THE STRATEGIC COMPETENCE AS A BASIC COMPONENT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF A PERSON WITH A SECOND LANGUAGE

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Abstract
The article discusses the strategic competence as an object of study in the research on the theory of language comprehension, including linguistic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic works of foreign and local scientists, as well as in the special literature on languages teaching. Strategic competence is regarded as a basic component of communicative competence of a person with a second language. The definition of strategic competence is based on knowledge about the ability of a person with a second language to assimilate a non-native language and the ability to use strategies of verbal behavior formed in the learning process.

Key words
Communicative competence; strategic competence; person with a second language; language skills; non-native language comprehension; verbal behavior strategy.

In a great number of studies on problems with languages comprehension, they regard the following by the term "strategic competence":

1) a component of the communicative competence in the structure of a language ability (L. F. Bachman, M. Canale, M. Swain, and S. J. Savignon);
2) a universal strategies complex of using language knowledge at producing and interpreting messages by a separate language (V.Z. Demyankov, D. Cooper,
J.J. Katz, and N. Chomsky), along with non-universal cognitive strategies that are put in universal cognition and applied at text interpretations and reality perceptions (M. Durbin); 3) a complex of learning techniques (teacher’s teaching strategies and learning strategies used by the learner) in the linguistic didactic aspect (B. L. Leaver, R. L. Oxford, H. D. Brown, E. Tarone, and G. Yull).

In the Soviet and Russian linguistic didactic science, the methodical aspect of the strategic competence is explained by the terms “algorithms,” “supports,” “reference signals,” “visual supports,” etc. (Y. I. Pasov, V. F. Shatalov, S. N. Lysenkova, and Y. S. Mezhenko, etc.).

M. Canale and M. Swain in the structure of the language ability single out a strategic competence as an independent component that is part of the chain of three other components – grammar, discourse, and sociolinguistic competences. According to M. Canale and M. Swain (1980), a strategic competence is “verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies that can be defined as initiative actions of communicative participants in order to create, fold, resume and readdress communication in different situations” (p. 6). It should immediately be noted that a strategic competence is not the strategies themselves, but also knowledge of these strategies and the ability to chose and use them in an appropriate situation.

M. Canale and M. Swain in their definition emphasize the phatic features of verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies, such as creating, folding, resuming, and readdressing communication. There is no doubt that the contact making function of the language should be referred to strategic ones. Nevertheless, we believe that defining the strategic competence only from the point of view of making a visual contact looks very simplified. It is obvious that knowledge and the ability to use phatic, meta-communicative strategies are characteristic of the native language strategic competence and an obligatory object to study in the foreign language. However, it is important not only to make and support a contact but also somehow continue it in order to finish, fold, or readdress the message. That is why, the strategic competence must be considered wider, taking into consideration not only the person’s ability to start and fend communication, but also proceed with communication. It is to be a full value of a participant of a communicative act with the minimum of communicative failures.

According to Savignon (1994), the strategic competence is a competence that supports our ability to cope with lack of knowledge and keep up communication by “paraphrases, distracting talks, repetitions, hesitations, evasive answers and suppositions and also by topic and tone,” or by tonality that varies depending on the situation. It might be: (i) official or unofficial; (ii) a request, regret, order, etc. (i.e. according to communicant’s intentions); (iii) an enquirer / a responder, an informer, a leader, a follower, etc. (i.e. according yo people’s communicative roles); (iv) formal / informal, friendly / unfriendly, etc. (i.e. according to the level sociability). «These strategies are used to compensate incomplete knowledge of rules or limiting factors of usage, such as tiredness, despair, and inattention» (Savignon, 1994). There are a number of communicative competence factors or the so-called “communicative inconveniences” that affect the language performance. These factors may include lack of interest, mood changes, distraction, being unwell, etc. All of these can cause stammering, slips of gthe
tongue, «false starts» in a speech, mixings in the word order, and even abrupt stops in the middle of the sentence (Di Pietro, 1989). It is obvious and possible not only in a foreigner's speech but also in any given conversation of a native speaker.

We, the authors, are interested in S. J. Savignon's definition of the other part, where the strategic competence is considered as an ability to keep up communication with the help of strategies in a situation where the communication is hampered by different reasons. It should be noted that this definition has a reference to one of the most important functions of the strategic competence, to the function of responding or compensating, along with use of strategies as verbal actions in the strategic competence frames. But the author does not specify incomplete knowledge of which rules cause addressing this or that particular strategy. We suppose that he means knowledge of the rules of the word use, grammar, communication procedures, speech behaviour, along knowledge of the context in a particular situation, etc.; therefore, that is knowledge of the language and extra linguistic competences elements.

A foreigner's speech is known to be characterized by definite peculiarities which make it different from their own language. Moreover, exactly these speech peculiarities mark out foreigners between the native speakers. To such peculiarities we can refer:

a) **long pauses**–hesitations (filled and unfilled pauses, false starts, speech repetitions) that are connected with different functions to plan the speech;

b) **repeating one and the same words, phrases, expressions, etc**;

c) **a construct that modifies one and the same set of speech patterns and not a spontaneous utterance**;

d) **and the use of a set of formulas taken out of the context that can be interpreted only when you can reconstruct the initial context or the formal language usage** (Protasova, 1999).

The mentioned above peculiarities should be refered to strategic skills, but we think that the strategic competence function cannot come only to the compensation due to hesitation moments and repetitions. We believe that the functional possibilities of the strategic competence are much wider.

L. F. Bachman in his research defines the strategic competence as a specific finished element of the communicative language ability. The strategic competence, by L. F. Bachman is a person's ability to use appropriately all elements of the language competence (as well as psychophysical skills) during the process of information exchange (Bachman, 1990). The strategic competence provides means to choose those elements of the language competence that correspond to the peculiarities of the context of a situation, where the language is used (participants' roles, formal characteristics of the situation, and knowledge structures of the language bearer, such as social culture knowledge, knowledge of "the real world").

Thus, the strategic competence takes the role of a linking chain between the language competence that includes organizational (grammatical and textual) and pragmatic (illocutionary and pragmatic) competences and the structure of the world knowledge (extra linguistic competence) by psycho-physiological mechanisms in the situation context. In L.F. Bachman's definition of the strategic competence is classified as a mental ability that gives a possibility to consider this category in our research as a
cognitive structure from the point of view of receiving, processing, and developing of information in the speech comprehending and producing process (Bachman, 1990).

In our opinion, the strategic competence is a cognitive mechanism by means of which the bound between the language and extra linguistic competences takes place and is necessary for a situation, when language and background knowledge of a person with a second language is realized with the help of psycho-physiological mechanisms (Utebaliyeva, 2004). The process of the knowledge realization is preceded by choosing necessary components out of the data base of the communicative competence. The structures of knowledge and mentality of a person who makes decisions by choosing this or that strategy of the speech behavior are most essential situation elements that cannot be taken out of the making decision model. That is why, the topical task in a research on the communicative competence is explication and analysis of such type of structures. For making decisions and choosing necessary in a particular situation, the strategy of a speech behavior in accordance to our concept of the strategic competence is considered as a basic component of the communicative competence.

We think that the strategic competence as an ability is a definite consequence of mental operations to choose a strategic speech behavior. The choice itself as a mental line performs a series of actions, such as evaluating the context of a situation and utterance planning. If search of the necessary language elements in the memory can be defined as an ability then the ability objectification into use of elements means of all basic components we can regard as an ability to choose necessary language means to realize a definite communicative goal.

The strategic competence of the foreign language is an ability of the secondary language personality to choose strategies of the speech behavior and, correspondingly, language means of expressing the speech intentions which are appropriate in the situations with definite pragmatic parameters and adequate to the linguistic culture of the studied language and which is formed in the process of language mastering and based on the personality’s ability to realize the communicative competence components (language and extra linguistic) in the communicative language usage.

So, the strategic competence is a basic component of the communicative competence that is a cognitive mechanism by means of which the bound between the extra linguistic and language competences is done and necessary for the situation language and background knowledge of the secondary language personality is realized by choosing speech behavior strategies. In general, it has a tendency to grow and develop correspondingly to its form. Hence, teaching a second language, we can speak about forming the strategic competence.

We believe that in the basis of the formation of any communicative competence in a foreign language as a concept system is a process of forming and further ordering the knowledge concepts. The mechanism that regulates the mechanisms of interaction between the concepts, organizes, and systemizes them into conceptual structures at solving communicative tasks is the strategic competence. That is why, in the language teaching process, the communicative competence formation is considered by us as a macro goal, reaching of which is done by realization of micro goals, including forming a language, extra linguistic competences, along with unifying the strategic competence.
To form the strategic competence of a second language, in our opinion, one should:

1) fill in the data bases of the language and extra linguistic competences with lexical, grammatical, and social cultural content and pragmatic knowledge that is necessary for a full participation in communication and its maintaining;

2) provide means and devices of operating the received knowledge in order to its productive, creative use in changing conditions and also on extending the possibility of self-obtaining new knowledge.

The evaluation level of the communicative competence of a language learner depends on how much the strategic competence is developed as ability. We understand this degree of development as a complex of formed skills to choose such a speech behavior that allows succeeding in realization of the communicative goal. The degree of development is defined by:

1) firmness and steadiness, flexibility of knowledge of the strategies for speech behavior (interaction of components of the communicative competence);

2) an ability to choose a necessary strategy;

3) a speed of searching the necessary language means;

4) and correctness / appropriateness in the use of the language means while solving the communicative tasks.

References


