
Assessment of Communicative Competence and Its Effect on Self-Concept and Academic Performance of Students

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ABSTRACT

This paper assessed the effect of communicative competence on the self-concept and academic performance of students. It was revealed that communicative competence is the ability to use language, or to communicate, in a culturally-appropriate manner in order to make meaning and accomplish social tasks with efficacy and fluency through extended interactions. The paper went further to review the components of communicative competence as: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. The paper also reviewed the concept of self-concept and the concept of academic performance. Numerous literature was also reviewed to assert the effect of communicative competencies on self-concept and academic performance. And thus revealed that for excellent academic performance, a student ought to acquire an understanding and a grasp of the subject content. This process of acquiring a command and an understanding of the subject content does not depend merely on memory work but on the level of self-concept and the ability to interact effectively. However, it was concluded that a student who possesses communication skills makes him/her more self-confident and, thus, self-concept indirectly influences academic performance. One of the recommendations was that parents and stakeholders in education must be encouraged to adopt specific techniques and strategies aimed at building a strong positive image for children and having ambitions that are commensurate with their abilities. This will in fact help students feel emotionally and psychologically ready and not overwhelmed by the academic task ahead.

KEYWORDS: Communicative Competence, Self-Concept, Academic Performance and Students

Introduction

Communicative competence is the penultimate goal for language learners. The goal of learning English for learners is to be able to communicate successfully. To master English, sufficient exposure is needed for learners to notice and acquire the language input and chances to use the knowledge. Communicative competence is likely to be promoted (Larsari, 2011). In addition, among the awareness and many

skills required for competence at formal schools and even at university, communicative competence is crucial (Yufrizal, 2017; Al Alami, 2014). In terms of linguistics, communicative competence refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology, and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately. It made a different perception between performance and competence (Yufrizal, 2017). The term "communicative competence" has been discussed in many studies in the second and foreign language learning paradigms. Numerous theories have been posited for its instructional and developmental processes, but tools for applications, such as simulations and learning experiences designed to augment communicative competence mediated by language, require added considerations for domain specificity. Gains in self-concept in communication and language can be made from experiential learning, which serves as a connective tissue for work in education with positive outcomes. Self-concept has been seen as the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes, and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence (Yahaya & Ramli, 2009). A positive self-concept in communicative competence can be developed through behaving objectively, knowing oneself, always appreciating oneself, being friends with oneself and always having positive and rational thinking.

Self-concept (physical, personal, moral and ethical), behavior, social satisfaction and identity, communication skills, and academic performance can be considered as three separate components. It is easy to assess a student's academic performance through the grades achieved in tests and examinations. However, assessing a student's self-concept, which involves feelings and perceptions of an individual, is much more subjective and thus a more difficult task. The communication skills of an individual are easier to assess as a student's ability to communicate can readily be determined by the way he interacts with his teachers and peers. However, it is not an easy task to assess the level of communication skills of a student as the interaction between students and their peers and students and their teachers occurs only in the classroom in school (Claes, Lacourse, Bouchard & Perucchini, 2003).

Conceptual Review

Concept of Communicative Competence

Treating language as a means of communication is a tendency in language pedagogy opposed to teaching language as grammar. Thus, it is believed that the core of language learning and teaching should be the development of the communicative competence of a language learner. Communicative competence can be defined as the ability to use language, or to communicate, in a culturally-appropriate manner in order to make meaning and accomplish social tasks with efficacy and fluency through extended interactions (Tarvin, 2015). Definitions.net (2018) defined communicative competence as a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology, and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use

utterances appropriately. Canale & Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) in Bagarić (2007) understood communicative competence as a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skills needed for communication. In their concept of communicative competence, knowledge refers to the (conscious or unconscious) knowledge of an individual about language and about other aspects of language use. Additionally, Hymes (1972) in Dagmara, (2012) defined communication competence as the mastery of patterns of sociolinguistic behaviour of the target language. These patterns are called by Hymes the rules of speaking and they refer to an appropriate speech conduct. Unlike Hymes or Canale & Swain, Savignon (1972) in Tuan (2017) put a much greater emphasis on the aspect of ability in her concept of communicative competence. She described communicative competence as the ability to function in a truly communicative setting – that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors. According to her, and many other theoreticians (e.g. Canale & Swain, 1980; Skehan, 1995, 1998; Bachman & Palmer, 1996 etc.), the nature of communicative competence is not static but dynamic, it is more interpersonal than intrapersonal and relative rather than absolute. It is also largely defined by context.

Concept of Self-Concept

The self-concept is a characteristic inherent in the personality of every individual. But different individuals have self-concepts of varying quality, as suggested by the term "positive and negative" self-concept, and in varying quantities, as implied by the term "low and high" self-concepts (Morses & Gerger, 2009). Self-concept is therefore defined as an organized and consistent way an individual thinks, feels, and reacts to issues concerning himself or herself arising from his/her personal experience in life (Pelemo, 2004). Thus, self-concept is the set of feelings and cognitions about oneself. It influences our thoughts, behaviors, and performance in school. Self-concept is very important to psychologists and educationists because whatever a person feels or thinks about himself is very important and could be a strong determinant of his behavior, even at school (academic performance). The components of "self" include self-image, which refers to the sort of person an individual thinks he is; self-esteem, which refers to how favorable an individual regards himself; and ideal-self, which represents the ideals of behavior manifestations an individual aspires to be (Boulter, 2002). However, according to Fayombo, (2001), self-concept is the image an individual has of himself/herself, which is a composite of the beliefs he or she has about himself or herself, including his or her physical, academic, psychological, social, and emotional characteristics, aspirations, and achievements. Thus, self-concept could be viewed as the extent to which an individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthwhile. It entails all the beliefs about the individual self and is essentially an individual's self-judgment of his own abilities, influence, and popularity.

Concept of Academic Performance

In educational institutions, academic performance is the outcome of educational goals that are achieved either by students or by the teacher, i.e., how well a student meets standards set by local authorities or the institution itself (Hughes, 2004). Despite the attention paid to a broad definition of educational outcomes, however, academic performance remains central and this has attracted various definitions from different scholars. Accordingly, Hatcher & Prul (2006) defined academic performance as how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers. Epunam, (2009) defined academic performance as the learning outcomes of a student which includes the knowledge, skills and ideas, acquired and obtained through their course of study within and outside the classroom situation. Kathryn, (2010) defined academic performance as a person's excellence in all academic disciplines, in a class as well as extracurricular activities. It includes excellence in sporting behaviour, confidence, communication skills, and others. Thus, academic performance is a multidimensional construct composed of the skills, attitudes, and behaviors of a learner that contribute to academic success in the classroom (Hijazi & Naqvi, 2006). Similarly, Steinberg (2005) posited that academic performance encompasses students' ability and performance; it is multidimensional; it is intricately related to human growth and cognitive, emotional and social physical development; it reflects the whole child; it is not related to a single instance, but occurs across time and levels, through a student's life in public school and into post-secondary years and working life. Hence, academic performance is the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate your knowledge verbally or down on paper. It also implies a process where a student's success in school is measured to determine how they stand up to others in the same areas.

Components of Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is composed of four elements: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. This framework is based on the work by Canale and Swain (1980), and it is rather a theoretical framework for the model than a model itself. Canale and Swain concentrate on discussing separate factors instead of treating competence in a holistic approach. Thus, the framework presents only what the components of communicative competence are, but not how they react.

Grammatical competence is the mastery of the language code. It means that speakers know the rules of the language, which include vocabulary, word and sentence formation, pronunciation, spelling, and linguistic semantics. Grammatical competence means the acquisition of phonological rules, morphological rules, syntactic rules, semantic rules, and lexical items. Today it is usually called linguistic competence.

Sociolinguistic competence encompasses sociocultural rules of language use, which basically means that the speaker is able to produce and understand utterances in different contexts. Each and every interaction has its own norms and purpose, and the

role of the speaker is to convey meaning in a form appropriate for a given context. There is a tendency in language teaching to avoid developing sociolinguistic competence. This wrong policy leads to a situation in which learners are not able to communicate appropriately depending on the context. Thus, sociolinguistic competence refers to the learning of pragmatic aspects of various speech acts, namely, cultural values, norms, and other socio-cultural conventions in social contexts (Mustadi, 2012). They are the context and topic of a discourse, the participants' social status, sex, and age, and other factors which influence the styles and registers of speech. Since different situations call for different types of expressions as well as different beliefs, views, values, and attitudes, the development of sociolinguistic competence is essential for communicative social actions.

Discourse competence also refers to language appropriateness with reference to a given situation. It is the speaker's ability to combine grammatical forms and meanings in order to achieve a unified spoken/written text in a particular genre. Text unity depends on cohesion in form (the utterances should be linked structurally so that the text is easy to comprehend) and coherence in meaning (different meanings in the text are related to each other). Canale and Swain emphasize that sociolinguistic rules of use and rules of discourse are crucial in interpreting utterances for social meaning, particularly when the literal meaning of an utterance does not lead to the speaker's intention easily.

Strategic competence refers to compensatory strategies in case of grammatical or sociolinguistic or discourse difficulties, such as the use of reference sources, grammatical and lexical paraphrase, requests for repetition, clarification, slower speech, or problems in addressing strangers when unsure of their social status or in finding the right cohesion devices (Yufrizal, 2017). Strategic competence is needed if a breakdown in communication occurs and/or the speaker suffers from insufficient communicative skills. Strategic skills are also employed when the speaker wants to enhance the effect of communication. It is believed that learners are acquainted with strategic skills as they use them in their first language. However, they need to be taught how to employ communicative strategies in their second language.

As earlier mentioned above, there are four major communicative competencies, which include: a) grammatical competence, b) sociolinguistic competence, c) discourse competence, and d) strategic competence.

1. The competency in grammatical competence consists of five tasks: a) spelling alphabets/letters and numbers; b) understanding the rules of noun phrases; c) understanding the rules of noun phrases; d) understanding the rules of word and sentence formations or structural skills: tenses, active and passive voices, direct and indirect speeches, degrees of comparison, gerunds and infinitives, affixes and derivatives, conditional sentences, relative/adjective clauses, causatives, use of wish, etc., e) constructing sentence types: simple, compound, and

- complex sentences; and constructing sentence forms: statement, interrogative, imperative, request, and exclamation sentences.
2. The competency of sociolinguistic competence consists of three tasks: a) understanding English language teaching for elementary school students, such as interesting strategies: singing songs, playing simple films/dramas, playing games/playing for fun, creating interesting media, etc. based on socio-cultural context; b) being able to teach by using English as the language of bilingual instruction in the social context of the elementary school level; c) producing appropriate utterances of self-introduction.
 3. The competency of discourse competence contains one task: combining grammatical forms and meanings to achieve texts in different genres in the form of different text types: poems, procedures, descriptions, reports, news items, narratives, recounts, spoofs, discussions, expositions, argumentatives, reports, letters, announcements, etc.
 4. The competency of strategic competence consists of one task: being able to use relevant language contents such as language functions/English expressions clearly in an organized and coherent way, according to the genre and communicative situation; selecting the relevant contents and expressing them using the appropriate tones of voice, body language, and gestures.

Effect of Communicative Competence on Students Self-Concept and Academic Performance

It is essential for an individual to acquire communicational skills to communicate, discuss and exchange ideas effectively with their parents, teachers as well as their peers (Downey, Meriel. 2007). With the current trends in the school system, which emphasizes the student's ability to express him in the teaching and learning process, it is mandatory that a student acquire communication skills. A student who lacks communication skills will not only experience problems communicating but also during the learning process as discussion forms the very basis of today's teaching and learning process (Yahaya, & Nordin, 2006). This inadequacy will indirectly erode a student's confidence and self-concept thus affecting his academic performance. Excellent academic performance is the main target of every student and school. For excellent academic performance, a student ought to acquire an understanding and a grasp of the subject content. This process of acquiring a command and an understanding of the subject content does not depend on merely on memory work but on the level of self-concept and the ability to interact effectively. A high level of self-confidence coupled with effective learning techniques will lead to excellent academic performance. Self-concept and communication skills form the basis of self-confidence (Yahaya & Ramli, 2009). A student's confidence and the ability to express him and interact in the classroom are closely related to self-concept. According to Yahaya, Ramli, Yahaya & Jaalam, (2009), the ability for interpersonal communication will affect the self-concept of an individual. A student assesses himself by the perception

that the teachers have of him. This perception is based on his ability to interact with others in the classroom. Teachers tend to give good assessment to students who interact well in the classroom. This in turn increases their self-confidence leading to a higher level of self-concept. Thus, the current democratic teaching style encourages students to interact with the teachers as well as their peers in the classroom. The communication skills the students possess make them more self-confident and indirectly influence their academic performance.

Conclusion

Based on the review of this paper, it was concluded that communicative competence is the ability to function in a truly communicative setting, specifically, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors. However, a high level of confidence coupled with effective learning techniques can lead to excellent academic performance. Self-concept and communication skills form the basis of confidence. Therefore, a student who possesses communication skills makes him/her more self-confident and, thus, self-concept indirectly influences academic performance.

Recommendations

Based on the review of this paper, the following recommendations were made.

1. Parents and stakeholders in education must be encouraged to adopt specific techniques and strategies aimed at building a strong positive image for children and having ambitions that commensurate with their abilities. This will in fact help students feel emotionally and psychologically ready and not overwhelmed by the academic task ahead.
2. Government and non-governmental agencies should encourage the provision of practical instructional materials, funds for educational visits, and employ more qualified teachers with professional training and expertise to teach students and to indulge them in practical academic exercises that would increase their level of self-concept as well as their academic performance.
3. The Ministry of Education or the State Education Board should draw up a plan where a subject on communicative competence is included in the school education syllabus.
4. Teachers should be given exposure to the importance of communication skills. They should attend courses, workshops, or seminars on communication skills. It is vital that this step be taken because these teachers will directly or indirectly channel their acquired knowledge to their students.

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