

Exploring Communicative Competence: Definitions, Advancements, and Implementations across Disciplines

Doung Dara¹

Mindset Development Organization, Cambodia
Email: d_dara09@yahoo.com

Abdul Ghani Soomro²

Associate Professor of English, Education and Literacy Department, Govt. of Sindh-Pakistan
Email: ghaniedu@gmail.com

Sun Ny³

Angkul Lower Secondary School, Cambodia
Email: nysun82@gmail.com

Chat Koem Hong⁴

The University of Cambodia
Email: chat.koemhong@gmail.com

Dr. Ehab Elshamy⁵

Chancellor, American International Theism University Florida- USA
Email: vc@aituedu.org

Abstract

This paper explored the dynamic and multifaceted concept of communicative competence, which originated as a critical response to Noam Chomsky's linguistic theories. By examining contributions from various scholarly disciplines, it compiled and critically assessed diverse definitions while tracing the evolution of communicative competence into a broader sociocultural phenomenon. The study meticulously mapped the developmental trajectory of communicative competence, exploring its theoretical underpinnings and practical applications in different contexts. It highlighted its significance in contemporary society by demonstrating its adaptability to changing pedagogical needs and societal expectations. This comprehensive overview emphasized the importance of communicative competence in both theoretical linguistics and practical language education. The paper showcased how communicative competence integrates functional, sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse competencies to facilitate effective communication across various societal domains, making it a pivotal element in the advancement of communication studies. Embracing communicative competence into collaborative learning and cognitive flexibility should be motivated for further research.

Keywords: *Communicative competence, language use, multidisciplinary perspectives, implementations*

Introduction

Communicative competence has traversed multiple domains of study, evolving continuously from its linguistic foundations to encompass functional considerations within both native and second language contexts, as well as across diverse language communities. The dichotomy between competence and performance, initially introduced within linguistics, laid the groundwork for the emergence of "communicative competence," a concept revitalizing language study by emphasizing sociolinguistic competence and the ability to effectively employ language in social contexts (Hymes, 1970). This shift extended the understanding of language from its core structural

aspects to its broader social dimensions, including appropriateness and situational use. Halliday (1974) further expanded this perspective by introducing meta-functions of language, highlighting the connection between language use and the speakers' experiences and interactions. Canale and Swain (1980) contributed to the discourse by delineating elements of communicative competence, notably introducing strategic competence as a means to compensate for deficiencies in linguistic proficiency (Ahmed, Ali, Fatima, Ali, Waqarul & Hasan, 2024). Subsequently, Canale (1983) proposed an enhanced framework, incorporating discourse competence, albeit without significant novelty. Troike (1989) introduced an ethnographical model of communicative competence, emphasizing three foundational pillars, with cultural attachment representing a revolutionary addition.

Bachman and Palmer (1996) presented a more intricate model, characterized by its linguistic exclusivity and criticality, encompassing elements of time, organization, and pragmatics, while also highlighting strategic competence from a different perspective. Okvir's (2005) contribution, although lacking novelty, overlooked strategic competence, a crucial aspect in communicative interactions. In parallel, Lingren (2008) integrated Goffman's and Kramsch's theories of interactional order and interactional competence into a comprehensive framework, emphasizing ongoing features and the importance of understanding interactional dynamics within communicative contexts (Ahmed, Sultana, Hassan, & Ali, 2024). Communicative competence, despite its varied interpretations and applications, remains foundational to communicative language teaching methodologies in practical settings. Teaching methods, syllabus designs, materials, and activities have been tailored to align with communicative language learning objectives, often at the expense of traditional structuralist approaches. Consequently, there exists ongoing discourse and debate surrounding the nature and implementation of communicative competence within language education.

Definitions

Communicative competence has various meanings. Hymes who is the distinguished linguist and anthropologist defines that communicative competence is "a wide term including not only linguistic Knowledge but also knowledge of a set of sociolinguistic codes and rules for using them." Communicative competence, he claims, is "the most general term for the speaking and hearing capabilities of a person - competence is understood to be dependent on two things: (tacit) knowledge and (ability for) use". (p. 16). Even though his notions of this term are acknowledged, there are some famous researchers using this linguistic term by defining differently. For Brown (1976) communicative competence, unlike linguistic competence, involves, awareness of the transactions that occur between people. Competence in this perspective is tied to actual performance of the language in social situations (Wieman & Backlund, 1980; Ali, Kolachi & Azam, 2023). Backlund (1977) offers a wider definition of communicative competence claiming that communicative competence is "the ability of art interactant to choose among available communicative behavior in order that he (she) may successfully accomplish his (her) own interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of his (her) fellow interactant within the constraints of the situations. "(p. 16). Further, Canale (1983) defines "communicative competence is the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required communications". In short, communicative competence has broad concepts covering not grammatical competence and knowledge, but its use contextually and socio-linguistically and ways to achieve communications or interactions.

Developmental notions of Communicative Competence Linguistic perspectives

Indeed, while the linguistic field may not always place communicative competence at the forefront, it serves as a solid foundation upon which many scholars build their research in this domain. Despite this, several influential linguists have made notable contributions to the understanding of communicative competence. No discussion of linguistic theory and communicative competence would be complete without mentioning Noam Chomsky. In his seminal work "Aspects of the Theory of Syntax" (1965), Chomsky introduced the concept of "competence vs performance." Here, competence refers to the innate linguistic knowledge possessed by speakers, while performance denotes the actual use of language in real-world situations (Ali, Busch, Qaisrani & Rehman, 2020; Khadim, Arain & Ali, 2023). This conceptual distinction laid the groundwork for subsequent explorations into communicative competence. Another significant figure in linguistic theory is M.A.K. Halliday. In his works from the early 1970s, particularly "Language as Social Semiotic" (1971) and "Explorations in the Functions of Language" (1973), Halliday introduced the idea of macro functions of language. He identified four key roles of language: ideational, manipulative, heuristic, and imaginative functions. These functions are integral to communication, as they serve various purposes such as conveying information, expressing social relations, and creating coherent discourse. Halliday's contributions laid the foundation for Systemic-Functional Grammar, a linguistic framework that places communication at its core (Ali, Mankash & Ullah, 2022).

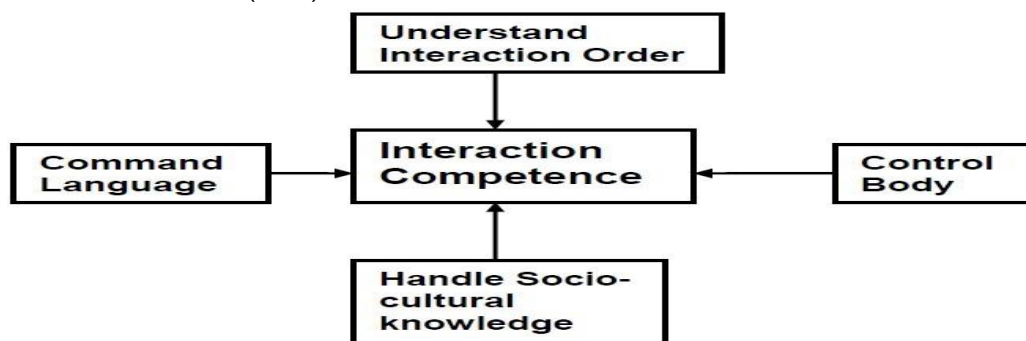
Halliday's meta-functions of language, as outlined in "Language as Social Semiotic" (1971), further elucidate the communicative aspects of language. The ideational function is concerned with conveying new information and

communicating content unknown to the listener. The interpersonal function involves expressing social and personal relations through language (Arain, Mankash & Ali, 2020). Finally, the textual function aims to organize spoken or written discourse into coherent and unified texts, transforming a mere sequence of sentences into a meaningful message. By integrating these insights into their research, scholars have been able to deepen their understanding of communicative competence and its role in language use and interaction. Chomsky's conceptualization of competence and performance provides a theoretical framework, while Halliday's macro-functions and meta-functions offer practical insights into the communicative dimensions of language. Together, these contributions enrich our understanding of communicative competence and its significance within linguistic theory and practice (Mankash, Khan, & Ali, 2023; Rehan, Ali & Mankash, 2022).

Sociolinguistics perspective

The evolution of communicative competence has been marked by the emergence of novel discoveries and alternative perspectives, challenging established notions and expanding the understanding of language and communication. While the seminal findings of Chomsky, particularly his distinction between competence and performance, laid the groundwork for linguistic inquiry, subsequent scholars sought to address the limitations and complexities inherent in this framework. In the realm of sociolinguistics and communication theory, scholars such as Habermas (1970) offered new insights into communicative competence. Habermas, a renowned German sociologist and philosopher, introduced the concept of communicative rationality, emphasizing the importance of language in facilitating rational discourse and social interaction (McCarthy, 1984). Similarly, Jakobovits (1970) explored the communicational perspectives of language beyond its structural aspects, envisioning a future where descriptive work in psychology, sociology, and anthropology would contribute to a comprehensive theory of communicative competence. Dell Hymes (1971) further advanced the discourse on communicative competence by challenging Chomsky's concept of language acquisition. Hymes proposed the term "communicative competence" to encapsulate the multifaceted nature of language use, highlighting the importance of social and contextual factors in communication. His framework, consisting of four knowledge categories, elucidated the various dimensions of communicative competence, including grammatical knowledge, rules of speaking, language functions, and appropriateness (Yun, 2005). Building upon Hymes' work, Troike (1989, 1996) outlined three components of communicative competence: linguistic, interactional, and cultural knowledge. These components encompassed a broad range of linguistic and sociocultural competencies necessary for effective communication in diverse contexts. Troike's framework emphasized the interconnectedness of language, interaction, and culture in communicative competence.

Fig 1. Troike's framework (1989)



In sociology and sociolinguistics, Lindgren (2008) introduced the concept of interactional competence, which encompasses communicative practices and knowledge essential for successful interaction. Drawing on Goffman's notion of interactional order, Lindgren highlighted the importance of understanding the structure of interaction and discourse organization in achieving communicative goals. Additionally, Gumpaz (2001) emphasized the contextual nature of talk and its role in real-life communicative exchanges, underscoring the multidimensionality of interactional competence (Shah, Ali & Ahmad, 2024). The model presented above delineates four key areas of knowledge essential for effective interaction: Control body, Command language, handling socio-cultural knowledge, and Understanding Interaction Order. These components encompass various aspects of non-verbal communication, linguistic proficiency, socio-cultural norms, and the structural dynamics of interaction. Control body pertains to nonverbal communication cues and physical body language, highlighting the importance of gestures, facial expressions, and posture in conveying

meaning during interaction. Command language encompasses linguistic competence, encompassing knowledge of and proficiency in using all linguistic features relevant to verbal communication within interaction contexts (Akram, Khan & Ahmad, 2022). Handling socio-cultural knowledge involves understanding culturally and socially accepted behaviors, as well as the broader social structures that influence interaction dynamics. This component emphasizes the significance of cultural norms, social conventions, and contextual factors in shaping communicative interactions (Thomas, Khan, & Ahmad, 2022; Younis, Naeem, & Ali, 2023). Understanding Interaction Order focuses on the structural organization of interaction as a whole, including aspects such as turn taking patterns and discourse coherence. This component underscores the importance of recognizing and adhering to established interactional norms and conventions for effective communication through effective leadership and teaching practices (Ahmad & Hamid, 2021; Ahmad, Thomas, & Hamid, 2020).

It is noteworthy that these components of interactional competence are interconnected and mutually influential, as emphasized by the model. Each area of knowledge contributes to a comprehensive understanding of interaction, and they collectively shape individuals' communicative competence in social contexts (Ahmad, Rashid, & Ali, 2023; Ahmad, et al., 2023; Ali, Ahmad, & Sewani, 2022). While this model shares similarities with Hymes' concept of communicative competence and Saville-Troike's framework, it offers a distinct focus on the organization and dynamics of speech within interaction. Kramsch (1986) specifically emphasizes the structural aspects of speech organization in interaction, distinguishing this model from other conceptualizations of communicative competence. Overall, the evolution of communicative competence reflects a continual refinement and expansion of theoretical frameworks, incorporating diverse perspectives and disciplines to capture the complexities of language and communication in various social and cultural contexts.

Language Acquisition (SLA)

Standing at the intersection of linguistic theories, language practices, and pedagogical ideologies, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) encompasses various approaches and methods aimed at understanding how individuals acquire and learn languages. One key concept within SLA that garners attention from linguists, sociocultural linguists, and specialists in language teaching is communicative competence (Naeem, Ali, & Ahmed, 2022). Initially emerging in the field of sociolinguistics, the concept of communicative competence soon found its place in SLA and language teaching. Troike (2005) notes its significance, highlighting its adoption by specialists in SLA and language pedagogy. Communicative competence in SLA refers to the ability to effectively use language in real-life communicative situations, a concern central to both language learning and teaching methodologies. Canale and Swain (1980) laid the groundwork for understanding communicative competence in SLA by proposing a theoretical framework consisting of three key areas: grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. This framework provided insights into the diverse competencies required for successful language use, including the ability to navigate linguistic structures, understand sociocultural norms, and employ communication strategies to compensate for deficiencies (Ahmad, Bibi, & Imran, 2023; Ali, et al., 2023).

Building upon Canale and Swain's framework, Canale (1983) introduced discourse competence as an additional component, acknowledging the importance of understanding discourse structures and coherence in communicative interactions. Bachman and Palmer (1996) further expanded on this model, proposing a twocomponent model that includes language knowledge and strategic competence (Ali, et al., 2023). Language knowledge encompasses organizational knowledge, including textual and grammatical knowledge, as well as pragmatic competence, which pertains to the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts by using technology (Ali, Shah, & Ahmad, 2023; Ali, et al., 2020; Ali, et al., 2023). Strategic competence, on the other hand, involves metacognitive strategies such as assessment, goalsetting, and planning. Cele-Murica, Dornyei, and Thurrell (1995) introduced the concept of action competence, which parallels Canale's functional knowledge and sociocultural competence. This framework provides insights into the practical application of language skills in action-oriented contexts. In contrast, Okvir (2005) proposed a simplified framework focusing on linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and sociolinguistic competence. This streamlined model offers a concise yet comprehensive understanding of communicative competence in SLA. Overall, these frameworks contribute to a nuanced understanding of communicative competence in SLA, highlighting the multifaceted nature of language use and the diverse competencies required for successful communication in real-life contexts.

| Year | Author | Communicative Competence development |
|------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1957 | Noam Chomsky | Competence vs Performance |

| | | |
|------|---------------------------------|--|
| 1971 | Hymes | knowledge and abilities to use languages |
| 1974 | Halliday | Meta-functions: ideational interpersonal and textual |
| 1977 | Habermas, J. | Towards a theory of communicative competence |
| 1980 | Canale & Swain | Grammar competence Sociolinguistic competence and Strategic competence |
| 1983 | Canale | Grammar, Sociolinguistic, Discourse and Strategic competence |
| 1989 | Troike | Linguistic, interaction and cultural knowledge |
| 1995 | Cele-Murica, Dornyei & Thurrell | discourse competence, linguistic competence, actional competence, sociocultural competence and strategic competence |
| 1996 | Bachman & Palmer | Language knowledge and Strategic competence |
| 2005 | Okvir | language competence, pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic competence |
| 2008 | Lingren | Interaction Competence: interaction order, language demand, body control and socio-cultural knowledge |
| 2009 | Widdowson, H. G. | Handbook of foreign language communication and learning |
| 2014 | Dongyun, S | From communicative competence to interactional competence: A new outlook to the teaching of spoken English. Journal of |
| | | Language Teaching and Research. |

Table 1: List of Communicative competence research

Implementations of communicative competence

The concept of communicative competence serves as the foundational bedrock for designing language teaching programs and syllabi, particularly in areas such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and English as an International Language (EIL) or as a foreign language. Esteemed scholars like Richard (2006), Savignon (2007), and Widdowson (2009) have underscored its pivotal role in language pedagogy. Moreover, terminologies such as communicative approach and communicative language ability, introduced by Bachman (1990), have become indispensable in practical language teaching methodologies. This transition from language theory to elements of learning theory, as highlighted by Xu, J. (2006), underscores the integration of communicative competence principles into pedagogical frameworks. Xu, J. (2006) identifies three main principles: the communication principle, task principle, and meaningfulness principle, which form the foundation for effective language instruction.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) regards language as a dynamic system for the expression of meaning and its functions in communication and interactions (Xu, J., 2006). This approach represents a paradigm shift in language pedagogy, as the focus shifts from linguistic forms to functional language use (Alexandra, 2012). Scholars such as Richards and Rodgers (1986), Brown (1987), Berns (1990), and Nunan (1991) have delineated various features and principles of the communicative approach, emphasizing its learner-centered nature. Additionally, Savignon (2002), Berns (1990), Nunan (1991), Brown (1987), and Richards and Rodgers (1986) have asserted that the communicative approach places a strong emphasis on the learner. Although discussions among multidisciplinary scholars have raised

various features for consideration, they predominantly revolve around language use, fluency, appropriateness, meaning negotiation, risk-taking encouragement, and student autonomy, rather than language knowledge, structural correctness, and rule strictness. Consequently, in real classrooms, CLT often takes the form of pair and group work, fostering negotiation and cooperation among learners, fluency-based activities to boost learners' confidence, and role-plays to provide opportunities for practicing and enhancing language functions (Xu, 2006; Aslam, Iqbal & Ahmed, 2022). However, while advocating for communicative competence in curriculum design and practices, opposing views have also surfaced. These views include the importance of generative competence, the inadequacy of speech acts as the sole basis for syllabi, the illusionary nature of communicative goals, the necessity for understanding both whole-class and pair/group work, the significance of accuracy in fluency, and the essential differences between using one's native language and attempting to use a less proficient language (Xu, 2006). The emergence of these opposing views prompts proponents of communicative competence to clarify and rectify misconceptions regarding its concepts and critical emphases.

English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has become an essential area of focus as educational institutions globally recognize the need for specialized language training to equip students for academic success in Englishspeaking environments. This field is richly documented by several foundational texts and research papers that outline both theoretical frameworks and practical applications. For instance, Jordan's English resource books for teachers (1997) provides extensive strategies for teaching English in academic contexts, essential for both instructors and learners. Complementing this, Hyland's works (2006) explores the authorial identity in the, delving deep into the nuances of academic writing and the construction of authorial credibility, which are pivotal for academic success. Further expanding on these foundations, Essential Tasks and Skills (2012) and Swales' genre analysis (1990) offer students and educators alike a detailed understanding of academic genres and the expectations surrounding them. These texts are instrumental in developing the skills necessary to navigate the complex structures of academic writing. Additionally, the integration of corpus linguistics, as discussed in Biber, Connor, and Upton's Discourse on the Move: Using Corpus Analysis to Describe Discourse Structure (2007), provides a data-driven approach to understanding and teaching academic discourse. Other significant contributions include Flowerdew and Peacock's Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes (2001), which broadens the discussion to include diverse EAP topics and methodologies, and Bailey's Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students (2011), which addresses practical writing challenges faced by international students. Together, these resources create a comprehensive educational framework that supports and enhances the teaching and learning of English for academic purposes.

English as an International Language (EIL)

English as an International Language (EIL) has become increasingly prevalent in global communication, owing to its status as a lingua franca in various domains such as business, academia, and technology (Crystal, 2019; Seidlhofer, 2020). As nations engage in cross-border interactions, the necessity for a common means of communication becomes evident, and English serves as the de facto medium for facilitating such exchanges. The rise of globalization, coupled with the expansion of digital platforms, has accelerated the spread of English beyond its traditional boundaries, enabling individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds to connect and collaborate seamlessly (Ali, et al., 2023; Imran, et al, 2023; Ali, et al., 2020). Furthermore, the dominance of English in international contexts has sparked discussions regarding its impact on linguistic diversity and cultural identity (Jenkins, 2022; Canagarajah, 2019). While proponents argue that EIL promotes intercultural understanding and facilitates mutual comprehension among speakers of different languages, critics raise concerns about the potential erosion of native languages and cultural homogenization. As English continues to assert its influence on a global scale, there is a growing need to address these complex sociolinguistic dynamics and promote linguistic pluralism within international discourse. Additionally, the evolution of English as an International Language has prompted scholars to explore its implications for language education and pedagogy (Seidlhofer, 2020; Kachru, 2021). Educators are tasked with preparing learners to effectively navigate a world where English proficiency is increasingly valued and demanded. This necessitates a shift towards communicative approaches that prioritize functional language skills and intercultural competence, equipping learners with the tools to engage meaningfully in diverse linguistic environments (Dilshad, Shah & Ahmad, 2023; Jabeen, Ali, & Ahmad, 2023).

In Cambodia, several studies highlighted the expanding role of English as an International Language (EIL) in Cambodia, exploring its integration within educational and socio-economic frameworks. Research by Doe and Smith (2019) examined the critical role of English in Cambodian universities, pointing to its necessity for maintaining global academic standards and advocating for structured EIL education to enhance teaching methodologies. Complementarily, Chan and Srey (2019) linked English proficiency with improved employment prospects in key

sectors such as international trade and tourism. Further studies by Lee and Hun (2019), and Nguyen and Chea (2019) explored the effects of globalization on language policies and the impact of English on cultural identity among students, respectively. These studies collectively illustrate the dual role of English in Cambodia as both a facilitator of global engagement and a potential challenge to cultural preservation, underscoring its complex implications in a rapidly globalizing world. The emergence of English as an International Language signifies a transformative shift in global communication patterns, presenting both opportunities and challenges for individuals, societies, and educational institutions worldwide through effective leadership and solving problem (Farzana, Lubna, & Ahmad, 2023; Haider, Ahmad, & Ali, 2024; Imran, et al., 2023;).

Conclusion

The evolution of communicative competence has been marked by the continual addition of new perspectives and innovations aimed at refining and expanding its application across multidisciplinary domains and societal contexts. While some scholars may omit certain elements or introduce new ones, the fundamental aim of communicative competence remains rooted in effective communication, whether linguistically or non-linguistically. To summarize, communicative competence relies on several cardinal elements, each playing a crucial role in facilitating successful communication: (1) Linguistic competence: This serves as the foundation for communicative competence, enabling individuals to effectively produce and comprehend language. Without linguistic competence, individuals would struggle to convey or understand messages as speakers or hearers; (2) Discourse competence or textual knowledge: In addition to linguistic proficiency, individuals require an understanding of discourse structures and textual conventions to ensure clear and coherent communication. Misunderstandings can arise if information is conveyed in a disorganized or ambiguous manner, hindering effective communication; (3) Strategic competence: This element complements linguistic and discourse competence by providing individuals with the ability to employ various communication strategies to overcome communication barriers and enhance interactional effectiveness. Strategic competence enables dialogic partners to navigate conversational challenges and maintain smooth communication flow and (4) Socio-cultural competence: Situated at the intersection of social and cultural factors, socio-cultural competence encompasses an understanding of societal norms, cultural practices, and contextual appropriateness in communication. It allows individuals to navigate diverse social contexts with sensitivity and adaptability, fostering mutual understanding and respect among interlocutors. Together, these cardinal elements form the foundation of communicative competence, enabling individuals to engage in effective communication across linguistic, cultural, and social boundaries. By integrating these elements into communicative practices, individuals can enhance their communicative abilities and foster meaningful interactions in various contexts.

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