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Pedagogical Conditions for Using Conversation Simulators in Developing Communicative Competence

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Abstract: This article explores the pedagogical conditions necessary for effectively using AI-powered conversation simulators – such as ChatGPT, Duolingo, and Mursion – in the development of communicative competence in language learners. It discusses how these tools can support linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences through realistic, interactive dialogue simulations. The article outlines technological and instructional requirements, classroom strategies, and potential challenges, emphasizing the importance of thoughtful integration into language curricula.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Communicative Competence, Language Learning, Conversation Simulators, ChatGPT, Duolingo, Mursion, Educational Technology, Pedagogical Integration, Speaking Skills.

Introduction: In today's language classrooms, the development of communicative competence is considered a central goal. Communicative competence encompasses not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in various social contexts. With advancements in educational technology, conversation simulators such as ChatGPT, Duolingo chatbots, and Mursion are increasingly being used to support language learning. These tools simulate interactive dialogues, offering learners opportunities to practice and develop communication skills in engaging, realistic, and autonomous ways. This article explores the pedagogical conditions necessary for the effective use of conversation simulators in fostering communicative

competence.

Understanding Conversation Simulators. Conversation simulators are digital tools powered by artificial intelligence (AI) that can engage users in interactive, often realistic, dialogues. They range from text-based chatbots like ChatGPT, to voice-activated assistants, and even immersive virtual reality platforms like Mursion. These tools are designed to mimic human conversation, providing learners with opportunities to practice speaking, listening, and responding in a target language.

- **ChatGPT** enables flexible, open-ended dialogue practice where learners can simulate everyday or academic conversations, receive real-time responses, and explore diverse topics.
- **Duolingo** incorporates gamified chatbot features that guide users through structured dialogues, reinforcing grammar and vocabulary.
- **Mursion** uses avatars in a VR environment to simulate high-stakes or professional communication scenarios, such as job interviews or customer service interactions.

These simulators serve as accessible conversation partners and can be integrated into formal or informal learning environments to support skill development.

According to language learning theories, communicative competence consists of several interconnected components:

- **Linguistic competence**: knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure.
- **Sociolinguistic competence**: understanding of social context, including cultural norms and appropriate language use.
- **Discourse competence**: ability to produce coherent and cohesive texts and conversations.
- **Strategic competence**: use of communication strategies to overcome breakdowns or fill gaps in language knowledge.

Conversation simulators can support each of these areas. For example, a student using ChatGPT can develop strategic competence by rephrasing unclear input, while practicing discourse competence by maintaining a coherent conversation. Duolingo helps reinforce linguistic competence through repetition and feedback, and Mursion offers a controlled environment to practice sociolinguistic norms in simulated real-life scenarios.

To ensure the successful integration of conversation simulators in developing communicative competence, several pedagogical conditions must be met:

- **Technological Readiness**: Both students and institutions need access to reliable internet connections, compatible devices, and necessary software. Familiarity with digital tools should be ensured through training and orientation.
- **Teacher Training and Digital Literacy**: Educators must be equipped with the skills to effectively implement AI tools. Professional development workshops and ongoing support are essential to ensure confident use and pedagogical alignment.
- **Task Design**: Tasks assigned to students using simulators should be meaningful, context-based, and goal-oriented. Clear instructions, expected outcomes, and relevance to real-life communication are crucial.
- **Learner Autonomy and Motivation**: Conversation simulators work best when learners take initiative. Activities should encourage independent exploration, curiosity, and confidence in using the language.
- **Blended Learning Models**: A combination of simulator use and traditional classroom interaction ensures balance. AI tools can be used for self-practice, while face-to-face sessions allow for reflection, discussion, and teacher feedback.
- **Curriculum Alignment**: The use of simulators should be integrated into the curriculum, not treated as a standalone activity. Learning objectives should be clearly linked to simulator tasks.
- **Assessment Integration**: Teachers should incorporate simulator-based tasks into formative and summative assessment practices, using tools such as rubrics, transcripts, and peer reviews.

Educators can implement various strategies to effectively incorporate conversation simulators:

- Use **ChatGPT** to simulate interviews, customer service calls, or informal conversations. Have students analyze the dialogue and reflect on language use. Teachers can guide students to focus on turn-taking, question formulation, and tone.
- Assign **Duolingo** chatbot modules as homework to reinforce class topics. Track progress using the built-in analytics and encourage learners to share new vocabulary or grammar patterns during classroom discussions.
- Schedule **Mursion** sessions to prepare students for professional communication scenarios. Use Mursion to practice culturally appropriate expressions, conflict resolution, or service-related dialogue in realistic VR environments. Follow up with group reflections, feedback sessions, or peer evaluations.

Additional strategies:

- Pair or group learners to co-construct dialogues

with ChatGPT, encouraging collaborative negotiation of meaning.

- Ask students to compare their AI conversations with authentic human dialogues and identify differences in structure or tone.
- Integrate simulator interactions into project-based learning, where students must use AI to gather information, role-play a scenario, and present their findings.

In addition to these applications, educators can encourage metacognitive strategies by asking students to keep digital learning journals where they document their interactions with conversation simulators. These reflections might include challenges faced, new expressions learned, or corrections received from AI feedback. Teachers can also implement peer coaching, where students exchange their AI-generated dialogues and provide constructive critiques. This peer-review process not only enhances linguistic awareness but also builds collaborative learning skills. Integrating simulator use into thematic units or CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) projects – such as simulating a historical interview or a scientific debate – can further contextualize language use and deepen content engagement.

Despite their benefits, conversation simulators present several challenges:

- **Over-reliance on AI**: Students may become dependent on AI feedback rather than engaging with peers or instructors, which could hinder the development of interpersonal communication skills and real-time interaction capabilities.
- **Limited cultural nuance**: While AI simulators are effective in providing language exposure, they may fail to capture the intricacies of cultural and contextual language use. This can lead to misunderstandings or the reinforcement of incorrect social norms.
- **Bias and inaccuracies**: AI-generated responses are based on data models that may contain inaccuracies or embedded biases. These errors can mislead learners or propagate stereotypes if not carefully monitored.
- **Ethical concerns**: The use of AI tools raises issues related to data privacy, informed consent, and the ethical use of student interaction data. Educational institutions must ensure that tools comply with privacy regulations and ethical standards.
- **Lack of emotional intelligence**: Unlike human instructors, AI lacks empathy and the ability to respond appropriately to students' emotional needs. This can affect learner motivation and engagement, particularly for students who benefit from supportive human interaction.
- **Access and equity issues**: Not all students may have equal access to devices, internet connectivity, or a quiet environment to use simulators effectively. These disparities can widen the digital divide and affect learning outcomes.

To address these challenges, educators should adopt a balanced approach that combines AI-driven tools with human guidance. They should critically evaluate the tools they choose, provide support and training to learners, and foster an inclusive, ethical, and culturally sensitive learning environment.

CONCLUSION

Conversation simulators have the potential to revolutionize language education by providing flexible, accessible, and engaging opportunities for communication practice. However, their effectiveness depends on thoughtful pedagogical planning. When supported by appropriate technological infrastructure, teacher training, purposeful task design, and ongoing assessment, these tools can significantly contribute to the development of communicative competence. As AI technology continues to evolve, educators have a valuable opportunity to reimagine language learning for the digital age.

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