

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE OF
FUTURE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS THROUGH
COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES

Abdunazarova Lola Mamanjon qizi

Samarkand state institute of foreign languages

Faculty of foreign language and literature

ABSTRACT

Sociolinguistic competence is an integral part of communicative competence which includes learning pragmatic and sociolinguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge about how to use language linguistically and socially appropriately. However, recent studies highlight to activate such communicative skills among future EFL teachers regardless of their proficiency level of linguistic knowledge. This article discusses the ways of developing sociolinguistic competence of future English teachers through computer technologies.

Keywords: Sociolinguistic competence, communicative competence, socio-cultural competence, future English teachers

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Declaration on “higher education of the 21st century” in 1998, [1, www.unesco.org] and the document of UNESCO “reform and development of higher education” in 1995 [2, unesdoc.unesco.org], play an important role in improving the quality of higher education all over the world. According to these documents, a special attention is paid to the reform of higher education on the basis of qualification requirements of the Council of Europe "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching and evaluation" (CEFR) [3, www.coe.int/lang-CEFR], adaptation of the quality of education to international standards, advanced methods of teaching education, preparation of future specialists of foreign languages using modern innovative teaching and learning technologies. In this regard, the new reforms are being carried out in the field of education in our country have marked a new era in the teaching of foreign languages. Within the framework of the law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "on education"[4, lex.uz] and the national program of personnel training [5, lex.uz] and the state standards for the system of continuous education on foreign languages were developed based on the requirements of the CEFR in our country. The requirements for the language level of all graduates of higher education were established. According to these, the crucial tasks as “training modern personnel who knows several foreign languages in our country, conducting scientific works on foreign languages, improving the methodology of Language Teaching” are highlighted by our president Sh.Mirziyoyev [6, www.uza.uz].

Hence, modern curriculum PreSETT [7, www.britishcouncil.uz] is aimed at teaching and learning competence development. While studying English as a foreign language at university, the students acquire knowledge, communicative skills, and transferable skills towards developing language competences, at the same time they learn new values, beliefs, behavior patterns and broaden world outlook, develop intellectual abilities and tolerance as well. Learners who study a foreign language have to master a number of competences: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. Sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences envelop discourse, socio-cultural, strategic and social competences which are interrelated between each other.

A number of researches have been done on the issue of the process of forming of sociolinguistic competence of English teachers which will help to reveal the essence of developing sociolinguistic competence of future English teachers through innovative computer technologies in this article.

Materials and Methods

The need of promoting sociolinguistic competence in foreign language learners becomes more evident when they use English for actual communication in real life is stressed by Kramsch [8, p.98: 296–311]. According to Yu, “learners have to internalize sociolinguistic rules to assist in the choice of appropriate forms”[9, p.1-24]. The ability to use English in various appropriate social settings where communication takes place is called *Sociolinguistic competence*. There are several factors to be considered when communicating such as age, gender, social status of the participants and the formality of the setting. Specifically, sociolinguistic competence can be divided into two areas: appropriateness of form and appropriateness of meaning. Leech [10, p.319] defines that appropriateness of form is in pragmatics which signals “the particular resources that a given language provides conveying particular illocutions” and Kasper and Blum-Kulka [11, p.203] define that appropriateness of meaning is socio-pragmatics which express the ways in pragmatic performance that is subject to specific socio-cultural conventions and values. Yu argues that the misunderstandings which non-native speakers come across in the cross-cultural realization of communicative acts as the failure in appropriate use of pragmalinguistics and socio-pragmatic competence. Sociolinguistic competence requires acquiring knowledge of using a language use as a means of communication in a way that should not bother one another. Issues on the development of sociolinguistic competence of and key skills for its formation were analyzed in the works of Russian, Uzbek and foreign scholars such as N. A. Belenyuk, V. I. Belikov, N. J. Dagbaeva, S. R. Dortman, V. I. Zaharova, L. F. Zueva, L. P. Krisin, E. S. Nechaeva, D. F. Nurmuxamedova, M. F. Ovchinnikova, L. P. Pavlova, A. A. Tadjibaeva, F. B. Hubieva, F. I. Sharkov, A. D. Shveytser, K. D. Riskulova, A.E.Rakhimova and others. As the consequence, these scholars assume the following

stages for the development of sociolinguistic competence of future English teachers: - acquaintance with the sociolinguistic environment of the studied language;

-acquirement of sociolinguistic competence in educational conditions; - acquirement of sociolinguistic competence in real conditions;

There is no use to convince teachers and students in the importance of information technology in the period of modernization of education. In the development of sociolinguistic competence of future English teachers in higher educational institutions, books, listening materials, videos and any authentic materials that reflect the culture of the target language community is available to be implemented in the classroom and independent study of forming of sociolinguistic competence. Currently, students have more opportunities of using computer classes, multimedia educational software, global information network of internet and distance learning courses. “Computer technologies act as innovative interactive learning tools to develop the ability to visualize the phenomena, dynamically represent the process of explaining, to handle significant amounts of educational information, contribute to the dynamics of learning process, turn the lesson into a colorful interactive activity”[12,p.45]. In connection with the issues of application computer and information technologies in the process of the development of sociolinguistic competence of and the role of the development of necessary key competences of future English teachers is explored in the recent dissertation work of Uzbek scholar K. D. Riskulova [13, 61pages]. In this research, she created the methodological guidelines (system) of forming sociolinguistic competence of future English teachers.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

The important features of using computer technologies in the educational process of learning and teaching of foreign languages is to create more variation in the classroom which leads to increasing motivation and better conditions to learn authentic and up-to-date materials in the target language. The use of ICT in the classroom can be realized in the following forms: the use of computer presentations; the use of interactive whiteboard; work with educational multimedia CDs programs; study open distance learning courses where the students from all over the world can interact with each other through emails, online calls or in a chat room. Despite what the means of communication chosen, ICT helps to develop sociolinguistic competence through independent study as well.

The crucial tasks of EFL teachers are to strengthen modern teaching techniques such as cooperative learning, project methodology, the use of new information technologies and Internet resources which help to implement a student-centered approach to learning, to provide individualization and differentiation of teaching taking into account the abilities of students. Due to the implementation of the ICT in education, UNESCO, Microsoft and Intel have created the” UNESCO ICT

COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHERS” in 2015 [14, www.unesco.org], which gives clear directions to teachers on how to become more effective facilitators in the ICT-based lessons and how to create blogs and use online platforms where all students can share their projects and as well, exchange information and post notes with their group mates.

There is a wide range of free educational software applications and platforms, free online courses that make English learning resources more accessible and they promote more personalized and meaningful learning for students, along with a healthy dose of classroom collaboration. For example: educational platforms: Google Drive, Edmodo, Kahoot...; free online distance learning courses: MOOC, Future Learn, Canvas and etc. These tools can be used to enhance and facilitate deeper and more authentic learning which can solve a series of didactic problems:

- developing English language skills by using materials of the global network
- increasing students’ motivation to learn English
- improving students’ communicative competence
- developing students’ sociolinguistic competence

CONCLUSION

To conclude briefly, the use of innovative information technologies and Internet resources help to implement a student-centered approach to learning and to promote independent study towards the development of sociolinguistic competence of future English teachers.

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