

TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE GRAMMAR COMMUNICATIVELY

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Abstract. *The article gives the characteristics of methods how to present a grammar item and techniques to practice a target grammar (English, German and Ukrainian as a foreign language). Within a comparative analysis of three methods communicative one is proved to be the most effective as it encourages students to use language from the beginning. There is an inductive learning of students where the teacher is a facilitator, mentor and manager of students' learning activities. There are three dimensions of a grammar item they are form, meaning and usage. To develop firm grammar competences of students learning activities should have the following characteristics: a meaningful context, real life situations, engaging features. Learning is to be student-oriented where activities are arranged according to a specific objective: to train form, meaning or usage and simultaneously the teacher provides communicative context. The given samples illustrate implementation of the main concepts and ideas into practice. The results of teaching grammar items communicatively are high, effective and long lasting.*

Key words: *communicative method, form, meaning and usage, inductive learning, language competences, personalization, facilitator.*

Introduction. Grammar-translation was the most common way of learning languages for hundreds of years. Students studied the grammar of sentences in the target language, then translated them into their own language – or the other way around.

In a typical grammar-translation class, the teacher uses the students' native language most of the time. In a typical grammar-translation lesson, grammar is taught deductively: the teacher presents the grammar rules, provides long and detailed explanations and gives examples (usually a list of isolated sentences), then students study

the rules and practice grammar through translation exercises. A lot of attention is paid to reading and writing; little attention is paid to speaking and listening. Most of the interaction is from the teacher to the student; there is very little student-student interaction. The ultimate goal is to achieve accuracy, that is, to produce grammatically correct sentences [6].

Analysis of recent research and publications can you find in the works of K. Beare, De Carrico, J.D. Larsen-Freeman, S. Thornbury and other scientists [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6].

Grammar-translation became unpopular because students translated written sentences, knew grammar rules perfectly, but were not able to communicate in the target language. **The aim** of the article is to show how asking students to translate into and out of their language and English/ German/Ukrainian they can be taught a lot about the similarities and differences between the two languages.

The main **methods of research** are the method of analysis and synthesis, as well as the comparative method.

Audio-lingual methodology gave students a lot of speaking practice by using habit-formation drills. Students repeated sentences again and again until they were memorized. Audio-lingual methodology is connected to the theory of behaviorism. It uses a stimulus-response reinforcement approach to language and grammar learning. A stimulus (a teacher's prompt) provokes a student response (a sentence) and this response is reinforced by reward of, for example, teacher praise and student satisfaction. If you repeat this procedure often enough, some people suggested, the language will be learned [6].

Noam Chomsky challenged the theory of behaviorism. He asked the logical question: Why can we all say new things that we have never heard before? In the 1970's, teachers stopped using only audio-lingual methodology [6]. Historically, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been seen as a response to the Audio-Lingual method. CLT focuses on the idea that people learn language if they have opportunities to use it and that if students have a desire to communicate and a purpose for communicating (rather than just practicing a grammar item), then the language learning will take care of itself [6].

In CLT, students do many speaking and writing tasks, trying to use any and all of the language they know. CLT

focuses more on content than on form; it puts focus on communication related to the realistic use of language in context. It concentrates on how successfully students can communicate, rather than on whether they are speaking or writing correctly. Correction often takes place after the students have tried to speak or write communicatively.

CLT gives students opportunities to practice using the language and to see its relevance outside the classroom. Also, it focuses on active learning and teaching. Most teachers don't follow only one method, but use elements of many different approaches. This eclecticism seems to be the best response to different claims about how different students learn. However, in order to be able to make informed decisions and to select the most appropriate grammar teaching approach for their students, teachers should learn how to use different approaches and methods and fully understand their potential and limitations [6].

Results. Is the need to provide students with an opportunity to use grammar structures in meaningful and engaging activities to encourage to use foreign languages from the beginning rather than learning about the languages with the hope that later on students will be able to apply grammatical knowledge in active way. These objectives direct to avoid inert learning and separate language activities (reading, writing, speaking, listening).

The most important first step in solving any problem how to start teach grammar communicatively is understanding its cause: why are some grammar items more challenging for students? There are three dimensions of grammar - *form*, *meaning* and *use* – and it is necessary to explore how these components can help teachers understand grammar structures better and identify potential learning challenges for their students more easily [3].

Nowadays teachers have to be informed about all teaching options. Once informed, they have to choose wisely from among the available practices to create their own unique blend that would be appropriate for their own personality and teaching style, for their own students and the circumstances in which the teaching is taking place. Traditional methodologies have often created language acquisition problems and ineffective learning environments in which learners hardly participate and/or volunteer. That did not promote learning. D. Larsen-Freeman created the term *grammaring* to convey the idea that grammar is a dynamic system, which needs to be taught as a skill, the fifth skill (the other four being reading, writing, speaking and listening), rather than as a fixed body of rules. If teachers understand that what you are trying to do is to get students to use grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately, then they realize that they need to provide students with an opportunity to use grammar structures in meaningful and engaging activities [3].

To the scholar's (Larsen-Freeman) point of view, this means that for someone to be able to speak and use language accurately, meaningfully and appropriately, all three dimensions of form, meaning and use have to be learned. However, if you stop and think about it, you realize that they are not all learned the same way. For this reason, form, meaning and use need to be taught differently. Teachers need to focus students' attention on one of these three, the one which presents the greatest learning challenge for students at that moment. The challenge changes, depending on the proficiency of the students and their native language. For example, for Ukrainian speakers, the challenge in learning the English passive is probably not its form or its meaning. Students have to learn both; however, it

is when to use the passive (as opposed to the active voice) that remains the greatest learning challenge. This suggests that the traditional way of introducing the passive to learners by transforming active sentences into passive ones is misguided because it suggests to students that the two voices are interchangeable, which they are not [3].

Once teachers have identified what learning challenges a grammar structure can pose, they need to plan how to introduce that structure to students. What teachers can do is to set up memorable grammar encounters, that is, to *present* new grammar items in an effective and engaging way. When talking about their work in grammar lessons, many teachers use just two categories: *presentation* and *practice*. These terms have wide definitions and this sometimes causes confusion. When planning the presentation stage, the teacher has to decide:

- How to expose students to the target structure;
- Whether to explain grammar rules to students, when to do this, and how to do this;
- How the students will be engaged.

The biggest challenge to overcome for the teacher while planning effective grammar practice is to find what he/she wants to practice (form, meaning or usage) and depending on a particular objective to find or design a proper language activity and at the same time use a target grammar in a meaningful communicative context. Effective grammar presentations share the following characteristics:

- Students encounter the target grammar item *in context*. For example, the teacher sets up a situation (e.g. presents a dialogue, shows a picture, tells a simple story, etc.) in which the target item is used.
- The teacher uses various techniques to help students *notice* the most

important features of that item (diagrams, different colors, timelines, etc.).

– Students are actively engaged (they answer meaningful questions, sometimes they research new language).

– Explanations given by the teacher are brief and memorable [6].

There is a sample of a lesson how to present and practice a target grammar in a communicative approach. Direct and indirect speech (Sequence of tenses, this grammar item is the biggest challenge even for Ukrainian teachers needless to say it is a huge one for students. In Ukrainian there is no agreement in the tense of a verb in the subordinate clause with the tense of a verb in the principle clause if it is in one of the past tenses. It is hard to explain to students that in the sentences:

He said that he worked (past simp.) for this firm. (it refers to present action).

He reported that the delegation were discussing (past cont.) an important topic (present action), there is

no such language phenomenon in Ukrainian.

It is better to present the grammar item in a form of an interview with a famous film star. Students will watch it once then they will be given a transcript of it and there will be another hands out (a review of a blogger to this video). So students will have 2 texts about the same but in direct and indirect speeches.

Next stage will be grammar observing. The teacher may ask students to compare 2 texts, to find similar sentences, to analyze them, to define tenses in quotes and indirect sentences, to trace what change takes place, to guess why they see the change. Notice that the teacher will observe the target grammar referring to present actions and states. The teacher will help students figure out its meaning. On the blackboard there will be diagrams and illustrations. e.g.

| Direct | Indirect |
|-------------|-------------|
| work/works | Worked |
| is/are | was/were |
| has starred | had starred |

The next stage will be practicing. The teacher will ask to imagine that you help your grandfather, who has some problems in hearing and seeing to watch break news. The task is to retell what an announcer is saying.

Then there will be a play «Gossiping» in which class will be divided into some groups of 3-4 people, each of groups will communicate on a certain topic (Love affair, New movie, Sport), they can take some notes.

When time is over a volunteer from each group will report what «news» they knew, they are supposed to start like this: Olia siad that..... John told to me that ... Mike informed that...

(If students report about past actions they have heard while gossiping the teacher makes some editing without drawing their attention).

Homework will be to write a review to a film release (teacher's choice).

This sample shows implementation of communicative approach where one can observe meaningful context, real life situations, personalization, engaging learning activities. The teacher provides the rules; the teacher provides information, students make their own conclusions; the teacher carefully leads the students to discover grammar rules; teachers and students collaborate to produce a co-constructed grammar explanation.

For teaching German indefinite and definite articles there is an effective technique as a game, this language activity is characterized to be interactive and meaningful.

A game «Make a sentence». Students make a circle where the first student who starts the game makes a sentence: «Das ist ... Buch. ... Buch ist interessant». At the same time he/she pauses at the places where the articles are to be and throws a ball to the next student who has to repeat the sentence with the correct articles. If there is a mistake the next student should continue and score if the articles are correct. The winner is who has scored the highest points.

«Crossing the river». There are phases written on the blackboard on a particular topic. Students are divided into two teams, the task is to make sentences with definite articles – for team A and to make sentences with indefinite articles – for team B. Each correct sentence is a stone to cross the river, the winner team is the first to make all sentences and reach another bank of the river.

E.g. topic «Die Schule»: *die (eine) Schule, der (ein) Unterricht, das (ein) Buch, das (ein) Heft, der (ein) Kugelschreiber, die (___) Bleistifte, die (eine) Hausaufgabe, die (eine) Lehrerin ...*

There are controlled language activities (drills and repetition). The role of drilling and repetition in communicative

teaching has been discussed a lot. On one hand, the main focus of the communicative approach is on natural, authentic communication with others. On the other hand, a learner needs a «bank» of language to refer to. This «bank» is often formed by having a number of experiences, and/or by using specific language meaningfully and with «fluent accuracy». Experts say repetition plays a big role in this process, so let's look at some reasons why.

Drills can be useful teaching and learning material because they provide practice of small, manageable chunks of language. Repeating a communicative situation/task more than once gives learners a chance to gain confidence, improve fluency and attempt more complex language structures or vocabulary (Thornburry: 2010).

Scott Thornburry (2010) suggests modifying the task where the teacher asks the students to repeat: instructors can either change the amount of scaffolding, or visual support provided to the students (having less and less text so that they could practice a dialogue independently); or the teachers can change the main skill being practiced (from speaking to writing, for example). Reducing the time allocated for the task in pairs, or asking students to do the same task in a new small group, provides the variety and spontaneity in teaching communicatively.

The next types are guided practice activities where teachers want students to think about and use specific language item(s) accurately as often as possible. In order to complete these activities, students have to use the target grammar structure, but they also have the freedom to somewhat personalize the language and contribute their own ideas. This maintains students' interest, but also challenges them.

The last group is free practice activities where the students have com-

plete freedom in the language they produce. The teacher can't predict what will be said before the activity begins. Students have the greatest opportunity to personalize the language, experiment, and incorporate previously learned grammar and other language points. Free practice activities include role plays, simulation, debates, discussions, composing and telling stories, making videos etc.

Meaningful activities require students to use the grammar structure for some meaningful purpose. For example, if they need to practice using a preposition, a meaningful practice activity would be reading maps in order to give directions to someone. Asking students to write a list of examples using, e.g. the preposition **on**, that is, to produce decontextualized sentences, is not particularly meaningful or engaging.

Many teachers try to personalize grammar practice activities by creating a situation requiring students to use the target grammar structure to talk about themselves. In this way, students can relate the language to their own experiences, and express their ideas, thoughts and feelings.

When selecting grammar practice activities, teachers should be guided by the nature of the learning challenge.

– If the students' learning challenge is form, meaningful repetition is useful (e.g. grammar jazz chants, or «Find someone who ...», or «Twenty questions game»).

– If the students' learning challenge is meaning, they will need to practice linking form and meaning together (e.g. the game «What have I changed?»).

– If the students' learning challenge is use, students will need to make a choice (e.g. role-play a job interview requiring them to use either the Present Perfect (to talk about their experiences) or the Past Simple Tense (specifying when they acquired these experiences)).

Conclusions and perspectives of further study of the problem. When planning a grammar lesson, teachers should also consider how to order grammar practice activities. There is no absolute rule, but activities in lessons are usually logically linked, with controlled practice coming before freer practice. As the class progresses, each type of activity allows increased amounts of creativity, personal relevance, and experimentation with the language.

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НАВЧАННЯ ГРАМАТИКИ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ НА КОМУНІКАТИВНІЙ ОСНОВІ

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Анотація. У статті охарактеризовано методи, прийоми презентації граматичного матеріалу іноземних мов на прикладі англійської, німецької та української як іноземної. Доведено, що комунікативний підхід до навчання граматики іноземної мови є найефективнішим, оскільки він спонукає студентів використовувати іноземну мову на початкових етапах її вивчення. Особливу увагу у процесі навчання граматики зосереджено на індуктивному методі, де роль викладача визначається як фасилітатора, спостерігача та організатора навчальної діяльності студентів. Встановлено, що виробленню стійких граматичних навичок з іноземної мови у студентів сприяють комунікативні вправи та завдання, які спрямовані на засвоєння форм слова його значення та слововживання. Крім того, зміст навчальних вправ та завдань повинен відображати реальні життєві ситуації, передбачати елементи заохочення до активної участі у навчально-виховному процесі. Наведені приклади ілюструють втілення основних ідей комунікативного підходу до навчання граматики іноземних мов. Результати вивчення студентами граматики іноземних мов на засадах комунікативного підходу сприяють швидкому оволодінню навчальним матеріалом та стійкості засвоєних граматичних знань, вмінь та навичок.

Ключові слова: комунікативний підхід, форма слова його значення та слововживання, індуктивний метод навчання, мовні компетентності, фасилітатор.