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THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE MODELS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR EFL TEACHING IN UZBEKISTAN: FROM CANALE AND SWAIN TO BACHMAN

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Abstract

This article traces how the concept of communicative competence developed from Hymes's sociolinguistic critique of Chomsky to the componential models of Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983) and Bachman (1990), and examines what these models mean for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Uzbekistan. The study uses a qualitative comparative-analytical review of foundational theoretical works, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and its 2020 Companion Volume, and the national regulatory documents that introduced CEFR-aligned standards in Uzbekistan. The results show that the models differ mainly in how they organise knowledge (grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic) and in how they treat strategic competence: as a compensatory skill in Canale and Swain, and as a central metacognitive capacity in Bachman. The comparison indicates that Uzbek EFL classrooms, historically shaped by grammar-translation practice, tend to develop grammatical competence more than discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competence. The article proposes a component-based framework for lesson design and assessment in which each competence is linked to concrete classroom tasks and CEFR descriptors. The framework also serves as a theoretical basis for evaluating digital and artificial intelligence (AI) tools in later stages of research.

Keywords: communicative competence; Canale and Swain; Bachman; communicative language ability; strategic competence; CEFR; EFL; Uzbekistan.

Introduction

Over the past decade, English language teaching in Uzbekistan has moved from a knowledge-centred tradition towards a competence-based paradigm. The turning point was Presidential Decree No. PQ-1875 of 10 December 2012, "On measures to further improve the system of learning foreign languages", which introduced foreign language instruction from the first grade and required the use of modern communicative methods. In 2013, the Cabinet of Ministers approved state educational standards for foreign languages aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), setting target levels from A1 in primary school to C1 for language majors. Presidential Resolution No. PQ-5117 of 19 May 2021 further expanded this policy by encouraging the popularisation of foreign languages and strengthening teacher certification.

These reforms share one central goal: learners should be able to use English for real communication, not only reproduce grammatical rules. In applied linguistics, this goal is expressed by the concept of **communicative competence**. However, the term is often used in Uzbek methodological literature and teacher training without a clear explanation of which model it refers to and which components it includes. As a result, teachers may declare a communicative aim while continuing to assess mainly grammatical accuracy and vocabulary recall. Hasanova (2007) described this tension between declared reform and grammar-translation practice in Uzbek classrooms, and the gap between policy and practice remains an important research problem.

The concept itself has a long history. Chomsky (1965) distinguished linguistic *competence* (an ideal speaker's knowledge of grammar) from *performance*. Hymes (1972) argued that this view ignored the social rules of language

use and proposed "communicative competence" as knowledge of both grammar and appropriateness. Canale and Swain (1980) turned this idea into a model for second language teaching and testing, which Canale (1983) later extended. Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996) then developed the more detailed model of communicative language ability (CLA), which strongly influenced language testing and the CEFR.

The **aim** of this article is to compare these models systematically and to show how their components can be applied in EFL teaching in Uzbekistan. The study addresses three research questions:

1. How did the components of communicative competence change from Canale and Swain (1980) to Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996)?
2. What are the main theoretical differences between the models, especially regarding strategic competence?
3. How can these models guide lesson design and assessment in CEFR-aligned EFL instruction in Uzbekistan?

The article also forms the theoretical foundation of a broader study on AI-based pedagogical approaches: before digital tools can be judged as effective, it must be clear which component of communicative competence they are expected to develop.

Methods

The study employs a **qualitative comparative-analytical review**, a type of integrative literature review recommended when the goal is to critically synthesise theoretical frameworks rather than to aggregate statistical effects (Snyder, 2019).

1. Corpus of sources. Sources were selected in three groups:

• *Foundational theoretical works:* Chomsky (1965), Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Savignon (1983), Bachman (1990), Bachman and Palmer (1996), Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995) and Celce-Murcia (2007).

• *Framework documents:* the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) and the CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020).

• *National documents and studies on Uzbekistan:* PQ-1875 (2012), the CEFR-aligned state educational standards (2013), PQ-5117 (2021), and research on English teaching in Uzbekistan (Hasanova, 2007; Jalolov, 2012).

2. Inclusion criteria. A source was included if it (a) proposed or critically revised a model of communicative competence, (b) was widely cited in applied linguistics or language testing, or (c) regulated or described EFL teaching in Uzbekistan.

2.3. Analytical procedure. The analysis was carried out in four steps:

1. *Extraction* — the components and sub-components of each model were identified and defined.
2. *Comparison* — the models were compared on five criteria: number of components, treatment of strategic competence, treatment of discourse/textual knowledge, orientation (teaching or testing), and link to CEFR.
3. *Mapping* — each component was matched with CEFR 2020 descriptor scales (linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences) and with typical tasks in Uzbek EFL classrooms.
4. *Synthesis* — a component-based framework for lesson design and assessment was formulated.

2.4. Limitations. Because the study is theoretical, it does not measure learners' competence levels empirically. Its conclusions about classroom practice are analytical and should be tested in future experimental research.

Results

1. Evolution of the concept

The analysis shows a clear line of development: each model kept the core of the previous one and added a component that the earlier model had left implicit. Table 1 summarises this sequence.

Table 1.

Chronology of the main models of communicative competence

Year	Author(s)	Model / key idea	Components
1965	Chomsky	Competence vs performance	Grammatical knowledge of an ideal speaker-listener

1972	Hymes	Communicative competence	Whether an utterance is possible, feasible, appropriate and actually performed
1980	Canale & Swain	First model for L2 teaching and testing	Grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic
1983	Canale	Extended model	Grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic
1990	Bachman	Communicative language ability (CLA)	Language competence (organizational, pragmatic), strategic competence, psychophysiological mechanisms
1995	Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei & Thurrell	Pedagogically motivated model	Discourse, linguistic, actional, sociocultural, strategic
1996	Bachman & Palmer	Language knowledge + strategic competence	Organizational (grammatical, textual), pragmatic (functional, sociolinguistic), metacognitive strategies
2001 / 2020	Council of Europe	CEFR communicative language competences	Linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic

2. The Canale and Swain model

Canale and Swain (1980) defined communicative competence as the underlying system of knowledge and skill required for communication. Canale (1983) separated discourse competence from sociolinguistic competence, producing the four-component model that is still most frequently cited in teacher education. Table 2 presents each component with an example of how it can be developed in an Uzbek EFL lesson.

Table 2.

Components of the Canale and Swain (1980) / Canale (1983) model and classroom applications

Component	Definition	Example task in the Uzbek EFL classroom
Grammatical	Knowledge of vocabulary, word formation, sentence structure, pronunciation and spelling	Practising the past simple by retelling how the family celebrated Navruz
Sociolinguistic	Producing and understanding utterances appropriate to the context, status of participants and purpose	Writing two emails on the same topic: to a university lecturer and to a friend
Discourse	Combining forms and meanings into a unified, coherent and cohesive text	Reordering jumbled paragraphs; linking ideas in an argumentative essay
Strategic	Verbal and non-verbal strategies used to compensate for breakdowns and to enhance communication	Information-gap tasks that require paraphrase, circumlocution and clarification requests

In this model, strategic competence is mainly **compensatory**: it becomes active when the speaker lacks a word or a structure. The components are listed side by side, and the model does not explain how they interact during real communication.

3. Bachman's model of communicative language ability

Bachman (1990) reorganised the components into a hierarchy (Figure 1). Grammatical and textual knowledge form *organizational competence*; illocutionary and sociolinguistic knowledge form *pragmatic competence*. The most important change concerns strategic competence, which becomes a separate capacity that links language knowledge to the context of use.

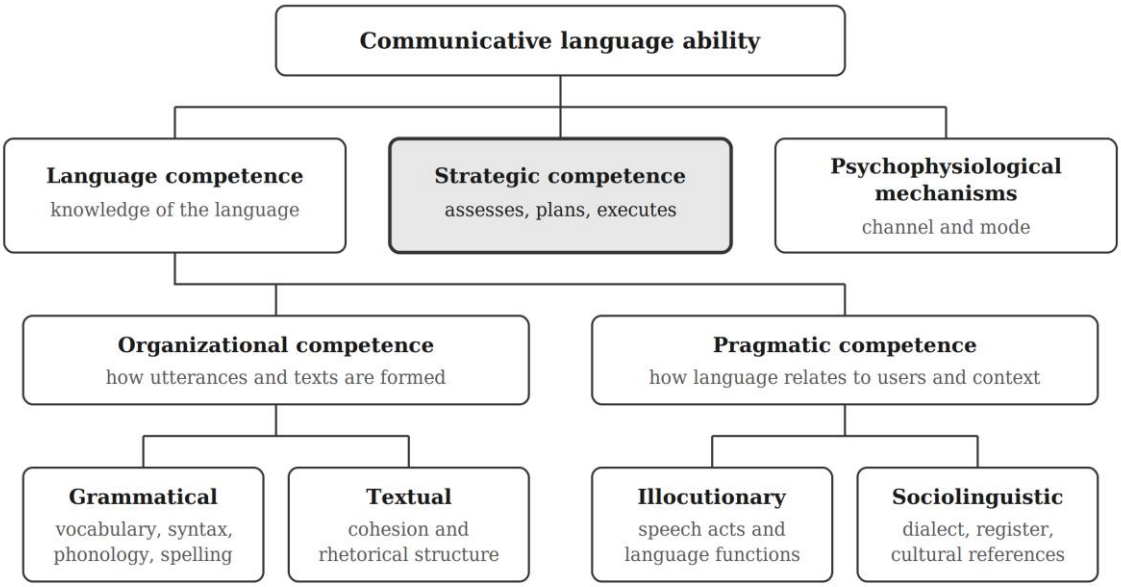

Figure 1. ***Components of communicative language ability (based on Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Bachman and Palmer (1996) later renamed illocutionary competence functional knowledge.***

In Bachman's model, strategic competence operates in every act of communication, not only when problems occur. It assesses the situation, plans the utterance and controls its execution. Bachman and Palmer (1996) described it as a set of metacognitive strategies: goal setting, assessment and planning.

4. Comparison of the models

Table 3 compares the models on the five criteria defined in the Methods section.

Table 3.

Comparative analysis of communicative competence models

Criterion	Canale & Swain (1980) / Canale (1983)	Bachman (1990) / Bachman & Palmer (1996)	Celce-Murcia et al. (1995)	CEFR (2001 / 2020)
Main components	3, later 4	Language knowledge (2 areas) + strategic competence	5	3 communicative language competences
Strategic competence	Compensatory: repairs breakdowns	Metacognitive: governs all language use	Compensatory and enhancing	Part of communicative strategies (reception, production, interaction, mediation)
Discourse / text	Separate component (1983)	Textual competence inside organizational competence	Central component	Discourse competence inside pragmatic competence
Pragmatics	Included in sociolinguistic competence	Separate pragmatic competence	Actional competence	Pragmatic competence (discourse, functional)
Main purpose	Teaching and testing	Test design and validation	Syllabus design	Curriculum, teaching and assessment
Relations between components	Additive list	Hierarchical and interactive	Interactive, discourse at the centre	Illustrative descriptor scales by level

5. Mapping to EFL teaching in Uzbekistan

When the components are matched with CEFR 2020 descriptor scales and with the teaching practices described in the literature on Uzbekistan (Hasanova, 2007; Jalolov, 2012), an imbalance appears. Table 4 summarises this analytical mapping; it describes tendencies reported in the literature rather than measured levels.

Table 4.

Components of communicative competence in CEFR 2020 and in Uzbek EFL practice (analytical synthesis)

Component	Relevant CEFR 2020 scales	Typical classroom emphasis	Main gap
Grammatical / linguistic	Vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, phonological control	Strong: rule explanation, translation, test drills	Fluency and pronunciation receive less practice
Discourse / textual	Thematic development, coherence and cohesion	Moderate: essay templates for examinations	Extended oral discourse is rarely practised
Sociolinguistic	Sociolinguistic appropriateness	Weak: textbook dialogues, limited authentic input	Register and politeness norms are not taught explicitly
Strategic	Communication strategies, mediation	Weak: errors are corrected immediately	Learners avoid speaking instead of using compensation strategies

6. A component-based framework for lesson design

Based on the comparison, the study proposes a framework in which every lesson stage targets a named component and uses a matching form of assessment (Table 5).

Table 5.

Component-based framework for a communicative EFL lesson

Lesson stage	Target component	Sample activity	Assessment
Lead-in	Sociolinguistic	Comparing greetings and forms of address in Uzbek and English	Teacher observation
Input	Discourse	Analysing how an authentic text is organised	Text-structure worksheet
Focused practice	Grammatical	Form-focused tasks in a meaningful context	Accuracy check, peer correction
Communicative task	Strategic	Information-gap or problem-solving task	Checklist of strategies used
Reflection	All components	Learner self-assessment against CEFR can-do statements	Self-assessment grid

Discussion

The first research question concerned the evolution of components. The results confirm that the development from Canale and Swain to Bachman was not a replacement of one model by another but a gradual refinement. Canale (1983) made discourse competence visible; Bachman (1990) grouped the knowledge components into organizational and pragmatic areas and explained how they interact. This agrees with Celce-Murcia's (2007) view that later models mainly clarify relationships between components rather than add entirely new knowledge.

The second research question concerned strategic competence, and here the difference is most significant for teaching. If strategic competence is only compensatory, as in Canale and Swain (1980), teachers may treat it as a "repair kit" for weak learners. If it is metacognitive, as in Bachman (1990), it becomes the capacity that turns knowledge into

performance for every learner. For Uzbek classrooms, the second interpretation has an important consequence: planning an utterance, monitoring it and adjusting it to the listener must be taught explicitly, not left to chance. Pre-task planning time, self-monitoring checklists and reflection on how a task was completed are practical ways of doing this.

The third research question concerned application in Uzbekistan. The mapping in Table 4 suggests that classroom practice still concentrates on the grammatical component, the one that is easiest to explain and to test. Several factors support this tendency: the grammar-translation tradition inherited from earlier decades (Hasanova, 2007), large class sizes, limited contact with native or proficient speakers outside the classroom, and examinations that historically rewarded accuracy over fluency. The adoption of CEFR-aligned standards in 2013 changed the declared goals, but the components defined in the models must also be reflected in textbooks, lesson plans and assessment tools. Otherwise, "communicative competence" remains a slogan rather than a measurable outcome.

The sociolinguistic component deserves special attention in the Uzbek context. Uzbek communicative culture places strong emphasis on respect for age and status, expressed through forms of address and indirectness. These norms can transfer into English and create unintended effects, for example, overly formal emails or an unwillingness to disagree openly in academic discussion. Explicit comparison of Uzbek and English norms, as suggested in Table 5, turns this potential interference into a resource for intercultural awareness, in line with Byram's (1997) concept of intercultural communicative competence.

The analysis has **implications for digital and AI-based teaching**, which is the focus of the broader research project. Most digital tools support the grammatical component well: automated feedback on grammar, spelling and vocabulary is now widely available. Fewer tools directly support discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competence. Therefore, when a new tool is introduced, teachers and researchers should ask which component it develops and which component still requires human guidance. The component-based framework in Table 5 can be used as such an evaluation checklist.

The study has limitations. It is a theoretical review, and the mapping to Uzbek practice relies on published descriptions rather than classroom observation or testing. Future research should measure the four components separately in Uzbek learners, for example with speaking tasks rated on CEFR 2020 scales, and test whether component-based lesson design leads to more balanced development.

Conclusion

The study compared the main models of communicative competence and examined their relevance for EFL teaching in Uzbekistan. Three conclusions can be drawn.

1. The concept developed from Hymes's idea of appropriateness to the componential models of Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), and then to Bachman's (1990) hierarchical model of communicative language ability, which also underlies the CEFR.
2. The key theoretical difference lies in strategic competence: compensatory in Canale and Swain, metacognitive and central in Bachman. The metacognitive view is more useful for teaching because it makes planning and self-monitoring explicit learning goals.
3. In Uzbek EFL practice, grammatical competence tends to receive more attention than discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competence. A component-based approach to lesson design and assessment, linked to CEFR 2020 descriptors, can help to close this gap.

For practitioners, the main recommendation is to name the target component at every lesson stage and to assess it with a matching tool. For researchers, the proposed framework offers criteria for evaluating whether digital and AI-based tools develop the full range of communicative competence or only its grammatical part.

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