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INTEGRATING META COMPETENCE INTO COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

Gulyamova Mavluda Khamitovna
UzSWLU, PhD
mavluda-gulyamova82@mail.ru

Abstract

The growing complexity of communication in modern educational and professional contexts requires language learners to develop not only communicative competence but also meta-competence. Meta-competence refers to learners' ability to reflect on, monitor, regulate and adapt their language use according to different communicative situations. This article explores the integration of meta-competence into Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and examines its potential to enhance learners' communicative effectiveness. Drawing upon contemporary theories of language learning, metacognition and communicative competence, the paper argues that meta-competence serves as a crucial component in fostering learner autonomy, critical thinking and strategic communication skills.

Keywords: Meta-competence, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), communicative competence, metacognition, learner autonomy, reflective learning, language awareness, strategic competence, English language teaching, language education.

Introduction

In recent decades, language education has undergone significant changes, shifting from traditional grammar-focused instruction to learner-centered approaches that emphasize meaningful communication. One of the most influential approaches in this regard is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which aims to develop

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learners' communicative competence through authentic language use and interaction. CLT encourages students not only to acquire linguistic knowledge but also to use language effectively in real-life situations.

The increasing complexity of communication in multilingual and multicultural contexts has highlighted the need for additional competencies beyond communicative competence. Modern language learners are expected to become reflective, autonomous and strategic users of language who can monitor, evaluate and regulate their own learning processes. This need has led to growing interest in the concept of meta-competence. Meta-competence refers to a higher-order ability that enables individuals to reflect on, manage and adapt their knowledge, skills and behaviors in different contexts. Unlike specific competencies that focus on particular tasks or domains, meta-competence functions as an overarching capacity that supports continuous learning, problem-solving, self-regulation and critical thinking. It allows learners to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and to make informed decisions about their learning strategies. The concept of meta-competence has attracted attention in various fields, including education, psychology, management and professional development. In language learning, meta-competence is closely associated with metacognitive awareness, learner autonomy, reflective practice and strategic competence. By developing meta-competence, learners become more capable of planning their learning goals, monitoring their progress, evaluating outcomes and adapting their communication strategies to different situations.

Researchers have identified several major types of meta-competence. The concept of meta-competence has been explored by several scholars, among whom John Burgoyne (1989) and Ronald Barnett (1994) are particularly influential. Both researchers consider meta-competence a higher-order capability that enables individuals to go beyond the mere possession of knowledge and skills. However, they differ in their understanding of its primary functions and significance. According to Burgoyne (1989), meta-competence refers to an

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individual's ability to manage, develop and adapt existing competencies in response to new situations and challenges. He argues that effective learners and professionals are not simply those who possess specific competencies but those who can continuously acquire new ones and transfer them across different contexts. From this perspective, meta-competence serves as a foundation for lifelong learning, adaptability and self-directed development. Barnett (1994), on the other hand, approaches meta-competence from a more reflective and critical perspective. He defines it as the capacity to engage in critical thinking, self-reflection and informed decision-making in uncertain and complex situations. For Barnett, meta-competence enables individuals to question assumptions, evaluate their experiences and construct new understandings. Thus, he emphasizes the transformative role of meta-competence in helping learners cope with the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

Having reviewed the theoretical perspectives of foreign scholars, the discussion now turns to the views of Uzbek researchers whose contributions offer valuable insights into the role and development of meta-competence in contemporary education. The concept of meta-competence has been discussed by both foreign and Uzbek scholars. Among them John Burgoyne (1989) and the Uzbek researcher Feruza Berdibekova (2025) provide valuable insights into the nature and significance of meta-competence. According to Burgoyne (1989), meta-competence is the ability to manage, develop and adapt existing competencies to new situations and challenges. He argues that successful individuals are not only those who possess specific skills and knowledge but also those who can continuously acquire new competencies and apply them effectively in changing contexts. Therefore, meta-competence serves as a foundation for lifelong learning and professional adaptability. Similarly, Berdibekova (2025) defines meta-competence as an integrative and higher-order competence that enables individuals to engage in continuous self-development, self-directed learning and effective performance in uncertain situations. She emphasizes the role of

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metacognitive processes, including self-awareness, reflection, self-regulation and the ability to manage one's own learning activities. In her view, meta-competence occupies the highest level in the hierarchy of competencies because it coordinates and enhances the development of other competencies. According to the scholar's idea we tried to give our own definition on this topic: Meta-competence refers ability to reflect on, monitor, regulate, and improve their own knowledge, skills, and performance in the learning and teaching process. It is a higher-order competence that enables individuals to adapt to new situations, learn from experience, and continuously develop their professional and communicative abilities. In teaching context, meta competence involves self-awareness, metacognitive skills, reflective practice, adaptability, self-directed learning, which supports continuous professional and personal growth. However, meta-competence refers to higher-order cognitive and metacognitive abilities that enable learners to:

- Reflect on their language use and learning strategies.
- Monitor their comprehension and production of language.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of communication.
- Adapt strategies to different communicative contexts.
- Engage in self-directed learning and continuous improvement.

In language learning, meta-competence allows students to become aware of how they learn and communicate, rather than simply focusing on what they learn. As we know language learning activities are very important in teaching. We can suggest the following activities for integrating meta-competence into CLT.

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Types of activity	The aim of the activity	Examples
Reflecting learning activity	Teachers can encourage learners to reflect on communicative tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Learning journals ❖ Reflection logs ❖ Self-assessment checklists ❖ Peer feedback sessions
Think-Aloud Protocols	Students verbalize their thought processes while completing communicative tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Vocabulary selection ❖ Grammar choices ❖ Problem-solving strategies ❖ Communication adjustments
Strategy-Based Instruction	Explicitly teaching communication and learning strategies helps students develop meta-competence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Asking for clarification ❖ Circumlocution ❖ Predicting meaning from context ❖ Monitoring comprehension ❖ Planning spoken or written messages
Self-Assessment and Goal Setting	Learners can set communicative goals and monitor their progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Improve fluency in discussions. ❖ Use new vocabulary in conversations. ❖ Increase participation in group activities.
Collaborative Learning and Peer Evaluation	Group work provides opportunities for learners to observe, analyze, and evaluate communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Peer feedback on presentations ❖ Group discussions ❖ Problem-solving tasks ❖ Project-based learning
Critical Incident Analysis	Students examine communication successes and failures from real or simulated situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Why did the misunderstanding occur? ❖ What alternative strategies could have been used? ❖ How did cultural factors influence communication?

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Integrating meta-competence into Communicative Language Teaching enriches language learning by combining communicative practice with metacognitive awareness. Through reflection, self-assessment, strategy use, and collaborative learning, students develop not only the ability to communicate but also the capacity to understand, monitor, and improve their communication. As language education increasingly emphasizes learner autonomy and lifelong learning, meta-competence represents a valuable addition to the principles and practices of CLT.

Conclusion

The integration of meta-competence into Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) provides a valuable framework for developing learners who are not only communicatively competent but also capable of critically reflecting on and regulating their own learning processes. While traditional CLT emphasizes meaningful interaction and language use, meta-competence enhances these goals by fostering learners' awareness of communication strategies, learning objectives and contextual language use. This combination encourages greater learner autonomy, adaptability and lifelong learning skills. Theoretical perspectives from both international and Uzbek scholars highlight the importance of reflective thinking, self-assessment and strategic learning in language education. By incorporating meta-competence into classroom practices, teachers can create more effective and learner-centered environments that promote both linguistic proficiency and cognitive development. Integrating meta-competence into CLT should be regarded as an essential step toward meeting the demands of modern language education and preparing learners for successful communication in diverse real-world contexts.

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