Chapter II

Discourse Competence
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DISCOURSE COMPETENCE

Introduction

Discourse competence is a component of communicative competence. Communicative competence is divided into four components: grammatical competence, discourse competence, socio-linguistic competence and strategic competence according to the classification of communicative competence as given by Canale and Swain (1980). They define discourse competence as an ability to make larger patterns of stretches of discourse into meaningful wholes. Later interpretation of discourse competence implies that discourse competence is also concerned with language use in social context, and in particular with interaction and dialogue between speakers (Gumperz, 1977). Contrary to it, Canale and Swain (1980) place it as a separate component of communicative competence.

The present chapter has three parts. The first part is concerned with the theoretical background and historical background communicative competence, tracing its origin from Noam Chomsky’s linguistic competence (1965) amd subsequent introduction of the term “Communicative competence” by Dell Hymes (1972). The second part describes some models of communicative competence that is, those given by Bialystok (1978), Cummins (1979, 1980, 1981), Krashen (1982), Canale and Swain (1980), Savingnon (1985), Brown (1987) and Qing (1990) and Bachman (1990). The third part discusses discourse and discourse analysis.
Communicative Competence

The role of ESL (English as a second Language) in bilingual education has always been the topic of discussion and intense research since the 1960s. Competence-based education has become a widely accepted approach to adult ESL learning. Interest in communicative language teaching has grown and spread since 1960s. Communication is the main aim of language teaching. At the same time, communication has been seen as the instrument, the method or the way of teaching. Communicative language teaching, whose major objective is to enable learners to produce language for the purpose of performing tasks which are important or essential to their everyday existence.

Dell Hymes, an American socio-linguist, coined the term communicative competence (1972), in contrast to Noam Chomsky’s linguistic competence (1965). With the publication of ‘Syntactic Structures’ (1957), Noam Chomsky developed the concept of ‘transformational generative grammar’ which had departed from the psychological theory of behaviorism (Skinner’s ‘Verbal Behaviour’ 1957) and structuralism (Bloomfield, 1933) and established the importance of cognition in human language learning. He asserted that every speaker of a language has an internalized generative grammar, and a native speaker-listener generates new sentences and distinguishes between correct and incorrect sentences.

According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence is the ability to communicate in everyday situations and includes both structural and functional aspects of language. It includes knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, rules of speaking and responding and use of language appropriately in different social contexts. For example: ‘Open the door’- is an imperative sentence grammatically but functionally, it may be a request, an order, a disagreement or an agreement. Thus, the sentence may function differently in different social contexts though its structure is stable.
Theoretical and Historical Background

Communicative competence has been discussed and defined by many applied linguists, socio-linguists, anthropologists and researchers. Here, the present researcher has tried to present views of different linguists and researchers about communicative competence.

Langue and Parole

Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) has made a distinction between two aspects of language: Langue and Parole. Langue means language: all the rules and conventions regarding the combinations of sounds, formation of words and sentences, pronunciation and meaning. It is a product of social agreement. The rules regarding language use and its usages are in the mind of native speakers. Langue is a social, constructs a set of conventions shared by the speakers of a language. Langue is abstract, as these particular sets of rules exist in the mind of speakers who belong to that society that has created the language.

On the other hand, parole belongs to the individual. When those rules that exist in the mind of speakers as langue are used in a concrete form in actual speech or writing, they are manifested as parole. Parole is the actual sounds and sentences produced by an individual speaker or writer. It may be said that it is a concrete physical manifestation of the abstract langue. If a person hears another person speaking a language which he does not know, he hears only sounds, which is parole, but he cannot understand it because he does not share the conventions of that language which are behind the individual sounds. Thus, langue is the underlying system, which makes the parole meaningful. Without it parole would never be understood and could not serve as a means of communication. Thus, parole implies individual performance of
In a speech community, language makes use of concrete and physical organs in uttering words and utterance.

Saussure has considered langue as the law of language. Like law, it maintains the social order and homogeneity of the language; and it is relatively fixed, that is, it cannot change with each individual. Parole is the executive side of the language for its function. It executes langue through speaking and writing. However, it is important to note that Saussure emphasized the importance of parole rather than langue.

**Chomsky’s Linguistic Competence**

American linguist, Noam Chomsky (1965) has made a similar distinction between linguistic competence and performance. According to Chomsky, competence is the native speaker’s knowledge of his/her language and the ability to produce and understand large stretches of sentences. Performance is the actual use of these utterances in routine life. In other words, the abstract or the internal grammar, which enables a speaker to utter and understand sentences and utterances in potential use, is a speaker’s competence. According to him, competence is free from interference due to the slips of memory, the lapses of attention and so on. Chomsky states:

“Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.” (1965: 3)

Chomsky’s linguistic competence and performance is the same as Ferdinand de Saussure’s langue and parole dichotomy. But it differs in the sense that langue is the same with every individual while competence differs from person to person. Ferdinand de Saussure’s understanding of langue
emphasizes language use in society while Chomsky’s competence is based on psychology and presumes individual differences among human beings.

**Criticisms of Chomsky’s Linguistic Competence**

As for Chomsky, linguistic theory aims to study the production and understanding of the rules of language that a native speaker-listener acquires during the process of language acquisition. However, socio-psycho-linguistic research rejected Chomsky’s limited view of competence and contrary to Chomsky’s view, emphasizes the need to study language in its social context. In the 1970s, Hymes, Wales, Campbell, Jakobovits, Widdowson and others, all reject Chomsky’s restricted view of competence. Jakobovits says,

“There is no guarantee that generative transformational grammar or for that matter any other linguistic theory will be able to account for all the facts about language which the native speaker possesses.” (1970:17)

He argues that the social linguistic rules are as necessary a part of linguistic competence of a speaker as those of syntax. In Hymes’ words, “There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless” (1970:14). Thus, the notion of competence should include socio-contextual appropriateness. The restriction of competence to performance in a homogeneous speech community apart from socio-cultural rules is inadequate to account for language in use. Campbell and Wales pointed out that Chomsky’s notion of linguistic competence goes far away from the most important linguistic ability-

“...to produce or understand utterances which are not so much grammatical but, more important, appropriate to the context in which they are made,” and they continue, “...by context we mean both the situational and verbal context of utterance.” (1970:27)

Chomsky’s notion of competence avoids almost everything of socio-cultural importance and significance. Thus, the attempt to establish a relationship between the language and its concrete context in which it is
appropriately used, has led to the concept of 'communicative competence' which can at best be taken as a socio-linguistic resolution of the competence-performance dichotomy.

Hymes' view of Communicative Competence

As already stated earlier, Dell Hymes (1972) coined the concept of communicative competence as an extension of Chomsky's linguistic competence. Hymes argued that competence must include the rules of use as well as grammatical rules. To him, competence should also describe the knowledge and ability of individuals for appropriate use in the communicative events in which they find themselves in any concrete speech community. The salient points about Hymes' view of communicative competence are the following:

1. A child acquires language not only as a grammatical but also as an appropriate system, i.e. when and where to speak, what to speak and with whom to talk.

2. He emphasizes the rules of use because without these rules the grammatical rules will be useless.

3. Grammatically, the same sentence may function differently as a request, an order and a commitment as: 'Close the window', may be an order if a teacher says this to his student; may be a request if a student says it to his friend. So, this particular sentence performs differently according to varying social contexts. On the other hand, grammatically two different sentences may function in same way as: 'Please give me your pen' and 'May I take your pen?'. Both are requests, yet they are grammatically different.

4. Within the developmental sequences in which knowledge of the sentence of a language is acquired, a child also acquires knowledge of a set of rules in which utterances are used.
5. Competence includes the knowledge of structures and the ability to use them in a given social context. Hymes postulates four features in communicative competence, which are as the following:

- Whether something is formally possible: it implies Chomsky's linguistic competence meaning when language agrees or disagrees with grammatical rules and structures.

- Whether something is formally feasible: it tells about the feasibility of a meaningful sentence. Sometimes a sentence cannot be grammatically acceptable but it may be accepted as feasible.

- Whether something is appropriate: it tells whether a sentence is appropriate to the context or not such as: 'Open the window' - may be a command, a request or just a statement or a warning but the appropriate meaning depends on the given context.

- Whether something is done: it implies the cultural and social rules of language use.

Thus, the notion of communicative competence refers to the grammatical, social, and cultural rules of use. Hence, communicative competence means the knowledge of grammar, structure, word-formation and pronunciation of the language, as well as knowledge of the rules of language use, to know how to start and how to end conversation, and how to respond to different social situations. In other words, communicative competence is the ability to use language in a speech community. Savignon notes,

"Communicative competence is relative, not absolute and depends on the co-operation of all the participants involved." (1983: 37)

It is essential for learners to know how to use grammatical rules for producing meaningful sentences in real life situations, it is also necessary for them to know what kind of language is used in a particular situation; when they should be silent and when they should perform. It is important that they understand the paralinguistic features of speaking, understand supra-sentential
features, and also know that a given or spoken sentence has more than one meaning according to the social context. So, language use involves social interaction and the main object of the theory of communicative competence is to emphasize the use of language as a means of interaction in the social contexts.

Language Use and Usage

Widdowson (1978) makes a distinction between language use and usage. Usage is the perfection of linguistic system whereas use is the realization of the language system as meaningful spoken behaviour. Thus, a speaker’s competence includes knowing how to recognize and how to use sentences to respond to rhetorical acts, e.g., requesting, apologizing, greeting, defining, classifying, promising, warning, etc. Widdowson further adds,

“...perhaps the only area of characterizing different language registers is to discover what rhetorical acts are commonly performed in them, how they combine to form composite communication units and what linguistic devices are used to indicate them.” (1971a: 85)

Some researchers claim that the distinction between usage and use is similar to Saussure’s distinction between langue and parole, and Chomsky’s distinction between competence and performance.

Some Models of Communicative Competence

Conceptualizing the nature of language proficiency and its relationship to other constructs has been central to the resolution of a number of applied educational issues. Since Dell Hymes’ proposal of the notion of ‘communicative competence’ (1970, 1971, 1972), an enormous amount of research on communicative competence has taken place.
Cummins' Model of CALP and BICS

Like the difference between linguistic and communicative competence, Cummins (1979, 1980) has distinguished between cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) and basic inter-personal communicative skills (BICS). Cognitive/academic language proficiency focuses on language forms and rules which learners use in the classroom context and BICS deals with the learners' communication ability in formal situations. Cummins (1981) has later extended his model of CALP and BICS in the form of context-reduced (based on classroom orientation) and context-embedded (based on the communicative ability) of language use. Where the former resembles with CALP but the latter BICS, with added context dimensions in which language is used. A good share of classroom, school-oriented language use is context-reduced, while face to face conversation is context-embedded.

Cummins included the two aspects in his research: language use and the issue of age of learning too. He took two years old children for his research to examine their development in communicative language proficiency in a second language. He found that if at a young age, children are exposed to second language learning, they achieve native like proficiency. On the other hand, they require at least 5 to 7 years to develop their proficiency in classroom learning; and this concept was highly related to the development of literacy. In their first language, there is only a little difference in everyday communication skills between children of high and low ability. However, the ability to handle classroom language is much variable. Through IQ test, it was found that to achieve this skill is not easy and it was concluded that bilingual children need to develop the cognitive/academic aspect of language to achieve equality with non-natives in school system.
Canale and Swain’s Model

Several models of language proficiency or communicative competence have been proposed in recent years but the model presented by Canale and Swain (1980) appears to be the most popular one. They divided communicative competence into the four following components: grammatical competence, socio-linguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Grammatical competence is the dimension of communicative competence, which emphasizes grammatical rules of language - lexical rules, morphological rules, rules of syntax, rules of sentence-formation, semantic rules and phonological rules. Socio-linguistic competence refers to how the language learner/speaker uses language according to socio-cultural rules. Discourse competence refers to the logical connection of sentences in larger patterns for a meaningful discourse (spoken or written). Strategic competence refers to the strategies for breakdowns in communication according to the situation.

The two subcategories: grammatical and discourse competence reflect the use of the linguistic system itself. The other two subcategories pay attention to the functional system. Grammatical competence has become popular through Chomsky’s notion of linguistic competence. Many linguists have accepted and gone with Canale and Swain’s model of communicative competence (1980). According to Schachter,

“One current approach to characterizing grammatical competence is to say that it involves the ‘computational aspects of language’ the rules of formulations or constraints that allow us to pair sound with meaning, the rules that form syntactic constructions or phonological or semantic patterns of varied sorts.” (1990: 39-40)

So, grammatical competence helps us in the formulation of language structure. Discourse competence is a complement of grammatical competence. Stubbs says,

“Discourse competence attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause and larger
linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written text.” (1983:1)

It can be considered the complement of grammatical competence.

However, discourse competence can also be viewed as the knowledge of text as well as dialogue. It enables us to use coherent and cohesive text, whether written or oral. Discoursal knowledge clearly involves both cultural conventions and appropriate grammatical choices. Hence, discourse competence is connected with grammatical competence and also overlaps with socio-linguistic competence.

Canale and Swain’s model of communicative competence has brought about a shift of emphasis from the teaching of grammar and vocabulary to the acquisition of socio-linguistic and discourse competence and reflects a remarkable change in the methods and materials used in the present day language pedagogy. The model has found acceptance and popularity but it is not without controversy. Many linguists are not convinced with their proposed categorization of communicative competence. Schachter has argued that discourse competence and socio-linguistic competence are not two parts of communicative competence but they are the same. She argues,

“What is unclear to me is the conceptual justification for the separation of discoursal and socio-linguistic knowledge into distinctive components. Surely, unity of a text involves appropriateness and depends on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of the interaction, and norms or conventions of interaction.” (1990: 43)

To her, communicative competence is best seen as “consisting of two kinds of competence: grammatical and pragmatic. She maintains that sociological factors interact with all these two components at all levels.” (1990: 44).
Savignon’s Model

Like Canale and Swain (1980), Savignon (1983) agrees with the four components of communicative competence given by Canale and Swain. She also suggests that socio-linguistic and strategic competence permit the learner to check his/her communicative ability even before his/her learning of grammatical or structural competence. She claims that strategic competence is always present in the learner even before and at the time of learning. So, she suggests that there is no need to learn it separately as other components of communicative competence. She presents the following model of communicative competence:

Fig. 3.

The components of communicative competence in S. Savignon’s (1983) model.

It is important to note that most researchers have given attention to the interactive nature of communicative competence. Adapting an interactional-based approach, Savignon maintains that communicative competence can develop learners’ interactive power and their conversational ability; and guides
them where they have to terminate, to maintain, to negotiate meaning of interaction according to the situation. She claims that communicative competence is relative not absolute, and all components depend upon each other and each participant is also dependent on the cooperation of all other participants. The communicative situation helps in the understanding process. According to Savignon, communicative competence implies

"...the ability to function in a truly communicative setting- that is a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total information input, both linguistic and paralinguistic of one or more interlocutors. Communicative competence includes grammatical competence (sentence level grammar), socio-linguistic competence (an understanding of the social context in which language is used), discourse competence (an understanding of how utterances are strung together to form a meaningful whole), and strategic competence (a language user’s employment of strategies to make the best use of what he/she knows about how a language works, in order to interpret, express and negotiate meaning in a given context)." (1985:130)

**Douglas Brown’s View of Communicative Competence**

Douglas Brown (1987) agrees with the four components of communicative competence but in a slightly different way. Brown considers that grammatical competence and discourse competence reflect the use of the linguistic system itself. While grammatical competence focuses on sentence-level grammar, discourse competence is concerned with inter-sentential relationships. Discourse competence is thus the complement of grammatical competence.
Chen Si-Qing’s Model

Chen Si-Qing’s model is quite different from Canale and Swain’s. Chen Si-Qing has presented a model of competence divided into two subcategories:

- **General Language Proficiency**
  - Competence
    - Grammatical competence
    - Communicative competence
    - Socio-linguistic competence
    - Discourse competence
    - Strategic competence

According to him, grammatical competence is not the subcategory of communicative competence, contrary to the view of Canale and Swain (1980)
and Savignon (1985). Performance is the realization of competence. Grammatical competence refers to language system and communicative competence refers to language use and they are viewed as two different components of competence.

**Bachman’s Model**

Bachman has reorganized the definition of communicative competence. Bachman’s model (1987 and 1990) has extended Canale and Swain’s view of communicative competence. In 1990, he provided a model of communicative competence that is divided into three main subcategories: language competence and psychomotor skills. Language competence is elaborated in his model and further subdivided into organizational and pragmatic competence.
COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Language Competence
- Strategic Competence
- Psychomotor Skills
  - Productive
    - Oral
    - Visual
  - Receptive
    - Audio
    - Visual

Organizational Competence

Grammatical Competence
- Textual
  - Lexis
  - Morphology
  - Syntax
- Phonology/Graphology

Pragmatic Competence

Illocutionary Competence
- Ideational Function
- Manipulative Function

Sociolinguistic Competence
- Imaginative Function
  - Heuristic Function
- Register and Dialect
  - References & Figures of Speech
  - Naturalness

Fig. 3

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Organizational competence includes grammatical and textual competence, and pragmatic competence subsumes illocutionary (language functions) and sociolinguistic competence.

Bachman’s organizational competence corresponds to Canale and Swain’s grammatical (lexis, morphology and syntax) and discourse (textual: coherence and cohesion) competence. Organizational competence is to know how to organize language at different levels, and pragmatic competence is to know how to use language appropriately according to the given situation. So, for communicating proficiently in L2, it becomes necessary to develop pragmatic competence and its two components: 1) illocutionary competence that in a simple term, is the ability to understand speech acts, and 2) Sociolinguistic competence that makes learners able to use different types of speech acts according to the social context. Speech acts are neutral between the spoken and written modes. It is important to note that in Bachman’s categorization of model strategic competence is viewed separately from linguistic competence.

**Discourse Competence and Discourse Analysis**

The focus on communicative competence has resulted in the study of discourse or pragmatic competence and has also encouraged discourse analysis. Discourse competence and discourse analysis have been the subject of extensive and intensive study since the 1960s and the early 1970s. The research has grown out from different disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, anthropology and sociology. Discourse competence remains an important issue of second language learning research. First of all, the interest in discourse is to be found in Zellig Harris’ (1952) paper ‘Discourse Analysis’. He considers discourse connected with text and social context. Discourse competence as mentioned before, is the use of communicative knowledge and experience, or it is a pattern of human behavior, attitude and socio-cultural rules and contexts through which they take part in communication. Discourse competence and
Discourse analysis have embraced many extensive and intensive studies and approaches, i.e., the study of rhetorical coherence of interaction in which the focus of attention is the function of the language in the exchange of information. Discourse analysis studies language in action whether it is the written text or any kind of spoken communication. So, it seems to be important to describe briefly different meanings related to the word discourse.

Fairclough defines discourse, as a “particular view of language in use.... as an element of social life, which is closely interconnected, with other elements” (2004: 3). Further he states,

“I see discourses as ways of representing aspects of the world—the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the ‘mental world’ of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world.... Different discourses are different perspectives of the world, and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people.... Discourses constitute part of the resources which people deploy in relating to one another- keeping separate from one another, cooperating, competing, dominating and in seeking to change the ways in which they relate to one another.” (2004: 124)

Foucault (1972, 1984) has made significant identification and analysis of discourses a preoccupation across the humanities and social sciences. His statement on ‘discourse’ makes it clear that for Foucault (1984), analysis of discourse is the analysis of the domain of ‘statements’,

“I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizing group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements.” (Foucault quoted in Fairclough, 2004: 123)

Cook states the following about discourse analysis,

“Discourse analysis examines how stretches of language, considered in their full textual, social, and psychological context, become meaningful and unified for their users.” (Cook, 2000: ix)

According to him, discourse analysis provides “insights into the problems and processes of language use and language learning” (Cook, 2000: ix). Cutting
defines discourse analysis as “...approaches to studying language’s relation to the contextual background features” (Cutting, 2003: 1).

Some researchers make a distinction between spoken discourse competence and textual competence. Spoken discourse competence also refers to the understanding of the context of situation and responding or speaking in different social context in cohesive and coherent way. Textual discourse competence refers to the ability to understand and construct monologues or written texts of different genres, such as narratives, procedural texts, expository texts, descriptive texts and others. These discourse types have different characteristics, but in each genre there are some elements that help in making the text coherent, e.g., linking devices. Learning a language involves learning how to relate in such a way that the reader or listener can understand the linguistic elements what is going on, and see what is important. Thus, discourse competence relates information in a way that is cohesive and coherent to the readers and hearers.

Two Meanings of Discourse Competence

After Zellig Harris’ (1952) paper ‘Discourse Analysis’, many applied linguists and sociologists have interpreted discourse competence into two different ways:

First Meaning of Discourse

The first meaning of discourse has been considered the proper organization of text. According to this view, discourse refers to the ability of providing for logical and cohesive connection of sentences and utterances into meaningful and coherent stretches of discourse. The term ‘organization’ for discourse competence was first introduced by Bachman (1990). But, this concept is best
exemplified by Canale and Swain (1980), Savignon (1983 and 1985), Brown (1987) and Qing (1990) as it has been pointed out before. All of them have described discourse competence as an organizational aspect of language above the sentence. It is the ability of combining sentences into larger stretches of communication.

Second Meaning of Discourse Competence

The second meaning of discourse refers to the socio-linguistic use of language. According to this concept, discourse cannot be produced and understood without the knowledge of socio-cultural contexts, values, attitudes and behaviours. This view of discourse is best exemplified by Gumperz (1977) and Schachter (1990). Narang states the following about discourse competence:

“A speaker-listener internalizes communicative grammar while he undergoes the normal process of socialization. This process implies that the learner’s language acquisition ability is but a part of his total learning/acquisition abilities and his interaction with the environment implies not just the linguistic environment. In fact a child learning his language and learning to interact with his environment never receives linguistic data isolated from socio-cultural context.” (1996: 247)

Therefore, according to this view a child acquires discourse competence through the learning of his/her social rules and conventions in addition to learning the grammatical rules. Hymes says,

“The linguist’s problem is to explain how a child comes rapidly to be able to produce and understand (in principle) any and all of the grammatical sentences of a language. If we consider a child actually capable of producing all possible sentences he would probably be institutionalized, particularly not only the sentences, but also speech or silence were random or unpredictable. We then have to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical but also as appropriate.” (1971: 5)

Discourse competence has become a popular and burning issue in ESL studies and research after Canale and Swain’s categorization of communicative
competence into four components: grammatical competence, discourse competence, socio-linguistic competence and strategic competence (1980). The question is asked is whether it should be learned through grammatical structure of language or through a given social context. Some linguists and researchers are of the view that discourse competence is the overlap of grammatical and socio-linguistic competence enveloping both the meanings of discourse. Schachter (1990) says that discourse competence and socio-linguistic competence are not two parts of communicative competence but they are the same. Discourse competence is a knowledge of text (micro-socio-linguistic knowledge) and can be viewed as cohesion and coherence, and it also refers to pragmatic knowledge. To her, discourse knowledge includes both cultural conventions and appropriate grammatical choices. Gumperz (1977) is concerned with conversation in socio-linguistic background in the interpretation of discourse. He believes that in the interpretation of discourse, only grammatical competence is not necessary but speaker’s attitude, behaviour and socio-cultural values are also important. In his theoretical study, Gumperz (1977) reported that social knowledge stored in the mind of speaker comes out and mingles with grammatical competence at the time of speaking. So, he has highlighted the role of socio-cultural assumptions in producing and perceiving the meaning of discourse because without certain background perceptions, the listener or reader may lose track in communication.

Finally, it may be concluded that discourse competence is the logical connection of sentences into meaningful wholes in a given social context. But discourse can not be understood without studying both aspects of discourse: spoken discourse and discourse in terms of cohesion.
Spoken Discourse

Discourse may, first of all, refer primarily to spoken interaction which is analyzed in terms of units of meaning, organized into a hierarchy employing some or all of the terms like act, move, exchange, transaction and others.

Spoken discourse refers to the interaction orally between and among persons in a social environment. Especially, spoken discourse relies upon conversation in a social-context. Spoken discourse competence refers to the ability to make and interpret the meaning of different functions of speech acts in different context: classroom setting, interviews and interaction with native and non-native speakers in routine situations.

The Birmingham Model

The Birmingham model of discourse analysis proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) at the University of Birmingham is very influential with respect to the study of conversational discourse with special reference to the classroom. It is a simple and useful model analyzing different patterns of interaction and it handles those patterns also that reflect the basic functions of conversation. Firstly, Sinclair and Coulthard examine the traditional or conventional patterns between teachers and students in the classroom and secondly, they examine the patterns of interaction outside the classroom. Therefore, this model can be related to Cummins’ context-embedded and context-reduced situations. The following is an edited excerpt from his classroom data:

(T=teacher, P=pupil)

T: Now then...what’s that, what is it?
P: Saw.
T: It’s a saw, yes this is a saw. What do we do with a saw?
P: Cut wood.
T: Yes. (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975: 93-94)
The above is a discourse process and discourse exchange between teacher and student in the classroom. Classroom is a place where anyone can start to interact in an easy pattern (initiation by teacher, answer of student and follow-up comment by teacher) but outside of the classroom, he/she faces the real world for interaction with different types of people. To communicate in real life seems to be free from the rules of structuredness. For example:

A: What time is it?
B: Six thirty.
A: Thanks. (p: 26)

Sinclair and Coulthard have provided a number of turns for analyzing discourse. An 'exchange' consists of a number of 'moves'. For example, the above exchange has the pattern: question, answer and confirmation. The teacher asks a question, the pupil answers it and again the teacher confirms the answer. The three types of moves are given the labels: initiation, response and follow up by McCarthy (1991). Sinclair and Coulthard’s model of discourse analysis reflects the basic function of intention and also offers a hierarchical model where smaller units combine together to form larger units. In its simplest form, the hierarchy is as follows:

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Transaction
  
Exchange
  
Move
  
Act
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While 'transaction' is a combination of a number of exchanges, 'act' at the lowest level, refers to speech acts, implying the functions performed through language.
Speech Acts

That which Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) label as ‘acts’, Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) name as ‘speech acts’. In simple words, speech acts refer to the functions of language, or the action that an utterance performs. Every sentence of speech or writing carries the force of requesting, apologizing, instructing, ordering, etc. then language is seen as doing a particular act, e.g.,

“Don’t lie.”

This particular set of language (either spoken or written) performs a particular act of order or advice or instruction etc. When we speak or write, we do not say or write just a bunch of linguistic structures. We have a function to perform with grammar and vocabulary. It is written, “Fixed rate” on a shop, it functions as a guide for customers that there is no possibility of bargaining.

The work from the Council of Europe, in particular that by Van Ek and Alexander (1975) and Wilkins (1976) is based on the recognition that in the actual use of language, people do not just produce sentences but express ideas, and fulfill communicative functions, in doing so. On this basis, it is proposed that the content of a language teaching course should be defined in terms of not only the formal elements of syntax and lexis, as is customary in the grammatical approach, but of the concepts and functions these elements are used to realize.

Some basic precepts of functional criteria for curriculum design appear to be like this- first predict the situations that the learner is likely to use the language in, and then identify the language functions related to them, that the learner will have to perform. There are clear practical difficulties involved, viz., listing and description of communicative functions, prediction of situations; the learner may have to face, the absence of a universal principles in doing so etc. O’Neil has said on this,

“...the idea that everything I write or teach must seem to be of direct value to the learners in situations we can predict he or she will encounter, is based on delusion, secondly, it can not be
carried out, thirdly, if you try to do so, you will debase the concept of communication itself.” (1977: 89)

The functional approach of discourse does not deal with only language use in context but also with concepts and functions in context; and with concepts and functions in idealized isolation. Language makes us able to continually express novel propositions. In other words, the needs that we put on language are virtually limitless. Our faculty of language is a faculty of linguistic creativity. The way in which language is organized to meet these demands is the application of the grammatical system in the actual process of communication depending on the features of the personality, the setting of the interaction and the purpose of the user. So, language materials are concerned with speech acts, with what is done, not only with grammatical and lexical forms of what is said. But these do not occur in isolation, they combine to form discourse.

Discourse Analysis in Terms of Cohesion

Discourse may also refer to a stretch of written language. This meaning of discourse is exemplified in Halliday’s (1989) ‘Spoken and Written Language’ and Halliday’s (1976) ‘Cohesion in English’.

The grammar of English offers a set of linkers to connect sentences. The unity produced in a text through this set of linking devices (grammatical linkers, lexical linkers, semantic linkers and conjunctions) is known as cohesion. The meaning of a text is more than the meanings of its individual sentences. With the set of linkers (connectives), the writer creates coherence in the text. Coherence gives a sense to readers. Neubauer considers text as interactive and inter-personal, “a way of behaving and making others behave” (1983: 7). The sentences such as:

“John is intelligent. He likes apple juice”- are cohesive but are not coherent. If one assures a link between being intelligent and juice, it leaves an
effect of cause-effect relationship between two sentences. So, cohesion is very important to interpret the text. Making sense of a text is called interpretation. The reader has to make the world of text (interpretation) on the basis of his/her experience and see what events are characteristically manifested in it (De Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981). For this links and markers, i.e., signals have semantic and discourse functions (i.e., -ed is the marker of past ness) present the surface of text. They help in three ways:

a) they answer the question, why something happened;
b) they reduce the ambiguity;
c) the reader recognizes the area of acting.

Halliday (1989), hence, considers both the meanings as constituting discourse.

American linguists i.e., Gumperz and Hymes, (1972) see types of speech event according to cultural and social context. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) and Goffman (1976a) examine spoken interaction. The paper by Allen and Widdowson (1978) ‘Teaching the communicative use of English’ introduces certain distinctions between use and usage, the grammatical cohesion of text and the rhetorical coherence of discourse. Widdowson (1971b) makes a useful distinction between text and discourse. He conceives of text as a stretch of language exemplifying the structure of the language, especially the devices indicating such structuring above the level of sentence, and discourse as a stretch of language being a unique piece of communication. While Fairclough defines texts as “any actual instance of language in use” (2004: 3) and Cutting further, specifies texts as “pieces of spoken or written discourse” (2003: 2).

Kramsch (1998) makes a difference between texts and discourse. She views texts as products of language use and discourses as the processes of language use. According to her, text is the “product of language use, whether it be a conversational exchange, or a stretch of written prose, held together by cohesive devices” (p: 132), and discourse is the “process of language use,
whether it be spoken, written or printed that includes writers, texts, and readers within a socio-cultural context of meaning production and reception” (p: 127).

Thus, discourse analysis is the examination of language used by members of a speech community. Today we seek to provide the learner not only with linguistic knowledge, which enables him/her to produce and understand grammatical sentences, but also social knowledge and skill, which permit him to produce and comprehend socially appropriate utterances. We deem it as part of the speaker’s competence to form ‘continuous discourse’.

Research on Second Language Written Discourse Competence

Second language learners of English feel difficulty in acquiring native like proficiency in written discourse. To assess their problems in ESL writing and those factors that may be helpful in achieving native like writing competence, a number of studies have been conducted. Though second language writing research is short of investigations, as Krashen remarks that ‘studies of second language writing are sadly lacking’ (1984: 41). Here, an attempt has been made to present some studies that have been conducted to find out second language writing processes and behaviours of second language learners to achieve competence in written discourse.

Among earliest studies on written discourse competence, Chelala (1981), Jones (1982) and Jacobs (1982) conducted their empirical research on second language writing behaviours of writers who took help from first language writing; Chelala (1981) worked on a case study of two professional and Spanish speaking women through composing aloud audiotapes four times and interviewing two times. She analyzed coherent patterns and incoherent patterns of subjects’ behaviours in their written products and their audiotapes of writing aloud by applying Perl’s coding scheme. She observed that her subjects took help from the first language in their incoherent behaviours and switched back and forth between the mother tongue and target language. She
observed in her findings that 1) there is no significant difference between native and non-native writers; 2) linguistic competence does not affect the composing ability of second language writing.

Jacobs, Zamel (1982), also found that for proficiency in writing, writing discourse process is more important than linguistic competence. She claimed that writing discourse process gives the ability to develop written products. For her empirical work, she took eight able women writers of university level, and she found through interviews about writing production process that her subjects took help from first language writing process in second language writing discourse process. So, she suggested that first language process based writing guidelines can also help for second language written discourse learning and teaching. Furthermore, first language writing process oriented instructions based research were carried out by Jones (1985), Diaz (1985, 1986), Rorschach (1986) and Urzua (1987). They all corroborated Zamel' (1982) view. They prepared first language writing process-oriented setting in a second language classroom and they found that first language writing process oriented pedagogy in second language classroom improved and developed second language writing ability and competence. Diaz and Urzua said that it did more beyond improving writing discourse competence. Pfingstag (1984) studied the helping factors of the composing aloud protocol. For her study, she took an undergraduate Spanish-speaking student with the proficiency of English till intermediate level. She used the Michigan Placement Test for analysis and saw that her subject was unproficient in composing competence, planned a little about the topic and had no knowledge of strategies to create ideas. So, to improve the composing strategies, she arranged composing aloud session for 20 minutes and found that this session improved the composing competence of her subject. Hence, she suggested writing aloud protocol as a helping pedagogical as well as research instrument.

Jones' (1985) study gave support to the use of writing process based teaching in second language classroom setting. Jones administered three
different writing tasks (e.g.; personal, descriptive and generalized) to each nine-second-language student in unlimited time. Jones took interviews of the subjects about the writing processes of each topic and their experiences and opinions for the differences between first language and second language writing processes. To analyze the writing behaviour of two participants, he applied Krashen's monitor theory and he observed that monitoring did not improve writing behaviour or strategies but he discovered that monitoring enhanced the second language writing process. Hence, he concluded that the use of monitor might be fruitful through instructional methods.

Rorschach (1986) also supported composing process-oriented pedagogy in second language classroom. Her views were similar to Jones' (1985) with respect to the use of monitoring with instructions. For her study, she collected her data from three ESL subjects. The teacher gave one essay to each participant for writing and after the checking of the essay; the essay was given once more to revise. Interviews were taken to find the reason why they composed and revised essays. She concluded that the reader’s response gave an instinct to writers to concentrate on the structural form rather than the topic.

Diaz (1985, 1986) focused on the benefits of instruction-based learning and teaching. Diaz examined the second language students’ writing behaviour in writing process-designed classroom. She found that instruction sourced illuminating pedagogy enhanced the writing discourse completely including writing strategies, techniques and behaviours.

Like Diaz, Urzua (1987) examined helping factors of process-based instruction in second language classroom. She studied the writing growth of four young students- two of fourth class and two of six class. Her data had “transcripts of peer response sessions, weekly compositions and twice-weekly dialogue journals” (p: 279). Through illuminating teaching, she observed that students gained three important writing skills: “...a) a sense of audience, b) a sense of voice, and c) a sense of power in language” (p: 279).

Raimes (1985a) reports that second language writers could not be defined because they differ in their cultural background and their learning needs. Therefore, their first language writing process could not be an aid in second language writing.

Lay's (1982) study on the other hand, claims that the use of both languages was necessary in acquiring the writing proficiency in second language. Her study took four Chinese subjects and tried to find out how much first language was used through composing aloud audiotapes and interviewing them about their writing background, first language experience and attitude towards second language. She observed that her subjects made use of switching to their first language while writing about a familiar topic of their first language. She found that they used their first language and its diction when they forgot or could not find a word of English. Lay gave three conditions in which her subjects were tended to switch to their first language- firstly, learners used first language at the initial developmental stage as a useful aid in learning and as they learnt more English, the use of first language decreases; second, she claimed that her participants used first language for those topics which they had experienced or acquired in their first language; and third, she argued that retrieval of first language information helps in better search on their unknown topics. Thus, Lay concluded that second language writers’ quality of creation of ideas, content and structure improved with the use of their first language because they could plan easily even in second language with first language information.
Zamel (1983) extended her earlier finding by conducting an empirical study on university level students. Here, she conducted her study on ‘skilled’ and ‘unskilled’ writers and she concluded that first language and second language writing processes of ‘skilled’ writers were the same and ‘unskilled’ writers expended more time in editing and deleting rather than revision. She declared that proficient writers “clearly understand what writing entails” while unproficient writers do not do so (p: 180).

Raimes (1985b) tested the writing proficiency of second language writers through the Michigan Proficiency Test. She reported writers’ behaviour, experience, background and attitude towards second language writing. Her research also selected ‘skilled’ and ‘unskilled’ second language writers. She also observed that her unskilled subjects paid little attention to planning, editing and revision; and she observed that linguistic competence in second language did not help in writing, while first language writing process might be beneficial in second language writing process.

Martin-Betancourt (1986) also supported the view that second language composition processes are similar to first language writing process. For this finding, she analyzed the protocols of Spanish speaking learners and found that some used first language a little and others used first language frequently by translating. Gaskill (1986), Hall (1987) and Arndt (1987) also emphasized the helping factors and role of first language writing process in second language writing process. They claimed that ‘proficient’ writers used first language writing experience, behaviour and knowledge in second language writing. Arndt reported that “the composing strategies of each individual writer were found to remain consistent across languages” (1987: 257).

A number of other studies also support the opinion that first language and second language writing processes are the same. Cumming (1987) discovered that unskilled French speaking second language writers used their first language to create text whereas skilled writers used first language not only to create text but also to choose apt vocabulary through translation or transfer.
Cumming collected his data from composing aloud tapes, relating to subjects’ experience of personal and academic areas after giving them three types of writing tasks—personal, expository and academic.

The same evidence came from the study of Jones and Tetroe (1987), who examined six graduate Spanish speaking ESL writers’ protocols to observe their first and second language writing behaviours and experiences. They found inconsistency in the use of first language writing in second language writing behaviour. Some transferred more and others a little. It works as an aid to ESL writers especially at the beginning level. Friedlander (1990) also reported the use of first language in creating ideas for content and that it resulted into better writing. These studies put forth the view that the use of first language writing process and competence becomes an effective and positive factor in second language writing and competence in second language written discourse.

Studies on written discourse competence exist in abundance. It has been the general concern of many researchers that ESL learner’s written discourse processing includes writing strategies, first language writing processes and second language linguistic competence. A more recent study by Whalen and Menard (1995) than earlier studies analyzed how much use was made of 1) metacognitive knowledge (Bracewell, 1983); awareness of cognitive knowledge and power for generating, manipulating and maintaining writing abilities that already exist in the mind of second language learner; 2) strategic knowledge [Cumming (1988), Koninck and Boucher (1993), Bisaillon (1992) and Whalen (1993)]—referred to the ability to acquire purpose of any given writing task, and 3) linguistic knowledge [Chomsky (1965) and Yau (1991)]—concerned with the structural knowledge of language, grammatical rules and know-how to apply them according to syntax and context. To see the importance of these factors, they gave an argumentative text in both first language (English) and second language (French) to 12 undergraduate students and they found that writers’ strategies, metacognitive knowledge and linguistic knowledge clearly have a role in discourse competence. Another study by Yau
(1991) has confirmed that writer's second language linguistic competence influences second language writing. If the writer has more/higher linguistic knowledge, he/she shows more competence in written discourse.

Recent studies made by Hirose and Sasaki (1994), Sasaki and Hirose (1996), Sasaki (2002) and Sasaki (2004) built second language writing models (comprehensive written text, videotaped writing behaviours and recall protocols) for Japanese students of EFL. The results showed that EFL learner's first language writing ability, second language linguistic competence, second language proficiency and second language metacognitive knowledge work as important helping factors to gain native like writing competence. While on the other hand, previous studies of Zamel (1982) and Raimes (1985a) had not seen any relation between L1 writing ability and second language proficiency. Reid (1984) claims that ESL writers should have knowledge of second language task “what is socially and culturally appropriate in terms of the writer’s roles, audience expectations, rhetorical and stylistic conventions and situational or contextual features of written text” (1990: 201).

Discourse Strategies in Written Discourse

Several studies have laid emphasis on the role and importance of writing discourse strategies in gaining writing competence. These strategies are writer's cognitive factors that guide learners to use their second language linguistic, grammatical and contextual knowledge in the process of writing. The first written discourse strategy is planning that aids in choosing method and material (linguistic structure, concept and content) for the given writing task. After planning, writers revise their prior knowledge related to the present written discourse perspective then they organize sentences at discourse level. Organizational strategy shows how to plan explicitly [Roca de Lorios et.al. (1999) and Zamel (1983)]. Other writing strategies such as: evaluation, transcription and translation help in maintaining second language discourse production; and are based on writer's cognitive capacity and his/her contextual
and cultural knowledge of the task. When the writer faces any problem in second language writing task, he/she takes the help of translation. His/her knowledge (linguistic and conceptual), behaviour and ability correspond to his second language writing discourse production (Wang and Wen, 2002).

Many studies examine written discourse strategies used by ‘good’ and ‘bad’ writers. Raimes (1985a), Roca de Larios, Marin and Murphy (2001) found that able writers are involved more in planning and revising in discourse production process, while less skilled second language writers are concerned with less planning, revision and more editing. Evidence for this phenomenon was found by Planko (1979), Sommers (1980), Zamel (1983) and Roca de Larios et al. (1999 and 2001).

Thus, writing discourse strategies play an important role in achieving written discourse competence. At present, teachers and researchers are giving more attention to the study of discourse in their classrooms and in their research. The question arises whether there is a need to give more time to the teaching of discourse to ESL learners.

Conclusion

It is clear that communicative competence is the mother of discourse competence as the various models presented by many linguists and researchers show. Canale and Swain (1980) have described communicative competence as a combination of four categories: grammatical, discourse, socio-linguistic and strategic. However, it has received criticism from Schachter (1990) who does not accept this division of components. Savingon (1983) suggests a possible relationship among four components. Bachman (1990) has developed a model of language competence dividing it into two components: organizational and pragmatic competence.

Discourse competence as discussed, is a subcategory of communicative competence. But it has also its own separate value in SLA because it is
concerned with the use of language in society and it is divided into two parts: organization of language, which includes the grammatical/linguistic knowledge, and function of language that includes socio-linguistic and strategic skills and knowledge. These two meanings of discourse are treated separately in the present work for collecting data on transfer of discourse competence and they are represented separately in the empirical studies reported in chapter III and chapter IV.