
Interaction competence in a communication event: A socio-linguistic perspective

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Abstract

A research on Interaction Competence (IC) – empirical or theoretical - invariably refers to Communicative Competence, since the referred interaction takes place in a 'communication event'. The present theoretical construct mainly draws upon the performance oriented perspective of communicative competence by Dell Hymes, as 'There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless'; the Functional approach to language by M Halliday that views functions as 'built in to Language as the fundamental principle of the linguistic system and the Speech Act Theory by J Austin and John Searle. It is universally agreed that Reciprocity or 'Performing together' is a seminal element of Interaction. The present paper tries to establish 'Interaction Competence is a complex of abilities utilized by the participants while performing together with least amount of friction in a communication event. It analytically presents four main clusters of abilities as components of IC, namely, 1. Linguistic Competence using linguistic systems; 2. Socio-Pragmatic Competence (managing the Speech acts, register, dialect variations); 3. Organizational Competence (organizing a cohesive, coherent conversation); 4. Strategic Competence (managing breakdowns, if any, during the process). A speech event is a 'co-construct as Young (2000) rightly states, 'The 'co-construct' is a cumulative result of harmonious working of some participant -specific factors (personality traits, mood, attitudes), inter- participant factors (roles, status, cooperative moves) and some participant -external factors (situational, social and cultural details of the event)'. The participants skilfully manage these factors with the above mentioned componential competencies.
