

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF a2 LEVEL LANGUAGE LEARNERS’ SPEECH COMPETENCE

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Annotation. The paper demonstrates that the phrase "speech competence" has not been given a widely accepted definition, particularly when it comes to preschoolers, based on a retrospective review of academic discourse spanning several decades. The authors' study has allowed them to identify the phenomenological features of the preschoolers' speech competence, viewing it as a dynamic, essential personal trait that shows up in their capacity and willingness to effectively listen, perceive and replicate information, participate in conversation, and express personal opinions. Participate in discussion and, in line with the age norm, voice personal thoughts and points of view orally.

Key words: Speech competence, speech proficiency, conversation, assessment, competence, metacognition, communicative competence

Speech and language are among the most important developmental stages for children. Our review of the literature reveals the quantity of articles addressing issues with preschoolers' speech proficiency. Six decades ago, R. White introduced the concept of competence into the scientific discourse of motivational psychology as a "motivational concept" in thinking about drive-reduction theory and psychoanalytic instinct theory[1;298]. Today, it is becoming more and more of a research topic in various fields, including educational science. In the 1960s, N. Chomsky introduced the technical term of linguistic competence in relation to language acquisition, distancing himself from the then-dominant behavioristic linguistics, which equated language with observable sound and sentence patterns[2;240]. Nearly ten years after the concept of competence was introduced in psychology. N. Gronlund refers to operational abilities (such as writing and reading skills) as “competence” when addressing competence-based assessments[3;530]. These ideas on competences as enlarged capacities all center on deliberate, conscious decision-making as opposed to routine actions. Since competent people are expected to reflect on their knowledge, abilities, and functioning, it appears that competencies involve metacognition. According to S. Mitchelmore and J. Rowley , there are two distinct definitions of competence in academic publications from the United States and Britain: competence in America and competence in Britain[4;92-111]. As stated by D. Moore et al, competence is the ability to exhibit certain

behaviors[5;314-319]. R. Boyatzis defines it as an underlying collection of human traits that enable excellent performance[6;288]. Despite its current widespread use in science, educational policy, and practice, the idea of competency has long been problematic due to its vagueness, which hinders academic communication and makes it impossible to assess research findings. Since N. Chomsky distinguished between competence and performance, competence has therefore become “one of the most controversial and confusing terms in the fields of linguistics and applied linguistics”[7;318].

Linguistic competence, grammatical competence, communicative competence, language competence, speech competence, and many more terminology related to speech itself are occasionally used interchangeably. All of these skills are undoubtedly interconnected, but additional clarification of their definitions is desperately needed in academic debate. N. Chomsky first proposed the idea in 1965, and it was centered on producing and understanding speech. Phrases that are grammatically correct in one context might not make sense in another, even yet grammatical understanding forms the basis for practical language use. There was pragmatic competence, or “knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use,” as well as “knowledge of form and meaning.” Competence, according to N. Chomsky, is “the speaker-hearer’s knowledge of the language.” [8;210]. It particularly refers to the body of linguistic knowledge that native speakers of a language possess, which allows users to 158 organized mistakes and ambiguities in sentences as well as generate an infinite number of grammatically correct words. Contrarily, performance describes a speaker’s actual speech, which often reflects their ability to use that information in a vague manner. But because his theory saw language as “a system of generative process” rather than “merely a systematic inventory of items,” N. Chomsky thought it was superior [9;240].

In other words , instead language production, whether spoken or written, is a dynamic and creative process rather than a static one.

Building on N. Chomsky’s difference between performance and competence, D. Hymes introduced the concept of communicative competence. D. Hymes defines communication competence as a set of abilities that allow an individual to assess if and to what degree something is “formally possible,” “feasible,” “appropriate,” and completed[10;269-293]. On the other hand, N. Chomsky’s idea of competence ignores the context and appropriateness of the utterances produced. According to R. Campbell and R. Wales , it is more important to produce comments that are “appropriate to the context in which they are made[11;242-260]. Therefore, people’s ability to communicate in a range of sociocultural circumstances and their grammatical understanding of how to make proper utterances are referred to as “communicative competence”. N. Chomsky defines competence from a cognitive and biological perspective, emphasizing an individual’s abstract knowledge system rather than their

physical ability or language use. To put it another way, according to N. Chomsky, competence is a mental state composed of systematic knowledge that generates and links various types of mental images. However, as G. Teachman and B. E. Gibson note, D. Hymes' communicative competence might be viewed as a blend of performance and competence because he integrated ability into his idea of competence, which is very different from N. Chomsky's original purpose. Because competency is more on usage and grammar knowledge than skill [15]. M. Canale and M. Swain expanded D. Hyme's notion of communicative competence and provided a theoretical framework in an attempt to “determine the feasibility and practicality of measuring” communication competence. M. Canale and M. Swain acknowledged that understanding language rules is part of communicative competence. In modern pedagogical language, the concept of “speech competence” is extensively employed[12;1-47]. However, this phrase is used in a variety of ways in the scientific literature, making its meaning ambiguous. According to M. Pentyluk, speech competence is a part of communicative competence, and is a human action that is carried out during speech activity and is targeted at understanding or producing a text (oral or written)[13;226-237]. He defines speech competence as “the ability to use knowledge in practice, to use linguistic units” and sees it as a fundamental idea within the framework of communicative competence, which he defines as “the ability to use a language depending on the situation, the particular quality of the speech personality acquired in the course of communication or specially 159organized learning”. A. Bogush defines speech competence as the ability to use a language appropriately and successfully in a particular context, as well as to use it for both linguistic and extra-linguistic[13;274]. Speech competence is defined by M. Hreb, N. Hrona, V. Chumak, O. Vyshnyk, and V. Hreb as “an integral quality of a person, manifested in the ability and willingness to use linguistic means, laws of their functioning for construction and understanding of speech utterances in accordance with the communicative purpose.” (facial expressions, gestures, and intonation) techniques of communicating speech [14;165-174]. “The ability to listen, perceive and reproduce information, read and understand a text, be engaged in discussions, persuade and defend their point of view, express their own opinions, points of view, in oral and written forms” is particularly relevant to the speech competency of elementary school pupils. As a result, academics acknowledge that competence is inextricably linked to knowledge and abilities, but they also view competence as a broader concept. Differentiating competence from knowledge enables us to determine that its existence should indicate a person's capacity rather than just their possession of certain facts to apply it to a certain task. The applicability of competence in solving diverse problems distinguishes it from skills. The ability of a person to unambiguously act in various situations, including non-standard ones, determines the difference between competence and skills. The

form, content, and usage of language are the three main components of language, according to L. Bloom and M. Lahey [15;535]. Phonology, morphology, and syntax are all components of language form. These linguistic domains are comparable in that they specify language's norms and structure. Language content refers to the area of semantics, or the meaning of words and the relationship of these words to one another. Language use describes the pragmatic and social components of language. In line with this, K. P. Zaitseva points out that the child's speech competence includes these five aspects: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics [16;77-79]. These five elements actively interact with one another, even though they are all described fairly independently. For example, as preschoolers' vocabulary expands, so does their capacity to form longer sentences. This interaction demonstrates the essential character of speech proficiency and necessitates the identification of the so-called meta-components in that competence, uniting its functional structure into wholeness.

To sum up, the overall conclusion is that there hasn't been a standard meaning for the word “speech competence” in educational discourse for a long time, particularly when it comes to A2 level language learners. By viewing the preschooler's linguistic competence as a dynamic, integrated human feature that is demonstrated in the capacity and motivation to successfully listen, perceive, and reproduce information, participate in dialogue, and orally express one's own thoughts and points of view in accordance with the age standard.

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