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Key Features of Linguocultural Competence

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Abstract: This article examines the distinctive features of linguocultural competence and its significance in the process of foreign language learning and intercultural communication. It discusses the relationship between language and culture, emphasizing that effective communication requires not only linguistic knowledge but also an understanding of cultural values, traditions, beliefs, and social norms. The paper highlights the key components of linguocultural competence and explains its role in developing learners' communicative abilities, cultural awareness, and successful interaction in multicultural environments.

Keywords: linguocultural competence, language and culture, intercultural communication, cultural awareness, communicative competence, foreign language education, cultural values, cross-cultural interaction.

Introduction

Modern foreign language education is culture-oriented and is grounded in A. Diesterwegs principle of cultural conformity [Culture-Relatedness], which emphasizes that education should be consistent with the cultural context in which learners develop [1, pp. 136–203]. Such an approach familiarizes learners with the culture, values, traditions, customs, and social norms of the target language community while fostering an understanding of the historical development and evolution of another culture. The acquisition of the target language culture constitutes an essential component of foreign language education. Through the process of language learning, individuals gradually become immersed in the target culture, leading to the development of linguocultural competence. This competence is regarded as one of the fundamental components of intercultural communicative competence. Consequently, successful intercultural communication requires not only proficiency in a foreign language but also a thorough understanding of the culture of its speakers.

The concept of competence in the field of foreign language education was systematically developed by the Council of Europe in 1996 within the framework of research conducted in Strasbourg to establish common standards for assessing foreign language proficiency [3, 1996]. Competence was defined as the ability to perform specific tasks effectively on the basis of the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired through the educational process. From our perspective, foreign language communicative competence is understood as the learners' ability to effectively apply linguistic, communicative, and sociocultural knowledge, skills, and abilities in real communicative situations. It enables learners to adapt their verbal behavior appropriately and purposefully according to the communicative context, thereby ensuring effective and culturally appropriate interaction.

Linguistic competence is recognized as one of the core components of communicative competence. Its essence lies in an individual's ability to correctly construct and appropriately use grammatical forms and syntactic structures in accordance with the norms of a particular language. As a fundamental element of communicative competence, linguistic competence encompasses both language competence and speech competence.

Language competence refers to knowledge of the language system [within the minimum scope prescribed by the curriculum] and the ability to apply this knowledge in practical communication. Speech competence, in contrast, denotes an individual's ability to communicate effectively while adhering to accepted linguistic norms across all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The development of learning competence is also of considerable importance in foreign language education. Learning competence is understood as an individual's readiness and ability to organize and carry out the language learning process effectively while acquiring a foreign language as an academic subject. It includes the capacity to employ appropriate learning strategies, monitor one's own progress, and engage in autonomous learning. Competence also implies the ability to overcome communicative difficulties that arise during foreign language use. In this regard, the development of competence involves fostering learners' readiness and ability to compensate for deficiencies in their linguistic knowledge, skills, and abilities by employing a variety of communicative and learning strategies, thereby ensuring successful and effective communication.

Sociocultural competence is defined as the ability to organize and regulate both verbal and non-verbal behavior appropriately in accordance with the norms, values, and cultural conventions of the target language community. The significance of this competence lies in its contribution to understanding the national mentality and worldview of the target culture, overcoming barriers in intercultural communication, and broadening learners' perspectives on both their own culture and other sociocultural communities.

According to scholars in the field of linguocultural studies, achieving meaningful outcomes in foreign language education largely depends on the degree to which learners have developed linguocultural competence. Consequently, fostering linguocultural

competence has become one of the principal objectives of contemporary foreign language education. The essence of linguocultural competence lies in acquiring systematic knowledge of the cultural values embodied in a language. Such integrated knowledge is reflected in encyclopedias, linguistic and cultural research, and other scholarly sources, representing the accumulated outcomes of scientific inquiry in this field. Although linguocultural competence contributes to the development of linguistic competence, it is conceptually much broader and more profound. It encompasses a systematic body of knowledge concerning the culture encoded in a particular national language and enables learners to interpret linguistic phenomena within their broader cultural context.

At present, every system of signs-including language and the linguocultural system-is examined from the perspectives of competence and performance [language use]. In other words, attention is focused not only on knowledge of the system itself but also on the practical application of its elements in real communicative situations. With regard to language, the distinction between these two dialectically interconnected concepts was first systematically formulated by Noam Chomsky. As he states, "We thus make a fundamental distinction between competence [the speaker-hearers knowledge of his language] and performance [the actual use of language in concrete situations] Performance is the direct manifestation of competence" [Chomsky, 1972, p. 9].

However, Chomsky subsequently noted that performance does not fully or directly reflect competence in actual language use. As he explains, "In actual fact, performance does not directly reflect competence. A record of natural speech will show numerous false starts, deviations from rules, changes of plan in the course of speaking, and similar phenomena. The linguists task is to determine the underlying system of rules that the speaker-hearer has internalized and that is employed in actual language use" [Chomsky, 1972, p. 9].

Thus, linguocultural competence represents a complex phenomenon that integrates diverse linguistic and cultural expressions within the cognitive framework of a linguocultural personality. These expressions are developed and enriched through continuous interaction with the linguistic and cultural experiences of other members of the speech community. As an integral part of society, the individual possesses the cognitive capacity to develop linguocultural knowledge and representations through various psychological processes. Although every persons linguocultural worldview is characterized by individual features, it is simultaneously shaped by the shared norms and values recognized by the community. Consequently, linguocultural concepts evolve, expand, and undergo continuous transformation under the influence of both personal experience and collective cultural development.

Within the linguocultural approach, the individual occupies a central position, serving as the primary bearer and embodiment of culture. Through the analysis of linguocultural concepts and the investigation of the use of linguocultural units [linguoculturemes], scholars formulate a generalized theoretical construct known as linguocultural competence. This competence, in turn, constitutes one of the essential components of linguocultural competency, as it enables individuals to interpret, internalize, and appropriately apply the cultural meanings encoded in language during intercultural communication.

References

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