

Linguistic Models for Educational Development: Appraising the Competence and Performance Theory

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Abstract

The development of a people is the essence of national transformation. Indeed, it is in individuals, who are the major constituents of a nation, that we find the root of whatever aspect of transformation for a nation. Individual development therefore is the concern of this paper. The focus is on individuals being transformed intellectually, morally and character-wise. The teacher is made and identified as the performer of this task of transformation. This is restricted to the teacher's appropriate use of language, especially in a classroom situation. The discussion is captured within the frameworks of Linguistic Competence and Performance

as introduced by Noam Chomsky, and Dell Hymes' Communicative Competence, each of which, in its way, defines how an individual possesses and uses language accurately and properly. At the end of the discourse, what we have holistically is that teachers should have a good knowledge of sentence construction and usage, to avoid distractions and misunderstanding, just as they should be careful and wise in their choice of words to be able to transform the character and general philosophy of the learners under them. This is proven to have positive implications on national transformation.

Introduction

It has become necessary to describe some systems of education as defective and deficient, in spite of the much effort put into the plan and development of the curriculum. Many a time, conferences, seminars, and workshops are held on teacher-education to facilitate the realisation of learning outcomes as anticipated in the curriculum. Yet, we do have problems going against our objectives. The faults are as a result of many components, some of which emanate directly from the way teaching is handled. A distinction between a good and a bad teacher becomes necessary therefore, with implications from the recognised qualities of good teaching which, in combination, could produce the results intended for the teaching exercise.

One, and of relevance to existing discussion is

that a good teacher must be effective in communication. That means that such a teacher should go beyond information exchange to ensure adequate comprehension of the feelings as well as intentions behind the message. The entire activity involves a composite of skills of both verbal and non-verbal kinds; gestures can follow the use of words, and communicators should be straight forward, conscious, assertive, and must be an engaged listener to be able to recognise and understand not just their own emotions but those of their co-communicators.

It is so interesting that communication is never separated from language, which is often regarded as a communicative instrument. It may be defined as the use of sounds and letters in combination for words and higher units of grammar for effective communication. It also includes the use of body acts and extra-linguistic signs of various kinds to convey a number of messages. Just as the farmer uses tools to work on the farm, the communicator uses language to effect communication.

Either in part or whole, the preceding paragraph has recognised the importance of language in the life of an individual. It is there for communication, and there is hardly a smooth communication when it is not there. Yet,

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communication is the essence of human existence. One would now see why a language for any communicative event, should be well understood. It is only then that well-structured and life-transforming messages can be sent and correspondingly received. We speak, therefore, of linguistic and communicative competence which a speaker requires and, for our essay, attention is given to the teacher who is challenged to have a good knowledge of sentence construction and usage, as well as the proper use of vocabulary to be able to transform the character and general philosophy of the learners under them.

Theoretical Framework

This discussion is captured within the frameworks of Linguistic Competence and Performance as introduced by Noam Chomsky, and Dell Hymes' Communicative Competence. Each of these theories defines, in its way, how an individual possesses and uses language accurately and properly. Both linguists believe in the mastery of a language and this may be described at this level, to be of related concepts to some extent. The two scholars do not agree, however, on the kind and nature of competence to be attained by a speaker. While Chomsky is concerned with language structure; referring to accurate mastery of sentence structure, Hymes argues holistically for both structure and function. In contra-distinction to Chomsky's idealised and pure linguistic or grammatical competence, Hymes is interested in a practical demonstration of that competence in grammar, not leaving out its extra-linguistic contexts. This, as Bagaric and Djigunvic argue, brings in "the sociolinguistic perspective into Chomsky's linguistic view of Competence" (95).

The Concept of Competence and Performance

The term Competence generally suggests proficiency, capability and efficiency. It is the knowledge to do something or carry out an exercise skilfully and effectively. Competence, according to the *BBC English Dictionary* can further be seen as the ability to do something well, effectively which follows professional standards. Individuals are therefore, said to be competent when they are effective, efficient, and satisfactory in what they do, considering the necessary standards they use in

achieving what is correct.

As a notion in Linguistics, competence is simply seen as the natural and innate ability of a speaker to understand and use correct forms of words and sentences in a language. It is, alternatively, "speakers' knowledge of their language, the system of rules which they have mastered so that they are able to produce and understand an indefinite number of sentences and to recognise grammatical mistakes and ambiguities" (Crystal 92). A competent speaker of Hausa, if an example must be provided, should be able to produce every possible sentence in the language, and can understand even the sentences they have never heard before a given time. Such is the same with speakers of English and those of the many languages of the world.

Noam Chomsky introduced the concept (competence) in the study of language and considered it as "the speaker's innate knowledge about his language, his tacit and unconscious knowledge of the systems of rules in his language that underlie his ability to produce, comprehend and interpret sentences in that Language" (Ndimele, 86). Chomsky's focus is the native speaker and his mastery in the grammar of his language. This further entails an adherence to rule systems as well as the ability to produce and understand a vast number of novel sentences. It involves the knowledge of correct formation and pronunciation of words and sentences, with attention to meaning and appropriateness of context.

The idea of 'competence' is often used in relation to 'performance' for the sake of making a distinction between the two. Exponent of the competence theory argues that what one is able to do at a time is not necessarily a manifestation of one's knowledge. Defining competence linguistically as the speaker's inherent ability of correct use of language structures, he describes performance as the practical demonstration of such skills in concrete situations. Competence is a property of the brain, while performance involves physical production. Linguists often use the two terms simply in terms of 'knowing' the language and 'doing' something with the language (Bilash, 1), respectively for language competence and performance. This distinction, according to him, is

important “primarily because it allows those studying a language to differentiate between a speech error and not knowing something about the language” (2). Indeed, speakers make mistakes in certain expressions even when they already have a mastery of their correct forms, and this is what Chomsky observed when he argued that competence (not performance) should be central in linguistic studies:

We thus make a fundamental distinction between competence (the speaker–hearer's knowledge of his language) and performance (the actual use of language in concrete situations)... the problem for the linguist as well as for the child learning the language, is to determine from the data of performance the underlying system of rules, that has been mastered by the speaker/hearer... of the technical sense, linguistic theory is mentalistic, observed use of language or hypothesised disposition to respond, habits, and so on, may provide evidence as to the nature of this mental reality, but surely cannot constitute the actual subject matter of linguistics (Chomsky, 4).

Competence actually remains but performance can be obstructed, Chomsky (4) further argues this way. One would begin to think, for instance, of someone who is either physically or emotionally unstable at a point, and is subsequently unable to bring out his real knowledge of what he really knows about the grammar of his language. Of course, it would be wrong to conclude that such a speaker lacks the grammatical knowledge, since he can display this competence when peace is returned to his life. Akmajian, Demers, Farmer & Harnish provide for us an example from supposed fluent speaker of English who has undergone serious dental surgery which causes him temporary speechlessness. Such a person should certainly not be said to have lost his knowledge of the English language. Rather, his linguistic competence in English is maintained, with performance limitations, specifically resulting from the injuries. According to them:

Actual speech is characterised by false starts

and stops, hesitations, lapses of memory, coughing, clearing of throat.... Although such details reflect the actual performance of a given speaker on a given occasion, they do not necessarily reflect the speaker's competence (152).

So, it could be that a competent speaker of a given language, at a given hour, is sick, bothered over the loss of a dear one, or any other heart-touching event. He/she might be suffering from intense hunger or inebriation. Any of such and other problems could temporarily affect the reasoning ability of the speaker, and this could be erroneously attached to absence of competence.

Dell Hymes' Notion of Communicative Competence

In response to Chomsky's view of linguistic competence and performance, Hymes (1972) introduced the idea of 'Communicative Competence' to counteract the former's emphasis on grammaticality. It is the position of Hymes that it is not enough to achieve grammatical competence which, according to Chomsky, is concerned with mastery of sentence structures. What a speaker actually needs as competence is the over-all knowledge of sentence formation as well as its use in extra-linguistic contexts. The focus of this theory is on socially-situated performance as against competence, as prioritised by Chomsky.

Communicative competence is sociolinguistic, and pragmatic in nature, especially when special attention is given to the interpretation of a speaker's intended meaning in an utterance. It represents the social reality underlying actual behaviour, as against mental reality. It is observed that the major criticism in Hymes' communicative competence is the inadequate distinction between competence and performance by Chomsky. According to Hymes, that attempted differentiation is unreal, and no significant progress can be made in linguistics without studying forms along with the ways in which they are used. Therefore, the structurally based linguistic competence is considered part of a whole communicative competence.

Types of Competence

Dell Hymes' introduction of communicative

competence produced reactions from many scholars who attempted to split the subject matter into a number of types. Canale and Swain (1980) first drew this categorization. Their description of communicative competence was based on grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. These refer respectively, to the knowledge of rules governing phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics; the ability to apply that knowledge of structural forms appropriately in a variety of social contexts; ability to connect sentences in a logical, cohesive, and coherent manner, and appropriate use of communication strategies of verbal and non-verbal kinds to enhance effective communication.

In 1990, Bachmann provided a two-way classification of competence as organisational competence which comprises grammatical and textual competence, and pragmatic competence comprising illocutionary and sociological competence. His categorisation seems to have maintained Canale and Swain's position, except for strategic competence which also refers to an aspect of performance.

Another reaction is from Van (1986 & 1987) who suggested six components of competence for "the communicative ability of a speaker" (Taha and Reishaan 4). The six are identified as linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, sociocultural competence and social competence.

Rather than allow sociolinguistic competence, as proposed by Canale and Swain, which can be defined broadly to include even the cultural-linguistic aspects, Van chooses to separate sociocultural competence, from sociolinguistic competence to add social competence, which he further defines to include motivation, attitude and self-confidence, empathy, interactive skill, and the general ability to handle social situations.

Furthermore, sociability competence can be considered rather than social competence as a necessary factor here. Sociability is actually more appropriate for the intended meaning instead of 'social' as used with the term competence. While 'social' generally relates to society or leisure activities, sociability is concerned with attitudinal interactive ability that is friendly and motivating in

nature.

Celce-Murcia and Dornyei also propose a model of communicative competence with intentions to disambiguate some terms in Canale and Swain and to be more specific:

We represent our model of communicative competence as a pyramid enclosing a circle.... The circle within the pyramid is discourse competence, and the three points of the triangle are sociocultural competence, linguistic competence, and actional competence.... The circle ... represents strategic competence, an ever-present, potentially usable inventory of skills that allows a strategically competent speaker to negotiate message and resolve problems or to compensate for deficiencies in any of the other underlying competencies... we have decided to use the term 'linguistic competence' rather than 'grammatical competence' in order to indicate unambiguously that this component also includes lexis and phonology in addition to morphology and syntax.... 'Sociocultural competence' rather than "Socio-linguistic competence" to better distinguish it from actional competence..." (9-11)

The new 'actional competence', according to the authors, is conceptualised in conveying and comprehending communicative intentions by producing and interpreting speech acts. Their classification places, therefore, the discourse component where:

the lexico-grammatical building blocks, the actional organising skills of communicative intents, and the socio-cultural context come together and shape the discourse, which, in turn, also shapes each of the other components.(9)

For Yule, communicative competence is defined simply in terms of grammar, sociolinguistics and strategy. All ideas so far reviewed here, have succeeded in providing grounds for linguistic analyses. Whichever way one tries to classify the

idea of communicative competence, such a classification can best be analysed to be an extension to, or more appropriately, a break-down of Hymes' conception. One fact which remains strong about linguistics is that structure and function are the basis for the study of language. While structure concerns pure linguistic studies, function is the subject of sociolinguistics. So, if Chomsky unfairly restricts competence in language to the mastery of language structure, Hymes has been able to save the situation by introducing the sociolinguistic aspect into the notion of competence. With his "communicative competence", both structure and functional aspects of language studies are considered. So, one's types of competence either extend the idea of linguistic competence or sociolinguistic competence, both of which are generally communicative.

On the Concept of Teaching

Teaching is an occupation, an enterprise and an act of a kind (National Teachers' Institute PDE, 8). It is regarded as an occupation, since it is a form of work in which man is daily engaged in for livelihood. It is an enterprise because it involves a series of activities at some specific periods, like taking students' attendance, implanting discipline, maintaining orders and whatever activity that is necessary for the realisation of learning objectives. It is also described as an act of talking and moving the body in order to let students have some knowledge and/or skills in an area of human endeavour. With this description, many-sided definitions of teaching become possible. But it must be held that what actually defines the concept of teaching is the communicative act between the teacher and the learners, with the primary aim of transforming the latter's behaviour. This is what a group of authors mean when they describe teaching as "a series of interactions between the learners and the teacher with the explicit goal of changing the behaviour of the learner" (Dandekar & Makhija 441). Ali defines teaching as "a process of integration of cognitive, affective and technical competence into a sequence of activities aimed at the attainment of selected learning goals or outcomes" (3). In Akuezilo (7), Smith describes the teaching as a process of interaction between teacher and student and as a system of actions intended to produce learning.

Teaching primarily, entails the transfer of knowledge or skills from one person who is the teacher, to the other person who is the learner. The teacher, therefore, has the specific functions of identifying what to learn as well as learning problems, informing and explaining, administering, directing, guiding and stimulating the children to learn. It is also the teacher's responsibility to evaluate, record, and report the pupils' performances. The general aim should be that our society is positively transformed through these individuals who are called learners. It follows that given this enormous task bestowed on the teacher, it is important, in the course of discharging his responsibilities to be careful with language use. Language is the primarily tool in teaching.

The Parameters of Effective Teaching

It is obvious that situations exist where the activity of teaching fails to produce the intended results, and this is what is meant by ineffective teaching. For teaching to be effective, the teacher's competence and performance must have a positive effect on the learners. Effective teaching also has to do with the level at which the anticipated production is made in a school setting through certain inputs. Particular attention is paid to learners rather than teachers when we speak of teaching effectively. As Dandekar and Makhija put:

Teachers' effectiveness is usually assessed in terms of pupils' behaviour and not in terms of the behaviour of teachers. Teachers' effectiveness should be differentiated from teachers' performance and teacher's competence. Teacher's performance is related to the behaviour of the teacher while teaching a class and teacher's competence refers to the set of knowledge, abilities and beliefs a teacher possesses and brings to the teaching situation. (461)

It is when the demonstrated competence of the teacher is able to transform the pupils' behaviour in accordance with the desired aims that we describe the exercise as effective. That is when children can do what they were taught to do.

Yet, it could be relevant to associate effective teaching with the teacher's efforts to general

competence and the way the teacher exhibits this before the learners. That is further agreeing that teaching is effective when the environment maximises learning in the learner. Akuezuilo, (27) also observes that the teacher's strategy at ensuring this maximisation should equally be judged alongside the effects. He suggests, therefore, that, "... teacher's effectiveness would be a function of the teacher's strategy and linked somehow to pupils' learning outcome" (40). Bushell, similarly points out that: "teaching and learning must be linked so that good learning indicates good teaching, and bad learning indicates bad teaching"(4).

It would not be wrong to see the teacher as central to achievement of quality education. He manages the minds of the pupils as a goal that must produce some credible results. The teacher focuses on the learner whose response is a cover-point to an overall judgement of teaching effectiveness. More specifically, the teacher's interest is in the development of "the all round persons, the intellect, his/her emotion, social, spiritual and his/her physical make-up" (Adeyanju, Ajayi, Agbola, 81).

More so, Aggarwal's definition of effective teaching as "the teacher's ability to stimulate students intellectually and move them emotionally to instil in them love for learning and develop suitable skills and attitudes" (25) is equally important.

In essence, the totality of what the learner is able to do after all, is determined by the teacher's competence and performance.

Communicative Competence and the Successful Teacher

We use communicative competence here in a holistic sense to include whatever aspect of behaviour that should be made part of communication. All kinds of competence, as recognised earlier, are found to be relevant and critical to the success of a teacher in the classroom. We would describe a teacher as communicatively competent when he/she is able to acquire these aspects of competence.

Following Chomsky's idealisation of linguistic competence, we would expect that a teacher forms sentences in such a way that such sentences are grammatical and acceptable. A grammatical sentence, it is assumed, should not break the rules

of word and sentence formation in a language.

We note, for instance, that:

Boy - (minus) 's' = singular

Boy + (plus) 's' = plural

Man = singular, while *men* = plural

The past tense of *talk* is *talked*, while that of *speak* is *spoke*.

The few examples are there to show the different shapes of words as defined by English grammar. The many words in English have acceptable patterns of arrangement in forming correct sentences. Consider, as an example, the following:

Come matter us the and discuss let.

Anybody with knowledge of English grammar would consider the above construction faulty and meaningless, thereby bringing no communication to effect. In an acceptable grammatical sequence, the particular expression takes a different shape as:

Come and let us discuss the matter.

I encountered a case where a teacher who needed to know whether Simon, his student, was in school at the particular time, but sounded as if he was referring to the previous day(s):

Was Simon in school?

The students would certainly misunderstand him, and when he repeated:

Was Simon in school now?

laughter had already set in with subsequent distraction. This misunderstanding and distraction are observed, therefore, to be the result of poor constructions.

Greater than that is the case of ambiguity where a word or longer expression is potentially identified with a number of meanings. Imagine a teacher who makes use of the word 'pupil' in reporting that:

The headmaster had an accident and his pupils were badly affected.

In that construction, 'pupils' could be understood to mean the Headmaster's school children. Yet, it could be interpreted as the dark areas at the centre of his eyes. See also the possible confusion in:

The girl insulted the boy with happiness.

There is ambiguity in the above expression which can be interpreted to mean the girl was happy while she insulted the boy, or that the girl and Happiness another person both insulted a boy. Wrong pronunciation of words in sentences also affects

meaning and understanding negatively.

By way of observation, Chomsky places emphasis on 'native speakers' in his conceptualised linguistic competence. Investigation has shown that a second language user is capable of doing very well in the second language, and this, reflects in several instances where certain speakers show mastery of certain languages without being placed as speakers of particular linguistic groups. Moreover, the idea of bilingualism recognises "co-ordinate bilingualism" which represents the use of two different languages with the same degree of competence:

A coordinate bilingual is a person who is able to speak two different languages and understand them well. Such a person will have acquired communicative competence in the two languages whereby he will understand the roles of each of the languages perfectly well and be able to communicate effectively with them in any situation... without giving room to any suspicion that he is more competent in one of the languages than the other. (Akindele & Adegbite 32)

This type of bilingualism is contrasted with "subordinate bilingualism" in which competence is noticed to be higher in one of the languages. The issue of 'native speaker' might not be an important issue in the general discussion of language competence, if these demonstrations are at all worthwhile.

From the angle of *discourse*, a teacher deserves to structure utterances in such a way that other factors would be considered apart from the requirements of a single sentence. Some of these, for example, can be described in terms of cohesion, which refers to the linkage between different parts of sentences or larger units of discourse with surface-structure features of an utterance or a text. Think, for instance, of the proper connections of pronouns and their antecedents in: "A little girl went for a walk in the park. While there, she saw a rabbit. Since, it was injured, she took it home" (O'Grady & Katamba 197). In consideration of cohesive ties in the statement, we are exposed to the ways speakers and writers construct their texts, and

this serves for us the basis of judgement on the well-formedness of a text which is a determiner to effective communication.

Besides, a teacher, like any other speaker, needs to be coherent in their utterances. This means that the totality of what they say in the course of lessons must be clear and reasonable in order not to be misunderstood. Imagine a teacher that defines a concept and leaves immediately to tell a story that does not really tally with his definition. It certainly can cause loss of understanding in the process of communication. This takes us to the conversational principles of *Relevance, Quality, Quantity, and Manner*, as introduced by Grice (1975). A coherent presentation is the structure with relevant utterances joined together with the purpose of unity to produce a whole text.

Also, in maintaining the maxims of quality, quantity, and manner, a construction in conversation has to be sincere and truthful, more informative, while ambiguities as well as obscurities are essentially avoided to pave way for smooth communications.

Strategically, a teacher should be able to manage a linguistically shaky discussion: a sort of communication breakdown that may occur in the interactive session with the students. Their tone must be socially friendly, and not suggestive of pride, sentiments, prejudice and animosity. The ability to maintain those expressions that conform to the socio-cultural standards are all expectations from the teacher, whose success depends, to an extent, on communicative competence.

Implications on National Development

Transformation is synonymous with change and development. We may define all as an instances of change in the nature, appearance, function or character of someone or something, often completely, and especially with the aim of improvement. A nation is said to be transformed, therefore, when change is effected for a better state. This can be seen from the broad views of quality and standard of life of the people, which can be qualified in terms of the progress and development in the economy and other areas of life. With national transformation, there will be improvement in agriculture, education, infrastructure, communication, and all other things that may be

found necessary for the well-being of the human life.

The citizens of a country need to be well educated for them to think and create ways of ensuring this change, and this is where the teacher is found very useful. The duty of the teacher is to give knowledge to learners to get them educated so that they can be useful to themselves and the society in which they live. This can only be achieved by good teachers who, according to Godihal, "are essential for the effective functioning of education systems and for the quality of learning processes" (1). Indeed, good and effective teachers assist learners to understand the amount of knowledge richly available for consumption.

This, we must resume, cannot be effective without a good knowledge of language, which is the sole agent of communication. On the significant role of language in national development, Abekah also acknowledges that: "Professionals such as the teacher, among other individuals who contribute to national development all use language as a medium of communication" (1).

Yet, any language to be used as a medium of instruction should be mastered by the teacher, whose misuse of language in the classroom can only lead to misunderstanding and lack of interest.

Conclusion

This study concludes that both competence and performance are necessary for effective teaching, and the result is that our nation will be transformed through the generations of learners who can also join their teachers to display their intellectuality, morality, and nation-transforming character. The paper emphasises the idea of "native speakers" in linguistic competence to give way to the fact that any speaker of a language (native or non-native) can be competent in the language, and this is what every good teachers should try to achieve. As against Chomsky's focus on competence, Hymes considers the combinatory roles of both competence and performance, and that is why his theory of communicative competence takes prominence in this essay. Considering the parameters of the theory, it is the position of the study that teachers should learn to construct sentences with acceptable patterns, devoid of ambiguity and wrong pronunciations for the sake of clarity; their speech

tone should be friendly and generally able to create a good learning atmosphere. The teacher's choice of words should be realistic rather than sentimental. The vocabulary should be of good content capable of emulating by learners. The general aim of the paper is that the teacher's communicative competence should be well developed as a basis for societal educational transformation.

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