

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: FROM HYMES TO CELCE-MURCIA

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Abstract. Communicative competence is fundamental to effective language use because successful communication requires more than grammatical knowledge. This theoretical article traces the development of the construct from Hymes's sociolinguistic formulation through the models of Canale and Swain, Canale, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell, and Celce-Murcia's 2007 revision. Using theoretical review and comparative analysis, the study shows a gradual movement toward increasingly detailed and instruction-oriented frameworks. Particular attention is given to Celce-Murcia's revised model, which comprises sociocultural, discourse, linguistic, formulaic, interactional, and strategic competence and offers a useful basis for syllabus design and communicative classroom activities.

Keywords: communicative competence, language teaching, sociocultural competence, interactional competence, strategic competence, syllabus design.

KOMMUNIKATIV KOMPETENSIYANING TARIXIY RIVOJLANISHI: HAYMSDAN SELSE-MURSIYAGACHA

Annotatsiya. Kommunikativ kompetensiya samarali muloqotning muhim sharti bo'lib, u grammatik bilim bilan cheklanmaydi. Ushbu nazariy maqolada tushunchaning Hymesning sotsiolingvistik qarashlaridan boshlab Canale va Swain, Canale, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei va Thurrell hamda Celce-Murcia tomonidan 2007-yilda qayta ko'rib chiqilgan modelgacha bo'lgan rivojlanishi tahlil qilinadi. Nazariy va qiyosiy tahlil kommunikativ kompetensiya modelining tobora batafsil va ta'limga yo'naltirilgan shaklga ega bo'lganini ko'rsatadi. Oltita o'zaro bog'liq komponentni qamrab olgan Celce-Murcia modeli o'quv dasturini loyihalash va kommunikativ ko'nikmalarni rivojlantirish uchun muhim nazariy asos bo'lib xizmat qilishi mumkin.

Kalit so'zlar: kommunikativ kompetensiya, til o'qitish, sotsiomadaniy kompetensiya, interaksional kompetensiya, strategik kompetensiya, o'quv dasturini loyihalash.

ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ: ОТ ХАЙМСА ДО СЕЛЬСЕ-МУРСИИ

Аннотация. Коммуникативная компетенция является важным условием эффективного общения и не ограничивается знанием грамматики. В статье рассматривается развитие данного понятия от социолингвистической концепции Хаймса до моделей Канале и Суэйна, Канале, Селсе-Мурсия, Дёрнъеи и Тёррелла, а также пересмотренной модели Селсе-Мурсия 2007 года. Теоретический и сравнительный анализ показывает постепенный переход к более детализированным и ориентированным на обучение моделям. Особое внимание уделяется модели Селсе-Мурсия, включающей шесть взаимосвязанных компонентов и представляющей теоретическую основу для разработки учебных программ и коммуникативно ориентированных заданий.

Ключевые слова: коммуникативная компетенция, обучение языку, социокультурная компетенция, интеракциональная компетенция, стратегическая компетенция, разработка учебной программы.

Introduction. In contemporary applied linguistics and foreign language education, communicative competence is widely recognized as one of the fundamental theoretical constructs underlying effective language teaching and learning. The concept has undergone considerable transformation since its introduction in the early 1970s, evolving from a sociolinguistic critique of traditional linguistic theories into a multidimensional framework encompassing linguistic knowledge, sociocultural awareness, discourse organization, strategic communication, and interactional abilities. The historical development of communicative competence reflects broader changes in linguistic theory, educational philosophy, and methodological approaches to second and foreign language acquisition. Understanding this evolution is essential for evaluating contemporary communicative language teaching practices and developing pedagogical models that respond to the

linguistic and intercultural demands of modern society.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the development of communicative competence models has contributed to the reorientation of teaching objectives from the memorization of grammatical structures toward the practical use of language in meaningful situations. Contemporary approaches increasingly emphasize authentic communication, task-based learning, collaborative interaction, intercultural understanding, and the development of learner autonomy. However, the practical implementation of communicative competence frameworks continues to present methodological challenges, including the integration of different competence components into classroom instruction and the development of reliable assessment procedures.

The relevance of the present study is determined by the necessity of systematically examining the historical development of communicative competence and identifying the theoretical continuities and conceptual differences among its major models. Although the contributions of Hymes, Canale and Swain, Bachman, and Celce-Murcia have been extensively discussed in applied linguistics, a comparative historical analysis remains important for understanding how these frameworks complement, revise, or challenge one another. Such an analysis can provide a theoretical foundation for selecting appropriate pedagogical approaches and developing comprehensive models of communicative language education.

Methodology. Although digital technologies increasingly influence education, foreign-language learning remains important for EFL learners preparing for future professional communication. Successful language use requires more than grammatical knowledge: learners also need to know what to say, how to say it, and how to adapt language to a particular context. Communicative competence is therefore a key construct for understanding how learners use linguistic knowledge in meaningful social and professional interaction.

The theoretical foundations of communicative competence emerged in response to the limitations of structuralist and formalist approaches to language. In particular, Noam Chomsky's distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance, introduced in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965), provided an influential starting point for subsequent debates concerning the nature of language knowledge. Chomsky conceptualized linguistic competence primarily as the internalized grammatical knowledge possessed by an ideal speaker-listener. Although this perspective contributed significantly to the development of linguistic theory, it did not fully address the social, cultural, and contextual dimensions of language use. Consequently, scholars increasingly emphasized the necessity of examining language not merely as an abstract grammatical system but also as a means of social interaction.

A decisive contribution to this theoretical shift was made by Dell Hymes, who introduced the concept of communicative competence in the context of sociolinguistics and the ethnography of communication. Hymes argued that successful communication requires more than the ability to construct grammatically correct sentences. Speakers must also understand when, where, why, and with whom particular linguistic expressions are appropriate. His theoretical framework therefore expanded the understanding of language competence by incorporating sociocultural norms, contextual appropriateness, and the practical conditions governing communicative behavior. This approach established a conceptual foundation for subsequent research in applied linguistics and significantly influenced the development of communicative language teaching.

Hymes was among the first scholars to develop the concept of communicative competence and argued that communication cannot be explained through linguistic competence alone [1]. His four judgements - whether an utterance is possible, feasible, appropriate, and actually performed - established a sociolinguistic basis for real communication.

Building on this work, Canale and Swain proposed grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence [2]. Canale later added discourse competence to account for coherent spoken and written discourse [3].

The further development of communicative competence was closely associated with the work of Michael Canale and Merrill Swain, who proposed a systematic model of communicative competence in 1980. Their framework identified grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence as essential components of successful communication. The model represented an important attempt to operationalize the concept for language teaching and assessment. In 1983, Canale further refined the framework by distinguishing discourse competence as a separate component, thereby emphasizing the importance of cohesion, coherence, and the organization of meaning across connected stretches of spoken and written language.

The contributions of Canale and Swain marked a significant stage in the transition from general sociolinguistic theory to pedagogically applicable models of language proficiency. Their work influenced the design of communicative curricula, the development of language assessment criteria, and the formulation of instructional objectives emphasizing functional language use. At the same time, subsequent research revealed the need for a more detailed explanation of the relationships between linguistic resources, discourse processes, communication strategies, and sociocultural contexts.

Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell developed the construct further through a five-component pedagogical model [4], which Celce-Murcia revised in 2007 to provide a more detailed and instruction-oriented framework [7].

The model of communicative competence proposed by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell was developed specifically for language-teaching purposes [4]. In this respect, it differs from earlier frameworks. Canale and Swain's model addressed both language teaching and assessment [2], whereas Bachman and Palmer's model of communicative language ability was primarily designed for language assessment [5]. By contrast, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell focused directly on teaching communicative competence. Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor emphasize that an important feature of the model is the interaction among its different components [6, p. 13].

The evolution of communicative competence continued through the work of Marianne Celce-Murcia and her colleagues, who developed a pedagogically oriented model emphasizing the interconnected nature of linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic, and actional competencies. In the model proposed by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995), discourse competence occupied a central position, reflecting the importance of integrating linguistic forms with communicative functions and contextual meanings. Their framework sought to address the practical requirements of language instruction by offering a more detailed description of the knowledge and skills necessary for effective communication.

Celce-Murcia subsequently revised the model in 2007, proposing a more elaborate framework that included sociocultural competence, discourse competence, formulaic competence, interactional competence, and strategic competence. This revision reflected the increasing recognition of the importance of conventionalized expressions, interactional routines, intercultural appropriateness, and discourse-level communication in second language learning. The model also demonstrated the growing influence of pragmatics, discourse analysis, and sociocultural approaches on the conceptualization of communicative competence.

The historical progression from Hymes to Celce-Murcia illustrates a gradual expansion of the theoretical understanding of language proficiency. Whereas early approaches focused primarily on the relationship between grammatical knowledge and sociocultural appropriateness, later models increasingly emphasized the dynamic interaction of linguistic, pragmatic, discourse, strategic, and interactional resources. This transformation has important implications for foreign language education, particularly in contexts where learners are expected to communicate effectively across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Results. The 1995 model was largely based on the classification introduced by Canale and Swain [2] and later developed by Canale [3]. The authors added actional competence as a separate component, modified some terminology, and described the subcomponents in greater detail so that they could be incorporated into language-course content and syllabus design [4].

The pedagogical value of the model lies in its assumption that communicative skills can be taught more directly and explicitly. Teachers and syllabus designers therefore need a clear account of the objectives, knowledge, and skills that constitute communicative competence. In this way, the model connects the principles of communicative language teaching with a more explicit description of what learners need in order to communicate successfully [4].

The 1995 model consisted of five main components: discourse, linguistic, actional, sociocultural, and strategic competence [4].

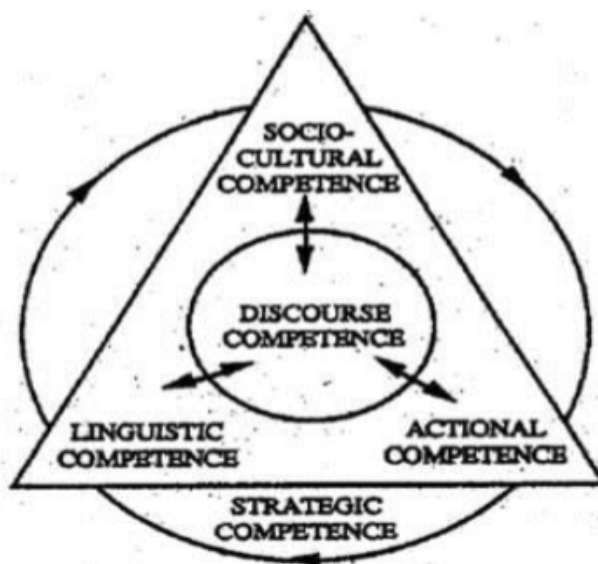


Figure 1. Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell's (1995) theoretical model [4]

Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell represented their framework visually as a pyramid containing interconnected circles and a triangle [4]. Discourse competence was placed at the centre because it connects the other competencies and supports the construction of unified spoken or written texts. Sociocultural, linguistic, and actional competence were positioned around discourse competence, while strategic competence surrounded the other components, indicating that communication strategies support and interact with every area of communicative competence.

In 2007, Celce-Murcia revised the original framework [7]. The updated model introduced formulaic competence as an additional component and expanded actional competence into the broader category of interactional competence. The revision addressed gaps in the 1995 framework and made the model more suitable for language-teaching activities. The revised model contained six components.

Sociocultural Competence. In Celce-Murcia's revised framework, sociocultural competence performs a top-down role and refers to the language user's pragmatic and sociocultural knowledge [7]. It determines whether language is used

appropriately in a particular social and cultural context and includes awareness of language varieties, registers, and culturally acceptable forms of communication. The component covers social contextual factors such as age, status, familiarity and relationships; stylistic appropriateness such as politeness, genre and register; and cultural factors, including background knowledge of the target-language community, regional variation, and cross-cultural understanding [8].

Discourse Competence. Discourse competence concerns the way words, grammatical structures, sentences, and utterances are selected and organized to form a unified spoken or written text [7]. In the revised model, it includes four main areas: cohesion, deixis, coherence, and generic structure.

Cohesion refers to formal linguistic devices that connect different parts of a text, including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions, and lexical chains. **Deixis** grounds language in a particular situation through personal, spatial, temporal, and textual references [7].

Coherence concerns the underlying logical and semantic relationships among ideas, while **generic structure** refers to the conventional organization of spoken or written genres. Together, these resources help users produce and interpret conversations, narratives, interviews, reports, lectures, and other forms of discourse [7].

Linguistic Competence. Linguistic competence includes the basic language resources required for spoken and written communication [7]. It covers sentence patterns, morphological forms, vocabulary, phonology, and orthography and therefore provides the grammatical, lexical, and sound systems through which communication is produced. In the revised framework, linguistic competence consists of phonological, lexical, morphological, and syntactic knowledge.

Phonological knowledge includes segmental and suprasegmental features; **lexical knowledge** covers content and function words; **morphological knowledge** includes grammatical inflections and word formation; and **syntactic knowledge** concerns phrase structure, word order, sentence patterns, coordination, subordination, and embedding [7]. Together, these elements support grammatically and lexically appropriate spoken and written messages.

Formulaic Competence. Formulaic competence was added to the revised model to describe fixed and prefabricated expressions that speakers frequently use in communication [7]. These expressions are often stored and produced as complete or partly fixed units rather than being constructed word by word. Formulaic competence complements linguistic competence by helping speakers communicate more fluently and naturally through familiar language chunks.

Formulaic competence includes routines, collocations, idioms, and lexical frames [7]. Routines include fixed expressions used in recurring situations; collocations are words that commonly occur together; idioms have conventional meanings that cannot always be inferred from individual words; and lexical frames contain a fixed structure with a variable element. These resources make language production faster and more contextually appropriate.

Interactional Competence. In the revised model, interactional competence performs a bottom-up role and is balanced against the top-down role of sociocultural competence [7]. It concerns the knowledge and skills required for successful spoken interaction and includes three subareas: actional competence, conversational competence, and non-verbal or paralinguistic competence.

Actional competence refers to knowledge of how to perform speech acts and communicative functions such as exchanging information, expressing opinions, requesting, apologizing, agreeing, and disagreeing. **Conversational competence** includes opening and closing interactions, taking and maintaining turns, changing topics, responding appropriately, and repairing communication when difficulties arise [7].

Non-verbal and paralinguistic competence includes communicative behaviours that accompany or replace speech, including gesture and body movement, the use of physical distance, touch, and other non-linguistic actions that carry interactional meaning [7]. These resources help language users manage face-to-face communication appropriately.

Strategic Competence. Strategic competence is an essential part of the revised model because it supports the use and development of the other competencies [7]. Celce-Murcia discusses three broad types of strategy: cognitive, metacognitive, and memory-related. Cognitive strategies involve reasoning, analysis, organization, outlining, summarizing, note-taking, and classifying information.

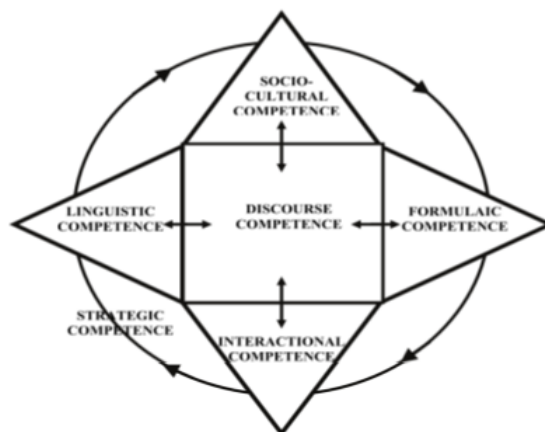


Figure 2. Celce-Murcia's (2007) theoretical model [7]

Metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning, while memory-related strategies help learners store, recall, and retrieve linguistic information [7]. These strategies may involve time planning, performance evaluation, feedback, contextual guessing, acronyms, visual images, sounds, or other associations. Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor note that the interaction of strategic competence with the other components is not explained as fully as some other relationships in the model [6]. Nevertheless, strategic competence remains important because it enables learners to manage difficulties, regulate learning, and use existing linguistic resources effectively.

Overall, the historical development of communicative competence shows a movement from a general sociolinguistic critique of purely linguistic competence toward detailed, instruction-oriented frameworks. The 1995 model made the construct more directly applicable to teaching, while Celce-Murcia's 2007 revision further specified the linguistic, sociocultural, discourse, formulaic, interactional, and strategic resources involved in communication [4, 7]. Because these components can be linked to learning objectives, syllabus content, classroom tasks, and assessment, the revised model provides a useful theoretical basis for instruction-oriented research and for the systematic development of learners' communicative competence.

The findings of the theoretical analysis also indicate that communicative competence should be understood as an integrated and context-dependent construct. Its individual components are analytically distinguishable but function in close interaction during actual communication. For example, successful participation in a discussion requires grammatical and lexical resources, knowledge of sociocultural conventions, the ability to construct coherent discourse, and the strategic capacity to overcome communication difficulties. Consequently, teaching approaches that develop these dimensions in isolation may not fully reflect the complex nature of communicative language use.

Conclusion. The historical analysis of communicative competence demonstrates that the concept has undergone a substantial theoretical and methodological transformation, reflecting the progressive expansion of linguistic research beyond the structural description of language toward the investigation of communication as a socially situated, cognitively complex, and interactionally organized process. The development of communicative competence from Dell Hymes's initial sociolinguistic conceptualization to Marianne Celce-Murcia's multidimensional pedagogical framework illustrates the increasing recognition that successful language use requires the integration of grammatical knowledge, sociocultural awareness, discourse organization, pragmatic appropriateness, strategic flexibility, and interactional abilities.

A comparative examination of these theoretical frameworks reveals both continuity and conceptual differentiation. Despite differences in terminology, structural organization, and emphasis, the models share the fundamental assumption that communicative competence extends beyond grammatical accuracy. At the same time, their historical development demonstrates an increasing level of theoretical differentiation, with later frameworks offering more detailed descriptions of pragmatic, discourse, sociocultural, and interactional aspects of language use. These differences should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence that later models entirely replace earlier ones. Rather, the models represent complementary theoretical perspectives that address different dimensions and purposes of communicative language education.

An important implication of this historical development concerns the changing objectives of English language teaching. The transition from grammar-centered instruction to communicative and competence-based approaches has encouraged educators to place greater emphasis on meaningful interaction, authentic language use, contextual appropriateness, and the development of functional communication skills. From this perspective, the theoretical evolution of communicative competence provides a foundation for designing educational activities that integrate linguistic accuracy with fluency, discourse coherence, pragmatic effectiveness, and intercultural sensitivity.

The historical development of communicative competence also highlights the growing importance of intercultural communication in contemporary language education. As English increasingly functions as a means of communication among speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, successful interaction requires sensitivity to cultural differences, awareness of communicative conventions, and flexibility in negotiating meaning. The sociocultural and interactional dimensions emphasized in later models are therefore particularly relevant to educational approaches that

prepare learners for communication in multilingual and multicultural environments.

From a methodological perspective, the present historical-comparative analysis demonstrates the value of examining communicative competence through the interaction of linguistic theory, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and language pedagogy. Such an interdisciplinary approach allows researchers to identify the conceptual foundations of contemporary teaching practices and evaluate their correspondence with the multidimensional nature of communication. However, the conclusions of this study are primarily theoretical and require further empirical investigation to determine how different models can be most effectively operationalized in specific educational contexts.

Future research should focus on developing and experimentally evaluating instructional frameworks that integrate the major components of communicative competence in a balanced and pedagogically feasible manner. Particular attention may be directed toward the development of interactional and sociocultural competence in EFL classrooms, the role of digital communication environments, the assessment of pragmatic and discourse abilities, and the adaptation of communicative competence models to different educational levels and learner populations.

In conclusion, the historical progression from Hymes to Celce-Murcia demonstrates that communicative competence has evolved from a sociolinguistic concept emphasizing contextual appropriateness into a comprehensive theoretical and pedagogical framework encompassing multiple interconnected dimensions of language use. This evolution has significantly influenced the objectives, content, methods, and assessment principles of foreign language education. Understanding the contributions and limitations of the major theoretical models provides an essential foundation for the development of contemporary approaches to English language teaching that seek to cultivate not merely linguistic knowledge but the ability to communicate effectively, appropriately, strategically, and meaningfully in diverse social and cultural contexts.

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