Inclusion of Social Media Abbreviations in Communicative Language Testing

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Abstract

Communicative competence is the broader term which covers all knowledge, capacity and skills. This particular study invites the attention towards communicative abbreviations which are used in social media platforms and electronic communication. Researcher placed these abbreviations in pragmatic and grammatical knowledge in Batchman (1999) model. These abbreviations are internationally recognized and mutually intelligible by the community of social media. Keeping in mind the idea that social media is an active and easily accessible platform to take information and express views. Large amount of world's population is active users of social media. While accessing the communicative competence of speakers these abbreviations should also be incorporated to access the communicative competence of the speakers. Knowhow of these abbreviations will help the speakers to perceive and produce information on social media more actively and quickly. List of abbreviations with their meanings have been reported in this study.

Keywords: Social media abbreviations, CLT, grammatical knowledge

1. Introduction

The term "communicative competence" was first coined in 1967 by the American sociolinguist and anthropologist Dell Hymes (1927- 2009) in response to Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence. He defined communicative competence as what "enables a member of the community to know when to speak and when to remain silent, which code to use, when, where and to whom, etc. (Hymes, 1967, p. 13).

Communicative competence is an umbrella term which covers all linguistics, social and strategic aspects of communication. Person can be declared as communicatively competent if the person shows expertise in all above mentioned aspects and communicates effectively but if the person lacks in any of these aspects, he would lack the communicative competence.

This particular study aims to highlight the importance and gain attention towards the emerging source of communication which is electronic and social media communication. Two main platforms of social media Facebook were founded in 2004 and twitter in 2006. According to Wang (2016), it has become a trend and standard for the people to post about their daily activities, opinions about social and current issues on these plate forms. Branckaute (2010) reported that there are 55 million statuses posted on Facebook daily by 500 million Facebook users. Meanwhile, 50 million tweets are observed on twitter daily and this rate is tremendously increasing as the access to electronic devices and social media is increasing.

So, all plate forms of social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and many others are found indulged in the frequent use abbreviations which are recognized and mutually intelligible by the active community of social media. Keeping this view in mind person should also have the knowhow and awareness of these abbreviations used at the platforms of social media to be aware of the current issues and activities on social media.

Influenced by theory of structural linguistics and behaviourism, Lado (1961) theorized a "skills-and-elements" model of L2 proficiency which specified three key elements of language knowledge (i.e., phonology, structure, and the lexicon) any of these elements could be examined with relation to four language skills (i.e., listening, reading, speaking, and writing).

Following Lado's (1961) model Carroll (1968) proposed a skills-and-components model of proficiency including phonology, orthography, grammar (morphology and syntax), and lexis to be measured through the same four skills. Carrol (1968) argued in the favor of integrative testing as compared to discrete element testing.

Widdowson (1983) showed a distinction between competence and capacity. He defined competence, i.e., communicative competence, the knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic conventions. On the other hand, capacity which he referred to as procedural or communicative capacity. He understood the ability to use knowledge as means of creating meaning in a language.

Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) summarized communicative competence as a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skill needed for communication. Knowledge refers to the (conscious or unconscious) knowledge of an individual about language and about other aspects of language use. In this model communicative competence includes Linguistic competence, Socio-cultural competence and strategic competence.

Farhady (1983) states that communicative competence includes many functional competencies with relation to the specific areas of language use and the learners would gather and mold more functional competences according to their educational and professional requirements. This promotes the idea that person would need specific and narrower competencies according to the need and context of use.

Kramsch (1986) included the element of non-verbal which was not focused by previous theorists in their models. Element of non-verbal communication also has importance with relation to verbal communication to incorporate the overall communicative competence.

Harding (2014) reported the alarming situation that the frequent advancement in the field of mobile and electronic communication has challenged the theoretical background. This particular research aims to call attention towards a narrow but frequently growing and highly influential aspect of the use of communicative abbreviations on social media.

Young generation and the active social media users have their own mutually intelligible abbreviations and slangs which are adapted for the communication on all social media forums such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and many others. Researcher intends to suggest that those abbreviations should also be kept under consideration while assessing the learner's communicative competence.

Researcher provides the list of abbreviations which is used on social media and suggests to be incorporated in the language tests because social media is the plate form through which a person connects to the whole world.

2. Literature Review

The term "communicative competence" was first coined in 1967 by the American sociolinguist and anthropologist Dell Hymes (1927- 2009) in response to Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence. He defined communicative competence as what "enables a member of the community to know when to speak and when to remain silent, which code to use, when, where and to whom, etc. (Hymes, 1967, p. 13).

Influenced by theory of structural linguistics and behaviourism, Lado (1961) proposed a "skills-and-elements" model of L2 proficiency which specified three key elements of language knowledge (i.e., phonology, structure, and the lexicon) any of these elements could be examined with relation to four language skills (i.e., listening, reading, speaking, and writing). Tasks could be designed to assess each discrete component through one or more skills.

Table 1: Frame work of Lado's (1961) Model

	Phonology	Structure	Lexicon
Listening			
Reading			
Speaking			
Writing			

Element of lexicon means stock of lexical items can be tested by incorporating with reading skill. Phonological elements can be tested through listening skill. Structural pattern can be tested through both productive skill speaking and writing. This model followed the scheme of discrete testing.

Chomsky (1965) criticized Lado's model by claiming that through structuralist approach creative aspect of language cannot be examined more over the universal characteristics of all the languages. Batchman (1990) argued that this model did not explain how skill and component are linked to each other. (Carroll, 1961; Oller, 1979; Farhady, 1980; Spolsky, 1985) raised criticism about the weakness of these tests to check the learner's performance in the real-life context. Morrow (1979) believed that atomist approach to language is totally wrong because language is totally different from its components.

Following Lado's (1961) model Carroll (1968) proposed a skills-and-components model of proficiency including phonology, orthography, grammar (morphology and syntax), and lexis to be measured through the same four skills. Carroll (1968) argued that the assessment of language by "discrete-point" tasks (i.e., approach which examines linguistic elements in isolation without context) needed to be complemented by integrative tasks (i.e., approach which attempts to examine the ability to use linguistic knowledge collectively at the same time while performing some real-life task). He maintained that language is an integrative phenomenon in practice and unitary in nature (Farhady 1994).

These language skills can be tested by asking learner to listen the instructions and then right down the given task. Skills related to phonology, grammar, morphology and syntax can be tested by following the approach of integrative testing.

Carrol (1961) and Oller (1979) introduced the new model to language testing "Integrative testing". Integrative testing was supported and given preference over discrete element testing.

Oller (1979) stated that language has a unitary nature and it is integrative in practice. Oller's hypothesis was refuted on the basis of both analytic flaws in the use of factor analysis (Vollmer & Sang, 1983) and on findings from empirical studies which examined the factorial structure of language knowledge. Results of cloze tests do not represent the true ability of the learner (Alderson, 1991). Morrow (1979) reported that in cloze and dictation tests learners rely on the instruction of the examiner and does not allow the spontaneous production of language.

Widdowson (1983) showed a distinction between competence and capacity. He defined competence, i.e., communicative competence, the knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic conventions. On the other hand, capacity as the procedural or communicative capacity. He understood the ability to use knowledge as means of creating meaning in a language. According to him, ability is not a component of competence. It does not turn into competence, but remains "an active force for continuing creativity", i.e., force for the realization of what Halliday called the "meaning potential" (Widdowson, 1983, p. 27). Widdowson gave more attention to performance or real language use.

Aspect of competence can be studied and tested proposed by widdowson (1983). Competence includes linguistic; lexical and structural and socio linguistic; social and cultural conventions with relation to language. Lexical and structural elements can be tested through devising a test of writing and reading. Sociolinguistic competence can be tested by asking testee to indulge in a speaking activity through this social and cultural conventions can be tested.
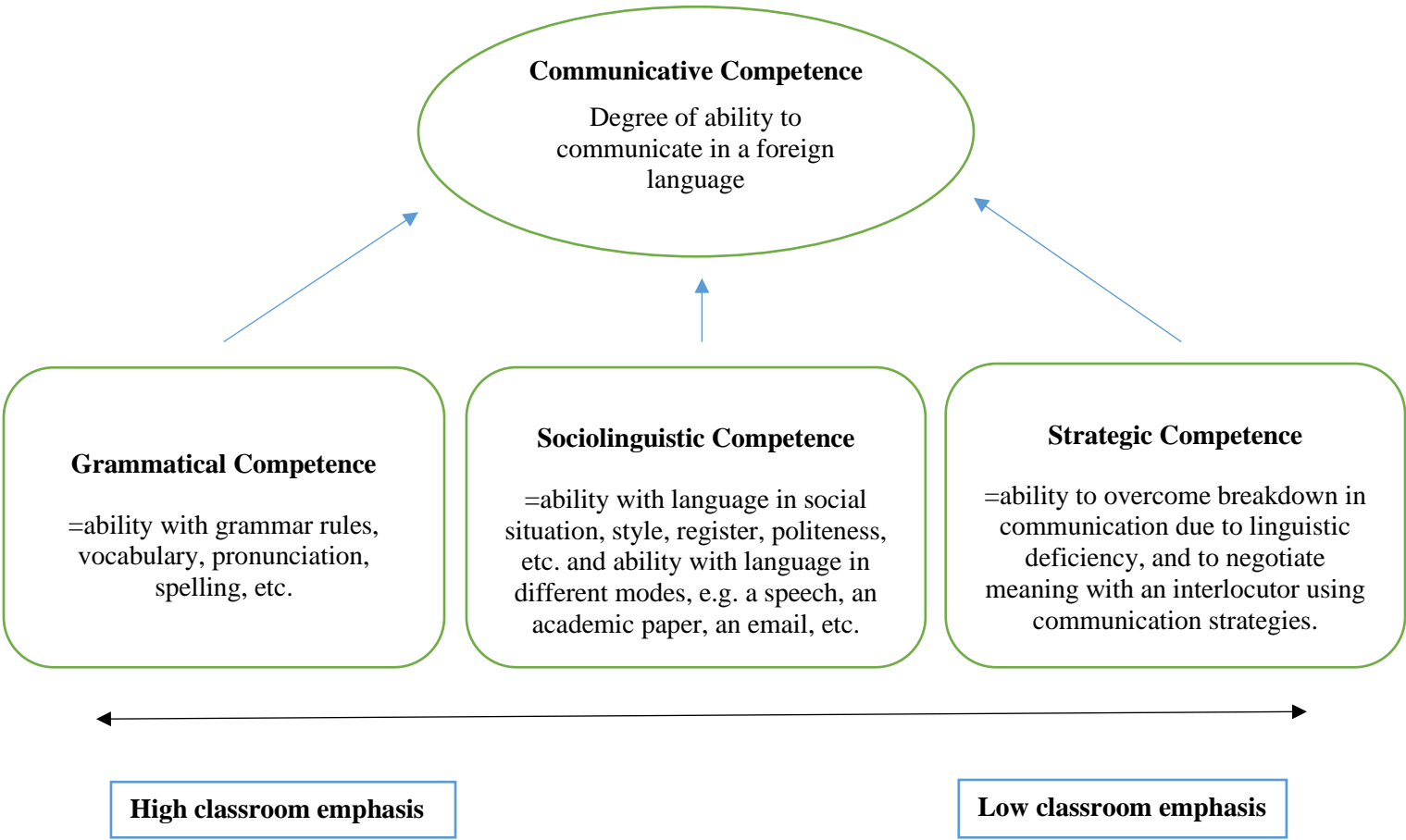
Canale and Swain (1980) criticized the purely functional approach. Vanek (1977) and Munby (1978) gave more attention to linguistic knowledge to fulfill communicative purpose. They added the element of sociolinguistic competence and proved that neither language is produced in vacuum nor is just mare produced in mind as Chomsky claimed (Adel & Hashemi, 2015; Ghaniabadi & Hashemi, 2015).

Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) summarized communicative competence as a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skill needed for communication. Knowledge refers to the (conscious or unconscious) knowledge of an individual about language and about other aspects of language use.

According to them, there are three types of knowledge:

1) Knowledge of the underlying grammatical principles

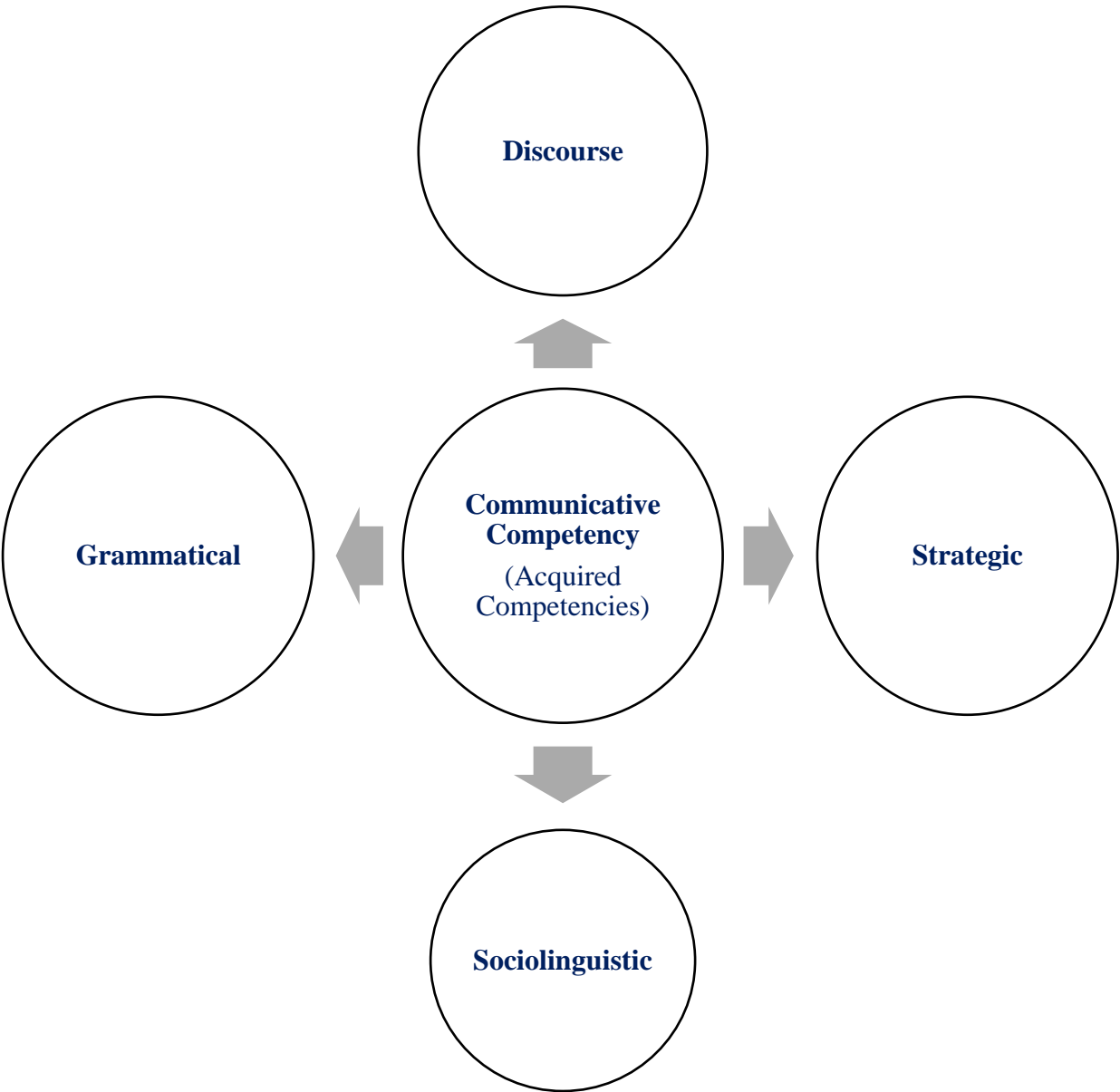2) Knowledge of the use of language in a social context in order to fulfil communicative functions

3) Knowledge of how to combine utterances and communicative functions with respect to discourse principles

Communicative Competence

Degree of ability to communicate in a foreign language

Grammatical Competence

=ability with grammar rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, etc.

Sociolinguistic Competence

=ability with language in social situation, style, register, politeness, etc. and ability with language in different modes, e.g. a speech, an academic paper, an email, etc.

Strategic Competence

=ability to overcome breakdown in communication due to linguistic deficiency, and to negotiate meaning with an interlocutor using communication strategies.

High classroom emphasis   **Low classroom emphasis**

Skill refers to how an individual can use the knowledge in actual communication. According to Canale (1983), skill requires a further distinction between underlying capacity and its manifestation in real communication, that is to say, in performance. The inclusion of strategic competence in this model was a major step, it was influenced by the previous frameworks proposed by Munby (1978) and Vanek's (1977) idea of 'functional and notional grammar'.

In this model, grammatical competence has few similarities with linguistic competence proposed by Chomsky. Knowledge of phonology, morphology, lexical items, syntax and semantics. Sociolinguistic competence covers the aspect of social situations, style, register, social conventions and different modes of language. Strategic competence includes aspects of negotiation, breakdown of speech etc.

Canale (1983) revised the model by adding the aspect of discourse competence, it included the mastery of cohesion and coherence and aspects of smaller grammatical forms to combine unified texts. Strategic competence in this model broadened the boundaries and included the aspects of verbal and non-verbal strategic communication.

Discourse

Grammatical

Communicative Competency
(Acquired Competencies)

Strategic

Sociolinguistic

Farhaday (1980) (one of the first active critics of the notion of Canale and Swain model of communicative competence, communicative competence is so vast in domain and complex in nature that it is not even possible for many native speakers to reach it. In this regard, Farhady

(1980) introduced the notorious concept of "functional competence" As Halliday (1976) describes, functions refer to what people do with language in different contexts. He considers four different purposes for language use: ideational, manipulative, heuristic, and imaginative and termed these purposes as general purposes of language. Based on the functional model of testing, he designed functional tests in (1981) which resulted to be more diagnostic and valid than integrative and discrete- point tests.

According to Farhady (1983) communicative competence comprises many functional competencies within specific areas of language use and learners would accumulate more functional competences depending on their educational and professional careers. This view gave room to ESP and EAP syllabi's and also advocates the aspect of more specific and narrower functions which can be performed with the help of language.
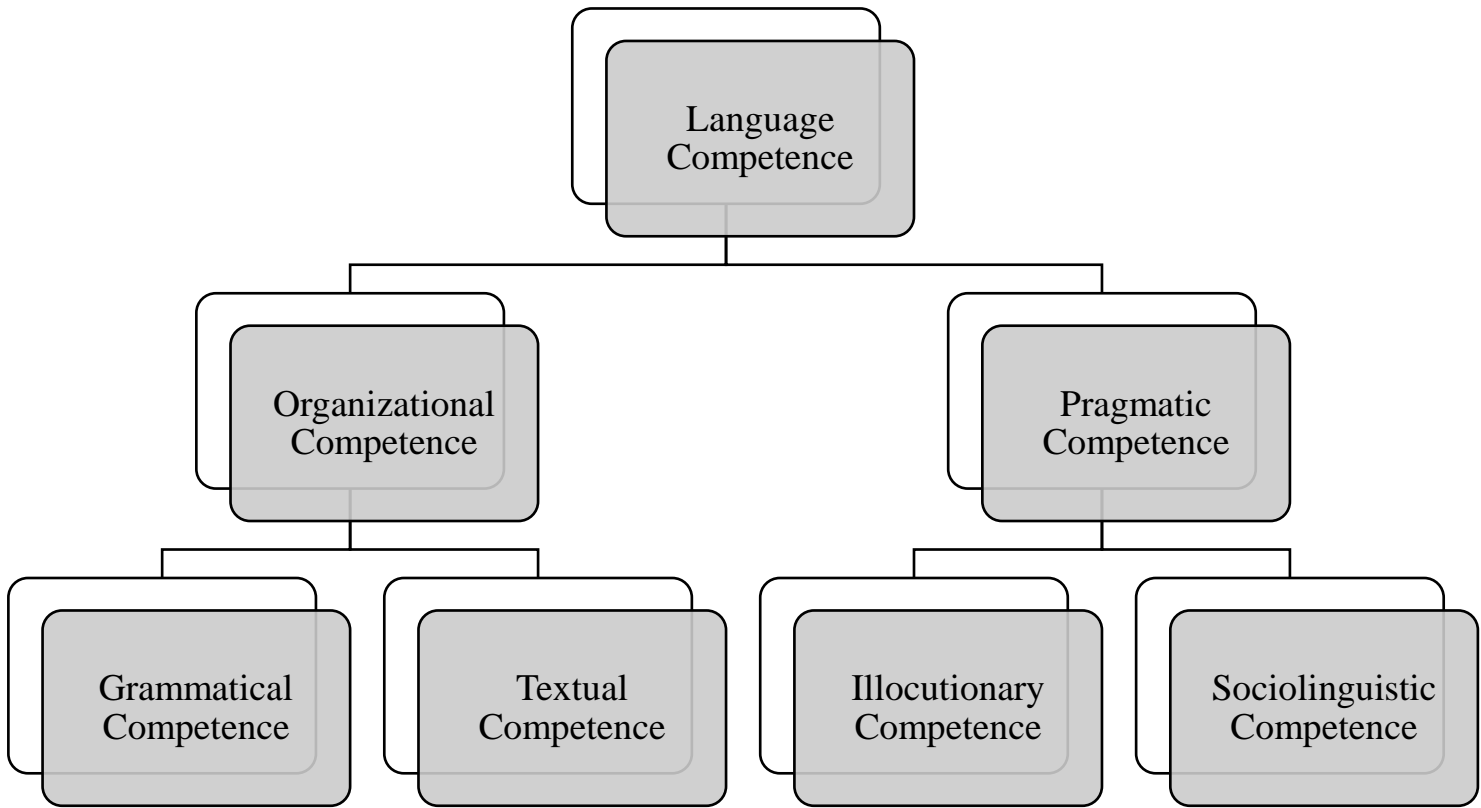
Savignon (1972, 1983) put a much greater emphasis on the aspect of ability in her frame of communicative competence. Namely, she described communicative competence as "the ability to function in a truly communicative setting – that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors" (Savignon, 1972).

Kramsch (1986) argued that possessing shared knowledge of the world is not enough for successful interaction in the context of real life. Verbal and non-verbal interaction in real life context entail the dynamic elements of utterances and meanings which cannot be pre-specified and pre-planned. According to Kramsch's (1986) definition, interaction is a dynamic process of matching between intended, perceived and expected meaning. She refers to this knowledge as interactional competence: an ability to process and negotiate the intended meaning, anticipate listener's response and possible misunderstanding, clarify one's own and others' intentions and finally arrive at a communicative decision. Interactional competence model as Kramsch (1986) describes, focuses on "notions or concepts", on "interactional processes and discourse skills".

One of the considerable advancements in the area of language testing was Bachman's (1990) comprehensive model of communicative competence which was an improvement over the previous models, from diverse perspectives. This model not only specified different components of communicative competence but also indicated how these components interact with each other in a complex manner. Its main focus on the central role of strategic competence including metacognitive strategies or higher order process that explain the interaction of knowledge and affective components of language use.

This framework encompasses three elements of language competence, strategic competence, and psychophysiological mechanisms. Language competence includes organizational and pragmatic competences. Organizational competence, in turn includes grammatical and textual abilities or competences, which are involved in producing and comprehending language.
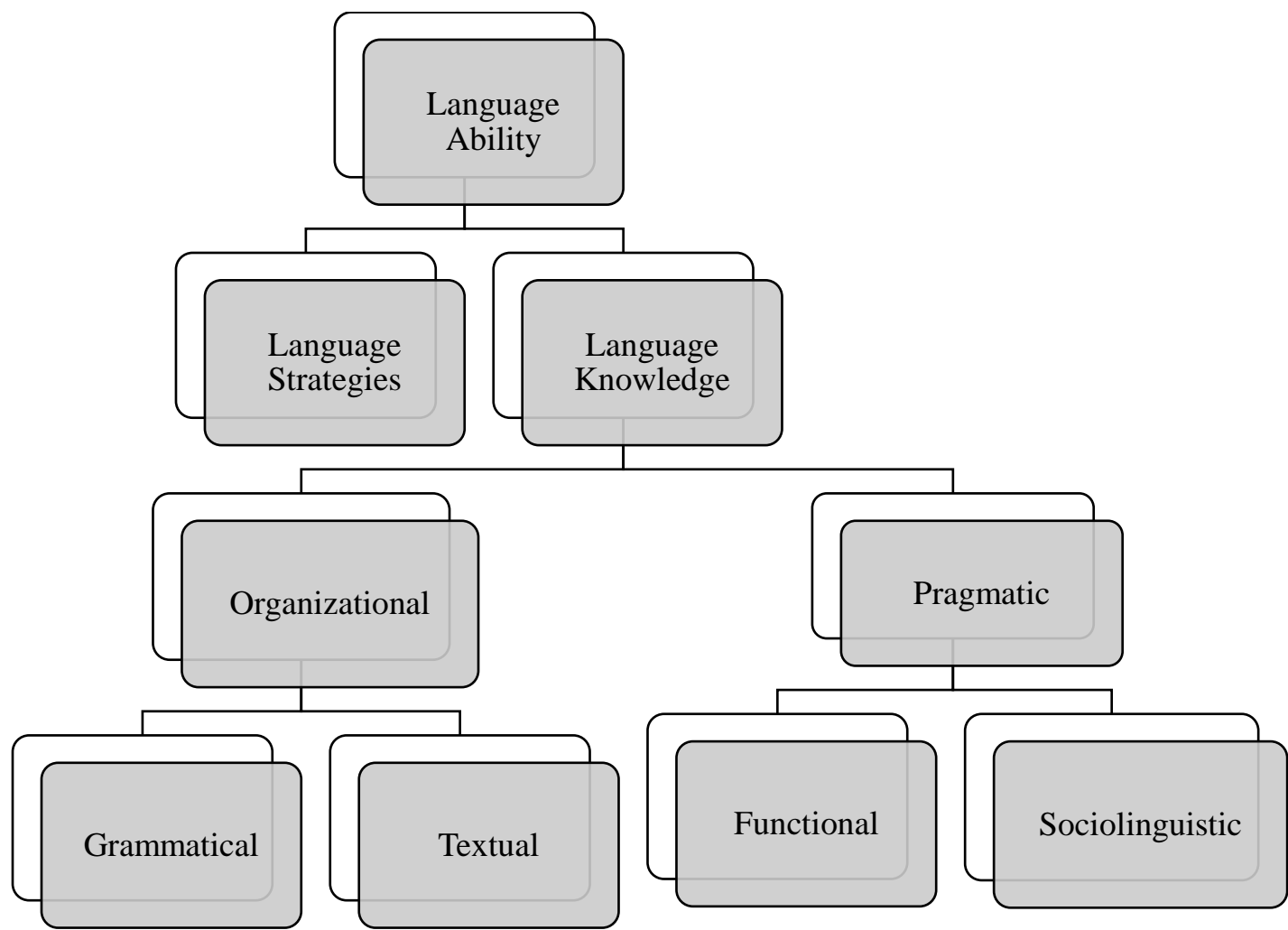
Pragmatic competence includes illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence. Widdoson's (1983) term capacity is equal to the term strategic competence devised by Batchman (1990).
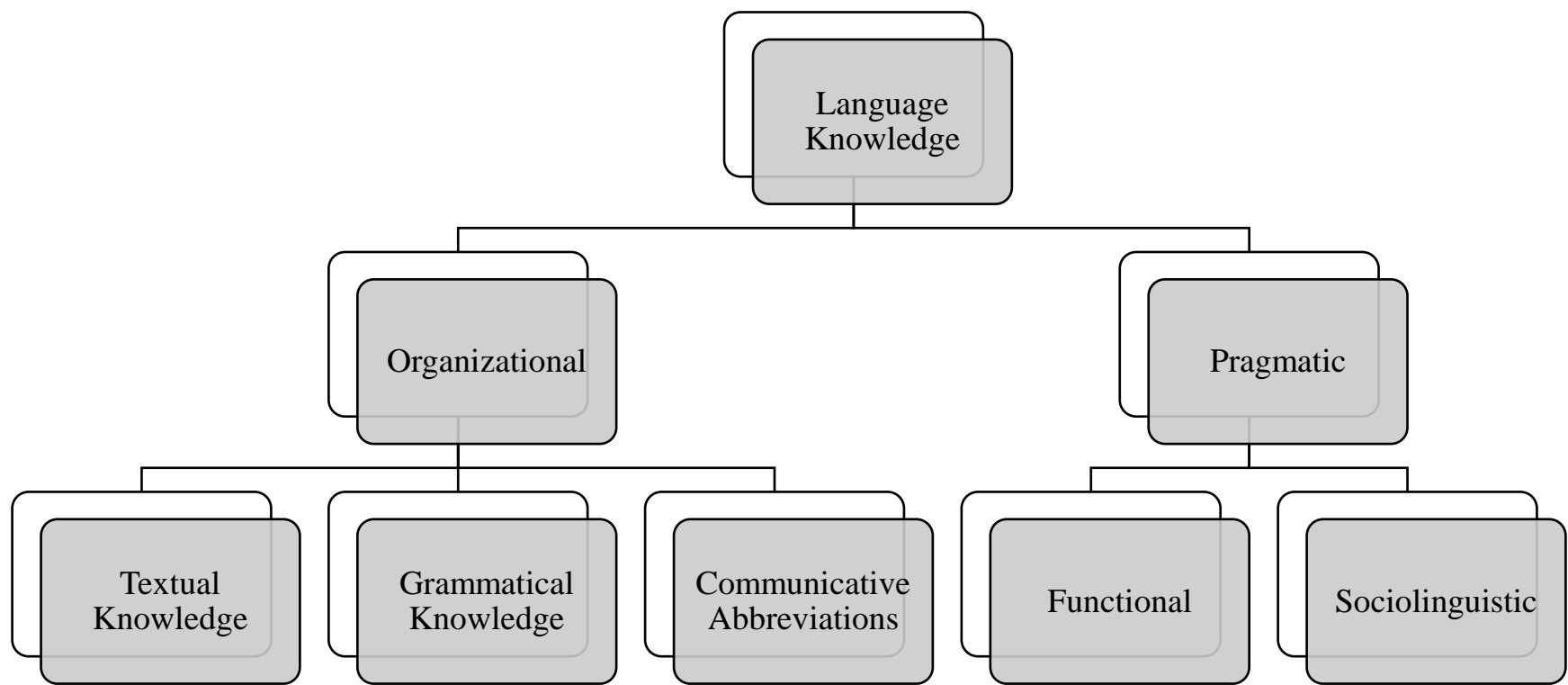

Proposed Framework by Batchman (1990) on Components of Language Competence

Batchman's grammatical competence is equal to Canale and Swain's grammatical competence. Textual competence includes cohesion and coherence of language, and knowledge about how to start, maintain and end conversation. Batchman's textual competence has swain's both strategic and discourse competence. Pragmatic competence is mainly concerned with the relationship that what the person says in that communicative act and what is the intended function in that communicative act.

Batchman and Palmer (1996) revised the frame work and proposed the categories of language knowledge and strategic competence. Language knowledge includes organizational and pragmatic knowledge. Organizational is composed of textual and grammatical knowledge. Pragmatic includes, functional and sociolinguistic knowledge.
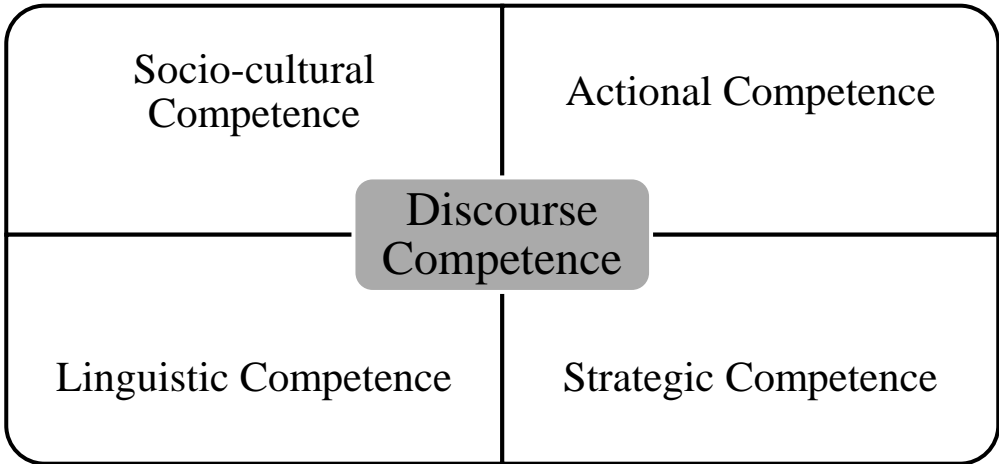
Proposed Framework by Batchman and Palmer (1996)

Placement of Communicative abbreviations in Batchman and Palmer (1996), in this particular study, the researcher intends to invite attention towards communicative abbreviations incorporated in social media and electronic conversation. Researcher places these abbreviations under the term pragmatic knowledge and grammatical knowledge. These abbreviations are vocabulary items and these vocabulary items have the specific function in the context of social media and electronic communication. These abbreviations have specific intended meanings which are mutually intelligible by the active users of social media and electronic communication.

Celcia Murcia, Thurrel and Dorney (1995) proposed the model of communicative competence, at this time scope of communicative competence came to an end with relation to content specification. This model included sociocultural, linguistic, discourse, strategic and actional competence.

Discourse competence included the aspects of cohesion and coherence, such as Dixies: temporal, personal and spatial dixies and conversation structure such as turn taking, collaboration, opening, re-opening and adjacency pairs. Actional competence includes the aspects of functions can be covered through language such as greeting, requesting, blaming, complaining, accusing, denying etc. Sociocultural aspect covers sociocultural conventions and knowledge of language related to any specific variety of language. Social and cultural context of language with relation to pragmatics is also placed in sociocultural competence.

The nature of communicative competence is not static but dynamic, it is more interpersonal than intrapersonal and relative rather than absolute (Canale & Swain, 1980; Skehan, 1998; Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Savignon (1983) referred to competence as an underlying ability and to performance as an open manifestation of competence. Savignon (1983) termed the communicative competence equal to the language proficiency. This point also suggests that if a person has communicative competence and has the grip on all aspects of communication such as sociolinguistic, strategic and linguistic. The person will be considered proficient user of the language.

Taylor (1988) proposed to replace the term "communicative competence" with the term "communicative proficiency". Bachman (1990) suggested using the term "communicative language ability", claiming that this term combines in itself the meanings of both language proficiency and communicative competence.

Harding (2014) reported that there appears a strong challenges regarding the theoretical construct in the area of communicative competence due to the drastic increase of technology and electronic communication. Due to the advent of the telecommunication and mobile based communication aspects of electronic and social media communication should also be kept under consideration.

Jue (2005) studied the social and psychological influence of the abbreviations on the life of Chinese people. Study reported that use of abbreviations lay specific function on ideological and psychological approaches to life. Frequent use of abbreviations creates a new trend and approach towards life of the community and people should have awareness of these aspects and changes in trends. Ruiyun (2005) conducted a comparative study of the use of abbreviations in English and Chinese News headlines and reported similarities between the use of abbreviations. It shows that abbreviations are the currently growing phenomenon in social and electronic media and it lays influence on the lives of the people.

Social media is the plate form which is considered more active and more valid as compared to electronic and print media. Social media includes many plate forms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and many others. Young generation and many other social media activists tend to post statuses and communicate with each other by having their specific abbreviations and slangs which are mutually intelligible by the active members of the social media.

Researcher intends to propose that those internationally, culturally and more specifically speaking on the plate form of social media recognized abbreviations and slangs should also be kept under consideration while assessing the communicative competence of native and non-native speakers. Keeping in mind, all plate forms of social media are the easily available forums through which speakers can easily communicate with the rest of the world. Most of communication is done in written form and person should have grip on those abbreviations and slangs. Researcher intends to propose that those abbreviations should also be dealt in tests to declare the person as communicatively competent.

2.1 Research Question

Q. 1 What are the abbreviations used for the social media platforms?

Q. 2 What are the abbreviations and slangs used on social media?

3. Results

3.1 Network-specific social media acronyms

IG	Instagram
LI	LinkedIn
YT	YouTube
FB	Facebook
TW	Twitter
DM	Direct message
MT	Modified tweet
PM	Private Message
RT	Retweeting them

3.2 Conversational Social media abbreviations

It's good to know what these social media abbreviations mean so you know what your audience is saying and provide them with a relevant response if needed. Some of these abbreviations are also used as hashtags, and you can take advantage of them for better visibility.

AFAIK	As far as I know
AMA	Ask me anything.
BRB	Be right back
BTAIM	Be that as it may
BTS	Behind the scenes.
BTW	By the way

DAE	Does anyone else. . .?
DYK	Did you know. . .?
ELI5	Explain like I'm five.
FBF	Flashback Friday. A theme in which people share old pictures or posts with their followers/
FBO	Facebook official. When you make a public announcement on Facebook about a live event such as a new relationship, a change of job, etc.
FF	Follow Friday. A trend that started out on Twitter and involves giving a shout out to people that you think deserve more recognition and followers.
FOMO	Fear of missing out.
FTFY	Fixed that for you
FTW	For the win
FYI	For your information
G2G or GTG	Got to go
GG	Good game
GTR	Got to run
HBD	Happy birthday
HIFW	How I feel when. . .
HMB	Hit me back
HMU	Hit me up
HT or H/T	Hat tip. Used for acknowledging, appreciating or thanking other users.
HTH	Here to help or happy to help
ICYMI	In case you missed it. Typically used when sharing content that's not too current.
IDC	I don't care
IDK	I don't know
IKR	I know, right?
ILY	I love you
IMHO	In my humble opinion
IMO	In my opinion
IRL	In real life
JK	Just kidding. Used for conveying a light-hearted tone.
LMAO	Laughing my a** off
LMK	Let me know
LMS	Like my status. Used for inviting people to engage with a post.
LOL	Laughing out loud
ROFL	Rolling on the floor laughing
MCM	Man crush Monday. Chipotle put its own twist to this abbreviation to fit the product:
MFW	My face when. . .
MTFBWY	May the Force be with you. A "Star Wars" reference commonly used to give encouragement.
NBD	No big deal
NM	Not much
NSFW	Not safe for work
NVM	Never mind
OH	Used as context for quotes

OMW	On my way
OOTD	Outfit of the day
OP	Original poster
OTP	One true pairing. Commonly used in fandoms. Refers to two people or fictional characters that you consider the perfect pair/couple.
PPL	People
ROFL	Rolling on the floor laughing
ROFLMAO	Rolling on the floor laughing my a** off
SFW	Safe for work
SMH	Shaking my head. Used to express shock or disappointment.
TBH	To be honest
TBBH	To be brutally honest
TBT	Throwback Thursday. Like FBF, this involves sharing old photos or posts.
TFW	That feeling when. . . Used for sharing a relatable experience.
TGIF	Thank God it's Friday
TIL	Today I learned. . .
TL; DR	Too long; didn't read.
TMI	Too much information
WBU	What about you?
WBW	Way back Wednesday. Follows the same theme as FBF and TBT
WFH	Work from home
YOLO	You only live once

4. Discussion

Social media and electronic modes of communication are frequently growing modes of communication and connection with the world. All plate forms of social media are considered very effective for opinion expression, throughout the last one-decade social media has been gaining remarkable popularity among the young generation (Khairutdinov, 2017). Experts and frequent users of social media tend to write posts and comments in the specific ways usually slangs, jargons and abbreviations are employed in their writings. This research mainly focuses on communicative abbreviations enlisted above. Awareness regarding these abbreviations is much necessary to be communicatively competent and proficient in the language as termed by (sauvignon, 1983).

Keeping in mind the idea that social media is the quite active and quick source of connecting to the world for both purposes sharing and taking information. Person should understand the communicative abbreviations used at the platforms of social media. Awareness of the communicative abbreviations should also be assessed in the communicative language tests.

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded from this particular research those communicative abbreviations have key importance in the modern era of technology in which healthy amount of communication is done through social media and electronic devices. These abbreviations should be incorporated in the communicative language tests and by having the awareness of the use of these abbreviations' person can perform role in the society in a better way. Responses and views of the social media community can be understood in a better way and person can compete and play role by having grip about the use of these abbreviations.

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