



Communicative Competence Of Primary School Learners

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Abstract:

This study aims to highlight the concept of communicative competence and its key indicators among primary school learners. It focuses on the significant facilitators that contribute to achieving communicative competence while also addressing the obstacles that hinder it. Practical examples will be provided to illustrate these points.

Keywords: Communicative Competence, Teacher, Learner, Primary School, Communication.

1. Introduction:

Communication is an integral part of human life, constantly occurring between individuals and the surrounding world, including other beings and phenomena. This communication takes various forms, involving sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. Individuals process these sensory inputs, forming mental representations that are stored in memory until needed.

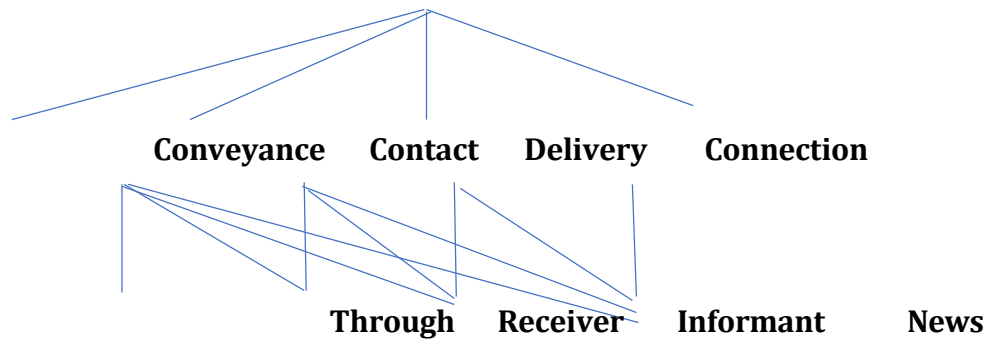
Thus, individuals build horizontal relationships with their peers and vertical connections with natural entities through their behavior, actions, and desires. This interaction is what we refer to as communication.¹

2. The Concept of Communication and its Mechanisms:

The term "communication" is surrounded by some ambiguity due to its rich vocabulary and its relationship with various related terms in both root and semantic fields, such as communication, conveyance, connection, linkage, reporting, notification, dialogue, and more.

Taha Abderrahman attempted to distinguish the first category, characterized by a common root, wherein communication is a comprehensive concept encompassing:²

Communication



In this framework, communication encompasses all these aspects, signifying the transmission of information while considering the source, recipient, and the channels involved.

Communication through language is considered one of the highest forms of communication. Language utilizes natural means to represent objects through sounds, symbols, and images. It is a mechanism that allows us to store and comprehend the universe's collective knowledge. Linguistic encoding stands at the forefront of various encoding mechanisms due to its ability to encompass, frame, interpret, and convey other symbolic structures.³

As a result, speech has always been a fundamental element in human communication, shaping the laws and understanding of other communication means. Through language, we grasp the world, influence and evolve our surroundings, engage mechanisms of thought and memory, communicate, produce, and translate our experiences and emotions to a degree that made Torandayik consider language as "the greatest invention of humanity."⁴

Thus, it becomes evident that there is no communication without language. Language is a system of meaningful symbols and representations. In the field of communication theory, it is often referred to as "code." Each code is governed by semantic relationships and structural rules, making it unique to a specific language within different societies, such as Arabic, French, and others.

This also applies to artificial languages. Understanding how communication occurs is more critical than understanding what is conveyed. How can a mere physical stimulus, used by one individual and perceived by another, make some of the speaker's thoughts similar to those of the listener?

It is important to note that there is no identity between the stimulus and thoughts, but linguistic signs go beyond conveying content or agreed-upon information. They carry connotations and shades of meaning that have been imprinted in the minds of language users through their experiences, intertwined with their emotions, desires, and aspirations. Furthermore, linguistic signs shape their perception of the world and others.

However, communication through signs is limited to two possibilities: either the content is conveyed entirely, or it is not conveyed at all, especially considering that

language is not a necessary means of conveying information, although it is the most refined. This is because communication can occur without signs. The gap between the signifier and the signified is primarily attributed to psychological factors related to individual experiences, cognitive systems, and interests, as well as the individual's situation.

Thus, "linguistic meaning is surrounded by other meanings that help structure human experiences and understanding of the world. Linguistic meaning is far from being in sync between transmitted representations and received representations."⁵

Among the most complex issues related to communication is the question of precedence between thought and language: which one comes before the other, and which one has a more significant influence on the emergence of the other? This has led to three main perspectives:⁶

- **The Language-First Perspective:**

This view, which has ancient roots in human thought, suggests that language shapes an individual's perception of the world. According to this perspective, the world in which a person lives is a linguistic construct.

For instance, Hegel argued that human thought is entirely enclosed within words, and words shape and mold thought. In Sabir Worf's theory, language has even more profound effects, as he believed that there is no thought without language. Therefore, if we could control the language people learn, we could control their thought patterns.

- **The Thought-First Perspective:**

In contrast, some argue that thought precedes language. Jean Piaget, for instance, believed that teaching linguistic forms does not lead to clear logical thinking. Instead, logical thinking precedes the acquisition of precise language. According to this view, thoughts are generated independently of language and then find appropriate words to express them.

- **The Mutual Interaction Perspective:**

A third perspective seeks to reconcile thought and language, viewing them as two sides of the same coin, inseparably linked. Here, thought and language are seen as interconnected aspects of human cognition. Thought can manifest itself without the need for language, as observed in infants' attempts to solve problems such as touching objects, opening doors, etc., during their early months.

On the other hand, language without thought initially manifests itself through non-connected sounds produced by infants to satisfy social goals like gaining attention or pleasing adults. Language initially serves a social function, both in form and function. Later, it evolves to serve an internal function, becoming a medium for thought. Vygotsky suggests that there are stages before the emergence of linguistic thinking, and both thought and language follow their own trajectories until they converge around the age of two. At this point, thought becomes verbal, and language becomes cognitive.

This debate has fueled discussions in linguistics, psychology, and philosophy about the intricate relationship between thought and language. It emphasizes the dynamic interplay between these two aspects of human cognition, shaping our understanding of how humans perceive and interact with the world.

3. Communicative Competence:

Dell Hymes defined communicative competence as an individual's ability to use language in a communicative context to fulfill specific communicative purposes. Communicative competence, based on this definition, implies an individual's capacity to convey their intentions through commonly accepted expressions.

It also encompasses an individual's awareness of the governing rules for appropriate language usage in social situations. It consists of two fundamental concepts: appropriateness and effectiveness, which apply to both spoken and written language.

The desired communicative competence to be acquired by learners involves a dual process—individual and social. The individual aspect relates to a person's specific strategies for dealing with communication situations, while the social aspect pertains to the context in which communication occurs.

The ultimate goal of language education is to acquire communicative competence. This is a comprehensive goal because it encompasses multiple competencies that reflect one's mastery of the linguistic system, as well as the ability to adapt this system to various communication contexts using proper strategies and methodologies.

Communicative competence is also influenced by logical, cognitive, social, and perceptual abilities. It integrates various forms of knowledge beyond language itself, as language learning is always connected to specific situations and contexts.

Types of competencies included in communicative competence can be defined as follows:

- **Linguistic Competence:** This involves the accuracy and integrity of linguistic performance.
- **Social Competence:** It encompasses the appropriateness of the social context in which communication takes place.
- **Strategic Competence:** This refers to the use of discourse and communication strategies during interaction.

The concept of competence can be traced back to Humboldt, and Chomsky associates it with the underlying rules in individuals that constitute their linguistic knowledge. These rules enable individuals to produce or understand an unlimited number of sentences they have never encountered before.

Linguists aim to determine this shared or individual competence among speakers of the same language community. Chomsky describes linguistics as the study of linguistic competence rather than linguistic performance. This idea of shared or generative competence aligns with De Saussure's conception of linguistics as competence rather than performance.

As the concept of "competence" intersects with "performance," it represents the explicit manifestation of communicative competence in the multifaceted linguistic actions of individuals. Linguistic performance involves the creation of sentences in various communicative contexts, forming the observable data that constitutes the basis for linguistic analysis. This concept aligns with De Saussure's notion of parole, which refers to the actual use of language.

The study of competence precedes the study of performance because competence represents the underlying knowledge of individuals who are ideal speakers of their language. It resides in their minds and is hidden from direct expression, while performance is the immediate and direct reflection of this competence. However, performance does not always accurately represent competence due to factors related to the speaker's circumstances, such as distraction, shifting attention, memory limitations, external noise, and more.⁷

4. Directions of Communicative Competence:

In addressing this aspect, we will explore the surrounding conditions and factors influencing communicative competence development in learners. We will also assess the contributions of educational programs at the primary stage in fostering and enhancing communicative competence among learners, with a focus on the strategies used.

Initially, we will delve into three fundamental directions of communicative competence and evaluate the extent to which educational programs provide a fertile ground for its growth and enhancement. These directions are as follows:

a. Egocentric Speech (Inner Speech):

At this stage, speech revolves around the speaking self, a concept introduced by Jean Piaget as egocentric speech or inner speech. Piaget identified three categories within inner speech: repetitive speech, which serves the pleasure of speaking alone; private dialogue, where a child talks to themselves as if thinking aloud; and collective inner dialogue, where children engage in group-like inner conversations without necessarily listening to or understanding each other.

During this initial stage, children consider themselves as the standard for everything, believing that what they find interesting is interesting for others as well. They assume that others understand things in the same way they do. Moreover, they often reinterpret and reinterpret the explanations given to them in a way that aligns with their own beliefs.⁸

The linguistic instructor's role in developing communicative competence among primary learners involves introducing second-generation curricula that incorporate a series of steps in understanding verbal content and subsequently utilizing it in producing similar situations. This process is achieved through two main stages: "Understanding the Spoken Word" and "Oral Expression."

b. Understanding the Spoken Word and Oral Expression:

Understanding the spoken word involves articulately delivering the text with vocal vigor and expressing emotions through it. It may include hand gestures or other non-verbal cues to engage listeners, guide their emotions, and make them more responsive. This field relies on accurate pronunciation, vocal clarity, and eloquence in delivery for the teacher.

For students, this stage emphasizes listening skills, which are inherently complex. Listening encompasses several aspects: firstly, recognizing spoken linguistic symbols through auditory discrimination; secondly, understanding the meaning conveyed by these symbols; thirdly, grasping the communicative function inherent in these symbols or spoken words; and fourthly, the interaction of the linguistic experiences conveyed in the message with the listener's knowledge, values, and criteria.⁹

In this stage, efforts are focused on developing the observational element, followed by the expressive element. Students are encouraged to use language to describe various scenes depicted in images, which allows them to employ two fundamental abilities: listening and observing. In a subsequent phase, a third ability, namely expression, is developed. Students learn to create verbal segments based on the linguistic knowledge provided by their language resources.

This allows them to enrich their linguistic repertoire by responding to questions posed by the teacher, who initiates the process with a question related to the text or topic.¹⁰ The student is then required to formulate answers that demonstrate an understanding of the question, utilizing their linguistic knowledge.

It's worth noting that communicative competence in the field of "Understanding the Spoken Word and Oral Expression" is gradually realized through the communicative interaction between the learner and the teacher. The learner's reactions and responses to questions about their understanding of the text are often quite precise, considering their educational and linguistic level and their prior knowledge.¹¹ Furthermore, this is influenced by the communicative interaction that occurs between the teacher and the learner.

The enhancement of the expressive ability in the learner is accomplished by directing them to complete exercises in the Arabic language activity book. These exercises reinforce the acquired knowledge and values.

The field of "Understanding Written Texts" aims to equip the teacher with reading skills, comprehension, and discussion abilities. Through written texts, the learner enriches their linguistic knowledge and achieves various learning goals (linguistic, cognitive, intellectual, and behavioral). This involves addressing grammatical, morphological, and spelling aspects while instilling diverse values.¹²

Reading is an activity that encompasses several stages, each of which must be fully comprehended. It involves interpreting meaningful linguistic symbols in printed and written forms, reading for understanding, and is the result of interaction between the reader's perception of written symbols representing language and the reader's language skills. The reader strives to decode the meanings intended by the author.¹³

The competency-based approach does not view Arabic language components in isolation but rather as an integrated unit. Therefore, the prescribed text in reading incorporates various cognitive, linguistic, stylistic, and technical elements. Reading serves as the central axis around which all Arabic language activities revolve, including reading, linguistic study, oral expression, and written expression.¹⁴ Reading is a multidimensional process, as outlined in Table 1:¹⁵

Table 1: Dimensions of the Reading Process

Dimension/Aspect	Description
Neurophysiological Path	Reading, first and foremost, is a tangible activity that demands specific capabilities from humans. Actual reading cannot occur without activating the visual system and the different functions of the brain. Reading, before any content analysis, is a process of perception, recognizing written symbols representing language, and storing them in memory.
Cognitive Path	The reader perceives the signs, deciphers their symbols, and then attempts to understand their content. Therefore, it involves transforming words and word groups into meaningful elements, requiring a significant effort in abstraction.
Emotional Path	The appeal of reading largely relies on the emotions it evokes. If the acceptance of the text stimulates thoughts, it also depends, to some extent, on the reader's conscience. Emotions are the driving force behind the essential principle of empathy in fictional reading.
Dialogical Path	The text, as a result of creative management and organized structuring of elements, is always potentially open to analysis, even in the case of narratives based on the absent. Persuasive techniques are thus found in every story in one form or another.
Symbolic Path	The meaning derived from reading immediately takes its place within the cultural context in which the reader operates. Each reading interacts with the prevailing cultural models and overarching conceptions of time and place. Reading relies on collective imagination models to confirm its symbolic dimension, whether they exclude or embrace these models.

Source: Conducted by the Researchers

In this way, communicative proficiency becomes evident through the learner's behavior, as listening and reading skills are intertwined in the culmination of understanding spoken language. Oral expression and comprehension of written material are also active components. Reading, as well as grammatical and morphological structures, play a role in this proficiency. The crucial element binding them all together is sound, bridging the gap between pronunciation and comprehension. When we connect sound to the process of articulation, we obtain speech. However, when we associate sound with the process of understanding and perception, we arrive at listening.¹⁶

5. Communication Competence Obstacles:

A. Language Disorders: ¹⁷

Language disorders or linguistic impairments refer to conditions that affect auditory or speech-related systems, leading to disruptions in the communication process. These disorders can include:

- **Stuttering:**

Stuttering involves a reverse association with language acquisition and loss of language abilities in individuals affected by it. According to "Jackson," children with stuttering may not distinguish between certain phonetic sounds, like /d/ and /t/, or /s/ and /ʃ/, until a later stage in language development, while typically developing children make these distinctions early.

- **Cluttering:**

Cluttering is characterized by the retention of speech in individuals, leading to difficulties in pronunciation, comprehension, understanding meanings, reading, and writing. "Jackson" has differentiated two types of cluttering: one occurring at the substitutational level, leading to disturbance in symmetry, and the other at the compositional level, resulting in disturbances in adjacency.

In the first case, internal relationships within the symmetry are affected, while in the latter, external relationships of adjacency remain intact but are influenced by internal relationships within the symmetry.

Specific features of cluttering may include:

- The ability to complete parts of words or sentences with ease, but significant difficulty initiating a dialogue.
- Difficulty maintaining context; individuals with cluttering may struggle to respond appropriately to focused questions or immediate situations, as they may find it challenging to engage in personal conversations or produce sentences like "It's raining" unless it's actually raining.
- Inability to use descriptive language; individuals with cluttering may be unable to move from one word to its synonym or equivalent phrases in their native language or any other language.
- Semantic poles and figurative expressions are affected as individuals tend to shift from the object to the content, from cause to effect, and from whole to part.

These language disorders hinder communication competence by affecting the relationship between listening and reading skills. This relationship primarily relies on sound, bridging the gap between pronunciation and perception. When sound is associated with the process of production, it results in speech. Conversely, when sound is linked to the processes of comprehension and perception, it leads to listening.

Furthermore, among the characteristics of adjacency disorder are:

- Loss of grammatical rules governing the arrangement of words into larger units: In this case, speech becomes disorganized, and grammatical words, such as conjunctions, prepositions, and pronouns, tend to disappear, leading to a telegraphic style where nouns dominate. In contrast, these words are more resilient in stuttering.
- Strong linkage between roots and derivational affixes or between compound words: Individuals with adjacency stuttering may pronounce and comprehend compound words like "Hadhramaut" as a whole, but struggle when they are broken down into "Hadhra" and "maut" separately.
- Difficulty using metaphors while still being able to use similes.

B. Attention Difficulties:

Attention refers to an individual's ability to focus their senses on internal stimuli (thoughts/feelings) or external stimuli.

C. Perception Difficulties:

Perception is a psychological process that contributes to understanding the meanings and significance of things, people, and situations a person deals with. It involves organizing sensory stimuli related to them, interpreting them, and forming meaningful concepts.

D. Memory Difficulties:

Memory is an individual's ability to organize and store experiences and then retrieve them for use in daily life or test situations.

E. Concept Formation Difficulties:

Concept formation involves creating a general idea about something, someone, or a situation, which is represented by a term derived from everyday spoken or written language, scientific books, journals, or dictionaries.

These obstacles can significantly impede communication competence. If you require further translation or have more content to be translated, please let me know.

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