



THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' COMPENSATORY COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN GERMAN AS A SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

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Abstract: *The development of compensatory communicative competence has become an important objective in contemporary foreign language education, particularly in contexts where German is taught as a second foreign language after English or another previously acquired language. Compensatory communicative competence refers to learners' ability to maintain communication and achieve communicative goals despite lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, or interactional gaps by using strategies such as paraphrasing, approximation, clarification requests, code-based transfer, gesture, self-repair, and meaning negotiation. This article examines the theoretical and practical foundations of developing students' compensatory communicative competence in German as a second foreign language instruction.*

Keywords: *compensatory communicative competence, German as a second foreign language, communication strategies, CEFR, multilingual didactics, German after English, strategy instruction, communicative competence*

The importance of compensatory communicative competence lies in its direct connection with real-life communication. In authentic interaction, learners frequently encounter lexical gaps, grammatical uncertainty, processing limitations, and misunderstandings, which may lead either to communication breakdown or to successful continuation of discourse through strategic behavior. Strategies such as

paraphrasing, approximation, clarification requests, confirmation checks, self-repair, repetition, and the use of non-verbal means allow learners to overcome communicative difficulties and sustain interaction. These behaviors are not random or incidental; instead, they reflect the learner's ability to regulate communication under conditions of limited linguistic resources. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) explicitly recognizes this dimension by including descriptors related to compensatory strategies and repair mechanisms, thereby providing a standardized pedagogical basis for integrating such competence into language teaching and assessment. The relevance of this issue is further reinforced by current developments in language education policy, particularly in countries where second foreign language instruction is being actively promoted. Educational reforms aimed at strengthening multilingual competence require not only the expansion of language offerings but also the improvement of methodological approaches that support effective communication. In such contexts, the development of compensatory communicative competence becomes a necessary condition for ensuring that learners can function communicatively even at early stages of language acquisition. However, despite its recognized importance, this competence is often underrepresented in classroom practice, where emphasis is still placed predominantly on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary acquisition, while strategic aspects of communication remain implicit and insufficiently addressed.

The present study is devoted to examining the theoretical and practical foundations for developing students' compensatory communicative competence in the process of teaching German as a second foreign language. The theoretical basis of the research is formed through the analysis of scholarly sources related to foreign language education, communicative competence theory, communication strategies, multilingual didactics, and the methodology of teaching German as a second foreign language. The literature review demonstrates that compensatory communicative competence is gaining increasing importance in modern foreign language education,

as it determines the learner's ability to maintain communication, express communicative intentions, and sustain interaction even in situations where linguistic resources are insufficient. In the academic literature on communicative competence, this concept is generally interpreted as a multidimensional system. Classical and contemporary studies identify several components of communicative competence, including linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and strategic competences. The strategic component, in particular, enables learners to overcome difficulties that arise during communication. From this perspective, compensatory communicative competence can be understood as a practical manifestation of strategic competence. It includes the ability to describe unknown lexical items, use approximate expressions, request clarification, ask for repetition, reformulate utterances, and employ non-verbal means such as gestures to support communication[1].

International framework documents in foreign language education also emphasize the importance of this competence. In particular, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and its Companion Volume introduce descriptors such as “compensating” and “monitoring and repair,” which explicitly refer to the learner's ability to overcome communication breakdowns and maintain interaction. These descriptors provide a standardized basis for conceptualizing, teaching, and assessing compensatory communicative competence. Therefore, within the reviewed literature, this competence is recognized as an independent and essential factor contributing to successful communication.

Research on communication strategies offers further insight into the internal mechanisms of compensatory competence. Some scholars define communication strategies as problem-solving devices used by learners to cope with difficulties in communication, while others analyze them from a psycholinguistic perspective as part of speech production and monitoring processes. Despite differences in theoretical approaches, there is a general consensus that communication strategies include such techniques as circumlocution, approximation, clarification requests,

confirmation checks, hesitation devices, and self-repair. These strategies enable learners to compensate for gaps in their linguistic knowledge and to remain active participants in interaction. The methodological framework of the present study is based on qualitative analysis and interpretive synthesis of theoretical and empirical sources. The research does not involve primary data collection but relies on the systematic examination of existing scholarly works and educational documents. The analysis was carried out in several stages. First, relevant sources were selected and examined in order to identify key definitions and conceptualizations of compensatory communicative competence. Second, communication strategies were analyzed and classified according to their functional and pedagogical characteristics. Third, empirical studies were reviewed to determine the effectiveness of strategy instruction in foreign language teaching. Finally, the findings were synthesized into a coherent framework applicable to German as a second foreign language instruction.

The research approach is comparative and interpretive rather than quantitative. Since the analyzed sources differ in terminology, research design, and educational context, the aim of the study is not statistical generalization but the identification of common patterns, theoretical convergences, and pedagogical implications. Special attention is given to the relationship between general communication strategy theory and the specific methodological features of teaching German in a multilingual environment. This allows for the integration of abstract theoretical insights with practical teaching considerations and supports the development of a comprehensive model for fostering compensatory communicative competence in foreign language learners.

The analysis of the selected literature and framework documents yielded several important results. First, compensatory communicative competence can be defined as a distinct and operational component of communicative competence. It is not merely an optional set of emergency behaviors used by weak learners; rather, it is an integral

part of effective communication under conditions of partial linguistic knowledge.[2]

Across the reviewed sources, compensatory competence consistently refers to a learner's ability to maintain or restore communication when lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, or interactional difficulties arise. This competence includes the ability to paraphrase unknown words, use approximate expressions, request clarification, check understanding, reformulate statements, rely on contextual clues, and mobilize non-verbal resources when necessary. Such actions allow learners to remain communicatively active even when their command of the target language is incomplete. Second, communication strategy theory provides a strong conceptual foundation for understanding compensatory competence, although the terminology and classifications used by researchers are not always identical. Some scholars focus on problem-solving behavior in interaction, others emphasize psycholinguistic planning and repair processes, while still others interpret communication strategies in terms of teaching methodology. Despite these differences, the reviewed literature shows broad agreement that strategies used to overcome communicative difficulties may be grouped into several major categories[3]. These include achievement strategies such as circumlocution and approximation, interactional strategies such as clarification requests and confirmation checks, time-gaining devices such as fillers and hesitation markers, and repair strategies such as self-correction or reformulation. This diversity indicates that compensatory competence is a multidimensional phenomenon and that its classroom development requires more than simple vocabulary substitution exercises.

Third, the context of German as a second foreign language creates particularly favorable conditions for the development of compensatory communicative competence. Learners who begin studying German after English or another foreign language already possess some degree of strategic experience. They may know how to ask for repetition, how to explain an unfamiliar concept using simpler words, how to infer meaning from context, or how to rely on cognates and structural similarities

across languages. Tertiary language didactics shows that such learners should not be treated as linguistically inexperienced beginners. On the contrary, their prior language learning experience constitutes a valuable cognitive and methodological resource. The “German after English” approach demonstrates that transfer from previously acquired languages may facilitate not only vocabulary recognition and grammatical awareness but also strategic communication. Thus, compensatory competence in German can be developed more effectively when teachers consciously activate learners’ multilingual repertoire.

The present article has examined the theoretical and practical foundations for developing students’ compensatory communicative competence in German as a second foreign language instruction. The analysis has shown that compensatory competence is not a peripheral or optional aspect of language learning, but a substantial and teachable component of communicative competence. It enables learners to maintain interaction, negotiate meaning, and achieve communicative goals despite gaps in linguistic knowledge, thereby supporting both immediate communication and long-term language development. The study has demonstrated that the concept of compensatory competence is well supported by contemporary language education frameworks, communication strategy theory, psycholinguistic research, and multilingual didactics. In particular, the CEFR-based understanding of compensation and repair, together with the insights of tertiary language teaching and the “German after English” approach, provides a strong basis for integrating strategic communication into language teaching practice. The reviewed empirical studies further suggest that explicit instruction in communication strategies can enhance learners’ oral performance and strategic awareness, although the strength and speed of these effects depend on the type of strategy, level of proficiency, and instructional design.

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