Socio-Cultural and Discursive Aspects of Language Competencies in Learning Foreign Languages

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Abstract

Transforming of teaching and learning process in Uzbekistan to the new phase is making it possible to research more effective ways of teaching and learning foreign languages, in particular to develop language competencies. This article focuses on various aspects of a foreign language learning in order to comprehend, interpret and use the target language efficiently in the right context. It emphasizes on how linguistic competencies are important concept in teaching and learning foreign languages. However, traditional English language teaching methodologies have been criticized for their lack of creativity, lack of focus on individual learners' needs, and inability to develop communicative competence. As we are living in information era, there are some misunderstandings in decoding and perceiving the message as well as interpreting and analyzing it when it's rendered in a foreign language for EFL learners. Any language has its own characteristics. On the one hand, this is expressed in the history of word formation in the language, and on the other, in the number of borrowed, outdated or new words. In addition, human speech includes both simple and complex expressions, a number of which are fixed in their composition and have strong connections among themselves. In this term, by learning a foreign language EFL learners confront not only the language itself but its history, culture, context, and individuality. In this study, metalanguage aspects of language learning process have been scrutinized to enable the process of learning a foreign language to become more accessible for both teachers and learners.

Keywords: *Sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competence, strategic competence, discourse, culture, hidden factors*

Introduction

Currently, the formation of youth's socio-political view plays an important role, as the contemporary generation is tend to become potential specialists of tomorrow. The measures are being undertaken in order to make them comprehend the concepts of "state", "society". "governance" and alike terms alongside with the conception of existing policy and future prospects by providing quality education and involving them in the socio-political processes taking place in Uzbekistan. The issues of developing youth's spirituality, their education and world outlook as well as their active participation in socio-political life seem to be crucial today. In this term, socio-linguistics and discourse give the opportunity to determine its own way of progress each state is concerned about upbringing harmoniously developed generation who is able to see the colors of the happenings.

According to CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) identities there are following competencies: communicative competence, linguistic/grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic/discursive competence, and strategic competence. Here, Linguistic or grammatical competence is defined as the ability to apply grammatical, lexical, syntactical, and stylistic rules to oral and written utterances.

Linguistic Competence

Primarily, linguistic competence is fundamental for enabling learners to participate effectively in communication, as it encompasses the rules and knowledge needed to construct meaningful utterances (Chomsky, 1965). If we look back to the history of language, when human was created, they would use written (symbols, pictures, etc.) and verbal words (sounds, some lexical items, short expressions, etc.) which later were evolutionally developed to more complicated utterances. To my view, linguistic competence is the backbone of the body, here the body is considered a language, as it is also a living organism, which develops over the time. With the help of the

linguistic competence a language user is able to decode and transfer the main part of the message and the second party of the communication process can encode that message to the point of higher percentage of its meaning. Good grammar, right words, appropriate syntactical and stylistic applications can decorate our speech and make it accessible for the second party.

Pragmatic Competence

Pragmatic competence, defined as the ability to comprehend and produce contextually appropriate language, is a crucial dimension of communicative competence (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). To do this, one should be aware and conscious about the environment and the context of that language used in order to make oneself sure the primary intention of the delivered message.

Several studies and practitioner accounts have highlighted that pragmatic competence often receives less emphasis in traditional EFL classrooms, particularly in contexts where grammatical accuracy is prioritized over communicative functionality (Krashen, "The Natural Approach"). This imbalance may contribute to observable gaps in learners' ability to understand and produce language appropriately in varied social contexts. However, this trend has begun to shift in recent years, with more educators acknowledging the importance of pragmatic awareness and incorporating contextualized language use into their teaching practices. However, the tendency is now changing and it has become tangible that without being aware about the context of a target language it remains underused.

In addition, it requires the knowledge of more areas to use a foreign language in the right context. So, a language user is supposed to be well aware about the culture, beliefs, social environment, life-styles, human cognition, and other relevant details that push to get the intended primary meaning of the message. The same requirement is set forwards for L1 learners as they will be able to compare the existing context to grasp what is delivered.

Sociolinguistic Competence

"*Every country has its customs*". This proverb is applicable in linguistics as well. It has the reflection on the target language as learning a foreign language is considered a social phenomenon. By regarding to Sociolinguistic competence, a language learner can understand not only the message itself but this way he can have overall vision about that culture and traditions as well as other social aspects that message carry within.

Sociolinguistic phenomenon can be seen in societies, politics, business, and other spheres of our lives. It can be used everywhere human interaction is involved as a human is part of society. Especially, sociolinguistic competence is extremely actual in the process of translating a literary work to keep the originality as much as possible and make a reader feel in that original environment, for instance. A language learner would have deeper comprehension of what he/she is learning if he/she addresses this competence and would make the learning process easier if he/she would be able to take sociolinguistic aspects into account. "This means that it offers a window into how language is interpreted, rendered and adapted according their speakers and the environment they happen to reside in. This is where language transfer, acquisition, interference, semantics, phonology and morphology especially come in."

The culture and the history surrounding the language in question also falls under scrutiny and that is where historical linguistics falls in. The two fields are so closely related that many people would have the two confused almost immediately but I digress. This part of linguistics is among the most studied simply because, you can never have language separated from society as language forms an intrinsic part of society. This is why language and culture as the latter forms the backbone of former. (Michael Koeberg, 2016) According to N.G. Yuzefovich (2005) "Socio-political interpretation of a text raises an issue of both its reflection of political culture related events and socio-political existence". In addition to linguistic and literal characteristics of a text, its gnoseological characteristics play a primary role in analyzing a text.

If I refer to my classes, I strongly believe that Sociolinguistic Competence would be essential and supporting skill that I would like to develop in my students. According to the topic and the material that I would like to present in the class, without any doubt, consider this aspect. Furthermore, there are other cultural aspects that should be considered while discussing various topics.

Strategic Competence

The skillful use of Strategic Competence in communication process is a matter of psychological state of a communicator to handle over misunderstandings and unknown expressions/words that he/she has to deal with as he/she must feel how to react in that hard dialogue.

Sometimes, a communicator (especially the one who is not a native speaker) might miss the point if fails to understand anything during the conversation. Asking for explanation or substitution of that unknown word/phrase/statement may have negative effect on the mutual interpersonal relations, in particular, in formal environment. Here, possession of this skill could help a speaker to get out of that nuisance. No doubt, an EFL learner should be taught this skill in order to keep positive communication atmosphere with an addressee.

According to my research results, strategic competence ensures compensatory devices to avoid the breakdown in communication process. Strategic competence can manifest in both verbal and non-verbal forms, helping learners to bridge gaps in their knowledge and maintain communication flow (Canale & Swain, 1980).

To apply this competence in my class, I would like to arrange the process by asking provocative questions and give them time to use their cognitive abilities to solve that problem, and handle with them in practice using simulations. It creates the opportunity for students to control their thoughts and emotions during real life situations connected with making deals and negotiations.

In conclusion, linguistic competencies are combination of perceiving the life in terms of conceptual-discourse methods, standards of scientific researches and activities. The primary form of analyzing a language identifies hidden factors of its social, political, economic and ideological objectives as they reflect all changes turning to setting the target for investigating, evaluating and selecting. This can help clearly define epistemic-linguistic problems and the frame of the tasks in developing foreign cultural consciousness.

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