

CONDITIONS, CRITERIA, INDICATORS AND LEVELS OF FORMING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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Abstract:

Individuals need communicative competence for personal fulfillment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. However, the success of communicative competence within a multicultural environment requires that a system of criteria, indicators and levels of forming communicative competence have to be considered. Aim of the following paper is to identify the system of criteria, indicators and levels for the analysis of communicative competence on the pedagogical discourse. The meaning of the key concepts of communicative competence, conditions and criteria, indicators and levels of forming communicative competence is studied within the search for a system of criteria, indicators, levels. The results reveal the system of criteria, indicators, levels to analyze communicative competence for individual's becoming more mobile, learning from the experiences of others and working in a qualitative way.

Key words: communicative competence; conditions; criteria and indicators

Introduction

Real life requires qualified specialists who are able not only to work and to do a job in a qualitative way but also extra abilities (I. Maslo, 2006a, p. 47) where communication is one of them.

Thus, communicative competence is set out to be of the greatest importance for individuals' personal fulfillment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment (European Reference Framework, 2004, p. 2).

However, the success of communicative competence within a multicultural environment requires that a system of criteria, indicators and levels of forming communicative competence have to be considered. Aim of the following paper is to identify the system of criteria, indicators and levels for the analysis of communicative competence on the pedagogical discourse. The meaning of the key concepts of *communicative competence, conditions and criteria, indicators and levels* of forming communicative competence is studied within the search for a system of criteria, indicators and levels.

The remaining part of this paper is organized as follows: The introductory state-of-the-art section demonstrates the author's position on the topic of the research. The following part of the paper involves four sections. Section 1 introduces the definition of communicative competence. Conditions of forming communicative competence are presented in Section 2. Criteria, indicators and levels of forming communicative competence will be considered in Section 3. The associated empirical results are presented and interpreted in Section 4. Afterwards, some concluding remarks are provided. Finally, a short outlook on interesting topics for further work is given.

State-of-the-Art

The modern issues of global developmental trends emphasize “a prime importance in sustainable development that is to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (B. Zimmermann, 2003, p. 9). Thus, sustainable personality is “a person who sees relationships and inter-relationships between nature, society and the economy” (T. Kaivola & L. Rohweder, 2007, p. 24). In other words, this is a person who is able to develop the system of external and internal perspectives, and in turn this developing the system of external and internal perspectives becomes a main condition for the sustainable personality to develop. For instance, the concern of the European Union, namely, to become “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (European Commission, 2004, p. 2) demonstrates the significance of developing the system of external and internal perspectives for the development of humans, institutions, society and mankind. Thus, the life necessity to develop the system of two perspectives, namely, external and internal, determines the research methodology of communicative competence within a multicultural environment, as highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1: Developing the System of External and Internal Perspectives as a Life Necessity

| External | synthesis | Internal |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| conscious | concordance | unconscious |
| learning | | acquisition |
| foreign language | | mother tongue |
| systematic | | non-systematic |
| from abstract to concrete | | from concrete to abstract |
| thought generalization | | thing generalization |

However, in real life sustainable personality is often realized from one of the perspectives: from the internal perspective accentuating cognition (G. Vossen, 2009, p. 33), from the external perspective accentuating social interaction (D. Tapscott & A. Williams, 2006) and finding a balance between the external and internal perspectives (S. Surikova, 2007, p. 31).

The methodological foundation of the present research to further consideration of communicative competence within a multicultural environment is formed by the System-Constructivist Theory based on (A. Homiča, 2009, p. 46) Parson’s system theory where any activity is considered as a system; Luhmann’s theory which emphasizes communication as a system; the theory of symbolic interactionism and the theory of subjectivism.

The System-Constructivist Theory emphasizes that human being’s point of view depends on the subjective aspect: everyone has his/her own system of external and internal perspectives (Table 1) that is a complex open system (D. Osberg, 2008, p. 2; I. Rudzinska, 2008, p. 1) and experience plays the central role in a construction process (E. Maslo, 2007, p. 39).

Thus, four approaches to realizing communicative competence within a multicultural environment are revealed: from the internal perspective accentuating cognition, from the

external perspective accentuating social interaction, finding a balance between the external and internal perspectives and developing the system of the external and internal perspectives.

The fourth approach is considered to be applicable to the present research on communicative competence within a multicultural environment.

Defining Communicative Competence

Having analyzed and summarized the definitions of communicative competence formulated by a number of researchers (J. Zaščerinska 2008, p. 143-153) the essence of *communicative competence* in the context of the present research is an individual combination of abilities and experience based on the social interaction and cognition that provides constructive interaction with other people in the interpersonal system, thereby promoting the system of the external and internal perspective (J. Zaščerinska 2009a). The understanding of the subject-content structure of communicative competence (J. Zaščerinska 2009a) can be presented as follows (See Table 2):

Table 2: The Subject-Content Structure of Communicative Competence

| | | External ↔ Internal | |
|-----------|---|--------------------------|--|
| objective | social interaction abilities and experience | communicative competence | Cognition abilities and experience |
| | Mastering constructive strategies and techniques of social interaction and its use in real life | | Mastering constructive strategies and techniques of cognition and its use in real life |
| | Opportunities of social experience (cognition and social interaction experience) in the social-cultural environment | | |

Conditions for Forming Communicative Competence

The prerequisite for the enhancement of communicative competence based on the researcher's understanding of singularity of individual's interaction in foreign and professional language and foreign language for professional purposes varied influence on individual's development in general (J. Zaščerinska, 2009b) including the improvement of communicative competence is the organization of such a study process that includes the forms of interaction such as interaction in foreign and professional language as well as foreign language for professional purposes.

The conditions of the improvement of individual's communicative competence in the social culture context are determined by the researchers' understanding of singularity of individual's interaction in foreign and professional languages, foreign language for professional purposes, their different influence on the individual's development including the improvement of individual's communicative competence; reflection.

In order to promote the enhancement of individual's communicative competence it is necessary to provide learners with a variety of opportunities for the construction of their own communicative competence (experience of social interaction and cognition activity) by interacting with peers and teachers and learning to develop the system of external and

internal perspectives; reaching their important personal aims and taking into consideration the interests and needs of others (J. Zašcerinska, 2009a) (See Table 3).

Table 3: Conditions for improving student communicative competence in the socio-cultural context

| Productive Professional Environment | | |
|---|--|--|
| External Perspective | | Internal Perspective |
| Opportunities to construct experience in social interaction | | Opportunities to construct experience in cognitive activity |
| Mastering constructive strategies and techniques of social interaction and its use in real life | | Mastering constructive strategies and techniques of cognition and its use in real life |
| Interpersonal dialogue | Study cultural dialogue | Individual's internal dialogue |
| Object-regulation | Other-regulation | Self-regulation |
| Establishing social purposes, social interaction planning and organizing | Establishing joint purposes, collaboration planning and organizing | Establishing personal purposes, individual planning and organizing |
| Social decision making | Joint decision making | Individual decision making |
| External evaluation | Mutual evaluation and self-evaluation | self-evaluation |

Criteria, Indicators and Levels of Forming Communicative Competence

The source of criteria is the definition of the research subject, subject's structure and factors of the system creation (I. Žogla, 2007, p. 2).

Criteria are also realized as indices, constructs, indicators, parameters, statistics or variables. However, criteria are to classify, to assess, to evaluate; and indicators are to determine the developmental dynamics.

The terminology on the research criteria used in the frame of the present research is as follows: criterion is a key element of the research subject to classify the subject of the research, indicator is an element of the research subject to determine the developmental dynamics of the subject and construct is a sub-element of the research subject.

The initial system of criteria and indicators of individual's communicative competence based on the present research methodology and theoretical findings (including I. Maslo, 1995, p. 8; A. Lasmanis, 2008, p. 2; I. Kramiņa, 2000, p. 65) can be presented as follows (See Table 4):

Table 4: Criteria and Indicators of Students' Communicative Competence

| Criteria | Indicators |
|---|--|
| Individual's social experience in General English | <i>experience of social interaction in General English (knowledge, skills and attitudes)</i> |
| | <i>Cognition experience (knowledge, skills and attitudes)</i> |
| Individual's social experience in Professional Language | <i>experience of social interaction in Professional Language (knowledge, skills</i> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <i>and attitudes)</i> |
| | <i>Cognition experience (knowledge, skills and attitudes)</i> |
| Individual's social experience in English for Academic Purposes | <i>experience of social interaction in English for Academic Purposes (knowledge, skills and attitudes)</i> |
| | <i>Cognition experience (knowledge, skills and attitudes)</i> |

The initial system of constructs of individual's communicative competence based on the present research methodology and theoretical findings can be presented as follows:

- social interaction means that students (I. Maslo 2006b, p. 15, I. Žogla, 2007, p. 4) participate in the activity, exchange ideas with others, co-operate with others, analyze a problem, are in the dialogue and search for problem solving tools together with others.
- cognitive activity is seen while students (E. Maslo 2007, p. 39) regulate his/her own learning process, set his/her own goals, take responsibility for his/her own learning, work independently, evaluate his/her own learning process and continue to improve his/her own skills.

The levels of communicative competence (as an outcome) are determined by *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (2001, p. 23) and presented in Table 5:

Table 4: The Levels of Individual's Communicative Competence

| Level | Basic User | Independent User | Proficient User |
|--------------------|--|---|---|
| Description | a basic user can perform an activity if some help is provided (I. Lūka, 2008, p. 49) | an independent user can perform an activity implementing previously acquired patterns or in similar situations (I. Lūka, 2008, p. 49) | a proficient user can perform the given activity autonomously |

The European Qualifications Framework level descriptions are based on learning outcomes defined in terms of knowledge, skills and wider competences – personal and professional (W. Martyniuk, 2006, p. 15). The outcomes are specified on an eight-level scale reflecting stages in a lifelong learning process (the European Qualifications Framework, 2006, p. 18-20; W. Martyniuk, 2006, p. 16):

- Level 1-2: compulsory education;
- Level 3: upper secondary or adult education;
- Level 4: end of upper secondary/post-compulsory education, “a gateway” to higher education;
- Level 5: completion of post-secondary or “short cycle” within the first cycle of higher education;
- Level 6: higher education, first cycle (B. A.);
- Level 7: higher education, second cycle (M. A.);

- Level 8: higher education, third cycle (Ph. D.).

Empirical Results

The target population of the present empirical study involves 5 participants of the English for Academic Purposes course within Fourth Baltic Summer School *Technical Informatics and Information Technology* at the Institute of Computer Science of the Tartu University from the 8th to the 23rd of August 2008 in Tartu, Estonia.

All 5 students have got Bachelor or Master Degree in different fields of Computer Sciences and working experience in the different fields.

The International Summer School offers special courses to support the internationalization of education and the cooperation among the universities of the Baltic Sea Region.

The aims of the Baltic Summer Schools *Technical Informatics and Information Technology* are determined as preparation for international Master and Ph.D. programs in Germany, further specialization in computer science and information technology and learning in a simulated environment.

The participants' communicative competence was evaluated on the first day, namely, the 7th August 2009, and on the fifth day, namely, the 11th August 2009, of Baltic Summer School 2009.

The methods used to measure the participants' communicative competence for the first time in the English for Academic Purposes course within the Baltic Summer School 2008 on the first day, namely, the 8th August 2008, and on the seventh day, namely, the 15th August 2008, were as follows: participant social experience in General English self-evaluation (a student him/herself), participant social experience in Professional Language self-evaluation (a student him/herself) and participant social experience in English for Academic Purposes evaluation (English teachers and the scientific director of the Baltic Summer School 2008).

Thus, the summary of the Measurement 1 results of the participants' communicative competence within the English for Academic Purposes course in the frame of the Baltic Summer School 2008 allows drawing a conclusion that the critical level of communicative competence dominates in the English group.

Summarizing the results of the second measurement of the participants' communicative competence (See Figure 1) after the implementation of the *Experience of Social Interaction and Cognitive Activity* program reveals that

- the level of communicative competence of four participants has been increased by the average coefficient of each participant social experience in General English;
- the level of communicative competence of two participants has been increased by the average coefficient of each participant social experience in Professional Language and the level of communicative competence of three participants has been remained at the same level by the average coefficient of each participant social experience in Professional Language;

- the level of communicative competence of five participants has been increased by the average coefficient of each participant social experience in English for Academic Purposes;
- the level of communicative competence of five participants has been increased by the average coefficient of each participant social interaction in English for Academic Purposes;
- the level of communicative competence of four participants has been increased by the average coefficient of each participant cognitive activity in English for Academic Purposes.

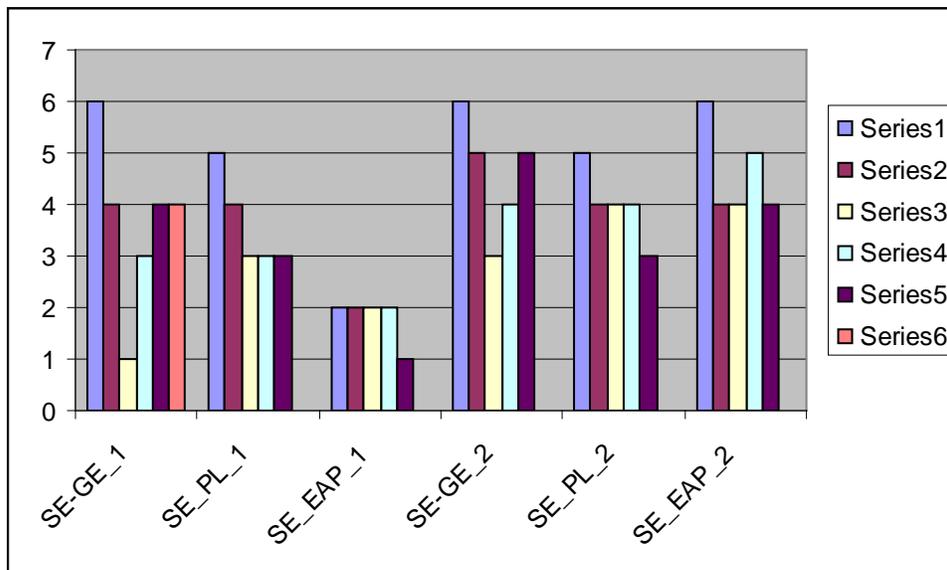


Figure 1: Inter-connections of Measurement 1 and 2 Between the Levels of Each Participant Communicative Competence in terms of Average Coefficient of Each Participant Social Experience in General English, Social Experience in Professional Language, Social Experience in English for Academic Purposes

The summary of the Measurement 2 results of the participants' communicative competence within the English for Academic Purposes course in the frame of the Baltic Summer School 2008 (See Figure 1) allows drawing a conclusion that the average level of communicative competence dominates in the English group.

Conclusion

The system of criteria, indicators and levels allows analyzing individuals' communicative competence within a multicultural environment.

Further research on forming communicative competence within a multicultural environment is considered to include further defining communicative competence, analyzing factors, determining criteria, revealing a relevant set of methods to evaluate each criterion, improving the questionnaire, carrying out further empirical studies and statistical analyzing.

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