Expanding the interrogation beyond communicative competence: Theoretical, institutional, and professional considerations

Hiram H. Maxim
Georgetown University
Outline

2. Initial response to “Perspectives”
3. Expansion of the interrogation - Institutional, theoretical, and professional issues
4. Recommendations
5. Exemplification

• “Interrogating Communicative Competence as a Framework for Collegiate Foreign Language Study”
  – Underlying assumptions
    • interactive, transactional oral language ≠ language in humanities scholarship
    • interactive, transactional oral language ≠ integration of language and content
    • interactive, transactional oral language ≠ professional-level language abilities
    • Creativity and self-expression ≠ exploration of the Other
“Interrogating Communicative Competence as a Framework for Collegiate Foreign Language Study”

- Challenges
  - Establish goals for collegiate FL education --> high functional multilingualism?
  - Disentangle different uses of “communicative”
  - Acknowledge and respect institutionalization of communicative notions in U.S. FL education
Initial reaction

• Author consensus on the effectiveness and appropriateness of Communicative Competence (CC)
• CC is a dynamic, elusive construct
• CC is a lower-level phenomenon
• CC is only one component of the larger picture
The larger picture

• Institutionally . . .
  – Divided departments
    • Goals
    • Instructional foci
      – Thematic emphasis
      – Modalities
      – Textual orientation
    • Personnel
Consequences of bifurcation

• Theoretically . . .
  – Divergent notions of language

• Methodologically . . .
  – Cross-sectional research

• Professionally . . .
  – Potentially bifurcated future professoriate
Recommendation 1

• Articulate educational goals for the four-year undergraduate FL learning experience that
  – are shared by teaching faculty;
  – reflect FL departments’ central role in the university’s humanistic educational mission;
  – draw on departmental expertise;
  – acknowledge student population.
Recommendation 2

• Develop and maintain a coherent curricular context that spans the four-year undergraduate experience
  – Acknowledgement and support of the long-term nature of L2 acquisition
  – Integration of language and content
  – Articulation across instructional levels
  – Implementation of consistent pedagogical practices
  – Assessment of curricular effectiveness
Recommendation 3

- Conduct longitudinal SLA research to better understand the phenomenon of collegiate FL learning
  - L1 literate learners
  - Textual thinkers
  - Intercultural critics
Exemplification: Georgetown University German Department (GUGD)

- Shared, consensual goals:
  “to enable learners to become competent and literate non-native users of German who can employ the language in a range of intellectual, professional, and personal contexts and who can also draw from it personal enrichment, enjoyment, and formation”
GUGD (cont.)

• Coherent curricular context
  – Integration of language and content through explicit literacy orientation
    • Focus on socially situated and culturally embedded language use via genre-based textual engagement
  – Principled sequencing of content
    • Primary-secondary discourse continuum
  – Publicly shared pedagogy
    • Genre-derived tasks
  – Task-based assessment
GUGD (cont.)

• Longitudinal research
  – Development of syntactic complexity among learners who completed at least three consecutive instructional levels ($N = 23$)
  – Analysis of writing performance on end-of-level “prototypical performance tasks” (PPT)
    • Mean length of T-unit (MLTU)
    • Mean length of clause (MLC)
    • Clauses per T-unit (CTU)
MLTU confidence intervals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>(n)</th>
<th>Upper CI</th>
<th>Lower CI</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<td>8.85</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>8.22</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10.19</td>
<td>8.79</td>
<td>9.49</td>
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<td>Level III</td>
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<td>13.28</td>
<td>11.91</td>
<td>12.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level IV</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.42</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.28</td>
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The graph visually represents the confidence intervals for each level, with the mean, upper confidence limit, and lower confidence limit for each level indicated.
MLTU growth lines
MLC confidence intervals

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Level II (n=23)</th>
<th>Level III (n=23)</th>
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<td>5.96</td>
<td>7.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower CI</td>
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<td>5.32</td>
<td>6.76</td>
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MLC growth lines
CTU confidence intervals

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<th></th>
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<th>Level II (n=23)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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<td>1.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower CI</td>
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<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.63</td>
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</table>
CTU growth lines
Parting thoughts on CC

- Cause or effect of structural dysfunction?
- Effective theoretical construct for collegiate FL curriculum construction?
- Productive research paradigm for understanding collegiate FL learning?
Thank you

- hhm2@georgetown.edu
- http://german.georgetown.edu