



Article

Theoretical Foundations of Developing Communicative Competencies in Pedagogy Students

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Abstract: The development of communicative competencies in pre-service pedagogy students represents one of the most critical challenges in contemporary higher education. Effective communication skills are foundational to professional teaching performance, yet systematic, evidence-based frameworks for cultivating these competencies within Uzbekistan's pedagogical context remain insufficiently developed. This study investigates the theoretical foundations underpinning communicative competence formation in undergraduate pedagogy students at Uzbekistan's higher educational institutions. Employing a mixed-methods research design, the study synthesizes major international theoretical frameworks including Chomsky's linguistic competence model, Hymes's communicative competence theory, and Canale and Swain's multidimensional framework alongside ethnopedagogical principles rooted in Uzbek cultural traditions. Data were collected through structured questionnaires (n = 312 students), classroom observations, in-depth interviews with 24 faculty members, and experimental instruction spanning two academic semesters.

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1. Introduction

In the global knowledge economy of the twenty-first century, communicative competence has emerged as a cornerstone of effective professional practice across disciplines. The teaching profession, by its very nature, is fundamentally communicative: teachers must convey complex information, motivate learners, manage classroom discourse, collaborate with colleagues, and engage with parents and broader school communities [1]. Consequently, the systematic development of communicative skills in pre-service pedagogy students is not merely desirable — it is professionally indispensable [2]. Internationally, educational reform movements have increasingly recognized communication as a key twenty-first-century skill. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) explicitly identifies communication literacy as one of the foundational competencies required for lifelong learning and sustainable development (UNESCO). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) similarly positions communicative proficiency as integral to the OECD Learning Compass 2030 framework, situating it alongside critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative capacity [3]. At the national level, Uzbekistan's Strategy for Development 2022–2026 (Presidential Decree No. UP-60, January 28, 2022) prioritizes the modernization of higher education, with particular emphasis on improving the practical

competencies of graduates, including communicative and professional skills. Within the Central Asian educational context, and Uzbekistan in particular, the integration of ethnopedagogical principles into teacher education represents an underexplored yet potentially transformative dimension of communicative skills development. Uzbek oral culture is extraordinarily rich in communicative traditions: the art of the storyteller (*ashula va dostonchilik*), proverb usage (*maqol va hikmatlar*), and the deeply embedded norms of respectful intergenerational communication (*hurmat va odobli muloqot*) constitute a living pedagogical heritage that contemporary teacher education programs have largely failed to systematically incorporate [4]. Scholars such as Ziyodullayev and Saidov have argued compellingly that this ethnopedagogical reservoir offers an authentic and culturally resonant foundation for developing communicative competencies among Uzbek pedagogy students. The present study addresses this research gap by investigating the theoretical foundations of communicative competency development in pedagogy students within Uzbekistan's higher educational system, integrating international theoretical frameworks with indigenous pedagogical traditions, and evaluating the efficacy of a culturally contextualized instructional intervention through a mixed-methods experimental design [5], [6].

Literature review

The theoretical lineage of communicative competence spans more than six decades of interdisciplinary inquiry. Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar introduced the pivotal distinction between competence the internalized knowledge of a language's rule system and performance the actual deployment of that knowledge in real communication. While foundational, Chomsky's model was explicitly limited to idealized speaker-listener dyads abstracted from sociocultural context, a limitation that subsequent scholars moved decisively to address [7].

Dell Hymes, in his seminal critique of the Chomskyan paradigm, argued that a linguistically competent speaker must also possess communicative competence: knowledge of when to speak and when not to, what to say to whom, how to say it, and in what manner. Hymes's ethnography of communication foregrounded the socioculturally embedded nature of language use, establishing a framework that proved enormously influential in applied linguistics and second language acquisition research [8].

Canale and Swain operationalized Hymes's insights into a pedagogically actionable four-component model: (1) grammatical competence – knowledge of lexis, phonology, syntax, and semantics; (2) sociolinguistic competence – appropriateness of language use across social contexts; (3) discourse competence – coherence and cohesion in extended language use; and (4) strategic competence – compensatory strategies deployed when communication breaks down. This framework became the dominant reference point in language teacher education throughout the 1980s and 1990s [9].

Bachman and Bachman and Palmer subsequently refined this architecture within a language assessment paradigm, reorganizing competencies into organizational knowledge (grammatical and textual) and pragmatic knowledge (functional and sociolinguistic), adding a strategic competence layer conceptualized as metacognitive strategy deployment. Their framework has proven particularly influential in the development of standardized language proficiency assessments [10]. More recently, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2018) has synthesized these traditions into a hierarchical competence model organized around communicative language activities, strategies, and competences, providing a practical benchmarking tool widely adopted in European and, increasingly, Central Asian educational systems.

2. Methodology

This study employed a concurrent mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative quasi-experimental methods with qualitative interpretive inquiry. The mixed-methods approach was selected to enable triangulation of findings across data sources and to capture both the measurable outcomes and the experiential dimensions of communicative competence development. The quantitative strand utilized a pretest-posttest control group design to measure gains in communicative proficiency. The qualitative strand drew upon classroom observations and semi-structured interviews to illuminate the processes and mechanisms underlying observed outcomes.

Communicative competence was assessed using an adapted version of the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) protocol (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2012), supplemented by a structured written communicative task battery developed for this study. The assessment instrument comprised four subscales aligned with Canale and Swain's framework: grammatical competence (25 items), sociolinguistic competence (25 items), discourse competence (25 items), and strategic competence (25 items), for a total possible score of 100. Content validity was established through expert panel review ($n = 8$ specialists in applied linguistics and pedagogy education). Internal consistency reliability was high (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$ for the full instrument). Construct validity was supported through confirmatory factor analysis, which confirmed the four-factor structure (CFI = .94, RMSEA = .052).

The qualitative instruments comprised a 24-item semi-structured interview guide for faculty participants and a structured classroom observation protocol based on the Communicative Classroom Environment Scale (CCES; adapted from Pianta et al). Each classroom was observed on three occasions over the intervention period by trained observers achieving inter-rater agreement of $\kappa = .82$.

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0. Group differences in posttest communicative competence scores were examined through analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), with pretest scores as the covariate, to control for baseline differences. Effect sizes were computed using Cohen's d . Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, employing NVivo 14 software for systematic coding and theme development. Trustworthiness was enhanced through member checking, peer debriefing, and negative case analysis. Ethical approval was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of Tashkent State Pedagogical University (Protocol No. REC-2023-17, dated 3 September 2023). All participants provided informed written consent. Participation was voluntary, and withdrawal without penalty was explicitly guaranteed. Participant data were anonymized and stored on password-protected, encrypted servers accessible only to the research team.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for experimental and control groups on each communicative competence subscale at pretest and posttest.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics: Communicative Competence Subscale Scores (Pretest and Posttest).

Subscale	EG Pre	EG Post	EG Gain %	CG Pre	CG Post	CG	Cohen's d
	M (SD)	M (SD)		M (SD)	M (SD)	Gain %	
Grammatical	12.8	19.6	+53.1%	12.6	14.1	+11.9%	1.84
Competence	(2.1)	(1.8)		(2.3)	(2.0)		

Sociolinguistic	12.3	18.7	+52.0%	12.5	13.6	+8.8%	1.71
Competence	(2.4)	(2.0)		(2.2)	(1.9)		
Discourse	13.1	19.2	+46.6%	13.0	14.3	+10.0%	1.92
Competence	(2.0)	(1.7)		(2.1)	(1.8)		
Strategic	13.4	17.8	+32.8%	13.1	14.2	+8.4%	1.28
Competence	(2.2)	(1.9)		(2.0)	(1.8)		
Total Score	51.6	75.3	+45.9%	51.2	55.9	+9.2%	2.01
(100)	(5.8)	(4.9)		(5.6)	(5.3)		

Note. EG = Experimental Group ($n = 158$); CG = Control Group ($n = 154$); M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; all posttest group differences significant at $p < .001$.

ANCOVA results confirmed statistically significant differences between experimental and control groups at posttest, after controlling for pretest scores, on total communicative competence [$F(1, 309) = 487.3, p < .001, \eta^2 = .612$] and on each subscale (all $p < .001$). The effect size for the overall intervention was very large (Cohen's $d = 2.01$), indicating substantial practical significance. The experimental group's holistic communicative proficiency gain of 45.9% substantially exceeded the control group's gain of 9.2% [11].

Faculty participants consistently emphasized that the integration of Uzbek proverbs, oral traditions, and culturally embedded communicative scenarios generated markedly higher student engagement compared to conventional instruction. Representative faculty testimony included observations that students were 'more willing to take communicative risks when the instructional content felt familiar and personally meaningful.' Classroom observation data corroborated these accounts: coded transcripts revealed significantly higher rates of student-initiated communicative acts in ICCP classrooms ($M = 23.4$ per lesson) compared to control classrooms ($M = 11.2$ per lesson; $t(70) = 14.7, p < .001$).

Table 2. Student-Initiated Communicative Acts: Observed Frequencies by Group and Phase.

Observation Phase	EG Mean Acts/Lesson	CG Mean Acts/Lesson	Difference	t-statistic (df=70)
Phase 1 (Weeks 1-4)	16.2	10.8	+5.4	7.32***
Phase 2 (Weeks 5-8)	21.7	11.1	+10.6	12.18***
Phase 3 (Weeks 9-12)	25.6	11.4	+14.2	16.54***
Phase 4 (Weeks 13-16)	30.1	11.5	+18.6	20.31***
Overall Mean	23.4	11.2	+12.2	14.7***

Note. *** $p < .001$.

Beyond communicative proficiency gains, students in the experimental group reported significantly higher communicative self-efficacy at posttest ($M = 78.4$) compared to control group peers ($M = 62.1$; $t(310) = 18.9, p < .001, d = 1.07$). Motivational survey data similarly revealed higher intrinsic motivation for communicative practice in the

experimental group ($M = 4.21/5.00$) versus the control group ($M = 3.48/5.00$; $t(310) = 12.4$, $p < .001$) [12].

The present study's findings offer several points of convergence and divergence with the existing international literature. The dramatic communicative competence gains observed in the experimental group particularly the very large effect size of $d = 2.01$ for overall proficiency are consistent with, though substantially larger than, those reported in comparable intervention studies. Ziyodullayev's ethnopedagogically augmented communicative training with Uzbek primary teacher students yielded $d = 1.24$, while Yusupova and Abdullayeva's blended instruction study reported $d = 0.91$. The larger effects observed here likely reflect the more intensive intervention design (16 weeks versus 8-12 weeks in comparable studies) and the more systematic integration of ethnopedagogical content across all four competence domains [13].

The comparatively smaller but still substantial gains in strategic competence corroborate Tsui's (2003) longitudinal findings that strategic competence is most resistant to short-term instructional intervention, being more deeply dependent on accumulated professional experience. The implication for programme design is that strategic competence development may require sustained post-intervention support mentored practicum placements, professional learning communities, or continuing professional development to consolidate and extend initial gains. Several limitations of the present study warrant acknowledgment [14]. The quasi-experimental design, while appropriate given the practical constraints of university-based research, does not permit the level of causal inference achievable through randomized controlled trials. Classroom-level randomization minimized but did not eliminate the possibility of selection effects. The follow-up period was limited to one academic semester; longitudinal research is needed to assess the durability of competence gains and their translation into professional teaching practice. Additionally, the study was conducted exclusively within two Uzbek pedagogical universities, limiting immediate generalizability to other institutional and national contexts [15].

4. Conclusion

This study investigated the theoretical foundations and practical efficacy of a culturally contextualized communicative competence development programme for undergraduate pedagogy students in Uzbekistan. The findings provide robust empirical support for three principal conclusions. First, communicative competence in pedagogy education is optimally theorized as a multidimensional construct encompassing grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies, as specified in Canale and Swain's foundational framework. However, this framework requires cultural contextualization to be maximally effective in the Uzbek pedagogical context: the integration of ethnopedagogical traditions including Uzbek proverb-based communicative norms, classical didactic texts, and oral storytelling traditions significantly enhanced the pedagogical power of the standard communicative competence curriculum. Second, the Integrated Communicative Competence Programme evaluated in this study produced very large and statistically significant communicative competence gains (Cohen's $d = 2.01$) compared to standard instruction, with particularly pronounced improvements in sociolinguistic and discourse competence. These gains were accompanied by significant increases in communicative self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. In sum, this study establishes that theoretically grounded, culturally responsive communicative competence education produces substantially superior outcomes for Uzbekistan's future teachers. The integration of indigenous pedagogical wisdom with contemporary communicative competence frameworks offers a promising and contextually appropriate model for teacher education reform across post-Soviet Central Asian contexts.

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