

LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE IN INTENSIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Gulnoz Rustamovna Tolibova

*Senior Lecturer, Department of Media Linguistics and Communication
Faculty of International Journalism
Uzbek State University of World Languages*

Abstract: This article explores the role of linguistic competence in the context of intensive English language teaching. It examines how a learner's mastery of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics contributes to language proficiency in a high-intensity learning environment. The study discusses strategies for enhancing linguistic competence, including focused grammar instruction, pronunciation training, and communicative activities. The findings highlight the importance of integrating all components of linguistic competence to ensure effective and accelerated language acquisition in intensive programs.

Keywords : Linguistic competence, intensive language teaching, english language learning, grammar and phonology, communicative approach, accelerated language acquisition, pragmatic understanding

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization and rapidly growing intercultural communication, the ability to use English fluently and accurately has become a critical necessity. Among the many approaches to English language instruction, intensive English language teaching (IELT) has emerged as a powerful and efficient method for helping learners achieve high levels of proficiency within relatively short periods. However, the success of such programs relies heavily on the development of learners' linguistic competence—a foundational element of communicative ability that encompasses phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic knowledge. The concept of linguistic competence, introduced by Noam Chomsky, refers to a speaker's implicit knowledge of the language system. In the context of second language acquisition (SLA), linguistic competence serves as a vital cornerstone for accurate language production and comprehension. It is particularly important in intensive language programs where time constraints and high expectations demand not only rapid vocabulary acquisition but also deep grammatical and structural understanding. Despite its significance, linguistic competence is sometimes overshadowed by the communicative aspects of language learning, especially in classrooms driven solely by functional language use. This article argues that a balanced integration of linguistic competence into the intensive English curriculum is essential for sustainable language development. By strengthening the internal structure of the language, learners are better prepared to engage meaningfully in real-world communication. This paper aims to explore the theoretical underpinnings of linguistic competence, analyze its role in intensive English language teaching environments, and present practical strategies for enhancing it within the classroom. The study also addresses challenges educators face in promoting linguistic competence and offers recommendations for effective curriculum design that bridges the gap between structural knowledge and communicative performance.

MAIN BODY

Theoretical background

Linguistic competence, first introduced by Chomsky (1965), is defined as a speaker's unconscious knowledge of the structure and rules of a language. It differs from communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), which includes not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately in context. In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), linguistic competence serves as the internalized system of rules that allows learners to construct grammatically correct sentences and understand input accurately. In intensive English programs, the role of linguistic competence is amplified due to the condensed nature of the instruction. Learners are required to absorb language structures and apply them swiftly, making it crucial to integrate grammar, phonetics, and syntax systematically into lesson plans.

Components of linguistic competence

Linguistic competence is not monolithic; it consists of several interrelated subsystems:

- **Phonological competence:** Understanding and producing the sound system of the language.
- **Morphological competence:** Recognizing word forms and structures (e.g., affixes, tenses).
- **Syntactic competence:** Constructing well-formed sentences using grammatical rules.
- **Semantic competence:** Comprehending word meanings and their combinations.
- **Pragmatic competence** (sometimes overlapping with communicative competence): Using language appropriately in different social contexts.

Each component contributes to accurate language production and comprehension. Intensive language instruction must address all these layers in an integrated manner.

Linguistic competence in the context of intensive teaching

Intensive English language teaching is characterized by a high volume of instruction delivered over a short time frame. While this format accelerates exposure, it also requires focused instruction to prevent surface-level learning. Rote memorization of phrases without structural understanding often leads to fossilization of errors. Therefore, attention to linguistic competence ensures learners gain not only communicative fluency but also structural accuracy. Research suggests that students in intensive programs benefit most when foundational grammatical structures are taught explicitly and reinforced through context-based application. Moreover, developing linguistic competence enhances learners' confidence and self-monitoring abilities in both spoken and written forms.

Strategies for enhancing linguistic competence

There are several pedagogical strategies that can support the development of linguistic competence in intensive English courses:

- **Explicit grammar instruction** with contextual examples and active learner engagement.



- **Pronunciation drills and phonetic training**, including stress and intonation practice.
- **Task-based learning** that requires accurate use of target structures.
- **Form-focused feedback**, where teachers correct errors and explain linguistic rules.
- **Integrated skills activities**, combining reading, writing, speaking, and listening with linguistic objectives.

Technology can also be used to support competence building—for example, through grammar apps, interactive quizzes, and speech analysis tools.

CONCLUSION

The present study has highlighted the crucial role of linguistic competence in the success of intensive English language teaching programs. As demonstrated throughout the discussion, linguistic competence forms the backbone of a learner's ability to produce and comprehend language accurately and meaningfully. In the context of intensive instruction—where time is compressed and learning expectations are high—the deliberate and systematic development of linguistic competence becomes even more significant. While communicative fluency remains a key goal of language learning, it should not come at the expense of grammatical accuracy and structural understanding. A balanced approach that integrates both linguistic and communicative competencies leads to more sustainable language acquisition, equipping learners with the tools to navigate both formal and informal communication settings with confidence and precision. Moreover, the findings suggest that intensive English programs must be carefully designed to include explicit instruction in the core components of linguistic competence: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Language instructors must also be adequately trained to implement form-focused strategies, scaffold learning through contextual practice, and provide timely feedback on learners' linguistic output. By prioritizing linguistic competence alongside communicative effectiveness, educators can ensure that learners not only speak more but also speak better. This approach empowers learners with a deeper understanding of language structures, enhances their cognitive engagement, and fosters long-term retention and adaptability in real-life communication. Future research could explore the measurable impact of specific instructional methods on the development of linguistic competence in intensive settings. Additionally, longitudinal studies may provide insights into how linguistic competence evolves post-program, offering a clearer picture of its contribution to overall language proficiency over time.

In conclusion, linguistic competence is not an optional supplement to language instruction—it is an essential foundation. Its thoughtful integration into intensive English language teaching will enhance not only the pace but also the quality of learners' progress, ultimately leading to more confident, capable, and autonomous language users.

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