Researching on Communicative Effectives of FL learners: the case of the LRN assessment environment

Dr Isaak Papadopoulos
European University Cyprus

Abstract

Introduction

The study aims at shedding light into the communicative effectiveness of ESOL candidates of LRN ESOL International & IELCA Exams. In particular, Communicative competence is rooted in Chomsky's (1965, p.4) “fundamental distinction between competence and performance”. According to Chomsky (1965, in Ohno, 2006, p.25), competence refers to “the shared knowledge of the ideal speaker-listener set in a completely homogeneous speech community”, and is language-internal in the sense that it does not relate to the external, actual use of language-the latter being subject to performance. Chomsky (1965, p.4) defines performance “as the actual use of language in concrete situations”, whereas Hymes (1972, as cited in Ohno, 2006) relates performance to the messages’ encoding and decoding. Due to imponderable psychological and social factors affecting the speakers' performance, such as lapses of memory, distractions, errors and unfinished structures, performance does not echo a speaker's competence (Kadhim, 2008; Ohno, 2006).

Hymes (1972) is opposed to the idealized view of competence proposed by Chomsky, and argues that the social and cultural differentiations among a speech community which affect both the speakers' competence and their performance, as well as the multiple aspects of competence, need to be considered. He contributed a lot to the consolidation of communicative competence as an integral part of language teaching classrooms, by separating competence into “linguistic competence, which deals with producing and understanding grammatically correct sentences, and communicative competence, which deals with producing and understanding sentences that are appropriate and acceptable to a particular situation” (Hymes, 1972, as cited in Ohno, 2006, p.26). Based on the above definition for communicative competence, it can be
inferred that being communicatively competent entails the ability to relate the knowledge obtained in the classroom with the real world (Saleh, 2013).

Canale and Swain (1980) further developed the notion of communicative competence by identifying its three components: grammatical competence—the knowledge of the language code, sociolinguistic competence—the use of language with relation to sociocultural rules in different social contexts, and strategic competence—“the ability of using language to achieve communicative goals and enhance the effectiveness of communication” (Canale & Swain, 1980, as cited in Saleh, 2013, p. 103).

The Purpose of the Research

This study attempts to investigate the communicative effectiveness of ESOL students within the LRN ESOL examination context. Towards that, the research is going to investigate

1. ESOL Students communication strategies during the speaking test of the LRN ESOL International Examination
2. ESOL Students Compensation Strategies during the speaking test of the LRN ESOL International Examination (Compensation strategies are strategies that speakers employ in order to overcome their linguistic deficiency and enhance their communication and interaction with the addressee.)

Based on the above, the researcher is going to investigate:

1. Differentiations on the basis of the language level of the candidates A1 to C2
2. Differentiations on the basis of the gender of the candidates Male and Female students.