attitudes that impact positively or negatively in the learning process.

The pupil learns how to analyze, to express and to manage these personal factors in relation to the learning of foreign languages, since they influence decisively in the degree of success. It is necessary to keep in mind the different cognitive styles of the students and to recognize them as different ways to achieve a significant learning, contributing in reducing the fear to make errors, accepting their capacities and limitations. The success is also influenced decisively by the development of the abilities to organize their own learning process. They include, among others: to learn how to relate new learnings with knowledge acquired, to use selective attention, to plan the realization of tasks or to look for and to select appropriate materials.

b) *Interpersonal Competence.* It refers to the acquisition of knowledge, abilities and strategies to contribute in the development of a cooperative learning in a group.

The fundamental objective of the area is to develop the talkative competence. The foreign language is a form of social behavior whose abilities are acquired interacting to other people.

In order to optimize the opportunities that the classroom of foreign languages offers to foment these aspects, it is necessary to pay attention in the following aspects: to use tasks that contribute to make explicit the expectations of the students, to generate ideas, as group, on interesting topics, to improve the affective relationships among the individuals, to develop a positive interdependence or to foment and appreciate the participation of all the students, etc.

THE INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

It includes the necessary skills and knowledge to relate their own culture with the foreign one and to overcome misunderstandings and stereotypes.

It embraces attitudes like to value the foreign language as a communication instrument or the respect toward other cultures. Among the knowledge related with this competence they are: information about the different countries where the foreign language is spoken, festivities and traditions and historical, literary or artistic aspects.

CONCLUSION

This article has gone through the different contributions of the foreign language teaching learning process. "Communicative competence" is seen as the understanding of the regulations of speech an language use,

and the skill to employ such understandig successfully and appropiately in real life situations.

Communicative competence is the main aim for second and foreign language teaching, and its models have been created to include numerous perspectives of language such as the morpho-syntactic competence , the pragmatic competence, the process competence and the intercultural competence.

The present educative context suggests utilizing communicative language teaching approach in its activities, all together with new technologies and cooperative learning as ways for accomplishing a good quality level of communicative competence in English as a second language.

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