



TYPES OF COMPETENCIES IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING BULGARIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract: The report addresses the issue of the place and essential role of different types of competencies in the context of teaching Bulgarian language and literature at the primary stage of basic education. The exposition presents various theories regarding language acquisition and examines different types of competencies, with attention paid to the key ones. It emphasizes that competencies are also linked to a person's behavior - not isolated knowledge or skills in themselves, but those that are adequate for specific learning situations and necessary for achieving high results in particular educational activities or in a specific professional role. In this sense, the formation of competencies is related both to the accumulation of knowledge and to the development of certain skills and abilities in a person from early childhood, with a pursuit of knowledge and continuous personal improvement in a spiritual sense.

Keywords: competence, development, Bulgarian language and literature, skills, early school age.

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Introduction

The concept of competence has Latin origins and means "suitable, capable, knowledgeable (Latin adj. competens)". Competences can be defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours acquired in the learning process, and their formation is a long and complex process starting from early childhood and continuing throughout conscious life. Competence is most often associated with the ability or skill to accomplish something thanks to acquired knowledge, but this ability is not innate; it is formed and developed through quality learning in an appropriate educational environment and the accumulation of practical experience. Competences ensure a correlation between the personal, social and professional expression of the modern individual. They are also related to personal behaviour - not isolated knowledge or skills on their own, but those that are adequate to specific learning situations and necessary for achieving high results in a particular learning activity or in a specific professional role. In this sense, the formation of competencies is associated both with the accumulation of knowledge and with the development of certain skills and abilities in a person from an early age, with a pursuit of knowledge and continuous personal improvement in a spiritual sense.

Exposition

There are various theories about language acquisition. According to one of the most interesting and criticised, that of N. Chomsky, innate mechanisms play a crucial role in language learning. According to him, people are born with an innate language ability and the nervous system (the instrument for

acquiring language) not only allows understanding the structure of the language but also provides each individual with strategies and techniques for learning the main features of their native language [1]. Opposing this view are learning theorists, who argue that language acquisition is primarily and above all a matter of learning. In the mid-1960s, the concept of linguistic competence emerged in linguistics. Later, to denote the appropriateness of language in a specific communicative situation, the term communicative competence was also introduced.

The concept of communicative competence was introduced in specialised literature by the American scholar D. Hymes in connection with the discussions in the 1960s on the problems of formalised description in linguistics. In his concept, D. Hymes starts from the premise that in order to explain the role of sociocultural and linguistic variability in the communication process, the very act of speech communication as purposeful social interaction must be understood as a function of membership in a particular speech community, rather than merely as a result of grammatical competence. This competence, unlike N. Chomsky's linguistic competence, is not an innate ability. It is formed as a result of the individual's interaction with the social environment [2]. The concept developed by D. Hymes includes four parameters:

1. Grammatical correctness - this parameter corresponds to the conceptual content of the term "linguistic competence" used in generative theory.
2. Feasibility - mainly determined by certain psychological factors that influence the speech production process.
- 3.



Acceptability - the relationship of the utterance to the context or situation.

3. Frequency of occurrence - the likelihood of a particular language form being used [3]. In this way, D. Hymes expands the concept of "language competence." He enriches N. Chomsky's ideas by extending the notion of competence from "silent knowledge of grammar to speaking in general"
4. The author examines linguistic competence from the perspectives of structural anthropology and sociolinguistics.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, the conceptual content of the term "communicative competence" includes:

1. Language knowledge.
2. Socially communicative skills (sociolinguistic rules for socially acceptable speech activity, strategies for successfully achieving communicative goals, etc.).
3. Sociocultural knowledge [3].

The presented model of communicative competence by D. Hymes includes linguistic, psychophysical and social characteristics. This broad scope of communicative competence implies that not only the linguistic code and its referential meanings should be considered, but also what can be said, to whom, how the discourse should be constructed, and how it should be interpreted in various social situations. Communicative competence is also interpreted in a broader sense as a 'working set of communicative strategies inherent to an individual or a group of individuals'. This more pragmatic definition by E. V. Klyuev actually explains the need in school to develop certain communicative strategies and tactics that take into account the communicative goal, communicative experience and communicative intentions [4]. More specifically, the communicative competence of the participant in communication includes knowledge of rules for:

1. The appropriate choice of language variant or language in a given social context according to a specific communicative intention or goal;
2. Switching between variants or languages [5].

Communicative competence is also interpreted as competence corresponding to the social context [6]. This means that the focus is on its social status, on its sociolinguistic aspect. In 1984, John Raven provided a detailed interpretation of competences, identifying as many as 37 relatively independent competences, which he defined through various categories – readiness, ability, attitude, etc. [7]. Jan van Ek defines each of the competences [8]. Within the framework of general communicative competence, he distinguishes six types of competences, which have independent dimensions but are part of a whole, namely the communicative competence. As Jan van Ek calls them, they are 'different aspects of the same concept'. At the same time, each of them is connected to the others. Specifically, these are:

- Linguistic competence (language competence)
- Sociolinguistic competence
- Discourse competence
- Sociocultural competence
- Social competence
- Literary competence

The definitions of literary competence by McRae, and by Brumfit and Carter, are largely connected with the teaching of literature in

secondary school. We indicate the descriptors they use to describe literary competence (it is interesting for the Bulgarian experience how English-speaking specialists in the field of literary education present literary competence).

Descriptors of literary competence according to McRae [9]:

- The ability to make connections and intertextual references;
- The ability to quote and summarise constructively;
- The ability to balance arguments and reach conclusions;
- The ability to take a subjective position and relate it to objective criteria;
- The ability for contextualisation

Descriptors of literary competence according to Brumfit and Carter:

- The ability to understand the implicit and explicit meanings of words in a literary text;
- The ability to demonstrate knowledge by quoting and retelling;
- The ability to recognise the values and relationships expressed in a literary text;
- The ability to make comparisons between the literary text and the external framework of history and society;
- The ability to develop students' linguistic skills, creativity and sensitivity;
- The ability to recognise the different components of a literary text, i.e. the main themes, the plot and the connections between the main themes and the plot [10].

One of the most important roles of literary competence is the ability to assess the importance of creatively expressing ideas, feelings and experiences through the various means, methods and techniques of literature. As N. Ivanova also states: "The process of literary education contributes to the literary development of students, respectively to the formation of the ability to perceive and comprehend both literary and non-literary texts, popular science texts, and to create one's own text" [11]; [12].

A literarily educated person is a concept that encompasses a multitude of skills, knowledge and understanding of information, which children gradually need to accumulate and refine from an early age, throughout the entire educational process, and also throughout their conscious life. Literature education is far from being limited solely to the reception and interpretation of a specific literary work or to obtaining information about the life and work of a particular author - it is much more complex, requiring deep engagement, emotional involvement, insight and expression of one's own feelings, thoughts and subjective attitude towards the surrounding world. The family and social environment play an extremely significant role, because social knowledge in childhood includes an active form of learning, through which the child constructs their own knowledge and perception of the world, and although parents and peers are undoubtedly important factors, adolescents actively participate in their own socialisation gradually realizing who they are and how much they correspond to the social context of their family and friends [13].

In this sense, a literarily educated person experiences a continuous need to improve their spiritual qualities and requires constant contact with books, works, and various forms of creativity.

According to R. Yoveva: "A literarily educated person perceives literature as a specific art, is capable of comprehending and synthesising literary facts, phenomena, and the connections between them in a cultural context; interpreting artistic and non-artistic (myth, folklore) texts, guided by the presumption that they are incomplete in terms of their existence... A literarily educated person is capable of communication (creating oral and written texts) according to their own intentions and appropriately to communicative situations. A literarily educated person has a need to engage with myth, folklore, literature, and dialogue with the book. This goal (the formation of a literarily educated person) is attainable not within a single year or degree, but throughout the entire educational process" [14].

Sociolinguistic competence represents a scientific integration between linguistic and social competence. Regarding the nature of sociolinguistic competence, there are several opinions, which can be grouped as follows:

1. Sociolinguistic competence is an intermediate competence, arising from the scientific integration between linguistic and social competence, in order to consider intermediate phenomena such as the sociology of language.
2. Sociolinguistics is an autonomous scientific discipline with its own subject, methods, and problems.
3. Sociolinguistics is a linguistic discipline that more adequately reflects linguistic reality, because it overcomes the consideration of language as an invariant carried by an ideal speaker and perceived by an ideal listener [15].

Regarding sociocultural competence: this concept, defining sociolinguistic competence, emphasises the ability to use language in a way that is most appropriate with regard to the cultural norms and values of a particular society. This includes understanding and respecting cultural differences, traditions, and practices, as well as the ability to use language in a way that recognises and honours these differences. Sociocultural competence plays a role in shaping an individual's social and cultural values and identity, which in turn determine their actions in a specific social-professional domain. Developing sociocultural competence in the primary education system is an important part of the curriculum, designed in accordance with a holistic approach to human beings. This helps to ensure that vocational education and training institutions follow the mission of creating conditions for acquiring competencies that are satisfying the demand in the labour market and necessary for the successful integration of the individual into the professional and social environment [16].

As for critical sociolinguistic competence – it goes beyond the ability to use language in the most appropriate way in different social contexts and focuses on analysing how language can be used to perpetuate or challenge social inequalities in a society, as well as the possibility of using it in a way that promotes social justice.

In the 1990s, the concept of competence continued to be enriched and developed, and after 2000, many countries' educational practices began to speak of competence-oriented education. It is precisely this gradual incorporation of competences into various spheres and situations (social and communicative) that prevents them from being strictly and clearly classified and separated, and on the contrary - they should be viewed as a whole, as interconnected and arising from one another.

Key Competences

The formal beginning of the topic of key competences was marked in December 2006 with the adoption of the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union and of the European Parliament on a Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. This framework describes eight (groups of) key competences, with communication in the mother tongue being the first, followed by communication in a foreign language, basic skills in mathematics, science and technology, digital competences, learning skills, social and civic competences, initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and creativity, and cultural competences. These competences are defined as key because they are applicable to all ages and all forms of learning, make lifelong learning practical and possible, serve as a tool for measuring the quality of educational systems, provide a link to the labour market, and create opportunities for mobility. They ensure successful expression and good social status for people by improving their quality of life and, last but not least, reduce the risk of social exclusion.

According to Bl. Dimova, it is precisely in preschool educational institutions that the foundations for the formation of basic knowledge, skills, competencies, and value orientations are laid. These elements are decisive for the future citizen's attitude towards themselves, towards others, and towards the global world. In this context, she considers early childhood as a critical period for building social sensitivity, cultural awareness, and responsibility for sustainable development [17].

Each of the eight key competences highlights learning aimed primarily at achieving results, focusing on the application of knowledge in real-life situations, thus taking education beyond its traditional subject-oriented framework and emphasising the development of key competences integrated across all subjects. As A. Abner notes, the formation of key competences is most effective when learning occurs in a culturally and emotionally rich environment. In his "PlayLearn" model, he demonstrates that "language acquisition is not achieved through pressure or rote memorisation, but through a play-educational approach in which the library, cultural environment and interactive technology function as mutually complementary educational factors" [18]

Conclusion

According to the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 22 May 2018, the key competences have been updated, but the understanding of them as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes remains unchanged, as does their number. A stronger emphasis is placed on basic skills (literacy in reading, foreign languages, basic digital skills, and transferable skills), improving skills in mathematics, science, technology, etc. [19]. As a result, the Revised Recommendation identifies the following eight (groups of) key competences:

- Linguistic literacy, mainly related to communication competences in the native language and focused on reading literacy
- Communicative competence, partly overlapping with linguistic competence in terms of communication skills but focused on foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and competence in the fields of science, technology and engineering
- Digital competence

- Personal, social and learning competence
- Civic competence
- Entrepreneurial competence
- Competence for cultural awareness and expression

All key competences are considered equally important, overlap, are interconnected and are acquired integratively through education in all subjects [19].

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