A Communicative Competence in Sociolinguistic Aspects for Language Teaching

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1. Introduction

In this short paper I examine the notion and goal of communicative competence and the implications we can draw from it for language teaching.

I am using the term in Joshua A. Fishman's sense to refer to the social rules of language use, i.e. the rules that native members of speech communities implicitly grasp and that constitute their native member of sociolinguistic behavior,[1] and I argue that there are important implications for language teaching in using such a concept of communicative competence rather than taking it to mean simply linguistic interaction in the target language. This paper, therefore, is a kind of comment on the second chapter, speaking in *Teaching English as a Second Language* by C.B. Paulston.

2. The Notion & Goal of Communicative Competence

With a few years there has been on increasing concern for communicative activities in language teaching. Rivers uses communicative as a synonym for "spontaneous expression,"[2] and it is rather typical of language teachers and psycholinguists that they tend to equate communicative competence with the ability to carry out linguistic interaction in the target language. In this case, it is predominant that language represents our experience of the processes, persons, objects, abstractions, qualities, states and relations of the world around us and inside us. Sociolinguists and anthropologists are careful to distinguish this referential meaning of language from the social meaning of language also carries. In Gumperz' terms:

"Effective communication requires that speakers and audiences agree both on the meaning of words and on the social import or values attached to choice of expression . . . We will use the term social significance or social meaning to refer to the social values implied when an utterance is used in a certain context."[3]

A very large part of the criticism levelled against Chomsky concerns the inadequacy of his attempts to explain language in terms of the notions of the linguistic competence of an ideal hearer-speaker in a homogeneous society. Such a speaker, says Hymes, is likely to become instituionalized if he simply produces any and all of grammatical sentences of the language with no regard for their appropriateness.[4]

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1) Joshua A. Fishman (1973), *Sociolinguistics*, (Rowley: Newbury House Publishers), p. 16.
2) Wilga Rivers (1973), "From Linguistic Competence to Communicative Competence," *TESOL Quarterly*, 7, 1, p. 26.
3) John Gumperz (1971), *Language in Social Groups* (Stanford: Standford University), p. 285.
4) Dell Hymes (1976), "On Communicative Competence," *Sociolinguistics*, J.B. Pride & J. Holmes, eds. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), p. 277.

The term Hymes has suggested for a knowledge of the rules for understanding and producing both the referential and the social meaning of language is communicative competence. He argues that communicative competence must include not only the linguistic forms of a language but also a knowledge of when, how and to whom it is appropriate to use these forms.

Communicative competence is not simply a term; it is basic concept to understanding social interaction. It is commonplace to point out that the tenets and concepts of a discipline profoundly influence the questions one asks and the solutions one seeks as well as limit the phenomena one observes. In Rivers' sense of the term I would concentrate on teaching the referential meaning of language; in Hymes' and Fishman's term I would go beyond to the social meaning of language.

3. The Model of Communicative Conpetence

If we accept Hymes' notion that a model of language must be designed with a face toward communicative conduct and social life, then it follows that a model for teaching language must also be designed with a face toward communication conduct and social life.[5]

This paper, also, suggests a similar model based on Fishman's for language teaching which sets up a framework for identifying and discussing strategies and teachinques in the teaching process, taking into account the social meaning of language.

The model looks like this:

Linguistic Performance   Communicative Performance

Linguistic Competence ←   Communicative Competence
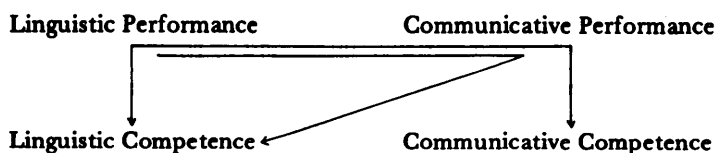
I found it is very dubious that strategy I can be efficient in language learning. Merely practice in the rules and utterances of a language is not likely to produce fluent speakers a fact to which both the products of the grammar translation and classic audiolingual methods attest. Strategy 2, which combines skill-getting exercises (drills, dialogues, rules, etc.) with skill-using activities will under propitious circumstances (good programs, trained teachers, motivated students), result in linguistic competence. In foreign language teaching that may be all one asks, it is the contention of this paper that the most efficient language teaching follows Strategy 3.

The necessity to develop communicative competence is especially important in second language teaching where the fact that the speakers are using the same national language easily obscures the equally important fact that the speakers may not share the same rules for speaking. And even if this is apparent, the faculty social meaning conveyed is likely to be just tacitly registered.

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5) Dell Hymes (1976) *Op. Cit.* p. 278.

Sociolinguistic rules, it is felt, one should learn as a child, and teaching adults such rules implies that they were not properly brought up.

The important thing to remember is not to imply any inherent moral superiority of one sociolinguistic rule over an other, to remember the difference between adding rules and substituting rules.

In the latter case, one obviously rejects the value of the first set of rules, rejects the very culture of the student. However, it give a skewed picture not to make very clear here that the emphasis should be on teaching communicative behavior, not on correcting forms which deviate from it.

In the matter of second language, the teaching situation is likely to be that of the foreign language. But the teacher's belief that his rules of communicative competence are the only real and acceptable rules remains exactly as invariable, and with the constraints on correction removed, there is no hesitation here in making this belief explicit.

I think that the difference between learning a foreign and a second language stems from the social meaning of the L2.

It should be clear, then, that the implications for language teaching that we can draw from the notions of communicative competence apply primarily to situations where the learners live in the country of the target language, whether they are second language speakers or foreign students.

Well, what do we teach? When we teach "How do you do" in the first lesson, we better also teach that it is only used in face to face encounters, and when we later do telephone conversations we can easily contrast the "Hello, this is Tom" with "How do you do, I am Tom." Of course, situational teaching has always included aspects of this but what we need to do is incorporate a systematic contrast of situational constraints on grammatical patterns.

4. Classroom Techniques for Developing Communicative Competence

There are several classroom techniques for teaching Communicative competence: Social formulas and dialogues, Problem-solving activities, role play and other activities.

4.1 Social Formulas & Dialogues

Judy Kettering in her Communication Activities (1974) uses them as step in her unit on "Establishing and Maintaining Social Relations," which such speech encounters as greetings, partings, introductions, excuses, compliments, complaints, etc. These are exercises deliberately designed to develop communicative competence. This exercise on hiding feelings is self-explanatory.

Hiding Feelings [6]

Phrases

A. Formal

1. The $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{cake} \\ \text{dinner} \\ \text{soup} \\ \text{dessert} \end{Bmatrix}$ is very good, but I'm $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{not very hungry.} \\ \text{full} \\ \text{not well.} \end{Bmatrix}$

2.

2. Your new $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{dress} \\ \text{coat} \\ \text{hat} \\ \text{house} \end{Bmatrix}$ is very $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{interesting.} \\ \text{unusual.} \\ \text{nice.} \end{Bmatrix}$

3. I can see your point.
    I guess you're right.
    I agree, but.

B. Informal— formal is not really applicable in the case. Either the more formal usage is used as above, or if you are good friends then you may be very honest and tell the person just what you think or feel.

Dialogues

A. Formal

1. A: How do you like my new dress?
    B: Oh, it's very unusual.
    A: Shall I wear it to dinner tomorrow night, or shall I wear the blue and white one?
    B: They are both nice, but I think I prefer the blue and white dress.

2. A: That was quite a party last night.
    B: It sure was. Did you have a chance to meet Bill Jameson?
    A: Just for a few minutes.
    B: What did you think of him?
    A: He seems quite intellicent, but I really only just met him.

3. A: Bob, you don't look very well. Are you sick?
    B: Well, I have felt better.
    A: Take it easy.
    B: Thanks, I will. Don't worry, I'm sure I'll feel better tomorrow.

Situations

1. A: Carol, I need some help.
    B: What's the matter?

6) Judy Kottering (1974), *Communicative Activities* (Pittsbutgh: Language Institute) pp. 37-40.

 A: I can't decide what dress to wear to the party. What do you think?

 B:

 2. A: Don't I look different?

 B: No . . . Oh! You got your hair cut!

 A: I thought you'd never notice. Do you like it?

 B:

B.   Semi-Sttuctured

 1. A: Who was that girl that talked so much at the party?

 B: Oh, that was Amy Demian, an old friend of mine.

 A:

 B: She's a sweet girl. Why, didn't you like her?

 A:

 2. Pier, you haven't eaten your cake!

 B:

 A: Oh, but I made it especially for you.

 B:

C.   Unstructured

 1.   You are invited to an American home for dinner. You don't like the salad but you ate it. They offer you some more.

 2.   Your good friend is wearing a horrible shirt. He just bought it and asks you how you like it.

 3.   Your mother tells you that you don't look well. She asks you how you feel. You feel terrible but you want to go to the ball game and don't want her to know.

 4.   Your roommate, Wendy, is getting married to a man you really can't stand, even for a few minutes. She asks you to go to dinner with them to celebrate.

In these activities, there is a progression from tightly controlled language use, where the student is learning the social formulas to a situation where he can use them. The unstructured situations lend themselves particularly well to role play. It is very difficult to lie, to complain, to turn someone down for a date in another language, and our students need to be taught how to do this in an appropriate manner. Remember section 1B.

In all of these encounters, the students are taught a formal and informal way for apologizing saying thank you, etc.

4.2.   Problem-Solving Activities

Sometimes an activity seems to be ideal for teaching communication activities are excellent

for developing linguistic competence, but unless the teacher consciously sums up the discussion with comment on the relative acceptability in our culture of the alternative solutions, these activities merely confirm cultural bias.

Here is the activity.

Dinner at an American Home[7]

Read the following problem individually. Consider the possible solutions. You may add your own solution if you think you can improve on the ones given. Decide on the solution that you think is the best one and be able to justify you solution.

Then discuss your solutions in your group, giving your choices and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each. You must decide together on one solution only (that means that you may have to give up your own solution) and be able to justify it.

Meet as a class and discuss group decisions. REMEMBER: There is no one single right answer. Time limit: approx. 20-30 minutes.

Problem

An American family asks you for dinner. They pick you up and take you to their home. They are very nice and try hard to make you forget how nervous and afraid you are about your English and the new customs. The wife has made a special dinner for you and has used her best dishes and tablecloth. She serves the food and you take a lot of the main dish to make her feel happy. You taste it and you *hate* it! It has liver in it and you never eat liver. She is waiting to see if you like the food. What do you do?

a) Excuse yourself and tell her you suddenly feel very ill.

b) Explain to her that you just don't like liver.

c) Try to eat the liver and pretend you like it.

d) Don't say anything and just don't eat it but eat a lot of the other food.

e) Tell her your doctor told you never to eat liver because it makes you sick.

4.3 Role Play

Role play is effective in bringing about communicative activity in the classroom. Role play, like the interaction activities, does not automatically lend itself to developing communicative competence, but it can easily enough be slanted that way.

In a role play about a car accident, developed by Britton and Lagoze (1974), the wife of one driver is angry with both the police and the young boy who hit their car. It can be useful to know how to express anger with a policeman in an acceptable manner, and there is a wealth

7) *Ibid.*, p. 76.

of sociolinguistic information in the directions and suitable phreases given for preparing for the role play.

That particular role play is for a rather advanced class but they can be done on a very elemen-tary level too.

It would be unrealistic to demand that all lessons feature such authentic exercises, but if we want to teach our students to function in another language, we could do very well to systemati-cally steer our teaching towards such activities which serve to teach not only language but also the social use of language.

5. Conclusion

In the first part of the paper, I have examined the notion and goal of communicative com-petence as the social rules of language use and argued that there are important implications for language teaching in using such a concept of communicative competence rather than taking it to mean simply linguistic interaction in the target language. In the second part of the part, I have explored what those implications are on the classroom teachnique level.

Communicative competence is taken to be the objective of language teaching: the production of speakers competent to communicate the target language.[8]

In order to develop communicative competence, all the teachers must bear in mind that the social meaning of language is so important in a language teaching.

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8) Christina Bratt Paulston, "Linguistic and Communicative Competence," *TESOL Quarterly* 8, No. 4 (Dec. 1974) pp. 347-362.

References

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< 요 약 >

사회언어학적 측면에서 본 언어교육과 의사소통

<div align="right">김 순 택</div>

(1) 본고는 사회언어학적 관점에서 언어교육을 수행하는 것이 타당하다는 점을 사회언어학의 주요한 관심사의 하나인 의사소통능력(communicative competence)의 문제와 관련하여 논하고자 한다. 필자는 여기서 종래의 순수언어학에서 거론되어 온 이른바 Chomsky식의 언어능력은 현실적으로 규명하기 불가능하며, 따라서 보다 효율적인 언어교육을 위해서는 언어를 사회적인 모든 규칙과 연관시켜 고찰하는 사회언어학적인 의사소통능력의 배양이 무엇보다도 선행되어야 함을 보이고자 한다.

(2) 제 2 장에서는 이론적 측면으로서, 의사소통능력의 개념과 그것이 지향하는 목표를 고찰하였고, 제 3 장에서 의사소통능력의 개발 단계를 순서적으로 제시하여 언어교육에 함축적 의미를 부여하려 하였다.

(3) 제 4 장에서는 실제적 측면으로서, 의사소통능력을 발전시키기 위한 구체적 학습장면을 예시함으로써 학습자로부터 사회적 규칙과 대화 및 문제 해결 능력을 도모하려 하였다.

(4) 결과적으로 본고는 사회언어학의 이론과 실제를 효과적인 언어교육에 적용시키려는데 그 의도가 있으며, 그렇게 하기 위해서는 교사가 학습자의 목표어를 자유로이 소통할 수 있는 능력을 배양하여 학습자에게 단계적으로 그 능력을 불어 넣도록 하여야 한다는 주장이다.