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LANGUAGES
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KEITA Abdoul Kadri

**Investigating Linguistic Barriers at the Level of Semantic comprehension on Learners'
Communicative Competence:**

A Case of First Year Master Students at the Department of English University of Biskra

Broad of Examiners

Chairperson

Dr. SEGUENI Lamri

Examiner

Dr. NASRI Chahira

Supervisor

Dr. LAALA Youcef

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation represents my work which is entirely original to me and was not previously submitted to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma, or other qualifications. It was completed after I registered for the Master degree at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra, Algeria.

Certified

Mr KEITA Abdoul Kadri

Date: 12/06/2024.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved family,

To my parents whose unwavering support, love and encouragement have been my motivation light. Your education and sacrifices have allowed me to pursue my dreams since and always.

Thank you for being my bedrock, this achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

To my sisters and brothers your constant accompaniment reminds me the virtues of respect and hard work. You are my joy and pride.

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List of abbreviations

EFL: English as Foreign Language.

CC: Communicative Competence.

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching.

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Abstract

The dissertation deals with the Linguistic Barriers at the Level of Semantic Comprehension that constitute an hindrance to EFL students' communicative competence in English a case study of First Year Master students in the Department of English at University of Biskra. It identifies specific semantic obstacles that impede EFL learners' communicative competence and suggests some recommendations to subjugate this issue. This research approach was qualitative using a case study design. Regarding the data collection instrument, a questionnaire was administrated to First Year Master learners. The population sample lent itself to the research project. The findings reveal the evidence of the existence of semantic barriers that hinder EFL students' communicative competence. This study comes up with some recommendations.

Keywords: Communicative Competence; Linguistic; Semantic; Barriers; EFL Learners.

Resumé

Le mémoire traite des Barrières Linguistiques au Niveau de la Compréhension Sémantique qui constituent un obstacle à la compétence communicative des étudiants en anglais langue étrangère, avec une étude de cas des étudiants de première année de Master du Département d'anglais de l'Université de Biskra. Il identifie des obstacles sémantiques spécifiques qui entravent la compétence communicative des apprenants en anglais langue étrangère et suggère quelques recommandations pour surmonter ce problème. Cette approche de recherche était qualitative en utilisant une conception d'étude de cas. En ce qui concerne l'instrument de collecte de données, un questionnaire a été administré aux apprenants de première année de Master. L'échantillon de population s'est prêté au projet de recherche. Les résultats révèlent la preuve de l'existence de barrières sémantiques qui entravent la compétence communicative des étudiants en anglais langue étrangère. Cette étude vise à apporter quelques recommandations pour une amélioration de la compétence communicative des apprenants.

Mots clés : Compétence Communicative ; Linguistique ; Sémantique ; barrières ; Apprenants.

General Introduction

General introduction:

1. Background:

The field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has observed increasingly an interest to communicative competence, emphasizing on the crucial role of semantics in the effectiveness of communication. This work focuses on the linguistics barriers, at the semantic level impeding the growth of communicative ability among First year Master students at University of Biskra.

The study of meaning in language (Semantics) plays an inherent function in communication. In navigating in the complex semantic distinction of English EFL students often face challenges influencing their ability to express intended meaning accurately and comprehend informations effectively. Firstly, a notable difficulty is the presence of semantic ambiguity in the English language. As Smith (2019) says, words and expressions may carry several meanings leading to confusion for EFL learners. Secondly, cross-cultural differences contribute to the complexity of EFL learning. Idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and connotations unique to English can be perplexing for non-native learners, impacting their capacity to grasp the intended meaning in diverse communicative contexts, sustain Jones & Lee, (2020). Furthermore, lexical gaps, contribute to communication breakdowns where students fail to find corresponding vocabulary in English for concepts in their native language. This gap limits their ability to convey nuanced meanings and hinders the development of a rich communicative repertoire (Brown, 2018).

This research addressing these difficulties vises to identify pedagogical interventions and strategies that can promote semantic awareness, raising a more profound comprehension of semantics in the group of educators and students. Activating light on these linguistic barriers, educators can adapt strategies to foster effective communication competence.

2. Statement of the Problem:

Currently students in their academic carrier focus on English as an academic subject rather than an instrument of communication. They tend to define it to the matter of a tool used only in academic areas. However in that context, most of English teachers put emphasis on skills to build accurate language structure and do not take into consideration the importance of the choice of words that really tackle the speaker intention. Teaching semantics in order to help students having appropriate vocabulary performing their communicative competence is not

adequately rated. Teaching which improves students' ability to communicate is necessary in the way of expressing themselves and understanding in their communicative setting. Such a problem must be a major concern of English teachers at university of Biskra (English Branch). It can be caused by the fact that teachers overlook others skills than helping students having a diversified and appropriate vocabulary. Also it may be due that they face obstacles or come up with irrelevant techniques to address the weakness of students' vocabulary. In the academic area most of students tend to address their teachers using their native language which causes a crucial disadvantage to their English communicative competence. The teaching techniques do not play in favour of a permanent increase of students' vocabulary as the interaction teachers-students minimise the use of the target language. As result many students naturally block in their communication or they practice code-switching.

3. Research Questions:

RQ1. How do vocabulary limitations impact the communicative competence of EFL students at Biskra University?

RQ2. Are lexical gaps faced by EFL students based on their linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds?

4. Research Hypothesis:

The provision of the present hypothesis is meant to be tested and verified.

Students who possess cultural awareness and understanding of semantic nuances will demonstrate enhanced communicative competence in cross-cultural contexts.

5. Aims of the Study:

The objectives of the study on "Investigating linguistic barriers at the level semantic comprehension on students' communicative competence" include the identification of semantic ambiguity. It focuses on considering and tracing semantic obstacles faced by EFL students, notably an accent on ambiguities, challenges resulting from the nuanced nature of English and multiple meanings. It also investigates lexical gaps, analysing how present gaps between EFL students' first language and English contribute to communication breakdowns and restrict the expansion of a comprehensive communicative repertory. Moreover, it aims to examine cross-cultural influences by exploring how EFL students' understanding of English influenced by cross-cultural differences, analysing the function of connotations and idiomatic expressions in hindering effective communication. The study tends to assess pedagogical

strategies and contribute to the broader EFL education in increasing the understanding of semantic comprehension challenges to notify possible research efforts.

6. Significance of the Study:

The importance of this study firstly, resides in its force to contribute valid insights to educational and academic practice. Addressing and comprehending in the case of EFL students at university of Biskra can inform educational approaches: provide educators with nuanced understanding of specific challenges faced by EFL learners, and capacitate the development of tailored pedagogical methods to enhance language instruction. As (Bygate, 2008) emphasises, understanding the specific challenges faced by learners is crucial for effective language instruction. Students often face challenges, in communication due to barriers with semantic ambiguity being a hindrance. Fourar & Hoadjli (2021) reveals in their work that semantic opaqueness stands as a major difficulty to EFL learners as they showed a poor level when dealing with formulaic sequences that hold a non-literal meaning even though they were directly and explicitly instructed in the assigned area. Semantic ambiguity, where words or phrases have various meanings can cause confusion and misunderstanding in language learning. In EFL context this ambiguity presents an obstacle for students trying to grasp and use language accurately. Chen (2018) shows that EFL students struggle to understand the intended meanings of words and expressions because of ambiguity. The complexity of the language with its vocabulary containing homonyms, polysemous words and idiomatic expressions exacerbates this challenge. When semantic ambiguity is present in EFL communication it hinders students ability to effectively convey their messages and comprehend others messages. Lee (2019) discovered that EFL learners often find interpreting expressions and figurative language difficult due, to the interpretations associated with these linguistic elements. Moreover, the study can help in the enhancement of curriculum by accentuating points where communicative competence may be impeded by semantic barriers. Misinterpreting language can lead to confusion and irritation ultimately impacting how well English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners are able to communicate. Moreover according to Garcías research, in 2020 the presence of ambiguity can cause communication errors and disruptions during conversations, which can impede the growth of students' ability to communicate effectively. To overcome semantic-based language challenges, in teaching English as a language it is essential to use a variety of methods. This includes giving instructions providing examples and exposing learners to real life language usage. Smith

(2021) advocates for the integration of semantic awareness activities into the EFL curriculum, such as semantic mapping exercises, synonym exploration, and contextual analysis of ambiguous language. . Engaging students in activities that require inferring meaning from context and clarify ambiguities through negotiation, learners can enhance their communicative competence in real-world contexts. Johnson (2022) emphasizes the importance of providing EFL learners with opportunities for meaningful interaction and negotiation of meaning in authentic communicative tasks. It adds force to the existing body of literature on semantics based linguistic barriers in EFL contexts and potentially creates a way for future research. Ultimately, this study has the potential to impact pedagogical language practices positively, helping both students and educators while advancing the larger field of EFL research.

7. Research Methodology:

- **Data Analysis Procedure:**

In this study the researcher intends to employ a qualitative method to delve deeply into the semantics-based linguistics barriers and collect data using questionnaire for M1 students of English branch at UMKB. The researcher will submit it to twenty five students of them of the academic year 2023/2024.

- **Data Collection Tool:**

The main data gathering tool is a questionnaire submitted to students to collect data on linguistic (semantic-based) barriers to their CC.

- **Population and Sampling:**

This research targets as population the first year master students who are enrolled in the academic year 2023/2024. The choice of this population is motivated by two reasons: firstly, they have been experiencing three (3) years of EFL studies and communicating with it and secondly there are aware of at least some linguistic barriers to their CC. The sample consists of twenty five (25) students of the same population.

8. The Research Structure:

This research study consists of three major chapters. The first two chapters are theoretical background study whereas the last chapter is the field work.

Chapter one concerns the concept of Communicative Competence; its historical background, its definitions, and its theoretical framework.

The second chapter is about linguistic semantic barriers and how they affect EFL learners' CC.

The last chapter is concerned with the field work of the method used in the two procedures of data analysis and collection. It will permit to interpret the findings and the results.

CHAPTER ONE
COMMUNICATIVE COMPTENCE

I. Communicative Competence:

1. Historical background:

Diverse linguistic standards and theories have shaped affluent historical background on the concept of communicative competence. It has evolved significantly over time, influenced by various academic disciplines and scholars. Here's an overview of its historical background, which enlightens the core development of the evolution of CC for a comprehensive understanding based on scholarly sources.

1.2. Evolution and Influences of Linguistic Theories on Communicative Competence:

1.2.1 Early Linguistic Theories:

The structuralist approach to language, focusing on grammar and sentence structure, laid the foundation for understanding language as a system of rules and structures (Saussure, 1916).

Noam Chomsky's work on generative grammar in the mid-20th century emphasized the innate linguistic competence of individuals and the importance of syntax in language acquisition (Chomsky, 1957).

1.2.2. Functional Theories of Language:

As a reaction to the limitations of a purely structural view of language Dell Hymes introduced the concept of communicative competence in the 1960s, highlighting the importance of language use in social contexts (Hymes, 1972).

Hymes' concept of communicative competence emphasized the capacity to use language effectively in different communicative situations, beyond just grammatical accuracy.

1.2.3. Sociolinguistic Perspectives:

Further, the emergence of sociolinguistics in the 1970s has contributed to the development of communicative competence by emphasizing the social and cultural aspects of language use (Labov, 1972).

Scholars like Erving Goffman emphasized on the role of context and interaction in shaping linguistic behavior, underscoring the importance of sociocultural competence in communicative proficiency.

1.2.4. Communicative Language Teaching: (CLT)

The communicative approach to language teaching, which gained prominence in the 1970s and 1980s, emphasized the development of students' ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

CLT shifted the focus from grammar-based instruction to meaningful communication, aligning with the principles of communicative competence as proposed by Hymes and later Canale and Swain.

Overall, the concept has been influenced by early linguistic theories, sociolinguistic insights, and educational approaches, giving prominence to the vigorous nature of language proficiency in communication and social interaction. The historical background of communicative competence considers a transfer from structural to functional perspectives on language, emphasizing the importance of effective communication in real-world contexts.

II. Definitions of the concept of Competence Competence:

Communicative Competence is the capacity to understand and produce language, as well as the awareness of cultural and social that governs communication. It includes not only linguistic skills (speaking, writing, listening, reading), but also the ability to interpret and respond to nonverbal and verbal cues. Communicative competence is the faculty to appropriately and effectively communicate in a given context or language.

The term was first coined by the American sociolinguist and anthropologist Dell Hymes, who described it as the knowledge that speakers and listeners have in order to communicate appropriately in different social contexts. He added also it is what “enables a member of a community to know when to speak and when to remain silent, which code to use, when, where and to whom, etc. (Hymes 1967, p13).

Since then, the concept has been subject of development over year and different models of communicative competence have been offered by different authors. Some major models can be listed as follow:

- Hymes' model (1967, 1972)
- Canale and Swain's model (1980)
- Canale (1983)

- Bachman's model (1990)
- Celce-murcia, Dornyei, and thurrell's model (1995).

2. Models of Communicative Competence:

2.1. Hymes' model

His work clearly demonstrated a shift of emphasis among linguists, away from the study of language as a system in isolation, a focus seen in the work of Chomsky (1965), towards the study of language as communication.

For Hymes, communication was more than speakers' regurgitations of grammar, "how something is said is part of what is said" (Hymes, 1986: 41). In other words, speakers must have more than simply linguistic competence in order to successfully and appropriately communicate in any given situation. The ideal speaker-hearer simply does not exist, because a completely homogeneous speech community is simply non-existent. The language used for communication in society is full of varieties that competence must be coupled with performance. Hymes introduced the broader, more elaborated and extensive concept of communicative competence, which includes both linguistic competence or implicit and explicit knowledge of the rules of grammar, and contextual or sociolinguistic knowledge of the rules of language use in context. He argues that "we have then to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not and as to what to talk to about with whom, when, where, in what manner" Hymes (1972: 277).

Hymes' model shows that mastering communicative competence does not stop only at the linguistic level, but it requires also the understanding a series of cultural, social and pragmatic variables which come to complete the essence of communication.

2.2. Canale and Swain's model

Canale and Swain developed theory of communicative competence based on Hymes' work. Their initial framework was proposed in 1980 and included four main components:

Grammatical competence or linguistic competence which refers to the ability to use the language correctly, how well a person has learned features and rules of the language. This includes vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence formation. How well does the learner understand the grammar of English? Teachers call this accuracy in language use. According to Canale and Swain, grammatical competence is concerned with mastery of the linguistic

code (verbal or non-verbal) which includes vocabulary knowledge as well as knowledge of morphological, syntactic, semantic, phonetic and orthographic rules. This competence enables the speaker to use knowledge and skills needed for understanding and expressing the literal meaning of utterances. Sociolinguistic competence which refers to the learner's ability to use language correctly in specific social situations – for example, using proper language forms at a job interview. Socio-linguistic competence is based upon such factors as the status of those speaking to each other, the purpose of the interaction, and the expectations of the players. How socially acceptable is the person's use of English in different settings? This competency is about appropriacy in using language. Discourse competence which refers to the learner's ability to use the new language in spoken and written discourse, how well a person can combine grammatical forms and meanings to find different ways to speak or write. How well does the student combine the language's elements to speak or write in English? Teachers often call this ability the student's fluency. Canale (1983, 1984) described discourse competence as mastery of rules that determine ways in which forms and meanings are combined to achieve a meaningful unity of spoken or written texts. The unity of a text is enabled by cohesion in form and coherence in meaning. Cohesion is achieved by the use of cohesion devices (e.g. pronouns, conjunctions, synonyms, parallel structures etc.) which help to link individual sentences and utterances to a structural whole. The means for achieving coherence, for instance repetition, progression, consistency, relevance of ideas etc., enable the organization of meaning, i.e. establish a logical relationship between groups of utterances. Strategic competence refers to strategies for effective communication when the learner's vocabulary proves inadequate for the job, and his or her command of useful learning strategies. Strategic competence is how well the person uses both verbal forms and non-verbal communication to compensate for lack of knowledge in the other three competencies. Can the learner find ways to compensate for areas of weakness? If so, the learner has communicative efficacy. These strategies include paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, reluctance, avoidance of words, structures or themes, guessing, changes of register and style, modifications of messages etc. (Ahmad. D. Journal of English Studies "ADJES")

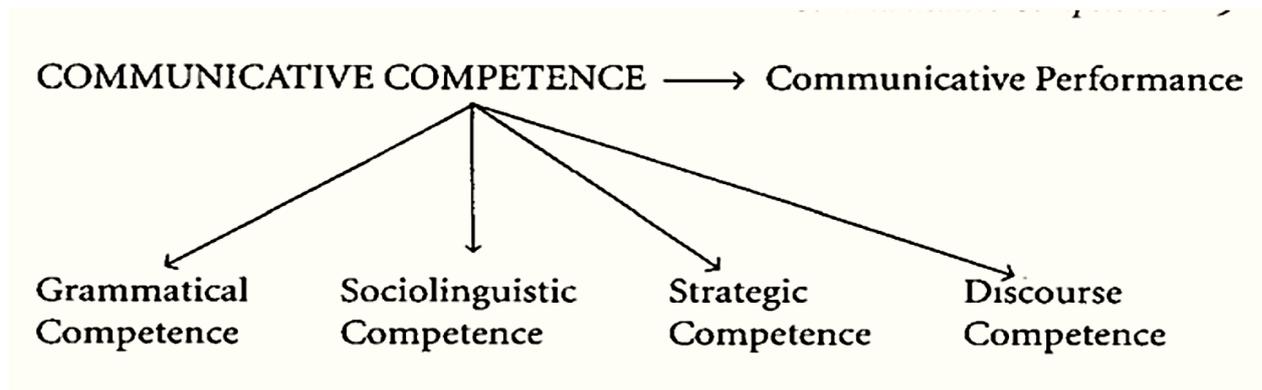


Figure 01: Canale and Swain’s model of communicative competence.

Canale and Swain’s model relies on the mastery of the language rules, the social situations, different ways to speak and write and the use of adequate strategies to perform effective communication.

2.3. Canale 1983

Introducing his new model, Canale reminds the reader that in the communicative competence model, communication is meant to be “the exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, oral and written/visual modes, and production and comprehension processes” (p.4). The four components of the revised framework are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Grammatical competence, as in the previous model, is concerned with “features and rules of the language such as vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, pronunciation, spelling and linguistic semantics” (p. 7). Sociolinguistic competence in this model, unlike the Canale and Swain’s model, which addressed both sociocultural rules and rules of discourse, “addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of the interaction, and norms or conventions of interaction” (p. 7), appropriateness of both form and meaning. Appropriateness of meaning also includes kinesics and proxemics. Discourse competence concerns mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres, achieved through cohesion and coherence. Strategic competence in this model has expanded to include mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action not only to compensate for breakdowns in communication but also to enhance the effectiveness of communication.

Canale believes this theoretical framework is not a model of communicative competence, because a model “implies some specification of the manner and order in which the components interact and in which the various competences are normally acquired” (p.12).

Canale and Swain’s model and Canale’s one both address different aspects of CC. One provides a more comprehensive breakdown of the involved specific components, whereas the other focuses on the practical application of language knowledge in communication.

2.4. Bachman’s model

One of the substantial advancements in the realm 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. Another major achievement of Bachman’s model over the previous ones was its emphasis on the central role of strategic competence including meta-cognitive strategies or higher order process that explain the interaction of knowledge and affective components of language use. According to Bachman (1990) and the subsequent model of Bachman & Palmer (1996) many traits of language users such as some general characteristics (ethnicity, cognitive style, sex, nationality, etc), their topical knowledge (knowledge of the world, background knowledge, affective schema (the feelings and biases people may have toward some linguistic contents) as well as the language ability impact the communicative language ability and linguistic performance of the learners in the real life context. For Bachman (1990) language ability is the most substantive characteristic of communicative competence which is composed of two broad categories including: organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge. He maintains that “organizational knowledge” associates to the production and comprehension of grammatical utterances. This type of knowledge is employed for the construction of either oral or conversational texts. There are two areas of organizational knowledge; grammatical knowledge used for producing grammatically acceptable utterances and organizational knowledge for organizing sentences to form both oral and written texts. “Grammatical knowledge” contributes to the production or comprehension of the formally acceptable utterances or sentences. The lexical, syntactic, phonological and graphological knowledge are deemed as the subcomponents of this competence. “Textual knowledge” encompasses the knowledge required for generating and comprehending either spoken or written texts. There are two areas of textual knowledge: knowledge of “cohesion” and knowledge of “rhetorical” or conversational organization.

Knowledge of cohesion is adopted to generate the textual relationship among sentences (anaphora, ellipsis, conjunctions, substitution, etc) in written texts or among utterances in conversations. Knowledge of conversational organization is involved in producing or comprehending organizational development in written texts. It is the knowledge that indicates how (spoken or written) texts are structured so that they are recognized conventional by hearers or readers.

2.4.1. Pragmatic knowledge: In Bachman's model, the inclusion of extra-linguistic knowledge was the focal point. Hence, he gave priority to the pragmatic aspects of language. This knowledge enables the user to adopt his linguistic knowledge to the context. This adaptation considers the social position of participants, the relationship between them, the setting parameters, dialects, registers and many other factors. In this model, there are two areas of pragmatic knowledge: functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge. Functional knowledge includes what he called illocutionary competence that enables the user to interpret relationships between utterances and texts and the intentions of language users. To define the functional competence, Bachman refers to Haliday's (1973) classification of the language functions. For Haliday, Functional knowledge involves the knowledge of four categories of language functions: ideational, manipulative, instrumental and imaginative. For instance, drawing upon the knowledge of manipulative function, it is possible to use language to affect the world around us which includes the knowledge of the following: a. Instrumental functions are exploited to get other people to do things for our sake. b. Regulatory functions: exploited to preside over what other people do. c. Interpersonal functions: used to establish, maintain and change interpersonal relationships. d. Knowledge of heuristic functions: enables us to use language to create an imaginative world.

2.4.2. Sociolinguistic knowledge: As another substantial component of pragmatic knowledge, sociolinguistic knowledge is wedged to create or interpret language that is appropriate to a particular language use setting: it embodies 1) sensitivity to registers which is of overriding importance, because in any language as Stevens, Haliday, Macintosh and Stevens (1964) implied, there is a variety of registers in terms of the three aspects of language use which include, field and mode of discourse as well as the style of discourse which refer to the relations between participants. The knowledge of these variations in sociolinguistic competence are important 2) knowledge of cultural references and figures of speech, which means the knowledge of the extended meaning given by specific cultures to particular events, places, institutions. It also involves the knowledge of connotation of that

meaning. 3) Sensitivity to naturalness that signals the native-like use of language. 4) Sensitivity to dialects, entailing the awareness from the regional and social varieties or dialects. Different contexts require the use of different languages.

2.4.3. Strategic competence: This Competency refers to a set of strategies that can be viewed as an advanced executive function managing cognition, in language use. Cognitive elements operate in three areas; 1) setting goals (making decisions on actions) 2) evaluation (assessing requirements and available resources) and 3) planning (determining resource allocation). Bachmans model builds upon Canale and Swains work by emphasizing the impact of test design and scoring on test takers performance highlighting the importance of competency. Certain tasks heavily rely on competency to compensate for shortcomings, in domains. This model clearly distinguishes between knowledge and skills a differentiation not explicitly addressed in models. Moreover it aims to elucidate how different components interact with each other within the context of language performance.

Based on Bachman’s model it can be concluded that he gave priority to pragmatic knowledge, sociolinguistic knowledge and strategic competence. Taking into consideration these additional components language learners can develop a more comprehensive communication skill set.

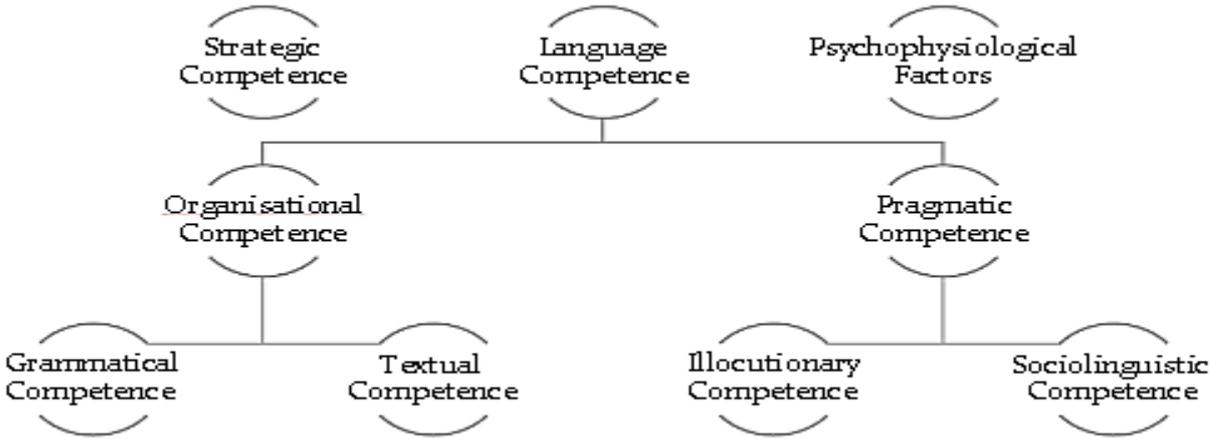


Figure 02: Bachman’s model of communicative competence.

2.5. Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell’s model (1995)

The maintaining of the competence has been in a continuing scale since then as, for example, in the scholarly motivated model of communicative competence proposed by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995). Celce-Murcia further divided communicative competence into: actional, discourse, linguistic, sociocultural, and strategic competencies

Actional competence refers to ability to choose speech act or knowledge of language functions (e.g. expressing and finding out feelings, suasion, asking for and giving information, complaining, greeting and leaving, etc.) and knowledge of speech act sets.

Discourse competence focuses to the ability to interpret a series of sentence and the larger context and how suffice to construct longer stretches of language so that the parts make up a coherent whole. "Discourse competence refers to the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and of how suffice meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text" Richards (2001: 160). In analyzing these components they start with the core, that is to say, discourse competence, which concerns the selection and sequencing of sentences to achieve a unified spoken or written text. It includes coherence, cohesion, genre, deixis, and conversational structure.

Linguistic competence entails the domain of grammatical capaticity , such as sentence patterns, morphological inflections, phonological and orthographic systems, as well as lexical resources. Brown (2000: 247) justifies that linguistic competence encompasses knowledge of rules of phonology, morphology, lexical items and syntax.

Sociocultural competence refers to the speaker's knowledge of how to express appropriate messages within the social and cultural context of communication in which they are produced, including relationships, shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose. The points relating to sociolinguistic competence: Proper Topic, Non Verbal, and Cross Cultural Understanding.

Strategic competence encompasses techniques that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication. Finally, these four components are influenced by the last one, strategic competence which is the manual of communication. The following are the strategic competences that the students may use: approximation, generalization, paraphrase, circumlocution, replacement, hesitation, avoidance, asking for help, shifts in register and style. (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1995: 11-28). Their conception can be illustrated in figure below.

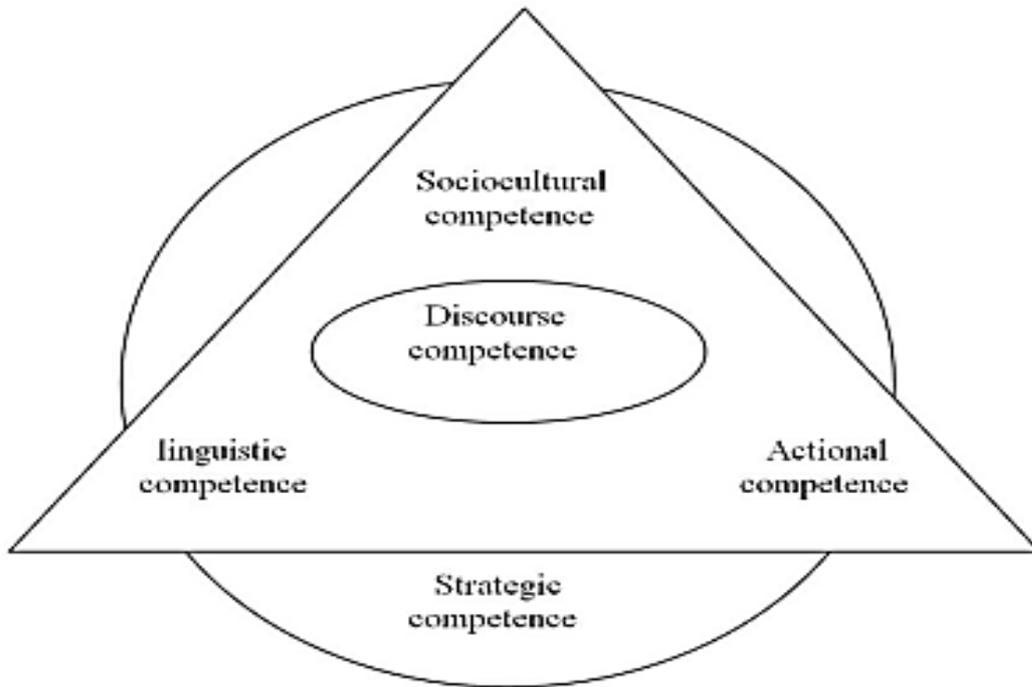


Figure 03: Celce-murcia, Dornyei, and thurrell's model of CC.

2.6. Development of Communicative Competence by Celce-Murcia (2007)

A figure drawn by Celce-Murcia in 2007 shows the chronological development of the concept of C.C. models.

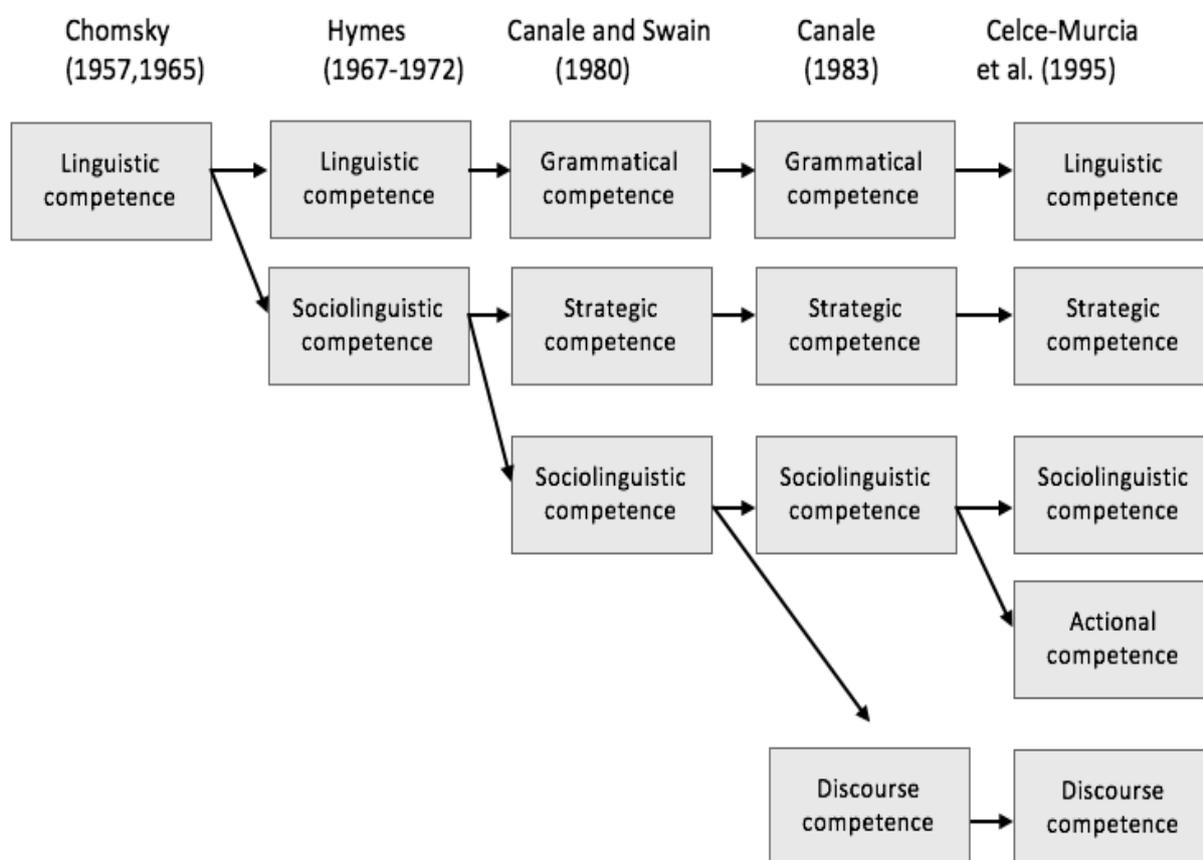


Figure 04: Development of communicative competence Celce-Murcia (2007).

Conclusion:

Different models of communicative competence encompass various abilities to convey its essence. Hymes, Canale & Swain, Bachman, Celce-murcia, Dornyei, and thurrell offered frames to understand and asses CC. The concept has profoundly influenced language teaching, moving the focus towards interaction, real-life communication, and the practical use of language skills.. In recent years, the notion of intercultural communicative competence has gained prominence. This recognizes the need for language users to be aware of cultural differences and to navigate meaning across different cultural contexts. They focused on the importance of linguistic ability and mainly on the proficiency to use language appropriately in various cultural social contexts. Ultimately the study of communicative competence deals with the need for learners to understand the multifaceted nature of an effective communication.

CHAPTER TWO

SEMANTIC BARRIERS TO

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETNCE

1. Introduction:

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that studies meaning in language. It is concerned with how words, phrases, sentences, and texts are used to convey meaning. This field examines the relationship between signifiers—like words, phrases, signs, and symbols—and what they stand for or represent in reality. As a fundamental aspect of linguistic theory, semantics intersects with various disciplines, including philosophy, cognitive science, and psychology.

1.1 Historical Background

The study of semantics has its roots in the ancient philosophical traditions. Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle pondered over the nature of meaning and the relationship between language and reality. Aristotle's "On Interpretation" is one of the earliest works addressing issues related to meaning and reference. However, modern semantics began to take shape in the 19th and 20th centuries with the work of scholars such as Ferdinand de Saussure, who is often considered the father of modern linguistics.

Saussure's structuralist approach introduced the idea that meaning in language arises from the relationships between elements within a linguistic system rather than from a direct correspondence with objects in the real world (Saussure, 1916). This perspective laid the groundwork for subsequent developments in the study of meaning.

1.2. Key Concepts in Semantics

1.2.1. Lexical Semantics: This subfield focuses on the meaning of words and the relationships between them. It involves studying phenomena such as synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, and hyponymy. For example, the word "bank" can mean the side of a river or a financial institution, which demonstrates polysemy (Murphy, 2003).

1.2.2. Compositional Semantics: This area examines how meanings of individual words combine to form the meanings of larger expressions like phrases and sentences. The principle of compositionality, which states that the meaning of an expression is determined by the meanings of its parts and the rules used to combine them, is central to this field (Frege, 1892).

1.2.3. Formal Semantics: Pioneered by logicians and linguists like Richard Montague, formal semantics applies tools from formal logic to analyze meaning in natural language. This approach allows for precise modeling of meaning and the derivation of truth conditions for sentences (Montague, 1974).

1.2.4. Pragmatics and Semantics: While semantics focuses on meaning derived from linguistic knowledge, pragmatics studies how context influences the interpretation of meaning. The boundary between these two fields is often blurred, as context can heavily impact how meaning is understood (Levinson, 1983).

1.3. Theoretical Approaches

Several theoretical frameworks have been developed to study semantics.

1.3.1. Truth-Conditional Semantics: This approach, associated with philosophers like Donald Davidson, posits that understanding the meaning of a sentence involves knowing the conditions under which it would be true or false (Davidson, 1967).

1.3.2. Prototype Theory: Proposed by Eleanor Rosch and further developed by George Lakoff, this theory suggests that categories are not defined by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions but rather by a prototype or best example of the category (Rosch, 1973; Lakoff, 1987).

1.4. Applications of Semantics

Understanding semantics is crucial in various fields. In artificial intelligence and natural language processing, semantic analysis is used to improve machine understanding of human language, leading to better translation systems, search engines, and conversational agents. In lexicography, semantics informs the creation of dictionaries and thesauri. Moreover, semantic analysis is essential in legal interpretation, literature, and communication studies.

Semantics is a dynamic and multifaceted field that explores how language conveys meaning. By studying the relationships between words and their meanings, as well as the principles governing sentence meaning, semantics bridges the gap between linguistic forms and the concepts they represent. Its interdisciplinary nature enriches our understanding of language and cognition, making it a vital area of study in linguistics and beyond.

2. Semantic Barriers

The word semantic from the Greek word “Semantikos” indicates “significant”. Semantic barrier can be defined as the aspects language related to the meaning that restrict communication. As the variations of meaning in language are transparent according to individuals in minor and cultures in major, the comprehension can be challenging for an outsider. Communicative competence encompasses not only the capacity to deal with vocabulary and grammar accurately but also to the ability to interpret and convey messages effectively in various contexts. However, EFL students frequently face obstacles that impede their progress toward communicative proficiency and semantic one plays a pivotal role. It refers to the difficulty connected to the meaning of words and expressions leading to miscommunication. Particularly pronounced in the EFL setting, where learners navigate in a language system different from their native language, its complexity is often underestimated in the instructional level.

Cross-cultural communication (or inter-cultural communication) by definition, is a form of communication that aims to share information across different cultures. It is especially prone to errors causing misunderstandings due to a number of cross-cultural barriers to communication. It's easy for one statement to mean one thing to one person and something different to someone else. Since our research focuses on the linguistic aspects of communication, we're solely interested in the semantic barrier which presents difficult challenge when EFL students communicate in their settings. Semantic problem arises when words and symbols have different meanings for different people that lead to a misunderstanding caused by the ambiguity of such statements. A very vivid example of ambiguity is idiomatic expressions, or idioms - phrases or sentences that shouldn't be understood literally. Such phrases are extremely ambiguous (open to more than one interpretation) and therefore taken out of context can be very confusing and thus leading to cases of misunderstanding. Gradskaya,(2018, 139) This requires an in-depth comprehension of the cultural and contextual factors that influence language. The part aims to explore specific semantic barriers that hinder communicative competence in EFL context. By identifying and analysing these impediments, we can gain insights into how they impact learners' capacity to communicate.

2.1. Semantic of English Sentences

The semantic analysis of English sentences has gone through the stages of viewing it from standpoint of traditional semantics (the meaning of a sentence is the situation it represents, and the situation can be described in terms of the possible world that it would be true of) to Fillmore's Frame semantics (which attempts to explain meaning in terms of their relation to general understanding, with proposition or deep structure being the core element of the semantic structure of any sentence), and finally Gilles Fauconnier's theory according to which, the meaning of a sentence can be derived from "mental spaces" (idealized cognitive models) which are of two kinds – base space (reality space, the interlocutors' shared knowledge of the real world) and built space (an embedded sentence requiring hearers to establish scenarios beyond the present point of time). Gradskaya, (2018; pp. 140,141)

Understanding the semantics of English sentences involves how the elements it constitutes are combined to convey meaning. For EFL students mastering semantic area is crucial for effective communication. Independently it could enhance their ability to produce meaningful English sentences in various contexts.

2.2. Types of semantic barriers

In communication semantic barriers arise from difficulty in understanding words meaning and how to combine them in form of meaningful sentences. There are two broad types of semantic barriers in the word level which are Denotative and connotative. Denotative barriers are based on the literal meaning. Connotative barriers refer on the associations people have with words. Denotative barriers can arise from word translation from a given language to another, whereas connotative barriers come from association one makes with a concept that doesn't match with someone else understandings. Thus, they can be categorized in different types.

2.2.1. Lexical Ambiguity

“Lexical ambiguity is the presence of two or more possible meanings for a single word.” (Yule,2014,p.58) It refers to multiplicity of word's meaning which leads to misunderstanding for EFL learners. E.g. the word “bank” can refer to a financial institution and at the same time the side of the river. It is frequent in EFL context that students encounter with this difficulty in their daily conversation which tends to block them in performing their communicative proficiency. According to Ellis “polysemy can pose difficulties for language learners as they

must learn to distinguish between various meanings of a word depending on the context.” (Ellis 2008,p.76)

2.2.2. Cultural References

Cultural references such as proverbs, slang, or cultural nuances, incorporated in language, may be unfamiliar to EFL learners, making it difficult for them to comprehend the intended meaning. They refer to cultural elements that may be difficult to language learners from different cultural background. This can be explained by the fact that they are related to specific cultural experiences and contexts. For example, idiomatic expressions like "raining cats and dogs" or references to popular culture figures may be confusing or meaningless to students who did not grow up in that particular culture. "Understanding cultural references, facilitates communication by providing insight into the context and meaning of expressions." (Kachru, 2005, p. 112)

EFL students often struggled to understand and use cultural references in their English communication. The study highlighted the importance of incorporating cultural awareness and sensitivity into language teaching in order to help students overcome these barriers.

2.2.3. Polysemy and Homonymy

Polysemy refers to a single word having multiple related meanings, while homonymy involves words that sound alike but have different meanings. These phenomena can create confusion and misinterpretation in communication. For example, the word "bank" can mean a financial institution or the side of a river. Without sufficient contextual clues, interlocutors may misunderstand the intended meaning (Murphy, 2003).

2.2.4. Synonymy and Near-Synonymy

While synonyms are words with similar meanings, they often carry subtle differences in connotation or usage. For instance, "big" and "large" are synonyms, but "big" might imply informality compared to "large." These nuances can cause misunderstandings, especially for non-native speakers who may not grasp the contextual appropriateness of each word (Cruse, 1986).

2.2.5. Syntax and Word Order

Differences in syntax and word order between English and the learner's native language can cause confusion in comprehending sentence meaning and structure. Those differences impede in structuring sentences as language may have different rules and structures. For example, in English, the word order of a sentence is typically subject-verb-object (SVO), whereas in other languages like Japanese or Arabic, the word order may be subject-object-verb (SOV) or verb-subject-object (VSO). Lightbown and Spada said "Syntax and word order can be particularly challenging for EFL learners, as they must learn to restructure sentences according to the rules of the target language." (Lightbown and Spada, 2013, p.134) Additionally syntax and word order influences the interpretation of meaning and context, for example shifting a word place or order can alter the emphasis of the message. It was found that EFL students often struggled with word order and syntax when constructing sentences in English in a study by Huang (2015). The study emphasized on the importance of providing explicit instruction and practice in syntax and word order to help students improve their communicative competence.

2.2.6. Idiomatic Expressions and Figurative Language

Idioms and figurative language, such as metaphors and similes, can be particularly challenging for non-native speakers. These expressions often carry meanings that are not deducible from the literal meanings of the words. For instance, the idiom "kick the bucket" means "to die," which can be perplexing for someone unfamiliar with this expression (Fernando, 1996).

2.2.7. Word Collocations and Fixed Expressions

Certain words tend to occur together in specific combinations, known as collocations (e.g., "make a decision," not "do a decision"). These collocations are often arbitrary and must be learned as fixed expressions. Misusing collocations can lead to semantic barriers and make communication sound unnatural or unclear (Lewis, 2000).

3. Overcoming Semantic Barriers

To enhance communicative competence and overcome semantic barriers, several strategies can be employed:

3.1. Contextual Learning: Understanding the context in which words and phrases are used can help clarify meanings and resolve ambiguities.

3.2. Exposure to Varied Language Use: Engaging with different forms of media, such as books, films, and conversations, can expose learners to diverse usages and cultural nuances.

3.3. Explicit Instruction: Teaching the meanings, usage, and cultural context of words and phrases explicitly can aid learners in grasping subtleties and avoiding misunderstandings.

3.4. Pragmatic Competence: Developing an awareness of how language is used in real-life interactions, including the use of idiomatic expressions and fixed phrases, can improve communicative effectiveness (Kecskes, 2014).

Conclusion:

Semantic barriers pose significant challenges to communicative competence by creating potential for misunderstanding and misinterpretation. These barriers arise from the inherent complexities of language, including polysemy, ambiguity, cultural differences, and idiomatic expressions. Overall, addressing these obstacles necessitate explicit instruction, practicing in varied context, and immersion to authentic language use. Independently cultural awareness and sensitivity plays a crucial role in overcoming the semantic-based linguistics barriers to EFL students CC.

CHAPTER THREE
FIELD WORK

Introduction

This study aims to collect opinions from students regarding how Linguistic Semantic-based barriers can affect their CC and also to show some proposed solutions by students themselves in its improvement. As the students are the main concerned in this study it is primordial to take into consideration their perceptions while analysing the research's hypothesis, according to which students may succeed in improving their communicative competence. This chapter analyses a questionnaire given to twenty five (25) students in the way of collecting informations.

1. Methodology

In this research paper, a qualitative approach is used for data gathering. The researcher gave a questionnaire to twenty five (25) of First Year Master students to explore experiences and perceptions regarding the semantic barriers to Communicative competence. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they had relevant experiences according to the topic. A total number of twenty eight (28) were included in the study.

The data collection instrument was chosen to permit flexibility in the answers while providing some structure to ensure that the essentials topics were covered. The questionnaire consisted of open ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about participants' thoughts and feelings related to the topic. It was developed through a review of literature and consultations of relevant sources related to the field. Students were invited to complete the questionnaire in a setting of their choice to ensure comfort and privacy, which are crucial for valuable responses. The questionnaire was administered in an online format depending on the participants' logistical considerations. Participants were consent and they were briefed on the study's purpose, they rights and the measures taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Responses were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. This method involved coding the data to identify common themes and patterns.

Despite the qualitative design provides rich detailed insights, the findings may not be generalizable to the students of the department. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias. Efforts were made to mitigate through careful questionnaire design and ensuring a comfortable environment for the participants to provide honest responses.

2. Questionnaire's sample

This sample is chosen from first-year master students in the University of Biskra at the department of English. The questionnaire was given to twenty five (25) and responses were received from all the students. This was chosen according to the principles of firstly, their experience of three (3) years English language studies which means they can communicate using it and secondly as EFL learners they are aware of some Linguistic (semantic-based) Barriers to their Communicative Competence that occur when performing it.

3. Description of the questionnaire

The included questions are simple questions clear for the learners' understanding. There are different types of questions: closed-ended, open-ended and multiple choice questions. It contains five (5) sections. In the first point, the question is about personal information which is the name and the gender. Section one refers on communicative competence. It includes one (1) question. The section two is based on semantic awareness running around three (3) questions. Concerning the third section it addresses four (4) questions referring on challenges in EFL communication. The section four explores two (2) questions about the strategies addressing semantic ambiguity. The fifth section is also composed of two (2) questions one dealing with reflections on teaching and learning and in the last question it is asked if the participants have additional comments related to the topic of semantic-based linguistic barriers in EFL communication.

4. Questionnaire analysis

Personal Information

Table 01: participants' gender

Options	Number	Percentage%
Females	15	53,6%
Males	13	46,4%
Total	28	100%

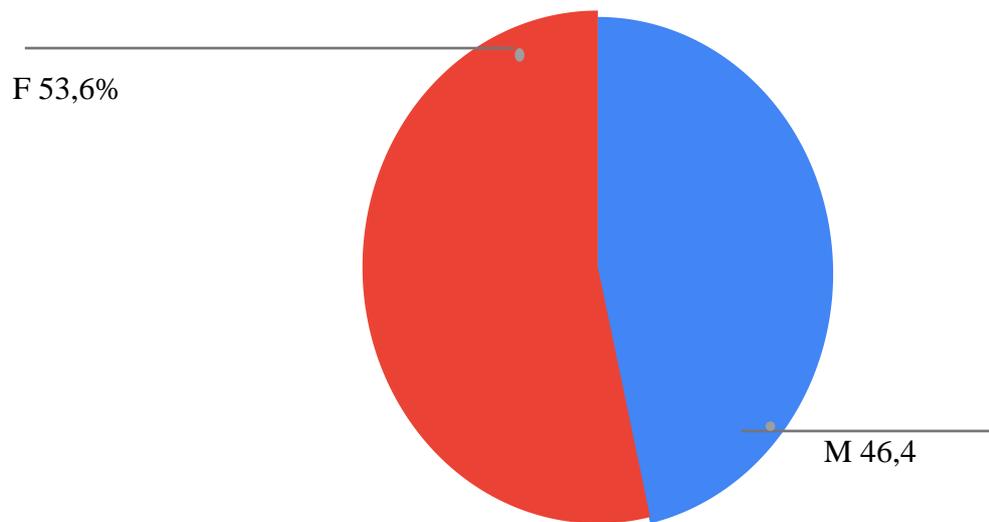


Figure 05: learners' gender chart

In this sample 15 females (53,6%) and 13 Males (46,4%) have participated. It can be noted that there is slightly a balance between the two genders. The representativity in this sample is visible.

Section one: Communicative Competence

Question 1: According to you what is communicative?

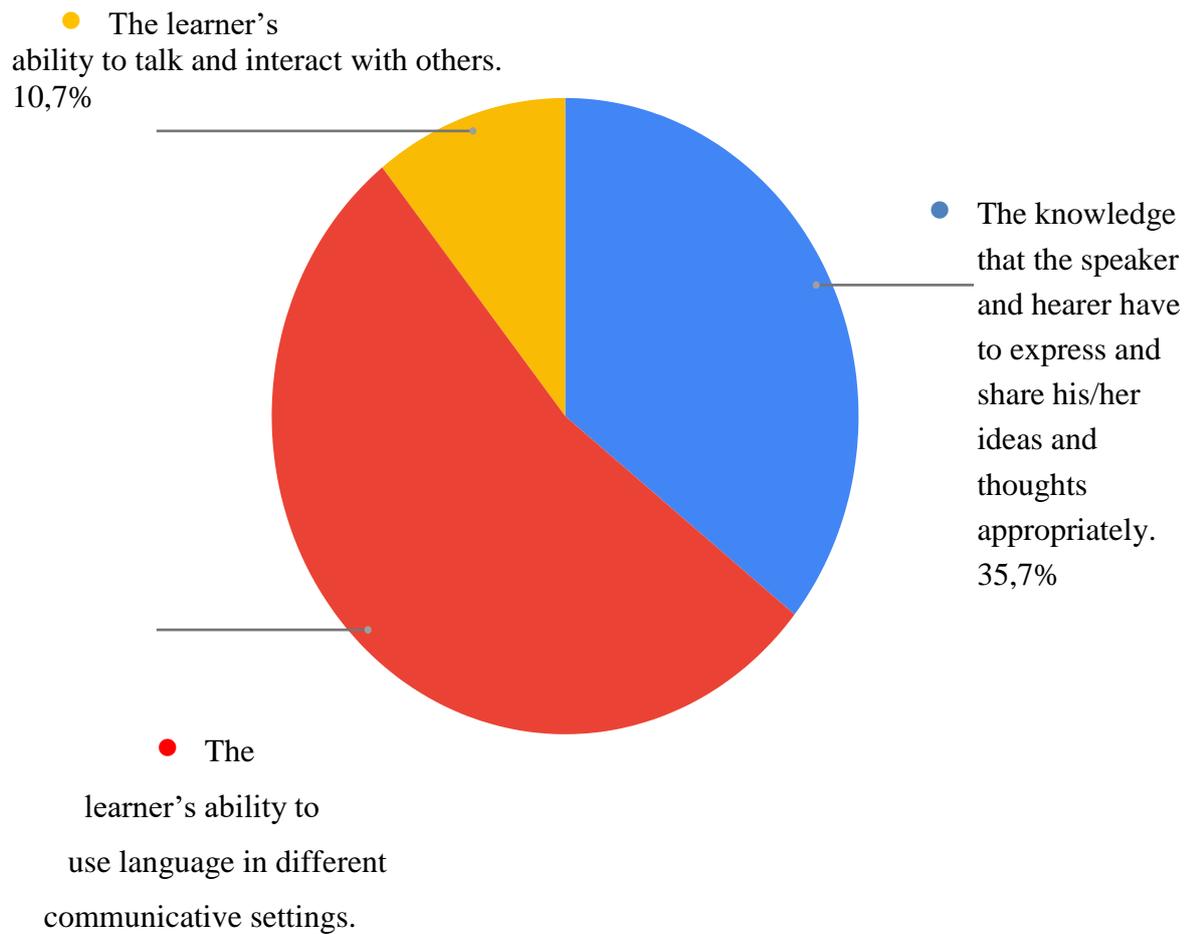


Figure 06: CC definition's chart

Table 02 : Definition of CC

Options	Number of participants	Percentage%
Choice 1	10	35,7%
Choice 2	15	53,6%
Choice 3	03	10,7%
Total	28	100%

In this question different definitions of communicative competence were under students' choice. According to their perceptions of the concept 35,7% of learners selected the first option which is : The knowledge that the speaker and hearer have to express and share his/her ideas and thoughts appropriately. Secondly, 53,6% opted for: The learner's ability to use language in different communicative settings. For the third choice: The learner's ability to talk and interact with others; 10,7% of students estimated it right. Each one of the participants has made their selection based on their opinion about how CC is.

Section two: Semantic awareness

Question 1: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

I am aware of the concept of semantic ambiguity in language.

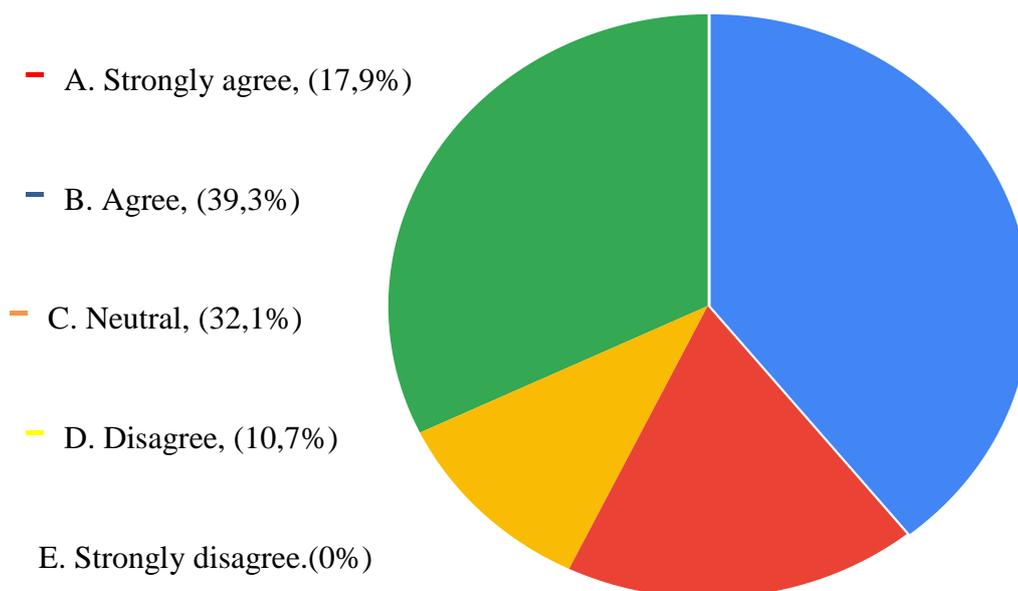


Figure 07: Semantic Awareness

Table 03: Semantic awareness

Options	Number	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	05	17,9%
Agree	11	39,9%
Neutral	09	32,1%
Disagree	03	10,7%
Strongly disagree	00	00%
Total	28	100%

The first question about semantic awareness, students were addressed to manifest to what extent they agree with its presence in language. Five (05) students represent 17,9% of those who were strongly agree with the statement. Stood or the option agree eleven (11) students equivalent of 39,3% of the participants. The option neutral was chosen by nine (09) learners acting for 32,1%. Finally, only (3) three students 10,7% putted point on the disagree option and the last option of strongly disagree was null. The majority chooses “agree” which indicates most of the participants are aware of the existence of semantic ambiguity in language.

Question 2: A student has difficulty understanding and using nuanced vocabulary, leading to misinterpretation or incomplete communication is facing vocabulary limitations. It can also refer to a restricted range of words and expressions in communication.

How do vocabulary limitations impact your communicative competence?

Options: Always; sometimes; often; rarely; never.

Between the participants eight (08) learners affirmed that always vocabulary restrictions impact their CC. Secondly, twelve (12) claimed that it is sometimes impactful. Moreover, eight (08) students testified that their CC is often and rarely impacted by vocabulary restrictions respectively four (4) for each option. Furthermore, no students asserted in favour of the “never” option. It can be esteemed that great number of the learners view their communicative competence impacted by a restrained vocabulary but in different degrees.

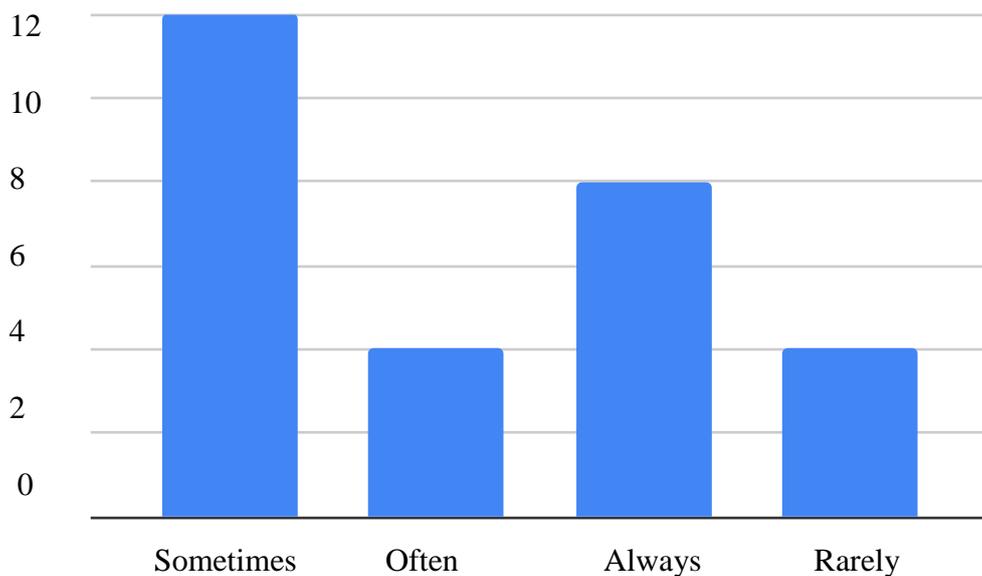


Figure 08: Vocabulary Limitations.

Options	Always	Sometimes	Often	Rarely	Never	Total
Number	12	08	04	04	00	28
Percentage%	26,6%	42,9%	14,3%	14,3%	00%	100%

Table 04: Vocabulary Limitations.

Question 3: Can you identify examples of semantic ambiguity in English language use.

Options: Always; sometimes; rarely; never.

Options	Number	Percentage%
Always	07	25%
Sometimes	19	67,1%
rarely	02	7,1%
Never	00	00%
Total	28	100%

Table 05: Semantic Ambiguity

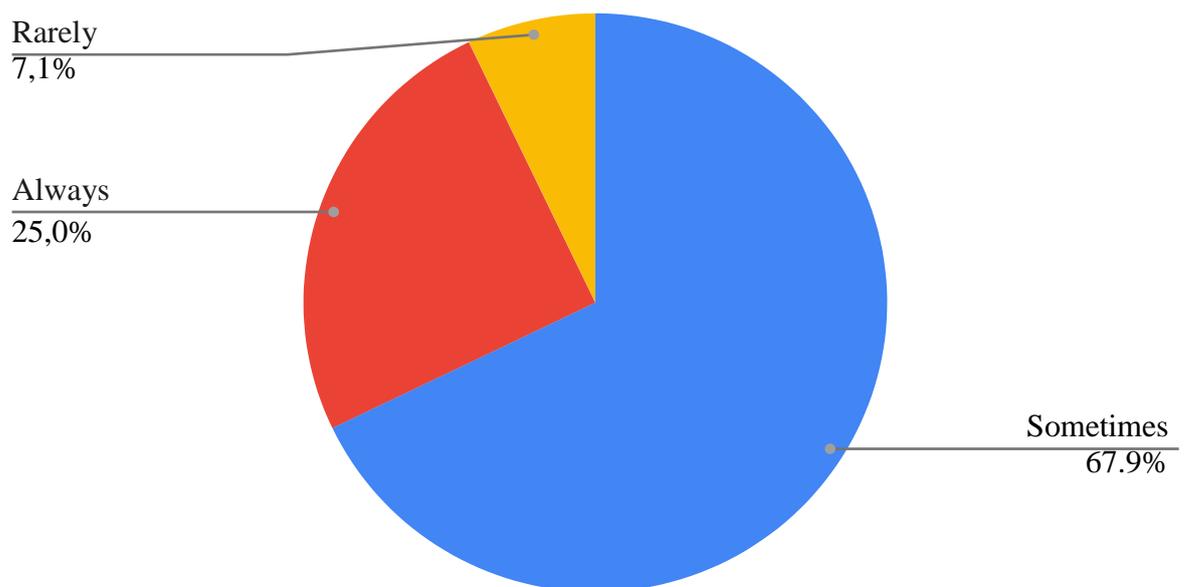


Figure 09: Semantic ambiguity.

The question about the identification of semantic ambiguity examples has been answered only by the first three options; “always” by seven (07) students, “sometimes” nineteen (19) students, and “rarely” by two (02) students. However, none of the learners has chosen the last option “never”. Subsequent to these answers it can be explain that the major part of the participants can exemplify semantic ambiguity in English language use.

Section three: Challenges in EFL Communication

Question 1: Based on your experience, what are the main semantic-based linguistic barriers that EFL learners encounter in communication?

Lexical ambiguity; Cultural references; Lexical gaps; Collocations;

Idioms and figurative language; Word choice; Others.

Concerning this question choice students were given the choice to tick one or more of the provided examples of challenges. The selection of the options was afterwards: “Lexical ambiguity” and “idioms & figurative language” thirteen times (13x), “Cultural references” eleven times (11x), “Lexical gaps” ten times (10x), “Collocations” seven times (7x), “Word choice” seven times (7), and the last option “Others” three times (3x). The following table exposes how much time the provided examples have chosen by the participants.

The findings of this question proved that “lexical ambiguity” and “idioms & figurative language” are the most common difficulty in the participants’ EFL communication. In the second is, “cultural references”. Furthermore, learners opted equally for “collocations” and “word choice”. Finally, three participants believe that they face others challenges.

Options	Numbers of times (x)
Lexical ambiguity	13
Cultural references	11
Lexical gaps	10
Collocations	07
Idioms & figurative language	13
Word choice	07
Others	03

Table 06: Challenges in EFL communication.

Question 2: How do semantic ambiguities affect EFL students' ability to express themselves accurately in English?

This interrogation let learners to state how they think that semantic nuances can have impact on EFL students' ability to express themselves accurately, the answers are as follow:

.

It affects strongly in the hearer interpretation when he didn't catch what the speaker mean by a polysemous word for example.

Semantic ambiguities make it difficult for EFL students to accurately express themselves in English because they may choose words that have multiple meanings, causing misunderstandings or confusion in communication.

May effect negatively by providing misunderstanding speech to the listener or native speaker that i encounter him or her

The fear of using advanced words , it also creates a break down of communication

They will have hard time choosing the right words to express themselves

EFL learners face challenges navigating such complexities, affecting their ability to convey intended meanings effectively within English discourse.

When he / she can't understand the meaning so he /she can't speak and communicate with others on that topic .

It can lead to miscommunication and frequent misunderstandings, making language less clear.

When the student do not have enough lexical knowledge he is prone to have communication breakdowns.

Misunderstandings of Figurative Language since English is rich with idioms, metaphors, and similes... that EFL students might take literall and that is incorrect

Semantic ambiguities can cause EFL students to misinterpret meanings, leading to incorrect word usage and misunderstandings, which hinder their ability to express themselves accurately and effectively in English.

It leads to miscommunication

They find difficulties in speaking which leads to anxiety

Semantic ambiguities can lead to confusion and imprecision, hindering EFL students' ability to convey their thoughts accurately in English.

It can

Not knowing the different meanings of words. Each meaning of a word suggests the existence of a certain context.

Misinterpretation:(Ambiguities can lead to confusion over the meaning of words and phrases, causing EFL students to use them incorrectly. For students who are not native speakers, distinguishing between subtle differences in meaning can be particularly challenging). -

Contextual Nuances : (EFL students may not have sufficient exposure to English in various contexts to understand how the meaning of a word or phrase can change depending on the situation. This can lead to expressions that are awkward or incorrect in the given context). -

Limited Vocabulary(semantic ambiguities often require a more nuanced understanding of vocabulary and how words relate to one another

Using idioms incorrectly

These ambiguities arise when a word or phrase has multiple meanings or interpretations, leading to confusion or miscommunication.

Semantic ambiguities, which are words or phrases with multiple meanings, can make it hard for EFL students to express themselves clearly.

EFL students' tends to have limited vocabulary compared to native speakers which affect their ability to express their ideas properly.

They Don't participate in correct way

Sometimes because of interference Lack of knowledge

It affects their communication skills and abilities

I dont know

i think it leads them to feel cornered in a discussion also it might affect their willingness to engage in conversation

The founded responses show in what way learners believe that semantic ambiguity impact in expressing accurately their thoughts in English.

Question 3: Are lexical gaps faced by EFL students based on their linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds?

Yes,

No

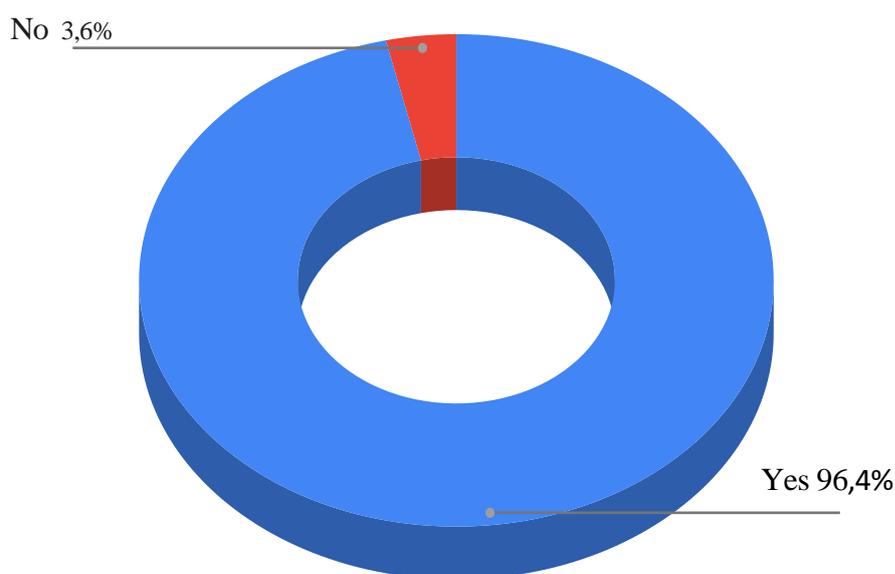


Figure 10: Lexical gaps chart

Options	Yes	No	Total
Number	27	01	28
percentage%	96,4%	3,6%	100%

Table 07: Lexical gaps

For this question twenty seven students (27) 96,4% answered “yes” and one (1) students 3,6% answered “no”. Nearly all of them agreed that lexical gaps faced by EFL students are based on their linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds.

Question 3: Have you ever experienced difficulty understanding idiomatic expressions or figurative language in English due to semantic ambiguity?

Please provide an example if applicable.

Most of time they hide an intended meaning so and i used to try understand the surface meaning more that the inferred meaning.

Yes, I have experienced a difficulty understanding idiomatic expressions. For instance, the phrase "hit the hay" confused me and might confuse other non-native speakers who don't understand its idiomatic meaning (to go to bed).

It cost arm and leg in the begining it was a mistery i couldn't figure it out then when i searched for i started to figure the i dioms and what they really mean

.

Yes , i always face difficulty to put idioms into practise , i can memorize but , but its challenging to find an appropriate context to use them in

Maybe on some newspapers

It is raining cats and dogs

Yes, in the beginning of my learning.

Yes

Yes

Yes, since idioms' wording does not necessarily reflect the idioms' meaning and it does not relate to our culture, hence, it is sometimes confusing to understand them.. I cannot provide a single example since every idiom I face for the first time creates a lot of question marks around it.

Yes , " it rains cats and dogs "

Yes, I have. One example is the idiom "it's raining cats and dogs." When I first encountered this expression, I couldn't understand why people would say it when it was raining heavily. The figurative meaning of the phrase wasn't immediately obvious to me, so I had to learn its meaning through context and explanation.

Yes, frequently

Yes of course;

Yes, understanding idiomatic expressions like "kick the bucket" was initially confusing due to semantic ambiguity.

Yes I have explained difficulties.....

An example is : to play possum. You would not get this idiom unless you know somethings about this animal. When surrounded by predators, it pretends to be dead so as to fool them. So, to understand an idiom, many factors are at play: culture, environment, psychology, and so on.

Yes, sometimes

Yes

Yes. No example

Yes, I have! Sometimes, when people use idioms like "it's raining cats and dogs," I get confused because it doesn't literally rain animals. It takes me a moment to remember it just means it's raining really hard.

Break a leg was an expression that confuses me because I interpreted as a evil wish for someone you hate but later on I knew

No

Pie in the sky

Sometimes

Yes

yes i did, i had an issue in decoding the idiom of the elephant in the room.

Above, participants exhibited examples of difficulty in understanding idiomatic expressions or figurative language in English due to semantic ambiguity

Section four: Strategies for Addressing Semantic Ambiguity

Question 1: What strategies do you employ to overcome semantic-based linguistic barriers in your own English language learning?

Contextual learning. Cultural awareness activities. Dictionary use. Using technology/online apps. Word association. Vocabulary Note Taking. Others.

Participants were asked to choose between the suggested strategies which one do they use to overcome semantic-based linguistic barriers in their own English language learning. The following chart bar represents their choices.

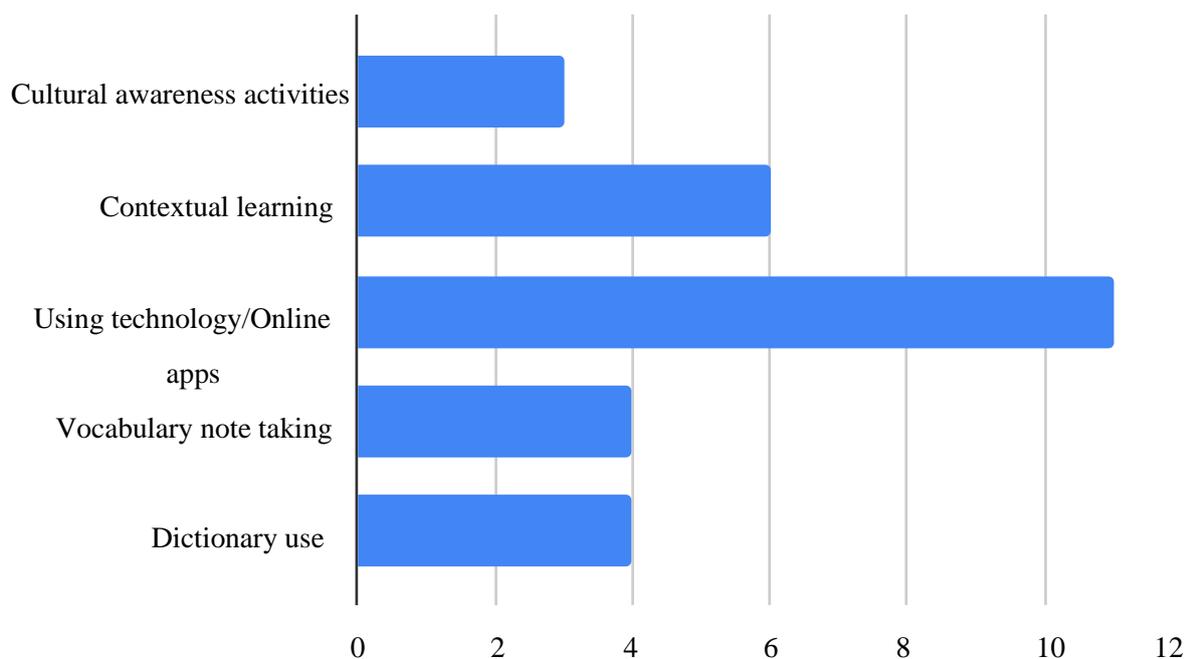


Figure 11: Strategies for Addressing Semantic Ambiguity

Strategies	Number of selection	Percentage%
Cultural awareness activities	03	10,7%
Contextual learning	06	21,4%
Using technology/ online apps	11	39,3%
Vocabulary note taking	04	14,3%
Dictionary use	04	14,3%
Total	28	100%

Table 08: Strategies for Addressing Semantic Ambiguity

The selection of the given techniques was as follow: “Using technology/online apps” this technique received the most elevated number of selection (11), then “contextual learning” comes in the second rank (6). The options of “vocabulary note taking” and “dictionary use” were equally popular, each selected four (4) times. Finally, has been favoured the strategy of “cultural awareness activities” by three (3) participants.

Regarding the strategies for addressing semantic Ambiguity, the answers can be expressed succinctly. For instance, they exhibited preference to methods overcoming semantic ambiguity in their EFL learning as noted in table above.

Question 2: In your opinion, what pedagogical approaches can be effective in helping EFL learners navigate semantic ambiguity and improve their communicative competence? Thick the right answer/s

Contextualized learning, Explicit instruction on Pragmatics, Collaborative learning, Feedback and error correction, Critical Thinking Activities, Task-based learning, Semantic mapping, Explicit Teaching Polysemous Words.

According to this question participants were allowed to opt for one or more from the given approaches which is why the total count exceeds the number of participants. The different approaches have been chosen as follow:

Contextualized learning, ten (10x) times selected, Explicit instruction on Pragmatics eight (8x) times, Collaborative learning four (4x) times, Feedback and error correction fourteen (14x) times, Critical Thinking Activities and Task-based learning equally selected nine (9x)

each one, Semantic mapping five (5x) times, and lastly Explicit Teaching Polysemous Words four (4x) times.

These findings provide insights into the tendency of language learners regarding different instructional approaches.

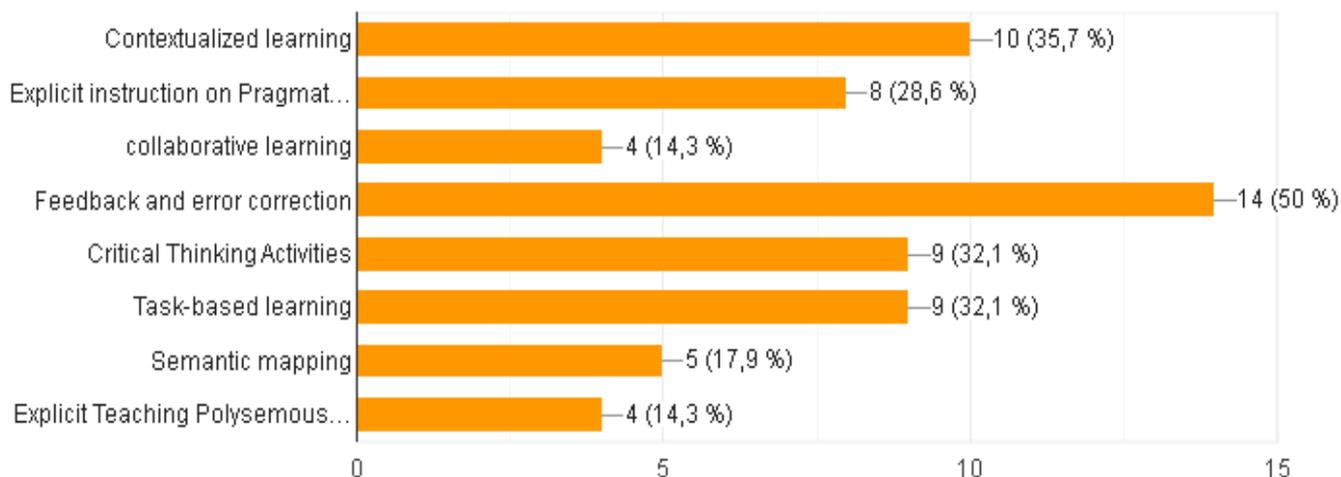


figure 12: Pedagogical approaches helping students to navigate semantic ambiguity bar chart.

Section five: Reflections on Teaching and Learning.

Question 1: Reflecting on your own EFL learning experience, how do you think greater awareness of semantic ambiguity could have benefited your language development?

This question was about to know towards what extend participants believe that a broader awareness of semantic nuance contributes to their language development.

It helps students to understand and respond appropriately to their communicative setting.

Being aware of semantic ambiguity could have helped me choose the right words and understand language nuances better, making my communication clearer and improving my English proficiency.

It will make the process of interaction or learning the language process easier to be developed

I would have start earlier learning those ambiguous terms and expressions

It will be of great benefit, cause i will have more understanding about English idioms and cultural expressions

By recognizing and navigating semantic complexities, individuals can refine my linguistic abilities and enriching my communication proficiency.

Yes it can be by knowing a lot of words , expressions ..etc on different topics , so he/she can speak and communicate in any topic that could face him/her

It helps in improving communicative competence and reduce such a problem

It develops my language vocabulary giving me a wider range of ways to express my ideas better and more concise.

allow me to better understand figurative language

Greater awareness of semantic ambiguity would have helped me navigate the complexities of English more effectively, reducing misunderstandings and enhancing my ability to use words correctly in various contexts. It would have improved my comprehension of idiomatic expressions and nuanced meanings

It would make learners have better communicative competence

Start correcting my mistakes and trying to improve my vocabulary.

by encouraging deeper understanding of context and word usage nuances.

It can enhance the speaking, writing skills. It can enrich vocabulary

Knowledge of the different word meanings enables you to read books related to different fields like physics, biology, etc. Also, it lets you read through them fast, saving time, and having read many books.

Improved comprehension, Increased vocabulary, Better error correction, Confidence in lge use.

Knowing the problem is a part of the solution; by knowing the semantic ambiguity learners will apply strategies to avoid it .

Understanding that words can have different meanings would have helped me learn English better. I would have understood stories and conversations more easily, learned more words, and felt more confident when talking in English.

It may enhance students' selection of words and promotes their critical thinking.

By understanding how the language structured

Reading more

By developing the semantic ability we can express ourselves better, thus, we can communicate better using English lge

I don't know

if i used self regulation strategies to tackle my semantic defencies it would have helped me in attaining and rettaining info and might have helped me to broaden my linguistic horizon.

They advanced how a greater awareness of semantic ambiguity can contributes in understanding and responding appropriately to their communicative setting as noted in their responses.

Additional comments

Question 1: Do you have any additional comments or insights related to the topic of semantic-based linguistic barriers in EFL communication?

No

.

No.

No

Well this topic is more essential to delve in and show that ambiguous meaning can lead to negative results for EFL students or learners in general, and find contribution will lead to positive way of understanding for both.

Nothing to add

Understanding and dealing with semantic ambiguity in English is important for getting better at the language. Using methods like contextual learning and getting feedback can really help us improve our English skills.

The level of formality can cyes hange the meaning in English depending on the relationship between interlocutors.

we should pay more attention to them because their effect last longer in life

Semantic-based linguistic barriers in EFL communication primarily stem from polysemy, idiomatic expressions, cultural differences, false friends, and lexical gaps. Addressing these challenges requires contextual learning, explicit instruction on idioms, cultural exposure, translation exercises, and the use of technology. By incorporating these strategies, educators can enhance learners' understanding and effective use of English in varied contexts.

Students shouldn't let this affect them negatively

No, thanks

No good luck

No, I do not.

At the end of the questionnaire were asked participants for additional comments, considering that it was an optional question some exposed their personal comments related to the topic.

5. Interpretations of the findings

The data reveal that students challenge with semantic ambiguity and vocabulary limitations. The presence of lexical ambiguity requires learners to have a high level of contextual awareness to effectively interpret and use such words. They also frequently misunderstand nuanced vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and figurative language influenced by cultural references which leads to communication breakdowns. A prevalent theme was the impact of cultural differences on semantic comprehension. Phrases like “it raining cats and dogs” or “hit the hay” were often misinterpreted literally. It signifies a gap in students understanding of the English cultural and contextual items. The difficulties observed suggest that the actual teaching approach might not adequately address the need for a real contextual practice and exposure to the multiplicity of words’ meaning. The issue of ambiguity and polysemy (words with multiple meanings) was also highlighted. Responses noted that the context in which is used can significantly alter its meanings and without sufficient contextual cues, they struggled to understand the intended message. Participants shared various strategies they employed to overcome those obstacles. However, students’ tendency to the use of technology and online apps should be an area of great focus for both for instructional competences and future researchers. It can be said that these obstacles are not only linguistic but, they are also coupled with cultural and contextual understanding. These findings are substantial with previous research that emphasizes semantics as a critical challenge to an effective language learning in

EFL contexts. Master one students of university of Biskra (English department) in the way of improving their CC struggle with semantic barriers as a crucial impediment. It indicates that tailored instructional strategies can mitigate these issues to improve EFL learners' communication proficiency. These findings underscore the importance of addressing semantic comprehension issues in First Year Master students. Efforts to simplify language, and provide context for ambiguous terms can significantly improve comprehension.

Overall, this study highlighted the critical need for inclusive communication strategies that consider the diverse linguistic backgrounds and proficiency levels of individuals, ensuring that information are clearly understood by all members of the community.

Conclusion

This chapter was consecrated to the description of the collected data from the practical work. It started by describing the aims and the methodology and the population, and then has followed the sample and the questionnaire description. The level of the participation was higher than the previewed number and almost all of the essential questions have been answered and that contributes to the confidence of the study. The analysis was constructed from a full description of the results obtained from the students' questionnaire. Its analysis and interpretation serve to support the hypothesis mentioned earlier in this study.

Recommendations

Indeed communicative competence entails the mastery of grammar, syntax and structure but, independently it cannot be isolated from semantic which also contribute to the appropriateness and effectiveness of CC. this work states some recommendations that will be helpful and practical for both EFL students and instructors of EFL learning in general as follow:

- Integrating into the curriculum semantic training,
- Focusing on contextualised learning,
- Cultural immersion activities to enhance understanding of nuanced vocabulary.

Further researches should explore the impact of specific teaching semantic interventions on improving communicative competence in EFL context.

Limitations of the study

This work's limitations contain the small size of the sample and its reservation for a single university which might influence the generalizability of the results.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General conclusion

The research on “Linguistic Barriers (Semantic-based) to EFL Students’ Communicative Competence: a Case Study of Master One Students at University of Biskra” has foregrounded important insights into the challenges faced by EFL learners in performing communicative competence. The study displayed in the research documented that the linguistic barriers students confront in their use of English are semantic barriers that include lexical ambiguity, polysemy, and cultural meaning. These barriers pave way of preventing students from understanding and expressing communicative meaning well and lead to misunderstandings, loss of confidence in communicative interaction, and communication breakdowns. The study was able to indicate that there is a vital need to integrate in EFL curriculum to acknowledge and sensitize students to the lexical and cultural nuances of language meaning. Immersion in practice could assist students in navigating and transgressing the barriers. Addressing these semantic challenges, educators can reinforce students’ communicative proficiency. In closing, teaching techniques in EFL education are discussed, and the practice of language instruction that elevates semantic sense will be a central concern for educators to couple learning with grammatical and syntactic knowledge for students to attain fluency and confidence in their English communication settings.

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Appendices
(Student' questionnaire)

Questionnaire: Linguistic Barriers (Semantic-based) to EFL Students Communicative Competence. A Case Study at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire. Your responses will ensure valuable insights into understanding semantic-based linguistic barriers in the context of EFL learning concerning Communicative Competence.

Personal Information:

Name:

Gender:

Section 1: Communicative competence:

Q1: According to you, Communicative Competence is:

- The learner's ability to use language in different communicative settings.
- The knowledge that speaker and hearer have to express and share his/her ideas and thought appropriately.
- The learner's ability to talk and interact with others.

Section 2: Semantic Awareness

Question 1: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

I am aware of the concept of semantic ambiguity in language.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Question 2: A student who has difficulty understanding and using nuanced vocabulary, leading to misinterpretation or incomplete communication is facing vocabulary limitations. It can also refer to a restricted range of words and expressions in communication.*

How do vocabulary limitations impact your communicative competence?

Always

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

Question 3: Can you identify examples of semantic ambiguity in English language use?

Always

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

Section 3: Challenges in EFL Communication

Question 1: Based on your experience, what are the main semantic-based linguistic barriers that EFL learners encounter in communication? Tick on the right answer/s. *

Lexical ambiguity;

Cultural references;

Lexical gaps;

Collocation;

Idioms and figurative language;

Word choice;

Others.

Question 2: How do semantic ambiguities affect EFL students' ability to express themselves accurately in English?

Question 3: Are lexical gaps faced by EFL students based on their linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds?

Yes

No

Question 4: Have you ever experienced difficulty understanding idiomatic expressions or figurative language in English due to semantic ambiguity? Please provide an example if applicable.

Section 4: Strategies for Addressing Semantic Ambiguity

Question 1: What strategies do you employ to overcome semantic-based linguistic barriers in your own English language learning? * Thick the right answer/s

Contextual learning;

Cultural awareness activities;

Dictionary use;

Using technology/online apps;

Word association;

Vocabulary Note Taking;

Others.

Question 2: In your opinion, what pedagogical approaches can be effective in helping EFL learners navigate semantic ambiguity and improve their communicative competence? * Thick the right answer/s

a) Contextualized learning

b) Explicit instruction on Pragmatics

c) collaborative learning

d) Feedback and error correction

e) Critical Thinking Activities

f) Task-based learning

g) Semantic mapping

h) Explicit Teaching Polysemous Words.

Section 5: Reflections on Teaching and Learning

1: Reflecting on your own EFL learning experience, how do you think greater awareness of semantic ambiguity could have benefited your language development?

Additional Comments

2: Do you have any additional comments or insights related to the topic of semantic-based linguistic barriers in EFL communication?