"Competence and Performance"

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Abstract: Competence is the knowledge of language or an idealized capacity that is located as a psychological or mental property or function, while performance is the errors and false made during utterances or it is the actual utterances.This piece of work examined and explained the difference between competence and performance as well as the different types of competence. It also revealed how important competence is for a second language leaner(s), and when to use it.The formal and actual way of measuring the competency of leaners is through the performance of students in classroom situation.

Keywords: competence, performance

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Chomsky (1965), a grammar is a model, that is to say, "it is a systematic description of those linguistic abilities of native speakers' use of language which enable them to speak and understand their language fluently". These linguistic abilities are referred to as competence of the native speaker of the language; it is also referred to as fluent use of native speaker's knowledge of the language. On the other hand, performance is what people actually say or understand by what someone else says on a given occasion. Competence is a speaker's-hearer's knowledge of his language while performance is the actual use of language in concrete situations.

Also, Chomsky (1965) is of the view that linguistic theory is concerned primarily with ideal speaker-hearer in completely homogenous speech community, who knows his language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distraction, shift of attention and interest and errors (random or characterized) in applying his knowledge in actual performance. Therefore, performance is a direct reflection of competence.

Furthermore, Chomsky's generative transformational grammar attempts to specify what the speaker actually knows, and not what he may report about his knowledge. Also, the grammar is not a model for speaker-hearer. It is an attempt to characterize in the most neutral possible terms the knowledge of the language that provides the basis for actual use of language by speaker-hearer.

Chomsky (1975) also asserts that the actual data of linguistic performance will determine the correctness of hypothesis about underlying linguistic structure along with introspective report by native speaker or the linguist who has learned his language. He also states that the aim of the transformational linguist is an attempt to specify the nature of language competence seen as a highly abstract set of organising principles which underlies the fact of language performance or actual use of language in specific situation.

Hughes (1988) refers to competence and performance as achievement and proficiency, while Ferdinand de Saussure, as quoted by Robins (1979), refers to as "Langue et parole" While "Parole" is the immediate accessible data, "Langue" is the language of each community; the lexicon, grammar and phonology implanted in the individual by his upbringing in the society, on the basis of which he speaks and understands his language. In other words, 'Langue' is said to be what the individual assimilates when he learns language: the phonic and grammatical systems which exist in the mind of each speaker. "Parole" on the other hand, is the executive side of language and involves both the combination by which the speaker uses the code of linguistic system in order to express his own thought in the act of "parole", the speaker selects and combines elements of the linguistic system and gives these form a concrete manifestation as phonic and meaning. However, these descriptions are as they relate to the native speaker of English.

Competence for Crystal (1985) is a person's knowledge of his language; "the system of rules" which he has mastered to enable him to produce and understand an indefinite number of sentences and recognize grammatical mistakes and ambiguities. He further states that, it is an idealized conception of the language which is seen to be in opposition to the notion of performance. Performance is referred to by Crystal (1985) as

language seen as set of a "specific utterances" produced by a native speaker as encountered in a corpus. Ruwet (1973) explains performance as the way in which the linguistic competence is put to work in concrete speech acts.

Apart from this, communicative competence is "our tacit cultural knowledge about how to use language in different situations, how to interact with different people engaged together in different speech event and how to use language to perform different acts" (Falsod& Connor 2006). In short, communicative competence is our knowledge of what, how, when, to whom and where to use language.

Cannale (1983) identified four types of communicative competence. They are grammatical competence, discourse competence, socio cultural competence and strategic competence. Taha and Reishaan (2008) also identify Communicative Competence,Grammatical Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence,Discourse Competence andStrategic Competence. These classification will be discussed indecently below:

Communicative Competence, there are lot of argument on this type of competence.Taha and Reishaan (2008) also discussed that Communicative Competence emphasizes on the skills of a native speaker on how utter and comprehend language appropriately rather than linguistic knowledge. It is more concern with contextual, setting and relationship of speaker and listener, while the other types concentrate on linguistic evidences.

Grammatical competence refers to the ability to recognize the lexical, morphological, syntactic and phonological features of a language and to make use of these features to interpret and form words and sentences that deal with correctness of a series of utterances, written words and phrases to form a text, that is a meaningful whole e.g. poem, telephone conversation or novel.Grammatical competence is all about native speaker's knowledge of grammar and mastery of language both written and verbal Taha and Reishaan (2000).

Sociolinguistic competence requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used: the roles of the participant, the information they share and function of the interaction. Sociolinguistic competence is concerned with appropriateness of utterances in relation to both societal and speaker's status in terms of values, norms, culture and objective Taha and Reishaan (2000).

Strategic competence on the other hand is the coping strategy that we use in unfamiliar contexts with constraints due to imperfect rules limiting factors in their application such as fatigue and distraction. The strategic competence is to improve the results from verbal linguistics. In other words is to amend the failure in communication.Taha and Reishaan (2000) suggested that there two necessary reasons for this competence and quoted "1. To compensate for problems in communication because of the limited development of the other areas of communicative competence. 2. To compensate for problems which are caused by limiting conditions, such as not being able to remember momentarily an idea or a grammatical form."They have concluded that when a speaker is making some utterances deliberate or undeliberate, spoken or written language in the problem found when translating utterances.

Discourse Competence according to Canale and Swain (1980) and Yoshida (2003) quoted in Taha and Reishaan (2000) is the combination grammar form and meaning to accomplish the targeted goal in both written and spoken language. It is the mastery of language by grammatical form and meaning in combine to maintain uniformity in texts. Discourse competence is all about cohesion and coherence in both written and spoken language.

Kishindo (2011) is of the view that "for one to communicate effectively, one has to use appropriate language coherently and in different context". Thus, the benchmark for measuring our students' knowledge in English is their ability to use language for communication in different situations.

From the above definitions, we can see that the difference between competence and performance is the identity between linguistic representation in the mind of the native speaker and their computations in a suitable situation. Loosely used, competence in this study refers to the total knowledge an English as a second language learner has about idiomatic expressions and how these interact with the grammatical structures to result in meaningful discourse. While performance refers to the knowledge of idiomatic expressions used in a realistic situations. Therefore, the difference between competence and performance is what the learner knows about the language and what he actually does with the knowledge of the language.

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