# THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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# Introduction

- Communicative competence is a linguistic term which refers to a learner's ability for a second language. It does not refer only to a learner's ability to apply and use grammatical rules, but also to form correct utterances, and know how to use these utterances appropriately.

- Linguistic and intercultural competences do not exist in parallel and are not interchangeable. In some cases, there can be high level of foreign language communicative competence, but not very well-developed intercultural competence. However, in order to achieve successful intercultural communication and to use intercultural competence, it is very important that linguistic competence exists.

# Using language

- Learning a new language does not just mean learning vocabulary and grammar
- You must learn how to use the language properly in different situations
- You must understand intended meanings and symbolism
- You must be able to negotiate issues as you speak

# Language Competence

- **Linguistic Competence**: defined in 1965 by Noam Chomsky
- This term describes a speaker's ability to produce and recognize grammatically correct phrases
- This stresses <u>grammatically correct</u> phrases, and not context
- Many anthropologists do not like this idea because it is so narrow

# Language Competence

- Someone who is linguistically competent should know how to put verbs with pronouns correctly, but does just knowing this grammar mean you really *know* the language?

- What about in languages that have formal and informal options?

# Language Competence

- Language varies from speaker to speaker and from situation to situation
- Words can mean different things, or their meanings can change over time
- Slang: "bad" can mean good or bad; same thing with "sick"
- Example: "odd"

# Language Competence

- Someone who is linguistically competent should know how to put verbs with pronouns correctly, but does just knowing this grammar mean you really *know* the language?

- What about in languages that have formal and informal options?
  - You versus you (in English and in Macedonian is rather different)

- Therefore, you need more than just linguistic competence…

# Grammatical and discourse competence

- Grammatical competence (includes the knowledge of lexical items, rules of morphology, syntax, grammar, semantics and phonology – words and rules). Linguistic competence asks: What words do I use? How do I put them into phrases and sentences?

- Discourse competence (i.e. the ability to connect sentences and stretches of discourse in order to for a meaningful series of utterances – cohesion and coherence). Discourse competence asks: How are words, phrases and sentences put together to create conversations, speeches, email messages, newspaper articles?

# Sociolinguistic and strategic competence

- Sociolinguistic competence ( the knowledge of sociocultural rules of language – appropriateness) i.e knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately, given the setting, the topic, and the relationships among the people communicating. Sociolinguistic competence asks: Which words and phrases fit this setting and this topic? How can I express a specific attitude (courtesy, authority, friendliness, respect) when I need to? How do I know what attitude another person is expressing?

- Strategic competence (appropriate use of communication strategies or as some theoreticians conveyed it – the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be turned to an action in order to compensate for inappropriate communication due to insufficient competence. Strategic competence asks: How do I know when I've misunderstood or when someone has misunderstood me? What do I say then? How can I express my ideas if I don't know the name of something or the right verb form to use?

# Communicative Competence



- **Communicative competence**: defined in 1966 by Dell Hymes
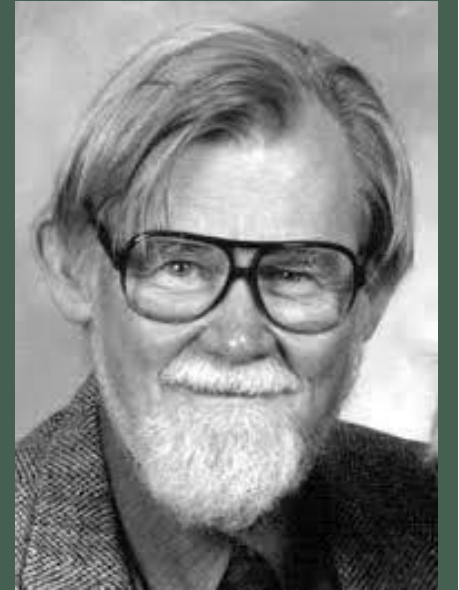
# Communicative Competence

- **Communicative competence**: defined in 1966 by Dell Hymes
- This term refers to the way people use language in real situations
- It does beyond definitions and grammar to see how well a person can speak a language in a variety of social situations
  - Includes understanding of:
    - Status
    - Power
    - Ideologies

# Intercultural competence

- Intercultural communication has been an important issue since 1959, when Edward T. Hall introduced this term in his book The Silent Language. This book is sometimes called "the field's founding document". He was one of the first researchers to differentiate cultures on the basis of how communications are sent and received and managed to define intercultural communication as communication between persons of different cultures. Within the books of this field, intercultural communication competence is almost synonymous with communicative competence but gives emphasis of the cultural context (Chen & Starosta, 1996).

# Communication and competence

- "Communication is defined as the exchange of meaning" (Gibson, 9). It involves sending and receiving information between a sender and receiver. Intercultural communication takes place when the sender and the receiver are from different cultures.

- Communicative competence's concept was introduced by Hymes who argued that "linguists wishing to understand the first language acquisition need to pay attention to the way in which not only grammatical competence but also the ability to use language appropriately is acquired" (Byram, p.7).

- However, he puts emphasis on the sociolinguistic competence and this was essential for the development of communicative language teaching. Sociolinguistic competence is the awareness of ways in which the choice of language forms is determined by such conditions as setting, relationship between communication partners, communicative intention, etc. and covers the relation between linguistic signals and their contextual situation meaning (Ek, p.41).
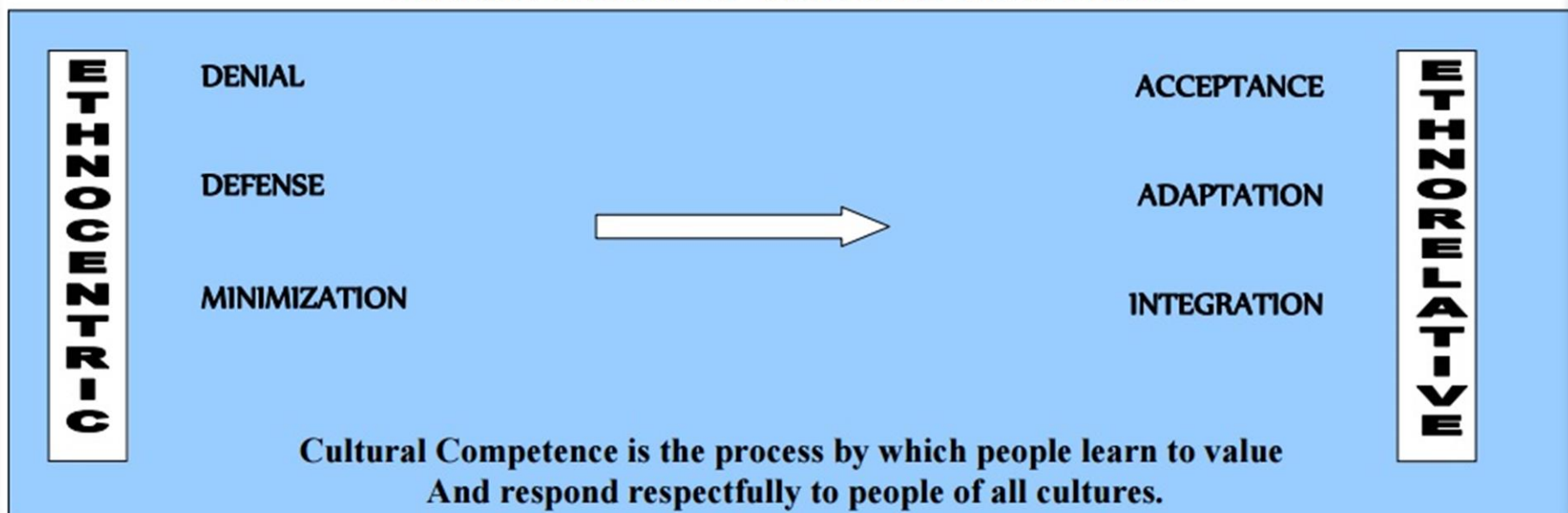
# Icc Concepts

- **Intercultural communication competence (ICC) has also been conceptualized in different ways depending on the scholars' theoretical orientations and perceptions of what counts as competence Byram's (1997) model of ICC, which is designed for the language classroom defined ICC in terms of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence.**

# Why is ICC a needed component in teaching/learning any foreign language?

- **It is crucial for teachers to develop intercultural communication competence which has two prerequisites :**

- intercultural communication awareness

- intercultural communication sensitivity

- **According to Bennett's model (Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity) individuals with intercultural sensitivity tend to transform themselves from the ethnocentric stage to the ethno-relative stage. The model includes 6 stages** ➡

# BENNETT MODEL OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY

**ETHNOCENTRIC**

DENIAL

DEFENSE

MINIMIZATION

➡

ACCEPTANCE

ADAPTATION

INTEGRATION

**ETHNORELATIVE**

**Cultural Competence is the process by which people learn to value
And respond respectfully to people of all cultures.**

## STAGES OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

DENIAL: Unaware of the existence of cultural differences.

DEFENSE: Acknowledge cultural differences but feel threatened by them. Methods used to defend against uncomfortable feelings are:
 *Denigration*     *Superiority*     *Reversal*

MINIMIZATION: Minimize cultural differences in order to protect one's own cultural identity.

ACCEPTANCE: Recognize and value cultural differences without judging them as positive or negative.

ADAPTATION: Adapt cognitively and behaviorally to cultural differences; Operate successfully within another culture.

INTEGRATION: Interact comfortably with a variety of cultures; Integration of cultural awareness into everyday interactions.

Bennett, M.J. (1993). Towards Ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R.M. Paige (Ed.) *Education for the intercultural experience*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

# Aims of ICC in learning/teaching foreign languages

➢ The ultimate goal of an IC approach is not so much 'native speaker competence' but rather intercultural communicative competence and this includes the ability to understand the language and behavior of the target community and explain it to members of the 'home' community.

➢ IC approach – trains learners to be diplomats i.e. able to view different cultures from a perspective of INFORMED UNDERSTANDING and this aim displaces the long-standing objective of ELT – to attain 'native speaker proficiency'!

➢"Intercultural competence is a powerful tool in the fight against intolerance, xenophobia and ethnocentrism" (Mrnjaus, p.11)

# CONCLUSION



Learning the language without the cultural dimension takes certain risks such as relying on stereotypes. It has been widely recognized in the language teaching profession that learners need not just knowledge and skill in the grammar of a language but also the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate ways combining both communicative and intercultural competence.