THE NEED TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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Communication is the life blood of all English language classes. It starts from the elementary level all throughout to tertiary education. The main reason English has been taught to students at an early age up until late stages is to ensure that they can communicate their thoughts and ideas properly and appropriately. This can simply be termed as communicative competence.

Communicative competence was a term made by Dell Hymes in 1966 as a response to the theory of linguistic competence that was proposed by Noam Chomsky in 1965. Dell Hymes argued that a child must not only be able to learn the rules of grammar to become good in language but also he or she needs to conform it to the norms of the society, meaning it has to be appropriate and acceptable. (Dell Hymes 1965 in Ralby 2011).

The British Council (BBC 2008), reports that communicative competence is the ability of a student to use the language successfully. There are four major factors: words and rules, appropriacy, cohesion and coherence, and use of communication strategies. (Canale and Swain 1980 in BBC 2008). These four factors are integrated and interplay together as one in the usage of the language so as to make communication effective.

To make it more specific, four components were derived: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. In a more detailed discussion, linguistic competence refers to the ability of a student to use grammar in producing language. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability of the student to conform language use to a socially acceptable manner. Discourse competence is when the student is able to use both oral and written modes of language in a more cohesive manner.
Lastly, strategic competence is the ability to detect error before and during language productions. It’s more like evaluating the language that is about to be used, being used or used. (Ralby 2011)

In the Philippine setting, language competency has been also one of the key concepts taught to students in the education curriculum. Sad to say, majority of students fail to develop communicative competence. In an opinion column of Philippine Daily Inquirer, it is said that only 8 to 10 out of 100 applicants can pass the English proficiency exam set by BPO industries. This has a direct implication on how students learn English as second language in the school levels. (Cabigon 2015)

In an effort to remedy this situation, the Philippines initiated the shift from basic education curriculum to K to 12 curriculum. This resulted in the changes of objectives and course offerings as well as the mode of delivery of lessons in the classrooms. Recently, learners’ modules were produced to help aid the students develop their competencies in all subject matters.

References:
