

## CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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In regard to the integration of Kazakhstani education to the modern world, the concept of communicative competence in English language education becomes relevant. There is a common consensus among linguistic scholars and educators on the basic interpretation of the content of communicative competence, however, before undertaking research on communicative abilities, a comprehensive construction of the concept of communicative competence is essential. This paper provides a thorough analysis of the concept of *communicative competence* with the subsequent overview of the models of communicative competence, which are considered prominent in the ambiance of foreign language education. Communicative competence refers to the set of sociocultural knowledge and communication skills and abilities of speakers to use a language appropriately, to convey and understand each other's messages outside the classroom rather than merely produce memorized accurate grammatical sentences. On the bases of the models, there is a comparative analysis, which aids to understand the core role of the current concept.

**Key words:** *concept of communicative competence, English language education, models of communicative competence, communicative language ability*

In regard to the modernization of Kazakhstani education, the concept of communicative competence in English language education becomes relevant. In the context of today's foreign language education and empirical studies in linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology and sociolinguistics, the competency-based approach and communicative abilities play one of the priority roles. The established goals are combined and reconsidered in one common and most essential aim - the development of communicative competence and intercultural communicative competence.

Communicative approach provides a new impetus to the shift from structural-based to communicative-oriented learning. On the basis of communicative language teaching, competency-based approach and linguistic performance, there is a development of Communicative Competence, which has been defined and interpreted by scholars from different aspects (Hymes, 1971; Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1972, 1983; Widdowson, 1983; Bachman, 1990).

The concept of Communicative Competence (CC) was initially introduced by Hymes [1] as a sociolinguistic concept, which was originally derived from Chomsky's fundamental distinction between linguistic "competence" and "performance" [2]. Within this distinction, Chomsky laid the groundwork for the subsequent studies. The linguistic competence refers to the speaker-hearer's knowledge of the grammatical structures in the context of the native language community, whereas linguistic performance is the actual use of this language. The concept was "concerned with the tacit knowledge of language structure" but "omits almost everything of socio-cultural, significance" [1 ; 270-280].

Hymes was one of the first anthropologists who was inspired, but at the same time, reacted against Chomsky's concept of linguistic competence and the "memorization of grammatical paradigms". Hymes identifies in the theory the lack of actual language behavior and the significance of linguistic ability of performing and understanding the utterances, which are appropriate to the context in which they are produced. In comparison with the linguistic competence, which focuses on the grammatical accuracy, communicative competence refers to the appropriate use of utterances within the socio-cultural contexts or heterogeneous speech communities. Consequently, communicative competence is more inclusive and more general concept including the speaking and hearing capabilities of an individual, which is seen as relevant to tacit knowledge (personal, hidden experience, skills, ideas in person's mind that are difficult to express) and ability to use it. While Hymes describes the Communicative Competence as the sociocultural knowledge and the ability of language users *to know when, where, how and with whom* to use the language appropriately, to convey and understand each others' messages outside the classroom rather than merely produce memorized accurate grammatical sentences [1], Widdowson comparatively, insists on teaching communicative competence alongside linguistic competence stating that the purpose of effective communication consists of not only composing and comprehending correct sentences as solely linguistic items but also of using appropriate sentences. By making the distinction between competence and performance, Widdowson was one of the first who pointed out the emphasis on the real language use and performance, and describes communicative competence as a convention of linguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge [3].

The well-known research project on the concept of communicative competence was presented by Savignon who describes communicative competence as “the ability to function in a truly communicative setting—that is in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors”[4;8]. Thus, Savignon outlines the following characteristics of communicative-competence:

- communicative competence belongs to a dynamic rather than a static concept. It reflects the common idea or an agreement between two or more interlocutors who share to some extent the same code or symbolic system.
- communicative-competence refers to not only written and spoken language but to different other symbolic systems as well;
- communicative competence is context-based. Communication occurs in limitless diversity of circumstances, and the achievement depends on the interlocutors’ comprehension and knowledge of the context.
- a distinction is drawn between competence and ability: competence is what one knows, performance is what one does. Communicative competence is developed, supported and evaluated through performance.
- communicative competence is relative, not absolute; it involves the collaborative participation of all implicated [4; 272].

These characteristics are the basic and primary implications for one’s communicative behaviour and ability. They lead to the shift from traditional classroom to focus on experiential learning where learners not only get knowledge about communication, but also learn how to communicate in foreign language effectively.

Although the concept of communicative competence provided by scholars varies, they all highlight the core role of CC in language education as an ultimate goal with meaningful communication [5]. According to Ozverir, the aim of teaching and acquiring the communicative competence is to provide students with “real-world relevance, which can help them link what they learn at school and how to use the language in practical communication” [6], while Barrot emphasizes the aim of development “learners’ competence of understanding and exchanging different ideas, behavioral modes, values, beliefs and cultures.” [7].

The literature on CC clearly demonstrates the significance of authentic language settings to consolidate the knowledge learners have learned in classes.

### **Models of Communicative Competence**

Hymes’ concept of communicative competence was further developed by a number of language educators and practitioners (Canale & Swain, 1980), (Van Ek, 1986), (Bachman, 1990). Canale and Swain were the first theorists who introduced a comprehensive model of a communicative competence in the ambiance of foreign language education. They define communicative competence as “the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of rules of language use” [8;6]. It is a combination of language grammar knowledge, an ability of using acquired knowledge in interactional social communication and the awareness of how utterances and communicative functions can be integrated in compliance with the principles of discourse. Hence, Canale and Swain’s model consists of three components of communicative competence: *grammatical*, *sociolinguistic* and *strategic*.

*Grammatical* indicates the accurate knowledge of the lexicon, morphology, syntax, statement-level meaning and phonology.

*Sociolinguistic* relates to the ability to comprehend and use language in various social settings at the appropriate level, and *strategic* refers to the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to improve the effectiveness and overcome breakdowns in communication [8; 28-31].

Afterwards, Canale refined the aforementioned model and developed a four-dimensional model, transferring some essential features from sociolinguistic competence into the additional competence, entitled as a *discourse competence* which refers to cohesion and coherence in understanding and expressing oneself in a specific language [9].

According to Hymes [1], grammar strategies and rules cannot be presented without rules and principles of language use, whereas Canale and Swain state that rules and principles of language use cannot be presented without grammar strategies. They claim that the process of acquiring grammatical competence is closely interrelated with the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence and cannot be achieved separately [8,9; 80].

Regarding the analysis of the relevant literature in the second and foreign language education, the Canale and Swain models are still dominant and warrant attention per se, the models explicate different dimensions to construct the communicative competence which comprise of definite underlying abilities. Each component cannot be regarded as a separate entity but interdependent on the whole notion coherently and serve as the key points for advancing subsequent models of communicative competence and language pedagogy overall [8,9].

Building upon the prior theoretical and empirical studies, Bachman (1990) replaces the term of communicative competence with *Communicative Language Ability*, which states for both “knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing or executing that competence in appropriate contextualised communicative language use” [10; 84]. Bachman gives more attention to language proficiency and proposes a new model of ‘language ability’. Since communicative language ability is influenced by various traits of language users, afterwards that model was slightly changed by Bachman and Palmer, which is considered to be much more detailed and comprehensive [11].

*Communicative Language Ability* model is classified into two important categories, which complement each other to achieve communicatively effective language use:

1. *Organizational competence*, which refers to the development of formal structures of the language that allow users to “produce and comprehend grammatically acceptable utterances and organize these to form texts, both oral and written” [11; 67]. As for the sub competences, it includes *grammatical* and *textual competences*. *Grammatical competence* -similar to Canale & Swain's grammatical competence, is considered as a vital part of communicative competence including the knowledge of the language (i.e. morphology, phonetics, syntax, vocabulary) [8]. It promotes understanding and producing of both grammatically accurate sentences and comprehension of the text. *Textual competence* is described as “the knowledge of the conventions for joining utterances together to form a text” [10; 88] (i.e. cohesion, rhetorical organisation, conversational routines). Textual competence involves written as well as spoken language. Bachman points out that communication correlates with the written discourse and therefore, is best provided in the context of abilities compatible with textual competence [10].

2. *Pragmatic competence* focuses on the relationships between linguistic items and utterances in their messages, purposes of language users and the relevance in elements of the language use context. In other words, it is the options people take, the efforts they devote during using language in the social interactive context and the impression their use of language make on other participants during the communicative interaction.

Pragmatic competence includes *illocutionary* and *sociolinguistic knowledge*.

*Illocutionary competence* refers to knowledge of language functions; it can be used for expressing and interpreting utterances and intentions “with certain illocutionary force” [10; 92].

*Sociolinguistic competence* defines the knowledge of sociolinguistic appropriateness, using the appropriate language utterances in specific settings of language use. It involves the awareness of diversity in dialect and variety, awareness of different cultural contexts and utterances.

Sociolinguistic competence and illocutionary competence were described together in pragmatic competence to establish one’s own comprehensive language competence.

Comparatively to Canale and Swain’s model where they divide it into three models - grammatical, sociolinguistic and discourse, Bachman’s model integrate all parts into one entitled language competence which is categorized into six subcompetences. Bachman’s model also includes strategic competence, which is far beyond Canale and Swain’s; it is used “to characterize the mental capacity for implementing the components of language competence in contextualized communicative language use” [10; 84]. The mechanisms involved in strategic competence, consists of three components: assessment, planning and execution.

*Assessment* refers to identifying the required information and language, and to interpreting ideas about interlocutors in the particular communicative goal. After all, the communicative goal is evaluated to check whether it is achieved, whereas, *planning* process involves the extracting the information from language competence and developing a plan to achieve a communicative goal.

The final component *execution* describes psychophysiological elements that take into consideration neurological and physiological aspects involved in language use [10; 98-107].

According to Bachman and Palmer, language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking should be provided as language use exercises. Their concept of language competence includes knowledge components that are integrated to all models to language use [11; 61-84]. Consequently, comparatively to Canale and Swain’s model, Bachman’s model is considered as more comprehensive due to the detailed and organizational elaboration of fundamental components of communicative language competence. It facilitates

to expand teachers' understanding to what extent we teach, learn and assess learners' language communicative performance.

Another recent model that merits to be described is a Common European Framework Model (CEF), which is meant for language assessment as well as learning and teaching of languages. The model focuses on what learners should know to interact appropriately, and what language and skills should be developed in order to communicate effectively. The document describes the common roles and a thorough elaboration of curriculum framework, course books, syllabus, test materials. CEF model comprises of three main competences: *linguistic*, *sociolinguistic* and *pragmatics* [12], which emphasize on particularly knowledge and skills and know-how.

*Linguistic competence* in CEF model indicates the learners' abilities to use language items to develop well-structured messages to achieve communicative goals. It focuses on mastering "lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills and other dimensions of language as system, independently of the sociolinguistic value of its variations and the pragmatic functions of its realizations" [12;13].

*Sociolinguistic competence* refers to the appropriate use of language in sociocultural settings including the following aspects: manners of appropriate behaviour, norms and differences between generations, genders, social groups, and differences in linguistic codification, register and dialects. Sociolinguistic components directly influence on all communicative interactions with interlocutors of different social and cultural background, even though communicators might be unaware and insensitive to its effect.

*Pragmatic competence* is concerned with two subcomponents: *functional competence* and *discourse competence*. The former refers to the effective use of linguistic resources and speech acts, basing on the scenarios or scripts of interactional exchanges, while the latter masters the discourse, cohesion and coherence, the recognition of text types and patterns, irony and satire. Both subcompetences include the planning competence, which relates to a logical and procedural sequence of communication in compliance with an interactive and transactional scheme.

Having carried out the analysis of the above-mentioned models from foreign language perspectives, all of them share the number of common points and goals of transferring a message to foreign language interlocutors at appropriate level. In all three models, grammatical competence is basically identical with linguistic competence, although Canale and Swain's and Bachman's models conceptualize strategic competence, they convey different components of communicative competence. What is different is that Bachman adds a new dimension- a pragmatic competence, and the sociolinguistic competence is a sub-component of it, which stresses the accurate use of language and social interaction regarding the sociolinguistic appropriateness.

Theories and the models of communicative competence thoroughly demonstrate the process of language acquisition. Thus, all above-mentioned models are important for further effective development of foreign language teaching.

However, it should be pointed out that the application of any models of communicative competence is relative rather than absolute. In other words, communicative competence can vary according to learners' levels and learning objectives intrinsic to the used context. Some components may be more substantive in some teaching-learning conditions than in others. Therefore, the models may be adapted according to the communicative goals and needs of the learners in particular social contexts.

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## КОММУНИКАТИВТІК ҚҰЗЫРЕТТІЛІККЕ КОНЦЕПТУАЛДЫ ТҮСІНІК

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Қазіргі таңда Қазақстандағы білімнің интеграциялануына байланысты ағылшын тілін оқытуда коммуникативтік құзыреттілік тұжырымдамасы өзекті болып табылады. Коммуникативтік құзыреттілік - тілді дұрыс қолданудағы коммуникативтік қабілеттер мен дағдылар, сондай-ақ ақпарат алмасу мен мектеп қабырғасынан тыс бір-бірін түсінуді қамтитын әлеуметтік-мәдени білімдер жиынтығы. Коммуникативтік құзыреттілік мазмұнына қатысты лингвист ғалымдар мен педагогтар арасында ортақ пікір бар, алайда коммуникативтік қабілеттер бойынша зерттеу жұмысын жүргізгенге дейін коммуникативтік құзыреттілік тұжырымдамасын жан жақты талдау қажет. Бұл мақалада коммуникативтік құзыреттілікті тұжырымдамасын терең талдау қарастырылған, ол кейіннен шет тілін оқыту жағдайында тиімді деп саналатын коммуникативтік құзыреттілік модельдерін қарастырады. Осы модельдер негізінде қазіргі тұжырымның негізгі рөлін түсінуге көмектесетін салыстырмалы талдау бар.

**Түйін сөздер:** коммуникативтік құзыреттілік тұжырымдамасы, ағылшын тілін оқыту, коммуникативтік құзыреттілік модельдері, коммуникативтік тілдік қабілет.

## КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНОЕ ПОНИМАНИЕ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ

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Важность применения концепции коммуникативной компетенции в казахстанском образовании продолжает расти в связи с прогрессирующей интеграцией образования с мировыми тенденциями в этой области. Существует общее согласие среди лингвистов и преподавателей в отношении базовой интерпретации содержания коммуникативной компетенции, однако, прежде чем приступить к исследованию коммуникативных способностей, необходимо всестороннее определение концепции коммуникативной компетенции, известной как совокупность социокультурных знаний, коммуникативных способностей и умений правильно использовать язык, а также включает в себя обмен информацией и понимание друг друга за пределами школьных стен. В данной статье представлен подробный разбор концепции коммуникативной компетенции с последующим сравнительным анализом моделей, важных для понимания ключевой роли в формировании коммуникативной компетентности.

**Ключевые слова:** концепция коммуникативной компетенции, обучение английскому языку, модели коммуникативной компетенции, коммуникативная языковая способность