

# COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND ITS COMPONENTS

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**Annotation:** *In this article we would like to give information about Communicative competence, its components and role in linguistics.*

**Аннотация:** *В этой статье мы хотели бы дать информацию о коммуникативной компетенции, ее компонентах и роли в лингвистике.*

**Annotatsiya:** *Ushbu maqolada biz kommunikativ kompetensiya, uning tarkibiy qismlari va tilshunoslikdagi o'рни haqida ma'lumot bermoqchimiz.*

**Keywords:** *linguistics, competence, communicative competence, Second Language Acquisition.*

**Ключевые слова:** *лингвистика, компетенция, коммуникативная компетенция, овладение вторым языком.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *lingvistika, kompetensiya, kommunikativ kompetensiya, ikkinchi tilni egallash.*

If a language learner is asked what they think the goal of a language course is, they would probably answer that it is to teach the grammar and vocabulary of that language. However, if they are asked what *their* goal is as language learners, they would most probably answer that it is to be able *to communicate* in that language.

Surely, it is not said that in actuality the goal of a language course is to teach solely grammar and vocabulary — well, at least it shouldn't be just that anymore. (I've been in a course with such an outdated approach, and the results were, of course, poor). Fortunately, the focus of second language teaching has moved from purely teaching grammar and vocabulary, to providing the skills for effective communication. In linguistics terminology, a language course should not only have “linguistic competence” as its goal, but “communicative competence” in general.

But what do these terms mean? Communicative competence is a term coined by Dell Hymes in 1966 in reaction to Noam Chomsky's (1965) notion of

“linguistic competence”. Communicative competence is the intuitive functional knowledge and control of the principles of language usage. As Hymes observes:

“...a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others.”  
(Hymes 1972, 277)

Communicative language teaching involves developing language proficiency through interactions embedded in meaningful contexts. This approach to teaching provides authentic opportunities for learning that go beyond repetition and memorization of grammatical patterns in isolation. A central concept of the communicative approach to language teaching is communicative competence: the learner’s ability to understand and use language appropriately to communicate in authentic (rather than simulated) social and school environments.

In other words, a language user needs to use the language not only correctly (based on linguistic competence), but also appropriately (based on communicative competence). Of course, this approach does not diminish the importance of learning the grammatical rules of a language. In fact, it is one of the four components of communicative competence: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence.

1. **Linguistic competence** is the knowledge of the language code, i.e. its grammar and vocabulary, and also of the conventions of its written representation (script and orthography). The grammar component includes the knowledge of the sounds and their pronunciation (i.e. phonetics), the rules that govern sound interactions and patterns (i.e. phonology), the formation of words by means of e.g. inflection and derivation (i.e. morphology), the rules that govern the combination of words and phrases to structure sentences (i.e. syntax), and the way that meaning is conveyed through language (i.e. semantics).

2. **Sociolinguistic competence** is the knowledge of sociocultural rules of use, i.e. knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately. The appropriateness depends on the setting of the communication, the topic, and the relationships among the people communicating. Moreover, being appropriate depends on knowing what the taboos of the other culture are, what politeness indices are used in each case, what the politically correct term would be for something, how a specific attitude (authority, friendliness, courtesy, irony etc.) is expressed etc.

3. **Discourse competence** is the knowledge of how to produce and comprehend oral or written texts in the modes of speaking/writing and listening/reading respectively. It's knowing how to combine language structures into a cohesive and coherent oral or written text of different types. Thus, discourse competence deals with organising words, phrases and sentences in order to create conversations, speeches, poetry, email messages, newspaper articles etc.

4. **Strategic competence** is the ability to recognise and repair communication breakdowns before, during, or after they occur. For instance, the speaker may not know a certain word, thus will plan to either paraphrase, or ask what that word is in the target language. During the conversation, background noise or other factors may hinder communication; thus the speaker must know how to keep the communication channel open. If the communication was unsuccessful due to external factors (such as interruptions), or due to the message being misunderstood, the speaker must know how to restore communication. These strategies may be requests for repetition, clarification, slower speech, or the usage of gestures, taking turns in conversation etc.

These four components of communicative competence should be respected in teaching a foreign language —and they usually are by modern teaching methods employed in second language teaching. Usually most of the above are best learned if the language learner immerses into the culture of a country that speaks the target language.

Communicative competence means having 'a competence to communicate'. This competence can be oral, written or even nonverbal. It is an inclusive term that refers to possessing the knowledge of the language as well as the skill to use the language in real life situations for fulfilling communicative needs. Language, according to many researchers, is a means of communication, and it comprises four main skills; viz, listening, speaking, reading and writing. To acquire these language skills, one needs not only to learn grammatical rules but to practice such skills till he gets used to all of them. Whenever s/he acquires the skills of the language and manages to use them effectively and appropriately according to the context in which s/he is involved, we can say that s/he achieves the required level of the communicative competence.

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