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DEVELOPING GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE WHEN LEARNING ENGLISH IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

РОЗВИТОК ГРАМАТИЧНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ ПІД ЧАС ВИВЧЕННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ У ВИЩИХ НАВЧАЛЬНИХ ЗАКЛАДАХ

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Abstract. *The article discusses some aspects of the formation and development of grammatical competence in learning English. Studying grammar is essential for fluency in English. The peculiarities of English grammar as one of the Germanic languages are analysed. An attempt is made to compare the features of English and German grammar, as well as English and Ukrainian grammar. Phrasal verbs are considered as a classic example of the differences between English and Ukrainian grammatical systems. The authors focus on selected complex topics of English grammar. The importance of project work in English language classes is emphasised and the possibility of group work is suggested. Among the authentic materials suitable for creating grammar exercises, materials from English-language publications are highlighted. The linguistic and didactic potential of authentic texts is emphasised. It was noted that they familiarise us with the peculiarities of life in other countries, and not only in those where the language is studied. Criteria for selecting texts for creating exercises were proposed: level of difficulty, interest, authenticity, neutrality. The stages of working with the text and the results of grammar mastery at each of these stages were analysed.*

Key words: *grammatical competence, text, topics, criteria, mastering grammar, creating exercises.*

Introduction.

It is difficult to imagine learning any foreign language, especially English, without mastering grammar. Recently, there has been a large number of advertisements such as ‘English without grammar’. Their authors promise quick mastery of the language without studying grammatical rules. With some experience in teaching foreign languages and using a scientific approach, it can be affirmed that the idea of grammar being ‘optional’ is false and harmful to teaching. Arguments such as ‘learning your native language happens without rules’ are often encountered. However, such statements ignore two facts: 1) the native language is learned in childhood, when the human brain functions differently; 2) the native language is learned mainly in a linguistic environment where everyone or almost everyone uses it. Undoubtedly, a certain level of knowledge and skills can be achieved without knowledge of grammar

or with a superficial acquaintance with grammar. However, speech will remain very primitive and will only be appropriate in certain situations when it is necessary to name the simplest concepts in everyday life (for example, asking for an item or paying at the supermarket checkout). Professional communication in English, which is required of a 21st-century specialist, requires a thorough and conscious study of grammar. This issue is addressed in publications by I.M. Golopych, L.L. Matsapura, O.I. Andryukhina, S.P. Derkach, O.V. Yazlovitska and other researchers.

Main text

English grammar is not unique, which is due to English belonging to the Germanic languages. Some features characteristic of other Germanic languages can also be found in English. However, English is characterised by a high level of analyticity and the virtual disappearance of flexibility. Grammatical relations in English sentences are conveyed by free grammatical morphemes [1, p. 220]. A classic example of the differences between Ukrainian and English grammar is phrasal verbs. If in Slavic languages a prefix can be used to form meaningful verb forms from a single root, in English such means of formation are prepositions and adverbs. We understand the meaning of the verbs formed unconsciously, comparing the meaning of the core verb with the meaning of the ‘particle’, the adverbial or prepositional part [2, p. 114]. Phrasal verbs differ only in this part, which is sometimes intuitively understandable and sometimes completely illogical from the point of view of a Ukrainian native speaker. Therefore, these and other grammatical phenomena should be memorised. The formation of grammatical skills and abilities in foreign language speech is a complex mental activity, during which complex mental operations are performed, including comparison, differentiation, finding common and distinctive features in grammatical forms, understanding them, and subsequently using grammatical information in speech situations. The success of these operations depends largely on the readiness of learners to functionally generalise grammatical structures while solving communicative tasks in various communication situations [3, p. 32]. In this case, it is advisable to draw parallels between the language being studied (English) and the native language (Ukrainian). The use of examples from other languages that the

applicants have already studied is also welcome. For example, there is a similarity in the lexical structure of English and German. The vocabulary related to political institutions is similar: Kandidat / candidate, Komitee / Committee, Präsident / president, etc. However, in this study, we are primarily interested in similarities and differences in grammar. Applicants can be asked to identify and reflect on these. With regard to the use of articles, the usage of this part of speech in German and English is largely the same. Both definite and indefinite articles are used in a similar way in both languages. However, German definite articles indicate the gender and number of the noun, which is not the case in English. As for prepositions, their use is generally similar: the German *von* corresponds to the English *of*, and the German *in* corresponds to the English *in*.

It is necessary to pay attention to topics related to complex aspects of the English language. These include the use of articles, degrees of comparison of adjectives, gerunds or infinitives, and grammatical tenses. The project method can help with this. It is mainly focused on the independent work of students (individual, in pairs or in groups), which they carry out over a certain period of time. This method can be organically combined with other forms of work. The implementation of a project involves, on the one hand, the use of a set of different methods and teaching tools and, on the other hand, the need to integrate knowledge and skills in order to apply knowledge from various fields of science, technology, engineering and creative spheres [4, p. 74]. When it comes to project work aimed at mastering grammar, one could suggest preparing an author's mini-guide (although this requires considerable effort, time and, most likely, group work). Smaller tasks include preparing a report for a conference or conducting media monitoring, writing down (with explanations) as many examples as possible for a specific rule. In our opinion, materials from English-language publications (articles and videos) are particularly suitable for creating grammar tasks. For example, a text with missing words and a table with answer options. Such a table may contain examples of the use of different rules. In addition, it can be used to demonstrate both grammatical and lexical aspects of language use. We should not forget about the linguistic and didactic potential of authentic texts: they

introduce us to the peculiarities of life in other countries, and not only those whose languages we are learning. Broadening the worldview of students is not the last task to be addressed, among other things, in foreign language classes. Not every text is suitable for creating exercises. Texts used as teaching materials should be approached critically and selected carefully. Taking into account previous research and experience teaching students of various specialities, the following criteria for selecting texts can be proposed.

1. Level of difficulty. The text should correspond to the level of knowledge that students have achieved or are expected to achieve. The vast majority of texts in the mass media can be understood with a B2 level (sometimes even B1). To study English at the C1 level, it is necessary to select specialised texts, but the vast majority of students studying non-language specialities do not reach this level. A text that is too difficult can be demotivating and cause apathy. If there are many unfamiliar words in the text, it is advisable to create a vocabulary list after the text.

2. Interest. Students usually have a variety of interests that often go beyond their educational programmes. For example, future economists may be interested in tourism, information technology, or art. Applicants for the 'hotel and restaurant business and catering' speciality may be interested in information technology, politics, history, etc. Accordingly, the text should be interesting for the group or the student. It is necessary to differentiate the tasks, offering each student the topic that interests him most. At the same time, we must not forget about the need to achieve the learning outcomes set out in the educational and professional programme: when looking for ways to motivate students, we must not sacrifice the minimum vocabulary required for the speciality.

3. Reliability. The information contained in the text must correspond to current realities and not contain obviously false or unreliable information. It is preferable to use materials published on the websites of well-known news agencies or news resources: CNN, BBC, Sky News, etc.

4. Neutrality. If we offer certain material to applicants, we must be aware that some of them may disagree with the author's position. Accordingly, we should avoid sources that are clearly propagandistic, aimed at convincing

opponents or consolidating supporters (as an exception, such texts can be used as illustrative material for future sociologists, political scientists or journalists).

The development of grammatical competence when working with a text takes place at all stages of this work: pre-text, text and post-text. The pre-text stage aims to motivate the learner, get them ready for work and overcome any difficulties in understanding the text. This stage involves the teacher explaining how the work will proceed and which grammatical forms to pay attention to. For example, knowledge of gerunds and infinitives can be refreshed if these grammatical categories are essential for understanding the text. The types of tasks that can be used at this stage include working with the title, as the topic of a journalistic article has its own linguistic features (absence of correct grammatical forms, omission of articles, economy of linguistic resources); working on new lexical and grammatical units; making assumptions about the content of the article and the presence of examples of the use of certain grammatical rules in it, taking into account the headline, etc. The text stage is devoted to the direct study of the proposed material (reading, literal and/or literary translation, discussion of questions regarding vocabulary and grammar) and the completion of tasks aimed at mastering lexical and grammatical units. The types of tasks at this stage can be varied, taking into account the students' abilities, their level of knowledge and the amount of time allocated for working with the text. For example, finding equivalents for foreign words or filling in the blanks in certain sentences with the necessary words and expressions, writing the necessary grammatical forms of verbs or degrees of comparison of adjectives in the text [5, p. 93]. At the post-text stage, you can consolidate the knowledge gained, for example, by suggesting that students make a mini-presentation on a grammar-related topic based on the text they have studied, such as 'The use of the passive voice in British journalism, based on the example of the article, etc.'. At the post-text stage, learners can create an exercise similar to the one above. The teacher can assess not only the correctness of the exercise itself, but also its relevance to the study of a particular grammatical topic. To develop the creative and didactic abilities of applicants, project work can be offered that involves searching for examples of the use of grammatical rules in open sources. These can be more than just

articles in the mass media. Applicants can use scientific materials, technical instructions, and video materials on YouTube. At the same time, at all stages of such work, it is necessary to maintain communication with all participants and monitor the dynamics of their work and their level of interest in it.

Summary and conclusions.

It is practically impossible for adult learners to study English without mastering grammar. English grammar is not unique, which is due to the fact that English belongs to the Germanic languages. English is highly analytical and almost completely devoid of flexibility, which manifests itself in the frequent use of prepositions and the virtual disappearance of case forms (with a few exceptions). Developing grammatical skills and foreign language speaking abilities is a complex mental activity. We believe that it is necessary to draw parallels between the language being studied (English) and the native language (Ukrainian). Examples from other languages that students have already studied can also be used, as demonstrated in our study using German as an example. Elements of comparative grammar help to actualise knowledge of both languages. Texts play an important role in mastering grammar, and a number of criteria must be applied when selecting such materials.

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