

A Review of Linguistic and Communicative Competence: An ESP Approach

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Abstract: *Linguistics is a scientific study of language. Communicative competence is the ability to communicate truly to the people in a society. ESP is specified to fulfill the learners' individual needs, utilizing the discipline's underpinning methodologies and practices. English for Science and Technology is a subset of ESP, and as a result, it is centered on the language appropriate to the activities of the discipline it teaches the grammar, lexis, study skills, discourse, genre and register.*

Keywords: Communicative Competence, ESP, EST, Linguistics

Introduction

Linguistics is a scientific study of language. David Crystal in his encyclopedia defines linguistics as the “science of language”. It is defined as: the scientific inquiry into human language and its structures and uses and into the relationship between them.

Linguistic competence is the equipment that a language user possesses in terms of his/her knowledge of the syntactic, semantic and phonological units of the language and the rules for their organization in sentences; it is the ability or capacity of the speaker to produce and understand sentences that are syntactically, semantically and phonologically acceptable.

Communicative competence is the ability to communicate truly to the people in a society with the knowledge of the lexis, morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology. Competence is an underlying cognitive ability, whereas performance is the overt manifestation of this ability in actual behavior.

Communicative Competence

In 1966, Dell Hymes coined a term “Communicative competence”. It is the reaction to concept of “linguistic competence”. Communicative competence is the perceptive functional knowledge of language and its usage.

The following are the four components of communicative competence: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

- **Linguistic competence** is the knowledge of the language code, i.e. grammar, vocabulary, and its written representation (script and orthography).
- **Sociolinguistic competence** is the knowledge of sociocultural rules and responding to language usage appropriately and the relationships among the people communicating.
- **Discourse competence** is the knowledge of producing and comprehending oral or written texts in the forms of speaking, writing, listening and reading correspondingly. So, it deals with organising words, phrases and sentences in view of creating conversation, speeches, etc.
- **Strategic competence** means one’s ability to identify and repair breakdowns in communication before, during, or after they occur. The speaker ought to know how to restore communication, in case the communication is not successful (due to interruptions, etc.)

The communicative approach has been a major starting point in considering approaches towards designing an ESL syllabus. According to Munby (1980b), the communicative approach emerged in

the attempt to know what content should be taught and learnt if a non-native is to be communicatively proficient in English. Hence, syllabus design is heavily based on the communicative needs of the learners.

According to Friedenberget al. (2003), the notion of communicative competence, or the ability to use the language in the right way to achieve communication goals, was first presented by Hymes (1971) and has subsequently been refined and applied to a variety of teaching contexts. This well-known model encompasses four types of language competence: linguistic (grammatical competence or accuracy), sociolinguistic (the extent to which utterances can be appropriately used or understood), discourse (ability to combine ideas to achieve cohesion and coherence) and strategic (ability to use strategies to handle language knowledge limitations) (Hymes, 1971; Oxford, 1990).

The ultimate goal of communicative language instruction is promoting communicative competence to language learners, and communicative goals are best accomplished by laying stress both on language usage and language use, fluency and accuracy, as well as on authentic language and contexts and on application of classroom learning to real world contexts (Brown, 2001).

In English language training programs, the idea that communicative competence is the goal of language learning had led to a broadening of the content and types of activities that take place in the language classroom, for instance, observation, role plays and presentations. Instructors encourage learners to develop their ability either to produce language or to produce extended sequences of language that are appropriate to a specific context and accomplish the focused communicative goals. Realia (or realistic) workplace materials and situations are employed through pair or small-group interaction rather than individual drilling and repetition.

Communicative Competence and ESP

English has become the most visible symbol of globalization because of its international stature. Foreign language learning and teaching faculties struggle in vain to provide suitable training to future English language communicating experts that meets the limits of both academic curriculum and real-world commercial necessities. Teaching English in an institution of non-native speaking English, on the other hand, has some challenges in ensuring that students achieve communicative competence in English. This weakness is a natural result of the typical non-native classroom environment, which has a severe lack of interpersonal contacts in the target language and little exposure to real situations, both of which are essential components of foreign language acquisition.

Communication competence is described by Stephen Littlejohn and David Jabusch (1982; as cited by Ghomari, 2015) as a person's capacity and willingness to contribute appropriately in a conversation in order to enhance the outcome of shared understanding.

English for Specific Purposes

Today ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is one of the most popular types of EFL instruction.

The teaching of English for every purpose that is indicated is referred to as ESP. Therefore, it is more properly defined as teaching English for academic objectives or teaching English for vocational or professional goals.

Characteristics of ESP

In terms of 'absolute' and 'variable' features, as per Dudley – Evans, Coeditor of the ESP Journal, ESP is specified to fulfill the learners' individual needs, utilizing the discipline's underpinning methodologies and practices. It focuses on syntax, lexis, academic skills, dialogue, and register-appropriate language. ESP is a distinct approach from General English that can be employed in specialized teaching scenarios. It is probably to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level or in a professional work situation.

ESP, as per Hutchinson, is a method of language instruction. Teachers of General English place a greater emphasis on the language. Their goal is to provide learners with a course that will satisfy their desire to study and comprehend a specific language, however when it relates to ESP, instructors place an emphasis on needs analysis, and content authors consider the students' objectives thoroughly.

According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), for much of its infancy, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is a branch of ESP and the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) dominates ESP.

ESP and General English

According to Hutchinson, the difference between the ESP and General English is nothing in theory, but a great deal in practice. In General English language, teachers teach the grammar rules, expression of sentences, phonetics, etc. whereas Teaching English language for specific purposes is intended for different professional/occupational, social and other – needs of the learner.

Nowadays, Teachers of English are fully aware of the importance of learner's needs analysis and thinking of materials written at all stages of materials production. So, it makes the influence of the ESP approach in teaching English in general. Gradually, it leads to stop General English programmes and start ESP programmes.

English for Science and Technology: A Subset of ESP

After analyzing learners need, it turns to English for Science and Technology. English for Science and Technology is a subset of ESP, and as a result, it is centered on the language appropriate to the activities of the discipline it teaches the grammar, lexis, study skills, discourse, genre and register.

EST does not necessarily cover the whole range of language requirements of an engineer or a technician in his professional life. A student should be able to read literature pertaining to his subject, for discussion, lecture-presentations and writing his/her own papers/articles in English.

The users of English language in the specified fields of science and technological in EST can form their own linguistic community. The methodology using in EST has therefore strengthened the concept of a linguistic community within scientific disciplines, emphasizing vocabulary and such kinds of tasks in these fields.

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is based on an assessment of the learner's goals and the collection of communicative needs that these goals generate. The capacity to operate efficiently and independently in English in academic or occupational life is a need for all ESP learners. ESP is a relatively new discipline under Applied Linguistics that proposes a new learner-centered approach to English language training, focused on the learner's individual needs (Kennedy and Bolitho, 1984). As a result, EST teachers must present learners with realistic materials in their subject and, whenever possible, create real-life situations for them.

Thus, the language using in EST can help the user better for describing, interpreting and explaining the different steps in the scientific process.

Conclusion

It is to summarize that the linguistic competence is under the domain of communicative competence because communicative competence consists of four areas of competencies - linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic. English for Specific Purposes or ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners and it is centered on the language. The methodology using in EST has therefore strengthened the concept of a linguistic community within scientific disciplines.

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