

Tema 4

Educación Secundaria



INGLÉS

LA COMPETENCIA COMUNICATIVA. ANÁLISIS DE SUS COMPONENTES.

0. INTRODUCTION

1. CHOMSKY'S THEORY OF COMPETENCE AND PERFORMANCE.

2. DELL HYMES' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE THEORY.

3. EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND ITS ELEMENTS.

3.1. Canale and Swain's theory.

3.2. Savignon's theory.

3.3. Larsen-Freeman's theory.

3.4. Bachman and Palmer's theory.

3.5. Faersch, Haastrup and Phillipson's theory.

4. MEC THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND ITS ELEMENTS.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

6. TOPIC-BASED UNIT.

✂ SUMMARY (Sample for the elaboration of the topic for the examination)

TEMA 4  
MAGISTER

## 0. INTRODUCTION.

Learning a foreign language is, from both a linguistic and a communicative view, a matter of mastering “competence” and “performance”. Chomsky’s view of what it means to know a language is reflected in his distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. In *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965:3) Chomsky writes:

*Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.*

For Chomsky, then, syntax is central. The world of linguistic theory has two parts: linguistic *competence* and linguistic *performance*. Linguistic competence, the speaker-listener’s knowledge, in Chomsky’s terms, concerns that knowledge of the language system which underlies any actual instance of its use. It refers to the mechanical aspects of language, necessarily implicit in what the (ideal) speaker-listener can say. Everything else comes under performance, “the actual use of language in concrete situations”, most explicitly understood to do with encoding and decoding.

There is, in Chomsky’s theory, a failure to provide an explicit place for sociocultural features and this failure is not accidental. Human life seems divided between grammatical competence and performance. Chomsky associates his views of competence and performance with the Saussurian conceptions of “langue” and “parole” but sees his own conceptions as superior because they concern underlying processes. Nevertheless, it is, to a certain extent, a sterile notion.

It is an sterile notion because the nature of communication is manifold:

- a) Communication is a form of **social interaction**; it involves a high degree of **unpredictability** and **creativity**; it provides constraints on **appropriate** language use.
- b) It is carried out under limiting **psychological** conditions (memory constraints, fatigue, distractions).
- c) It always has a **purpose** (persuade, greet, promise, etc.).
- d) It involves **authentic** language.
- e) It is judged successful or not on the basis of **actual results**.

In addition, communication is understood as the exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, oral and written/visual modes, and production and comprehension processes.

The Communicative Approach in Foreign or Second Language Teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes referred to



as "communicative competence". Chomsky (1957) defined language as a set of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements. An able speaker has a subconscious knowledge of the grammar rules of his language which allows him to make sentences in that language. However, Dell Hymes thought that Chomsky had missed out some very important information: the rules of use. When a native speaker speaks he does not only utter grammatically correct forms, he also knows where and when to use these sentences and to whom. Hymes, then, said that competence by itself is not enough to explain a native speaker's knowledge, and he replaced it with his own concept of *communicative competence*.

## 1. CHOMSKY'S THEORY OF COMPETENCE AND PERFORMANCE.

Chomsky argued that it was impossible for people to acquire a language by simple repetition and reinforcement. Children, he said, do not learn a language this way, for they do not, in fact, repeat what adults say, but produce their own sentences, and create phrases which they have never heard before. They also make systematic errors, and no amount of correct input or of error- correction will stop them from doing so. Children do not so much learn the grammar of a language, as they construct it anew.

It should be said that even if this was the case for children learning their mother-tongue, we could not simply assume that adults and adolescents learn an FL in the same way. Nevertheless, the idea that over-learning of typical structures would lead to mastery of an FL seemed to be very dubious in the light of Chomsky's critique of Behaviourist approaches to language learning. However, Chomsky himself did not feel that linguistics could do much to help language teachers. Indeed, he wrote that neither linguistics, nor psychology could do or say much to further the cause of classroom learning.

Moreover, Chomsky's own model of language quickly came under fire from people who were at least sympathetic to his attack on behaviourism. This was because Chomsky's model appears to construct an ideal, and unreal, image of the language user. Chomsky, extending Saussure's distinction between 'langue' and 'parole', differentiates between competence and performance. The proper object of study for the linguist, he says, is not language as it is produced in everyday situations - that is performance - but the inner, and ultimately innate knowledge of grammar that everyone has in their minds - that is competence.

To study language, then, we need to turn away from real usage, in which the actualisation of grammar is always partial, interrupted and likely to be over-ridden by other concerns, and look to the prior knowledge of grammar that all speakers possess, and which has nothing to do with the social situation within which they happen to find themselves. From the start, this conception of the linguist's task aroused criticism, and one of the most telling critiques was made by the sociolinguist Dell Hymes.

## 2. DELL HYMES' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE THEORY

Hymes first of all draws attention to the image of the ideal speaker that Chomsky's model draws :



*The image is that of a child, born with the ability to master any language with almost miraculous ease and speed; a child who is not merely moulded by conditioning and reinforcement, but who actively proceeds with the unconscious theoretical interpretation of the speech that comes its way, so that in a few years and with a finite experience, it is master of an infinite ability, that of producing and understanding in principle any and all grammatical sentences of language. The image (or theoretical perspective) expresses the essential equality in children just as human beings. It is noble in that it can inspire one with the belief that even the most dispiriting conditions can be transformed; it is an indispensable weapon against views that would explain the communicative differences among groups of children as inherent, perhaps racial.*

But, says Hymes, this image is also misleading, for it abstracts the child as learner, and the adult as language-user, from the social contexts within which acquisition and use are achieved. And because it does this, it produces an ideal speaker who is a very strange being indeed.

Consider now a child with just such an ability (Chomsky's competence). A child who might produce any sentence whatsoever - such a child would be likely to be institutionalised: even more so if not only sentences, but also speech or silence was random, unpredictable. For that matter, a person who chooses occasions and sentences suitably, but is master only of fully grammatical sentences, is at best a bit odd. Some occasions call for being appropriately ungrammatical.

We have then to account for the fact that 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 suggests, then, that linguistic competence is but a sub-division of a greater whole - communicative competence. Language is but one mode of communication among others, and full communication involves mastery of all the codes - gesture, position, non-verbal vocalization, use of visual aids and so on. And language itself varies from situation to situation, from communicative dyad to communicative dyad; bilingual and multilingual people, Hymes points out, often differentiate the contexts within which one language or another can be used - the Berber uses the Berber language for everyday interaction, and reserves Arabic for discussions of transcendental matters. The change in social relationships that in French is signified by the shift from 'Vous' to 'Tu' is, in Paraguay indicated by shift of a whole language, from Spanish to Guarani. Within a single language, differences and distinctions may be denoted by changes in code or register, by the use of specific kinds of vocabulary, or by the way silence is used. These constraints on language use are as important as the rules of grammar. Hymes writes :



*The acquisition of such competency is of course fed by social experience, needs, and motives, and issues in action that is itself a renewed source of motives, needs, experience. We break irrevocably with the model that restricts the design of language to one face toward referential meaning, one toward sound, and that defines the organization of language as solely consisting of rules for linking the two. Such a model implies naming to be the sole use of speech, as if languages were never organized to lament, rejoice, beseech, admonish, aphorize, inveigh, for the many varied forms of persuasion, direction, expression and symbolic play. A model of language must design it with a face toward communicative conduct and social life.*

Hymes insists, then, on the utility of language, and the need to understand it as a tool - or set of tools - that people use to carry out different tasks. This will bring us to a consideration of the concept of the 'speech act' : the idea that when someone says something, she is not simply sitting back and describing the world, but intends to produce some kind of effect, some kind of change in the world.

Hymes distinguished four aspects of Communicative Competence:

- a) **Systematic potential.** Systematic potential means that the native speaker possesses a system that has a potential for creating a lot of language. This is similar to Chomsky's competence. We study if an utterance is possible according to the forms of expression available.
- b) **Appropriacy.** Appropriacy means that the native speaker knows what language is appropriate in a given situation. An utterance will be appropriate in relation to a context. Later on, Yalden (1987) revised and extended this aspect.

<b>APPROPRIACY VARIABLES (Yalden, 1987)</b>	
1. Participants	- who is taking part in the communicative situation?
2. Social relationships	- who is the relative status of the participants?
3. Setting.	- where and when are we communicating?
4. Scene.	- which is the psychological and cultural environment?
5. Form..	- which is the linguistic description of the message?
6. Topic.	- what is the message about?
7. Purpose.	- which is the intention of the message?
8. Key.	- is it serious, mocking ...?

9. Genre.	- is it a casual speech, a poem ...?
10. Channel.	- which media does the message use?
11. Code.	- which variety of language or language do we use?
12. Interaction norms.	- which is the voice loudness, physical distance ...?
13. Interpretation norms.	- how do we interpret the message conventions?

- c) **Occurrence.** Occurrence means that the native speaker knows how often something is said in the language and act accordingly. This means that an utterance should not only be possible from a grammatical point of view. It should also be actually performed<sup>1</sup>.
- d) **Feasibility.** Feasibility means that the native speaker knows whether something is possible in the language. Even if there is no grammatical rule to ban twenty-adjective prehead construction we know that these constructions are not possible in the language.

Therefore, we can conclude with Yalden that Hymes refuses to accept a model of language that defines its organization as a simple set of rules for linking meaning and form. Hymes said that:

*Such a model implies naming to be the sole use of speech, as if languages were never organized to lament, rejoice, beseech, admonish, aphorize, inveigh ... for the many varied forms of persuasion, direction, expression and symbolic play. A model of language must design it with a face toward communicative conduct and social life. (Yalden, 1987)*

We have taken the first step towards the enlarging of the competence. Grammaticality is only one of the four factors of communicative competence, while grammaticality was linguistic competence for Chomsky. In next section we will see how the definition of competence has become increasingly complex.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> To make it clear, let us use an example. There is no doubt that a sentence in Spanish such as "*La manzana es comida por mí*" is clearly possible, but it seems hard to imagine any real Spanish speaker (outside limited scholar environments) saying such sentence.

<sup>2</sup>We must not forget Halliday, as an example of linguists who reject Chomsky's definition of competence. Halliday is not persuaded that a distinction between idealized knowledge of a language and actual use is necessary for the study of language in use, for the study of learning to mean.



### 3. EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND ITS ELEMENTS.

Hymes' concept of communicative competence is of extreme relevance to language teaching. Since his inception, many other applied linguists have tried to characterize the main components of communicative competence. A discussion of the most influential theories follows.

#### 3.1. Canale and Swain's theory.

One of the most helpful discussions of competence is to be found in Canale and Swain's (1980) article. They point out that

*there is some diversity of opinion in the literature as to (i) whether or not the notion 'communicative competence' includes that of 'grammatical competence' as one of its components and (ii) whether or not communicative competence should be distinguished from (communicative) performance. (Canale & Swain 1980:5)*

As they say, 'it is common to find the term "communicative competence" used to refer exclusively to knowledge or capability relating to the rules of language use and the term "grammatical (or linguistic) competence" used to refer to the rules of grammar' (p.5). However, they maintain that just as there are rules of grammar that would be useless without rules of language use (Hymes 1972), so there are also rules of language use that would be useless without rules of grammar. Hence they see communicative competence as consisting of grammatical competence plus sociolinguistic competence.

Thus for them, there are two clearly defined and distinct subcomponents of communicative competence. They use 'the term "communicative competence" to refer to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the rules of language use' (p.6). This is a welcome clarification, and one is grateful to have a position so clearly stated. It can be seen that this corresponds very closely to Chomsky's position, as his 'pragmatic competence' can easily be related to Canale and Swain's 'sociolinguistic competence'.

Another very welcome clarification which at the same time brings them into line with Chomsky is Canale and Swain's decision to exclude explicitly from their notion of communicative competence any idea of 'ability for use', unlike Hymes, who makes this an important feature.

*(...) we hesitate to incorporate the notion of ability for use into our definition of communicative competence for two main reasons: (i) to our knowledge this notion has not been pursued rigorously in any research on communicative competence (or considered directly relevant in such research, and (ii) we doubt that there is any theory of human action that can adequately explicate 'ability for use' (Canale & Swain 1980:7)*

This view clearly reflects that of Chomsky quoted earlier (Chomsky 1975:138), and the fact of stating it so explicitly makes an important contribution to clarifying the debate. (Unfortunately, but typically in this field, Canale, in a later article meant to be a refinement of this one, backslides when he explicitly associates grammatical competence with 'skill' (Canale 1983:7). The rest of Canale and Swain's article is concerned with the development of communicative competence (including grammatical competence) in second language learners.

As one component of their overall conception of communicative competence they develop the interesting notion of 'strategic competence' to deal with the knowledge and ability learners need to develop in order to take part in communicative interaction. This is clearly important, but on the one hand they fail to distinguish between knowledge and ability, or rather they incorporate both, and on the other hand they do not distinguish between those strategies which all speakers have, both native and non-native, and those which are peculiar to non-native speakers. Once again we see the difficulties that arise when the notion of competence is extended beyond the domain to which it was originally applied.

Canale expanded the description to four in 1983 due to his new view of linguistic communication. Yalden gives us Canale's account of linguistic communication as:

1. It is a form of social interaction, and is therefore acquired and used in social interaction.
2. It involves a high degree of unpredictability and creativity in form and message.
3. It takes place in discourse and sociocultural contexts which provide constraints on appropriate language use and also clues to correct interpretations of utterances.
4. It is carried out under limiting psychological and other conditions such as memory constraints, fatigue and other distractions.
5. It always has a purpose.
6. It involves authentic language.
7. It is judged as successful or not on the basis of actual outcomes.

According to Canale (1983: 5), communicative competence refers to 'the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication'. The four components of communicative competence can be summarized as follows:

CANALE (1983)
1. Grammatical competence.
2. Sociolinguistic competence.
3. Discourse competence.
4. Strategic competence.

**Grammatical competence** producing a structured comprehensible utterance (including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling).





**Sociolinguistic competence** involving knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language and of discourse.

**Discourse competence** shaping language and communicating purposefully in different genres (text types), using cohesion (structural linking) and coherence (meaningful relationships in language).

**Strategic competence** enhancing the effectiveness of communication (e.g. deliberate speech), and compensating for breakdowns in communication (e.g. comprehension checks, paraphrases, conversation fillers).

Canale also drew a distinction between the underlying systems of knowledge and actual communication. Actual communication was for him the realization of such knowledge and skills under limiting conditions such as fatigue, nervousness ...

We can finally say that in neither account is a model provided, e.g., a description of how these four components interact. Sandra Savignon was the first one to propose a possible relationship.

### **3.2. Savignon's theory.**

The inevitable and fundamental changes in the nature of competence once it is associated with any kind of communication come out very clearly in Savignon's discussion of the subject (Savignon 1983). She makes such statements as the following:

*Communicative competence is a dynamic rather than a static concept. It depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more persons who share to some degree the same symbolic system. In this sense, then, communicative competence can be said to be an interpersonal rather than an intrapersonal trait. (Savignon 1983:8)*

Savignon is here spelling out very clearly what follows from Hymes' introduction of a social dimension (see above). More consequences follow.

*Communicative competence is relative, not absolute, and depends on the cooperation of all the participants involved. It makes sense, then, to speak of degrees of communicative competence. (Savignon 1983:9)*

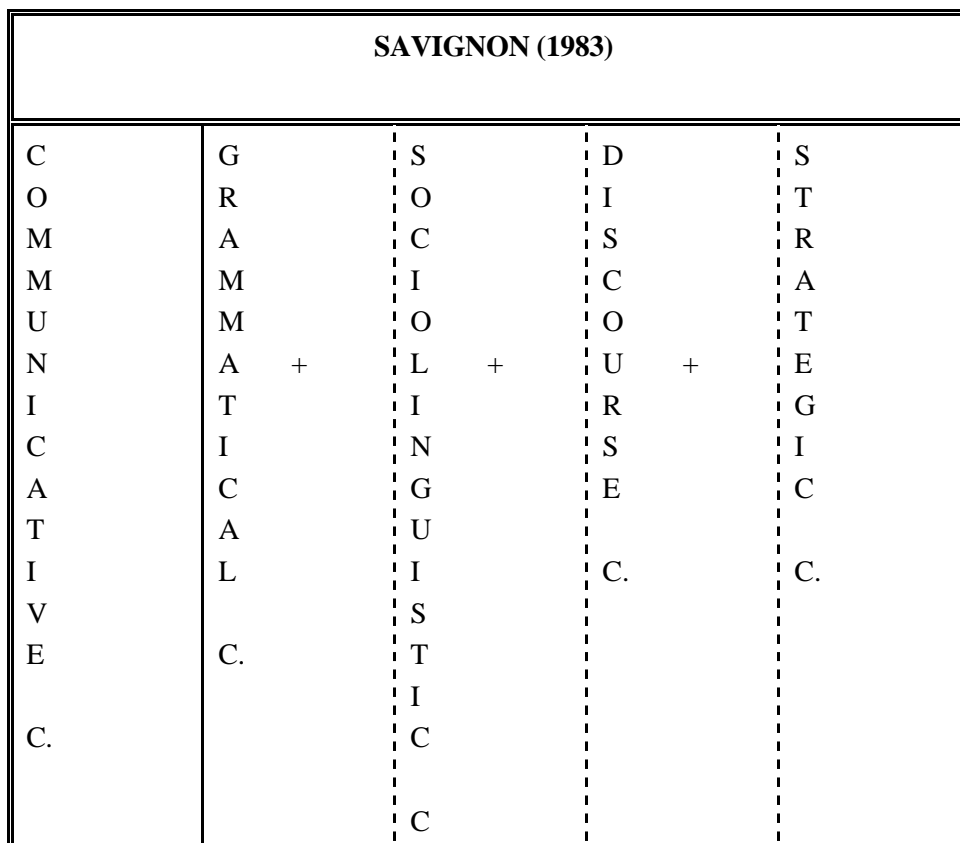
Once again, we are dealing with something very different from Chomsky's original concept. The problem is that Hymes, and those that follow him, such as Savignon, are apparently claiming to be merely extending the original concept, whereas they are obviously doing more than that. The danger is that even when such writers apply the notion of competence to its original domain, i.e. that of the native speaker, they introduce their fundamentally different view, as may be seen in the following extract from Savignon.

The competence of native speakers, well developed though it may be, is relative. Mother-tongue proficiency varies widely from child to child and from adult to adult. Vocabulary range, articulation, critical thinking, persuasiveness, and penmanship are but a few of the many, many facets of competence wherein native speakers differ. (Savignon 1983:53)

Here again we see the identification of competence with proficiency and the inclusion of elements specifically excluded by Chomsky (see Chomsky 1980:234). What is important is that there does not seem to be any awareness in any of these instances that a changed concept of competence is being used. Under these circumstances it is very difficult to know in any given instance what exactly is meant by the term 'competence'.

As far as the term 'communicative competence' is concerned, it generally seems to mean, in the context of language teaching and learning, 'ability to perform' or 'ability to communicate' in the L2. More generally, associating competence with communication inevitably seems to bring in some aspects of performance. It is difficult to escape the conclusion, therefore, that when we talk about communicative competence in the context of language teaching or learning we are really talking about communicative *performance*. Especially when we talk about aims and about specifying them for teaching and learning purposes, we are interested mainly in performance, no matter what the terms we use. Hence in all these discussions, as we have noted, the distinction between competence and performance tends to become blurred and the exact meaning of the terms used is difficult to determine.

In brief, Savignon proposes a relationship between Canale's four factors. The following diagram tries to show how they interact continuously:





Savignon also posits that both sociolinguistic and strategic components may grant the language learner a basic, limited communicative ability, before the acquisition of any grammatical competence. She finally suggests that strategic competence is present from the very beginning of language learning, diminishing in importance as the rest of the components increase.

### **3.3. Larsen-Freeman's theory.**

Diane Larsen-Freeman gives us a different account of the main elements of communicative competence. Yalden (1987) quotes her saying:

*In order to fashion our utterance and use it appropriately we must minimally make use of our knowledge of linguistic rules, functions or speech acts, propositional content, interactional patterns, and strategic competence.*

Therefore, we can see her notion of communicative competence as comprising:

<b>LARSEN-FREEMAN (1982)</b>
1. Linguistic rules.
2. Propositional content.
3. Interactional patterns.
4. Strategic competence.
5. Functions or speech acts

The **linguistic rules** domain includes not only Canale's grammatical or Chomsky's linguistic competence but also discourse or paralinguistic features. These paralinguistic features may include quality of voice, suprasegmental elements and so on.

**Propositional content** is another philosophical term. It is normally included in the subset of discourse but Larsen-Freeman highlights and isolates it. It is the meaning of a sentence which affirms or denies something and is capable of being true or false.

**Interactional patterns** have to do with the variable relationships that may arise during the process of negotiating meaning. They may depend not only in linguistic but also in extralinguistic factors. They are normally included under the discourse heading.

**Strategic competence** is similar to Canale's concept. As Larsen-Freeman puts it (Yalden):

*It is a superordinate process responsible for controlling the smooth flow of communication.*

**Functions** or **speech acts** will be analysed to show the connection between speech and its context. The two terms come from different scientific fields. *Function* is an applied linguistics term. The most usual answer to the question 'why do we use language?' is 'to communicate our ideas' and this ability to communicate or communicative competence is our main object of study in this unit. But it would be wrong to think of communicating our ideas as the only way in which we use language (referential, ideational or propositional function). Several other functions may be identified where the communication of ideas is a marginal or irrelevant consideration.

One of the commonest uses of languages, the expressive or emotional one, is a means of getting rid of our nervous energy when we are under stress. We do not try to communicate ideas because we can use language in this way whether we are alone or not. Swear words and obscenities are probably the most usual signals to be used in this way, especially when we are angry. But there are also many emotive utterances of a positive kind, such as expressions of fear, affection, astonishment ...

Malinowski (1844-1942) termed the third use of language we are studying 'phatic communication'. He used it to refer to the social function of language, which arises out of the basic human need to signal friendship, or, at least, lack of enmity. If someone does not say hello to you when he is supposed to, you may think he is hostile. In these cases the sole function of language is to maintain a comfortable relationship between people, to provide a means of avoiding an embarrassing situation. Phatic communication, however, is far from universal, some cultures prefer silence.

The fourth function we may find is based on phonetic properties. The rhythmical litanies of religious groups, the persuasive cadences of political speechmaking, the dialogue chants used by prisoners or soldiers have only one apparent reason: people take delight in them. They can only be explained by a universal desire to exploit the sonic potential of language.

The fifth function is the performative one. A performative sentence is an utterance that performs an act. This use occurs in the naming of a ship at a launching ceremony, or when a priest baptizes a child.

We may also find other functions such as:

- recording facts.
- instrument of thought.
- expression of regional, social, educational, sexual or occupational identity.
- metalinguistic function.

The British linguist Halliday grouped all these functions into three metafunctions, which are the manifestation in the linguistic system of the two very general purposes which underlie all



uses of language combined with the third component (textual) which breathes relevance into the other two.

The ideational function is to organize the speaker's or writer's experience of the real or imaginary world, i.e. language refers to real or imagined persons, things, actions, events, states, etc.

The interpersonal function is to indicate, establish or maintain social relationships between people. It includes forms of address, speech function, modality ...

The third component is the textual function which serves to create written or spoken texts which cohere within themselves and which fit the particular situation in which they are used.

*Speech act* is a philosophical term which is synonymous with *function*. Austin's (1962) speech act theory arose from his observation that it simply is not possible to determine the truth value of many utterances. For example, the truth of the utterance "I promise to do it tonight" cannot be determined. The utterance has no relationship with the external world, and so truth conditions cannot be established.

This led to Austin to propose a distinction between performative utterances and constative utterances. Constatives are utterances for which a truth value conceivably could be determined. Thus, one could ascertain the truth of the utterance "It's raining out" by looking out the window. Performatives (e.g., "I apologise"), on the other hand, are used in order to perform some acts (their occurrence changes the world in some way), and hence they are not amenable to a truth conditional analysis.

Although one cannot determine the truth value of performatives, there are various ways in which they can go wrong or infelicitous. For example, if you utter the performative "I declare war on Canada", you will fail to substantially alter the world. The remark will misfire; that is, it will have no effect because you have no authority to declare war. Performatives, then, are a class of utterances that are conventionally used as a means of performing certain actions. They can be either successful or not but are neither true or false. On the basis of these problems, Austin abandoned the performative-constative distinction in favour of a theory of illocutionary forces or speech acts.

On this view, all speech have a dimension of meaning and a particular force. In other words, one is *doing* something with one's words. In Austin's speech act theory, any utterance involves the simultaneous performance of a number of different acts. First, one is performing a **locutionary act**. That is, one is making certain sounds (a phonetic act) that comprise identifiable words that are arranged on the basis of a particular grammar, having a certain sense and reference. In a sense, the locutionary act involves the dimensions of language (phonetics, syntax, and semantics) with which linguistics have traditionally been concerned.

In addition to the locutionary, as Grundy (2000) points out, the speaker is also performing a particular “act in saying”, or what Austin termed an illocutionary act. The illocutionary act is the conventional force associate with the uttering of the words in a particular context. Thus, John’s utterance – “I promise to do it tonight” – will have the **illocutionary force** of a promise (if performed felicitously). Finally, a speaker is simultaneously performing what Austin termed a **perlocutionary act**. The perlocutionary act refers to the effects the utterance has on the hearer.

Beginning with his dissertation, Searle (1969) systematised and extended speech act theory in several directions. For the present discussion, his most important contributions include his taxonomy of speech acts. The essential condition states that an utterance in context will have a conventionally recognised illocutionary point, and according to Searle (1969), there are five basic, primitive illocutionary points. As Cutting (2002) cleverly claims, this represents an important attempt to classify, in a systematic manner, actions that speakers can perform with their utterances.

- a) **Directives:** A directive counts as an attempt to get the hearer to perform some future action. Prototypes include requesting, ordering, and questioning. With these speech acts, a speaker is attempting to alter the world in some way with words. Hence, directives represent a world-to-words fit; the speaker is attempting to bring the world in line with words.
- b) **Assertives:** An assertive counts as an attempt to represent an actual state of affairs, to commit the speaker to something being the case. Prototypes include asserting, concluding, informing, predicting, and reporting. With assertives a speaker is attempting to depict the nature of the world. Hence, rather than attempting to get the world to match one’s words (the world-towards fit of directives), one is attempting to get one’s words to match the world; assertives represent a words-to-world fit.
- c) **Commissives:** A commissive counts as an attempt to commit the speaker to a future course of action. Prototypes include warning, promising, threatening, and guaranteeing. As with directives, the speaker of a commissive is attempting to alter the world in some way; commissives thus reflect a world-to-words fit. Unlike directives, however, it is the speaker’s (rather than the hearer’s ) subsequent actions that will alter the world.
- d) **Declaratives:** A declarative counts as an attempt to bring about a change in some institutional state of affairs. Prototypes include declaring war, performing a marriage, and calling a base runner “out”. For a declarative, the relationship between the world and a speakers’ world is bi-directional; declaratives have a double direction of fit (both words-to-world and world-to-words).The point of a declarative (e.g. declaring war) is to alter the state of the world (world-to-words) by stating that the propositional content matches the state of the world (words-to world).



- e) **Expressives:** Expressives count as attempts to express a psychological state. Prototypes include thanking, complaining, greeting, and apologizing. For expressives, there is no fit between words and the world. Instead, the point of an expressive is simply to express the speaker's inner psychological state or to express a particular attitude that is represented by the propositional content of the utterance.

### **3.4. Bachman and Palmer's theory.**

In their 1982 model Bachman and Palmer (cf. Bachman 1992) divide language competence into operational competence and pragmatic competence. These are then further subdivided into grammatical competence and textual competence on the one hand and illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence on the other. Bachman (1992, p. 86) comments 'The results of [Bachman and Palmer's] study suggest that the components of what they called grammatical and pragmatic competence are closely associated with each other, while the components they described as sociolinguistic competence are distinct.'

An alternative framework is offered by Bachman (1990), describing what he terms communicative language ability. Communicative language ability combines competence and performance "in appropriate contextualised communicative language use"(p.84). Bachman is concerned with the issue of testing and relates communicative competence to the idea of proficiency in language.

His interest in testing leads him to separate strategic competence from language knowledge. The justification for this being that two people may have the same knowledge and control over a language but have differing degrees of success in using this knowledge. This has implications for test validity. Evidence in the classroom of these differential abilities is sometimes found after placement testing. Students with similar or identical grammar scores are not equally able to participate in the class. Bachman also sees strategic competence as something that is always available to the learner and native speaker alike and not just when a breakdown in communication occurs.

#### **Components of Language Competence: Language Competence**

1. Organisational Competence: Grammatical and Textual
2. Pragmatic Competence: Illocutionary and Sociolinguistic

from: Bachman(p.87)

He equates communicative competence with language competence, which he then further divides into organisational competence and pragmatic competence. Organisational competence is combined Canale's grammatical and discourse competence which is described above. Discourse competence is termed textual competence by Bachman. Pragmatic competence is concerned with the relationship between language users and the context (p.89) and is divided into Illocutionary competence and Sociolinguistic competence. Illocutionary competence is an

ability to produce and comprehend an utterance appropriately in a particular context. A complete description draws both on speech act theory and Halliday's functional view of language. Under sociolinguistic competence he includes sensitivity to differences in dialect, register and naturalness.

### **3.5. Faersch, Haastруп and Phillipson's theory.**

As the goals for ELT became more concerned with enabling learners to interact successfully with members of other societies, so the explorations of applied linguists into the components of communicative ability assumed increasing relevance and usefulness to the work of classroom teachers and materials designers. The key components as identified by Faerch, Haanstrup and Phillipson (1984) can be listed as: *linguistic competence*, *pragmatic competence*, *discourse competence*, *strategic competence*, and *fluency*.

- a) **Linguistic competence.** Linguistic competence is concerned with knowledge of the language itself, its form and meaning. The language user knows the rules governing his native language and he can apply them without paying attention to them. Thus, linguistic competence involves a knowledge of spelling, pronunciation, word formation, grammatical structure, sentence structure, and linguistic semantics.

An important point for the teacher to note is that linguistic competence is an integral part of communicative competence. As Faerch, Haanstrup, and Phillipson point out: "It is impossible to conceive of a person being communicatively competent without being linguistically competent (1984: 168). It has perhaps been a misconception about communicative language teaching that it does not aim for a high standard of formal correctness. On the contrary, it is not incompatible to have correctness in the use of rules as an ultimate goal and, at the same time, to tolerate risk-taking and error in the classroom as part of the process of achieving communicative competence.

- b) **Pragmatic competence.** Pragmatic competence is generally considered to involve two kinds of ability. In part it means knowing how to use language in order to achieve certain communicative goals or intentions. This has also been called *illocutionary competence*. An example would be "It's so hot today". This statement could have a number of *illocutionary forces*. It might be a statement about the physical atmosphere, a request to open the window, or an attempt to elicit the offer of a cold drink.

Thus, one element of pragmatic competence is knowing how to perform a particular function or express an intention clearly. In order for communication to be successful, however, spoken or written messages must also be appropriate to the social context in which they are produced. Learners need to know the appropriate social conventions. It can be seen, then, the social knowledge is necessary to select the language forms to use in different settings, and with people in different roles and with different status. It can relate as much to non-verbal as to verbal communication. Part of communicative competence is knowing what is appropriate, what is incongruous, and what might cause offence.





- c) **Discourse competence.** Speakers of any language will need to become aware of how discourse works in terms of common cohesive devices. Discourse competence consists of knowing how to perform the turns in discourse; how to maintain the conversation; and how to develop. A similar kind of competence for written texts is also developed. In a nutshell, these various abilities needed to create coherent written texts or conversation, and to understand them, have together been termed Discourse competence.
- d) **Strategic competence.** This competence is defined as how to cope in an authentic communicative situation and how to keep the communicative channel open. It consists of using *communication strategies*. These strategies come into play when learners are unable to express what they want to say because they lack the resources to do so successfully. They compensate for this either by changing their original intention or by searching for other means of expression.
- e) **Fluency.** The term “fluency” relates to language production and it is normally reserved for speech. It is the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation. Faerch, Haanstrup and Phillipson include fluency as a component of communicative competence and distinguish it from strategic competence in this way: “whereas strategic competence presupposes a lack of [accessible] knowledge, fluency covers speaker’s ability to make use of whatever linguistic and pragmatic competence they have (Faerch, Haanstrup, and Phillipson, 1984: 168). They list three types of fluency: *semantic fluency* (linking together propositions and speech acts); *lexical-syntactic fluency* (linking together syntactic constituents and words); and *articulatory fluency* (linking together speech segments).

#### 4. MEC THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND ITS ELEMENTS.

Our main aim when teaching a foreign language is the acquisition of communicative competence. This communicative competence has been analysed following Canale's classification and the one made by The Council of Europe when establishing the Common European Framework of Reference for languages.

Thus, the common contents for Statutory Secondary Education and Bachillerato respectively see communicative competence as comprising four subcompetences:

- Linguistic competence (including semantic, syntactic and phonological elements).
- Pragmatic or discourse competence (functions, speech acts, interactions...).
- Sociolinguistic competence (social conventions, communicative intentions, registers...).
- Strategic competence (the ability to make adjustments in the course of communication).



Sociocultural competence no longer appears as a separate element but it blends together with sociolinguistic aspects as it can be seen in the new organisation of contents in three blocks: Communicative skills, reflections upon language and sociocultural aspects.

Following the Common European Framework for languages, the Ministry states that to progressively develop communicative competence in a given language, the student must be able to carry out a series of communicative tasks. Communicative tasks are sets of actions that have a specific communicative aim within a specific field. In order to carry them out, communicative competence is activated; various strategies as well as linguistic and discourse skills are used in context. As a consequence, the activities in which the foreign language is used can be classified in fields: public (everything related to everyday social interaction), personal (family relations and individual social practice) and those related to work and education.

To conclude, we want to say, quoting the curriculum for foreign languages, that learning foreign languages shall contribute to the students' training from a global perspective that favours the development of his/her personality, positive social attitudes, access to interesting data... It shall also promote the knowledge of other ways of life and social organisation different to our own, increase their information sources and enable them to establish relations characterised by social and cultural tolerance in a world where international communication plays an essential role.

## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bartning, Inge, Maisa Martin & Ineke Vedder, eds. *Communicative Proficiency and Linguistic Development: Intersections Between SLA and Language Testing Research*.

Biggs, J.B., and Moore, P.J. *The Process of Learning*. (3rd ed.) Prentice Hall. Sydney, 1993.

Brandle, Klaus. *Communicative Language Teaching in Action: Putting Principles to Work*. London: Prentice Hall, 2007.

Brewster, J., Ellis, G. and Girard, D. *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Penguin. London 1992.

Crystal, D. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. CUP. Cambridge, 1987.

Ellis, R. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. OUP. Oxford, 1985.

*Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Enc. Brit. Inc. Chicago, 2000.



Hadley, A. O. (2001). *Teaching Language in Context*. Heinle and Heinle. United Kingdom.  
*Materiales para la Reforma. Secundaria*. MEC. Madrid, 1992.

Peterwagner, Reinhold. *What is the Matter with Communicative Competence? An Analysis to Encourage Teachers of English to Assess the Very Basis of Their Teaching*. Wein: Lit Verlag, 2005.

*Propuesta de Secuencia. Lenguas Extranjeras*. MEC-Escuela Española. Madrid, 1993.

Rickheit, Gert & Hans Strohner, eds. *Handbook of Communication Competence*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2010.

Richards, J.C., Platt, J., and Platt, H. *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. Longman. London, 1992.

Slagter, P. (2001). *Learning by instructing. Studies in instructed foreign language teaching*. Edition Rodopi B. V., Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA.

Steinberg, D.D. *Psycholinguistics*. Longman. London, 1982.

Walcott, William H. *Knowledge, Competence and Communication: Chomsky, Freire, Searle, and Communicative Language Teaching*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2006.

Yalden, J. *Principles of Course Design for Language Teaching*. CUP. Cambridge, 1987.

Yule, George. *The Study of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 (4<sup>th</sup> ed.).



## ESQUEMA TEMA 4

### LA COMPETENCIA COMUNICATIVA. ANÁLISIS DE SUS COMPONENTES.

#### 0. INTRODUCTION

- Chomsky: mastery of both competence and performance

#### 1. CHOMSKY'S THEORY OF COMPETENCE AND PERFORMANCE

- Impossible for people to acquire a language by simple repetition and reinforcement
- Critique of Behaviourism.

#### 2. DELL HYMES' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE THEORY

- Hymes suggests that linguistic competence is but a sub-division of a greater whole: communicative competence.
- Communicative competence: systematic potential, appropriacy, occurrence, and feasibility.
- Definition of competence: increasingly complex.

#### 3. EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND ITS ELEMENTS

##### 3.1. Canale and Swain's theory

- The four components of communicative competence can be summarized as follows:

CANALE (1983)
1. Grammatical competence.
2. Sociolinguistic competence.
3. Discourse competence.
4. Strategic competence.



**3.2. Savignon's theory**

- Savignon proposes a relationship between Canale's four factors.

<b>SAVIGNON (1983)</b>							
C O M M U N I C A T I V E C.	G R A M M A T I C A L C.	+	S O C I O L I N G U I S T I C C.	+	D I S C O U R S E C.	+	S T R A T E G I C C.

**3.3. Larsen-Freeman's theory**

<b>LARSEN-FREEMAN (1982)</b>
1. Linguistic rules.
2. Propositional content.
3. Interactional patterns.
4. Strategic competence.
5. Functions or speech acts



### **3.4. Bachman and Palmer's theory.**

- Bachman and Palmer divide language competence into operational competence and pragmatic competence.
- An alternative framework is offered by Bachman (1990), describing what he terms communicative language ability.
- Communicative language ability combines competence and performance “in appropriate contextualised communicative language use”.
- Components: organisational and pragmatic competence.

### **3.5. Faersch, Haastrup and Phillipson's theory.**

- Key components: linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, and fluency.

## **4. MEC THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND ITS ELEMENTS.**

- Our main aim when teaching a foreign language is the acquisition of communicative competence.
- Canale's classification + Common European Framework of Reference for languages.
- Subcompetences: linguistic, pragmatic, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences.



## CUESTIONES BÁSICAS

1. COMPETENCE AND PERFORMANCE.
2. HYMES'S COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE.
3. SAVIGNON'S THEORY.

## RESPUESTAS

### 1. COMPETENCE AND PERFORMANCE.

Chomsky defined language as a set of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements. Grammar, a generative grammar, was an explicit description of the ideal speaker-hearer's intrinsic competence. This linguistic competence was, therefore, a subconscious or tacit knowledge of the grammar rules of a language which allows us to make sentences.

Clearly this ability does not require any conscious or explicit knowledge. In fact we learn the oral-aural expression of our mother tongue without any formal instruction and the instruction we receive to learn the visual-written part of language will normally cover a minute fraction of the immense field of language.

Linguistic competence must cover not only the ability to repeat or understand already heard sentences but also the ability to produce and understand new utterances. Because of this we cannot say that language is a set, no matter how big, of utterances that have actually occurred. Any utterance will not qualify as a sentence in competence. To avoid the problem of ill-formed utterances, Chomsky introduced the concept of linguistic performance. While linguistic competence is the tacit knowledge of the language, linguistic performance is the use of language in concrete situations.

### 2. HYMES'S COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE.

Hymes's theory of communicative competence involves judgements of four kinds, thus linking linguistic theory and society:

<b>HYMES'S ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE</b>
1. Systematic potential
2. Appropriacy.
3. Occurrence.
4. Feasibility.

### 3. SAVIGNON'S THEORY.

Savignon proposes a relationship between Canale's four factors. The following diagram tries to show how they interact continuously:





SAVIGNON (1983)						
C O M M U N I C A T I V E C.	G R A M M A T I C A L C.	+    +	S O C I O L I N G U I S T I C C.	D I S C O U R S E C.	+    +	S T R A T E G I C C.

Savignon also posits that both sociolinguistic and strategic components may grant the language learner a basic, limited communicative ability, before the acquisition of any grammatical competence. She finally suggests that strategic competence is present from the very beginning of language learning, diminishing in importance as the rest of the components increase.

**SUMMARY (Sample for the elaboration of the topic for the examination)****LA COMPETENCIA COMUNICATIVA. ANÁLISIS DE SUS COMPONENTES.**

The present essay aims to study the concept of communicative competence and its main constituents. For this purpose, I will divide the topic into three main sections. First, I will discuss Chomsky's theory of competence and performance. Then, I will develop Hymes' communicative competence theory. Finally, I will examine the most important theories proposed about this concept and its main constituents. At the end of the essay, the main bibliographical references will be compiled.

When addressing the origin of the concept "communicative competence", we must go back to **Chomsky's concept of competence and performance**; that is, we must go back to his critique of behaviourism. In plain terms, Chomsky argued that it was impossible for people to acquire a language by simple repetition and reinforcement. Children, he said, do not learn a language this way, for they do not, in fact, repeat what adults say, but produce their own sentences, and create phrases which they have never heard before. They also make systematic errors, and no amount of correct input or of error-correction will stop them from doing so. Children do not so much learn the grammar of a language, as they construct it anew.

Chomsky's own model of language quickly came under fire from people who were at least sympathetic to his attack on behaviourism. This was because Chomsky's model appears to construct an ideal, and unreal, image of the language user. Chomsky, extending Saussure's distinction between 'langue' and 'parole', differentiates between competence and performance. The proper object of study for the linguist, he says, is not language as it is produced in everyday situations - that is performance - but the inner, and ultimately innate knowledge of grammar that everyone has in their minds - that is competence.

To study language, then, we need to turn away from real usage, in which the actualisation of grammar is always partial, interrupted and likely to be over-ridden by other concerns, and look to the prior knowledge of grammar that all speakers possess, and which has nothing to do with the social situation within which they happen to find themselves. From the start, this conception of the linguist's task aroused criticism, and one of the most telling critiques was made by the sociolinguist Dell Hymes.

Hymes suggests that linguistic competence is but a sub-division of a greater whole - **communicative competence**. Language is but one mode of communication among others, and full communication involves mastery of all the codes - gesture, position, non-verbal vocalization, use of visual aids and so on. And language itself varies from situation to situation, from communicative dyad to communicative dyad; bilingual and multilingual people, Hymes points out, often differentiate the contexts within which one language or another can be used -



the Berber uses the Berber language for everyday interaction, and reserves Arabic for discussions of transcendental matters.

Furthermore, Hymes insists on the utility of language, and the need to understand it as a tool - or set of tools - that people use to carry out different tasks. This will bring us to a consideration of the concept of the 'speech act': the idea that when someone says something, she is not simply sitting back and describing the world, but intends to produce some kind of effect, some kind of change in the world. In this way, Hymes distinguished four aspects of Communicative Competence:

- e) **Systematic potential.** Systematic potential means that the native speaker possesses a system that has a potential for creating a lot of language. This is similar to Chomsky's competence. We study if an utterance is possible according to the forms of expression available.
- f) **Appropriacy.** Appropriacy means that the native speaker knows what language is appropriate in a given situation. An utterance will be appropriate in relation to a context.
- g) **Occurrence.** Occurrence means that the native speaker knows how often something is said in the language and act accordingly. This means that an utterance should not only be possible from a grammatical point of view. It should also be actually performed.
- h) **Feasibility.** Feasibility means that the native speaker knows whether something is possible in the language. Even if there is no grammatical rule to ban twenty-adjective prehead construction we know that these constructions are not possible in the language.

That completes my overview of the origin and development of the concept of communicative competence, so now I would like to move on to the inspection of the most significant theories that have been later on proposed. These include Canale and Swain's theory, Savignon's theory; Larsen-Freeman's theory, Bachman and Palmer's theory, and Faerch, Haastруп and Phillipson's theory.

Let us start by analysing **Canale and Swain's theory**. One of the most helpful discussions of competence is to be found in Canale and Swain's (1980) article. They point out that: *"there is some diversity of opinion in the literature as to (i) whether or not the notion 'communicative competence' includes that of 'grammatical competence' as one of its components and (ii) whether or not communicative competence should be distinguished from (communicative) performance."* (Canale & Swain 1980:5)

As they say, 'it is common to find the term "communicative competence" used to refer exclusively to knowledge or capability relating to the rules of language use and the term "grammatical (or linguistic) competence" used to refer to the rules of grammar' (p.5). However, they maintain that just as there are rules of grammar that would be useless without rules of language use (Hymes 1972), so there are also rules of language use that would be useless without rules of grammar.

Hence they see communicative competence as consisting of grammatical competence plus sociolinguistic competence.

Thus for them, there are two clearly defined and distinct subcomponents of communicative competence. They use 'the term "communicative competence" to refer to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the rules of language use' (p.6). This is a welcome clarification, and one is grateful to have a position so clearly stated. It can be seen that this corresponds very closely to Chomsky's position, as his 'pragmatic competence' can easily be related to Canale and Swain's 'sociolinguistic competence'.

Another very welcome clarification which at the same time brings them into line with Chomsky is Canale and Swain's decision to exclude explicitly from their notion of communicative competence any idea of 'ability for use', unlike Hymes, who makes this an important feature.

*(...) we hesitate to incorporate the notion of ability for use into our definition of communicative competence for two main reasons: (i) to our knowledge this notion has not been pursued rigorously in any research on communicative competence (or considered directly relevant in such research, and (ii) we doubt that there is any theory of human action that can adequately explicate 'ability for use' (Canale & Swain 1980:7)*

This view clearly reflects that of Chomsky quoted earlier (Chomsky 1975:138), and the fact of stating it so explicitly makes an important contribution to clarifying the debate. (Unfortunately, but typically in this field, Canale, in a later article meant to be a refinement of this one, backslides when he explicitly associates grammatical competence with 'skill' (Canale 1983:7). The rest of Canale and Swain's article is concerned with the development of communicative competence (including grammatical competence) in second language learners.

As one component of their overall conception of communicative competence they develop the interesting notion of 'strategic competence' to deal with the knowledge and ability learners need to develop in order to take part in communicative interaction. This is clearly important, but on the one hand they fail to distinguish between knowledge and ability, or rather they incorporate both, and on the other hand they do not distinguish between those strategies which all speakers have, both native and non-native, and those which are peculiar to non-native speakers. Once again we see the difficulties that arise when the notion of competence is extended beyond the domain to which it was originally applied.

Canale expanded the description to four in 1983 due to his new view of linguistic communication. Yalden gives us Canale's account of linguistic communication as:

8. It is a form of social interaction, and is therefore acquired and used in social interaction.
9. It involves a high degree of unpredictability and creativity in form and message.



10. It takes place in discourse and sociocultural contexts which provide constraints on appropriate language use and also clues to correct interpretations of utterances.
11. It is carried out under limiting psychological and other conditions such as memory constraints, fatigue and other distractions.
12. It always has a purpose.
13. It involves authentic language.
14. It is judged as successful or not on the basis of actual outcomes.

According to Canale (1983: 5), communicative competence refers to 'the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication'. The four components of communicative competence can be summarized as follows:

- a. **Grammatical competence** producing a structured comprehensible utterance (including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling).
- b. **Sociolinguistic competence** involving knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language and of discourse.
- c. **Discourse competence** shaping language and communicating purposefully in different genres (text types), using cohesion (structural linking) and coherence (meaningful relationships in language).
- d. **Strategic competence** enhancing the effectiveness of communication (e.g. deliberate speech), and compensating for breakdowns in communication (e.g. comprehension checks, paraphrase, conversation fillers).

Suprisingly, Canale did not offer a description of how these four components interact. Such an interaction was proposed by **Savignon** (1983). As for her, "*Communicative competence is a dynamic rather than a static concept. It depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more persons who share to some degree the same symbolic system. In this sense, then, communicative competence can be said to be an interpersonal rather than an intrapersonal trait.*" (Savignon 1983:8)

Savignon is here spelling out very clearly what follows from Hymes' introduction of a social dimension. More consequences follow: "*Communicative competence is relative, not absolute, and depends on the cooperation of all the participants involved. It makes sense, then, to speak of degrees of communicative competence.*" (Savignon 1983:9)

Once again, we are dealing with something very different from Chomsky's original concept. The problem is that Hymes, and those that follow him, such as Savignon, are apparently claiming to be merely extending the original concept, whereas they are obviously doing more than that. The danger is that even when such writers apply the notion of competence to its original domain, i.e.

that of the native speaker, they introduce their fundamentally different view, as may be seen in the following extract from Savignon.

The competence of native speakers, well developed though it may be, is relative. Mother-tongue proficiency varies widely from child to child and from adult to adult. Vocabulary range, articulation, critical thinking, persuasiveness, and penmanship are but a few of the many, many facets of competence wherein native speakers differ. (Savignon 1983:53)

Here again we see the identification of competence with proficiency and the inclusion of elements specifically excluded by Chomsky (see Chomsky 1980:234). What is important is that there does not seem to be any awareness in any of these instances that a changed concept of competence is being used. Under these circumstances it is very difficult to know in any given instance what exactly is meant by the term 'competence'.

As far as the term 'communicative competence' is concerned, it generally seems to mean, in the context of language teaching and learning, 'ability to perform' or 'ability to communicate' in the L2. More generally, associating competence with communication inevitably seems to bring in some aspects of performance. It is difficult to escape the conclusion, therefore, that when we talk about communicative competence in the context of language teaching or learning we are really talking about communicative *performance*. Especially when we talk about aims and about specifying them for teaching and learning purposes, we are interested mainly in performance, no matter what the terms we use. Hence in all these discussions, as we have noted, the distinction between competence and performance tends to become blurred and the exact meaning of the terms used is difficult to determine.

Now that I have discussed Savignon's theory, I will centre my attention on **Larsen-Freeman's theory**. Taking previous theories as her point of departure, she gave a different account of the main elements of communicative competence. Yalden (1987) quotes her saying: "*In order to fashion our utterance and use it appropriately we must minimally make use of our knowledge of linguistic rules, functions or speech acts, propositional content, interactional patterns, and strategic competence.*"

Therefore, we can see her notion of communicative competence as comprising the following elements:

- a) The **linguistic rules** domain includes not only Canale's grammatical or Chomsky's linguistic competence but also discourse or paralinguistic features. These paralinguistic features may include quality of voice, suprasegmental elements and so on.
- b) **Propositional content** is another philosophical term. It is normally included in the subset of discourse but Larsen-Freeman highlights and isolates it. It is the meaning of a sentence which affirms or denies something and is capable of being true or false.



- c) **Interactional patterns** have to do with the variable relationships that may arise during the process of negotiating meaning. They may depend not only in linguistic but also in extralinguistic factors. They are normally included under the discourse heading.
- d) **Strategic competence** is similar to Canale's concept. As Larsen-Freeman puts it (Yalden, 1987): "*It is a superordinate process responsible for controlling the smooth flow of communication.*"
- e) **Functions or speech acts.** These two terms come from different scientific fields. Let us first analyse in detail the concept of "function" and then the concept of Speech act.

*Function* is an applied linguistics term. In the simplest sense, the word 'function' can be thought of as a synonym for the word 'use', so that when we talk about functions of language, we may mean no more than the way people use their language, or their languages if they have more than one. Stated in the most general terms, people do different things with their language; that is, they expect to achieve by talking and writing, and by listening and reading, a large number of different aims and different purposes. There are a number of familiar classifications of linguistic functions: for example, that put forward by Malinowski. Malinowski (1923) classified the functions of language into the two broad categories of pragmatic and magical. As an anthropologist, he was interested in practical or pragmatic uses of language and in ritual and magical uses of language that were associated with ceremonial or religious activities in the culture.

Let us present the **most commonly accepted classification**. The most usual answer to the question "*why do we use language?*" is "*to communicate our ideas*" and this ability to communicate or communicative competence is studied in the next part. But it would be wrong to think of communicating our ideas as the only way in which we use language (referential, ideational or propositional function). One of the commonest uses of language, the expressive or emotional one, is a means of getting rid of our nervous energy when we are under stress. We do not try to communicate ideas because we can use language in this way whether we are alone or not. Swear words and obscenities are probably the most usual signals to be used in this way, especially when we are angry. The third use of language is called "phatic communication". It refers to the social function of language, which arises out of the basic human need to signal friendship, or, at least, lack of enmity. The fourth function is the poetic one which is based on phonetic properties. For instance, the rhythmical litanies of religious groups. Finally, the fifth function is the performative one. A performative sentence is an utterance that performs an act. This use occurs in the naming of a ship at a launching ceremony (the act of naming the ship coincides in time with the act of launching her), or when a priest baptizes a child (equally, the child is baptised at the time the priest pronounces the words).

The British linguist **Halliday** grouped all these functions into three metafunctions, which are the manifestation in the linguistic system of the two very general purposes which underlie all uses of language, combined with the third component (textual) which breathes relevance into

the other two. The ideational function is to organize the speaker's or writer's experience of the real or imaginary world, *i.e.* language refers to real or imagined persons, things, actions, events, states, and so on. The interpersonal function is to indicate, establish or maintain social relationships between people. It includes forms of address, speech function, modality. The third component is the textual function which serves to create written or spoken texts which cohere within themselves and which fit the particular situation in which they are used.

Let us now centre our attention on the concept of *Speech act*. This is a philosophical term which is synonymous with *function*. Austin's (1962) speech act theory arose from his observation that it simply is not possible to determine the truth value of many utterances. For example, the truth of the utterance "I promise to do it tonight" cannot be determined. The utterance has no relationship with the external world, and so truth conditions cannot be established. This led to Austin to propose a distinction between performative utterances and constative utterances. Constatives are utterances for which a truth value conceivably could be determined. Thus, one could ascertain the truth of the utterance "It's raining out" by looking out the window. Performatives (e.g., "I apologise"), on the other hand, are used in order to perform some act (their occurrence changes the world in some way., and hence they are not amenable to a truth conditional analysis).

Although one cannot determine the truth value of performatives, there are various ways in which they can go wrong or infelicitous. For example, if you utter the performative "I declare war on Canada", you will fail to substantially alter the world. The remark will misfire; that is, it will have no effect because you have no authority to declare war. Performatives, then, are a class of utterances that are conventionally used as a means of performing certain actions. They can be either successful or not but are neither true or false. On the basis of these problems, Austin abandoned the performative-constative distinction in favour of a theory of illocutionary forces or speech acts.

On this view, all speech have a dimension of meaning and a particular force. In other words, one is *doing* something with one's words. In Austin's speech act theory, any utterance involves the simultaneous performance of a number of different acts. First, one is performing a **locutionary act**. That is, one is making certain sounds (a phonetic act) that comprise identifiable words that are arranged on the basis of a particular grammar, having a certain sense and reference. In a sense, the locutionary act involves the dimensions of language (phonetics, syntax, and semantics) with which linguistics have traditionally been concerned. In addition to the locutionary, as Grundy (2000) points out, the speaker is also performing a particular "act in saying", or what Austin termed an illocutionary act. The illocutionary act is the conventional force associate with the uttering of the words in a particular context. Thus, John's utterance – "I promise to do it tonight" – will have the **illocutionary force** of a promise (if performed felicitously). Finally, a speaker is simultaneously performing what Austin termed a **perlocutionary act**. The perlocutionary act refers to the effects the utterance has on the hearer.





Beginning with his dissertation, Searle (1969) systematised and extended speech act theory in several directions. For the present discussion, his most important contributions include his taxonomy of speech acts. The essential condition states that an utterance in context will have a conventionally recognised illocutionary point, and according to Searle (1969), there are five basic, primitive illocutionary points. As Cutting (2002) cleverly claims, this represents an important attempt to classify, in a systematic manner, actions that speakers can perform with their utterances.

- f) **Directives:** A directive counts as an attempt to get the hearer to perform some future action. Prototypes include requesting, ordering, and questioning. With these speech acts, a speaker is attempting to alter the world in some way with words.
- g) **Assertives:** An assertive counts as an attempt to represent an actual state of affairs, to commit the speaker to something being the case. Prototypes include asserting, concluding, informing, predicting, and reporting. With assertives a speaker is attempting to depict the nature of the world.
- h) **Commissives:** A commissive counts as an attempt to commit the speaker to a future course of action. Prototypes include warning, promising, threatening, and guaranteeing. As with directives, the speaker of a commissive is attempting to alter the world in some way.
- i) **Declaratives:** A declarative counts as an attempt to bring about a change in some institutional state of affairs. Prototypes include declaring war, performing a marriage, and calling a base runner “out”.
- j) **Expressives:** Expressives count as attempts to express a psychological state. Prototypes include thanking, complaining, greeting, and apologizing.

Relying on Chomsky’s and Hymes’ proposal, **Bachman and Palmer** (1982) also proposed their own framework to define the concept of communicative competence. More precisely, in their 1982 model Bachman and Palmer (cf. Bachman 1992) divide language competence into operational competence and pragmatic competence. These are then further subdivided into grammatical competence and textual competence on the one hand and illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence on the other. Bachman (1992, p. 86) comments 'The results of [Bachman and Palmer's] study suggest that the components of what they called grammatical and pragmatic competence are closely associated with each other, while the components they described as sociolinguistic competence are distinct.'

An alternative framework is offered by Bachman (1990), describing what he terms communicative language ability. Communicative language ability combines competence and performance “in appropriate contextualised communicative language use”(p.84). Bachman is concerned with the issue of testing and relates communicative competence to the idea of proficiency in language. His interest in testing leads him to separate strategic competence from language knowledge. The justification for this being that two people may have the same knowledge and control over a language but have differing degrees of success in using this knowledge.

He equates communicative competence with language competence, which he then further divides into organisational competence and pragmatic competence. Organisational competence is combined Canale's grammatical and discourse competence which is described above. Discourse competence is termed textual competence by Bachman. Pragmatic competence is concerned with the relationship between language users and the context (p.89) and is divided into Illocutionary competence and Sociolinguistic competence. Illocutionary competence is an ability to produce and comprehend an utterance appropriately in a particular context. A complete description draws both on speech act theory and Halliday's functional view of language. Under sociolinguistic competence he includes sensitivity to differences in dialect, register and naturalness.

After presenting Bachman and Palmer's theory, I will go on to review **Faersch, Haastруп and Phillipson's** contributions to the concept of communicative competence. In their theory and as the goals for ELT became more concerned with enabling learners to interact successfully with members of other societies, Faerch, Haanstrup and Phillipson (1984) identified the following components: *linguistic competence*, *pragmatic competence*, *discourse competence*, *strategic competence*, and *fluency*.

- f) **Linguistic competence.** Linguistic competence is concerned with knowledge of the language itself, its form and meaning. The language user knows the rules governing his native language and he can apply them without paying attention to them. Thus, linguistic competence involves a knowledge of spelling, pronunciation, word formation, grammatical structure, sentence structure, and linguistic semantics. An important point for the teacher to note is that linguistic competence is an integral part of communicative competence. As Faerch, Haanstrup, and Phillipson point out: "It is impossible to conceive of a person being communicatively competent without being linguistically competent (1984: 168).
- g) **Pragmatic competence.** Pragmatic competence is generally considered to involve two kinds of ability. In part it means knowing how to use language in order to achieve certain communicative goals or intentions. This has also been called *illocutionary competence*. An example would be "It's so hot today". This statement could have a number of *illocutionary forces*. It might be a statement about the physical atmosphere, a request to open the window, or an attempt to elicit the offer of a cold drink. In addition, learners need to know the appropriate social conventions. It can be seen, then, the social knowledge is necessary to select the language forms to use in different settings, and with people in different roles and with different status. It can relate as much to non-verbal as to verbal communication. Part of communicative competence is knowing what is appropriate, what is incongruous, and what might cause offence.
- h) **Discourse competence.** Speakers of any language will need to become aware of how discourse works in terms of common cohesive devices. Discourse competence consists



of knowing how to perform the turns in discourse; how to maintain the conversation; and how to develop. A similar kind of competence for written texts is also developed.

- i) **Strategic competence.** This competence is defined as how to cope in an authentic communicative situation and how to keep the communicative channel open. It consists of using *communication strategies*. These strategies come into play when learners are unable to express what they want to say because they lack the resources to do so successfully. They compensate for this either by changing their original intention or by searching for other means of expression.
  
- j) **Fluency.** The term “fluency” relates to language production and it is normally reserved for speech. It is the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation. Faerch, Haanstrup and Phillipson include fluency as a component of communicative competence and distinguish it from strategic competence in this way: “whereas strategic competence presupposes a lack of [accessible] knowledge, fluency covers speaker’s ability to make use of whatever linguistic and pragmatic competence they have (Faerch, Haanstrup, and Phillipson, 1984: 168). They list three types of fluency: *semantic fluency* (linking together propositions and speech acts); *lexical-syntactic fluency* (linking together syntactic constituents and words); and *articulatory fluency* (linking together speech segments).

To finish off this essay, I will focus on what the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture understands as being communicative competent in a foreign language. Thus, the common contents for Statutory Secondary Education and Bachillerato respectively see communicative competence as comprising four subcompetences:

- Linguistic competence (including semantic, syntactic and phonological elements).
- Pragmatic or discourse competence (functions, speech acts, interactions...).
- Sociolinguistic competence (social conventions, communicative intentions, registers...).
- Strategic competence (the ability to make adjustments in the course of communication).

Sociocultural competence no longer appears as a separate element but it blends together with sociolinguistic aspects as it can be seen in the new organisation of contents in three blocks: Communicative skills, reflections upon language and sociocultural aspects.

Following the Common European Framework for languages, the Ministry states that to progressively develop communicative competence in a given language, the student must be able to carry out a series of communicative tasks. Communicative tasks are sets of actions that have a specific communicative aim within a specific field. In order to carry them out, communicative competence is activated; various strategies as well as linguistic and discourse skills are used in context. As a consequence, the activities in which the foreign language is used can be classified in

fields: public (everything related to everyday social interaction), personal (family relations and individual social practice) and those related to work and education.

To sum up, I have thoroughly studied the concept of communicative competence and its main constituents. In this light, I have started my discussion by presenting Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance. Then, I have introduced Hymes' revision and extension of these two concepts. In the remaining of the essay, I have analysed the most influential theories. In doing so, I have reviewed the main proposals that attempt to establish the main constituents.

In order to develop this topic, the following bibliographical references have been used:

Biggs, J.B., and Moore, P.J. *The Process of Learning*. (3rd ed.) Prentice Hall. Sydney, 1993.

Brewster, J., Ellis, G. and Girard, D. *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Penguin. London 1992.

Crystal, D. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. CUP. Cambridge, 1987.

Ellis, R. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. OUP. Oxford, 1985.

*Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Enc. Brit. Inc. Chicago, 2000.

Hadley, A. O. (2001). *Teaching Language in Context*. Heinle and Heinle. United Kingdom.

*Materiales para la Reforma. Secundaria*. MEC. Madrid, 1992.

*Propuesta de Secuencia. Lenguas Extranjeras*. MEC-Escuela Española. Madrid, 1993.

Richards, J.C., Platt, J., and Platt, H. *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. Longman. London, 1992.

Slagter, P. (2001). *Learning by instructing. Studies in instructed foreign language teaching*. Edition Rodopi B. V., Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA.

Steinberg, D.D. *Psycholinguistics*. Longman. London, 1982.

Yalden, J. *Principles of Course Design for Language Teaching*. CUP. Cambridge, 1987.