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# THE ROLE OF SOME COMMUNICATIVE METHODS IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE

*The article analyzes some communicative methods that are used to develop grammatical competence of students of higher educational institutions. The article highlights such communicative methods as Callan Method, the Method of communicative tasks and Schmidt Method. These methods use oral communication as the main educational approach in order to prepare students for the use of grammatical constructions in everyday communicative situations.*

*If in Callan Method grammatical competence is developed through the free communication of students with the teacher in an artificially created foreign language environment thanks to the use of certain grammatical models, the Method of communicative tasks ensures the development of grammatical competence through the analysis of authentic language material of various kinds.*

*Schmidt method is based on the concept of the importance of focusing on the form of speech, in other words, on its grammatical structure during foreign language communication. It is through such "accentuation of attention" that grammatical competence is improved, which in turn leads to the "crystallization" of communicative competence. These Communicative methods function within the framework of the Communicative Approach, the main principle of which is deep immersion in the language environment through the performance of communicative tasks focused on content to a greater extent than on form. Under such conditions, learning occurs involuntarily, while the interest and motivation of students to fully interact with group members and the teacher increases. In addition, concentration on the meaning reduces the level of anxiety and fright of free speech, contributing to the increase in its speed and fluency, while carefully adjusting the form of speech the teacher allows you to positively influence its accuracy, in other words, to promote the development of grammatical competence. Thus, communicative methods can be used in order to effectively develop the grammatical competence of students of higher educational institutions, which in turn transforms the educational process into an exciting world of immersion in a life-like language environment.*

***Key words:*** *grammatical competence, communicative approach, focusing on form, communicative purpose, student-centred learning.*

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# РОЛЬ ОКРЕМИХ КОМУНІКАТИВНИХ МЕТОДІВ НАВЧАННЯ У РОЗВИТКУ ІНШОМОВНОЇ ГРАМАТИЧНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ ВИЩИХ НАВЧАЛЬНИХ ЗАКЛАДІВ

*У статті проаналізовано окремі комунікативні методи, які використовуються для розвитку граматичної компетентності студентів вищих навчальних закладів. У статті розглядаються такі комунікативні методи як метод Р. Каллана, Метод комунікативних завдань та Метод Р. Шмідта. Дані методи застосовують усну комунікацію в якості основного навчального підходу з метою підготовки студентів до використання граматичних конструкцій у життєвих комунікативних ситуаціях.*

*Якщо у методі Р. Каллана граматична компетентність розвивається допомогою вільного спілкування студентів з викладачем у штучно створеному іншомовному середовищі завдяки використанню певних граматичних моделей, Метод комунікативних завдань забезпечує розвиток граматичної компетентності через аналіз автентичного мовного матеріалу різного виду.*

*Метод Р. Шмідта базується на концепції щодо важливості зосередження на формі мовлення, іншими словами на її граматичній будові під час іншомовної комунікації. Саме через таку «акцентацію уваги» відбувається удосконалення граматичної компетентності, що веде в свою чергу до «кристалізації» комунікативної компетентності. Дані Комунікативні методи функціонують у рамках Комунікативного підходу, головним принципом якого є глибоке занурення у мовне середовище через виконання комунікативних завдань, сфокусованих на змісті у більшій мірі, ніж на формі. За таких умов навчання відбувається мимовільно, при цьому зростає зацікавленість*

*та мотивація студентів до повноцінної взаємодії з членами групи та викладачем Крім того, концентрація на змісті знижує рівень тривожності та страху перед вільним мовленням, сприяючи збільшенню його швидкості та плавності, при цьому обережне коригування форми мовлення викладачем дозволяє вплинути позитивно на його правильність, іншими словами сприяти розвитку граматичної компетентності. Таким чином, комуніка-тивні методи можуть бути використані з метою ефективного розвитку граматичної компетентності студен-тів вищих навчальних закладів, в свою чергу, перетворюючи навчальний процес у захоплюючий світ занурення у мовне середовище, максимально наближене до реального життя.*

***Ключові слова:*** *граматична компетентність, комунікативний підхід, зосередження на формі, комунікативна мета, студентоцентроване навчання.*

**Introduction. Formulation of the problem**. Foreign languages researches are always defined by the level of methodological development in the sphere of foreign language teaching and rely upon the methods available in a certain period. Therefore, the analysis of methods in the framework of a particular methodological approach is of primary importance as it can acknowledge the correctness of the choice of methods for ensuring the quality of the teaching process.

Knowledge of grammar is undoubtedly necessary for mastering a foreign language. It is an undeniable fact that due to excellent grammar skills communication in a foreign language becomes clear and understandable, and ultimately perfect.

Grammatical competence provides systematic knowledge of lexical, morphological, syntactic, phonetic and orthographic aspects of the language for the construction of meaningful and coherent statements; mastery of grammatical concepts, as well as means of expressing grammatical categories; skills and ability to adequately use grammatical phenomena in speech activity in various communication situations to solve communicative tasks.

However, grammatical competence also refers to the unconscious knowledge of grammar that enables the speaker to use and understand the language. It includes the ability to acquire knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, syntax, semantics, etc. It functions as a part of communicative competence. There is no single method that allows you to quickly and effortlessly build and develop grammatical competence. However, the process of acquiring grammatical competence can be significantly improved by using the Communicative Approach. The Communicative Approach has undeniable advantages, as it allows students to acquire and develop new linguistic knowledge, increases their motivation through the use of student-centered learning, which is the basis of the Communicative Approach.

Thanks to the implementation of student-centered learning, the student turns from a passive participant in the educational process into its co-creator, becoming an equal member of the team, the goal of which is the comprehensive development of all participants (Hamer, 1991: 69).

The **purpose of the article** is to highlight the role of the Communicative approach in the process of improving the foreign language grammatical competence of students of higher educational institutions.

**State of research.** The main components of grammatical competence are grammatical skills, which are divided into reproductive (speaking and writing skills), receptive (listening and reading skills), characterized by such features as automaticity, flexibility and stability and gradual formation); grammatical knowledge and grammatical awareness. The following stages of the formation of grammatical competence are distinguished:

– presentation of grammatical phenomena and creation of a basis for further formation of skills;

– formation of speech grammar skills by automating them in oral speech;

– inclusion of skills in various types of speech;

– development of speaking skills.

American psycholinguist, University of Maryland professor Michael Hugh Long identified two ways of forming grammatical competence, namely: by "focusing on form" and "focusing on forms". The "focus on forms" method is a traditional method that involves learning a grammatical phenomenon out of context through the demonstration of rules and the completion of training exercises. The method of "focusing on form" stems from the understanding of the need to learn a foreign language in the same way as one's native language through the perception of ready-made language structures in the context through live communication (Long., Robinson, 1998: 37-39).

The communicative approach is based on the principle of language use. The main idea of communicative learning is the deep conviction that if students are involved in solving communicative tasks, focusing more on content than on form, learning will occur spontaneously (Harmer, 1991: 69-70). Thus, the Communicative Approach, which involves solving communicative problems in order to achieve a communicative goal, is extremely effective for the development of grammatical competence, because, according to Ron Shin, professor of applied linguistics at Tottori University, Japan, all types of learning

activities in the classroom should be built on the performance of communicative tasks, therefore, any teaching of grammar should arise from the difficulties that appear during the communication process, in which the speaker tries to express the desired idea.

According to Sandra Fotos, Professor of English and Applied Linguistics at Senshu University, Tokyo, Japan, performing a communicative task significantly increases the speaker's awareness of the need to use one or another grammatical form, and therefore increases speech literacy, while providing the opportunity to use the language fluently.

In general, we can state that learning grammar, which is caused by a communicative need, is a successful way of developing grammatical competence through the use of the Communicative Approach. Therefore, the level of communicative competence depends on the level of grammatical competence, which involves continuous improvement through the use of the Communicative Approach (Thornbury, 2009: 33-35).

**Results of the research.** The communicative approach is based on the principle of language use. The main idea of communicative learning is the deep belief that if students are involved in solving communicative tasks, learning will happen spontaneously. Therefore, the teacher's managerial activity should be aimed at involving students in solving communicative tasks in the language being studied, in order to encourage them to use the language. In this type of learning, knowledge is no longer the result of explanation, but rather the free participation of students in the target environment.

Attention is transferred from the product of learning (knowledge of grammar and vocabulary) to the learning process. In other words, if the goal of language is communication, then communication in the learning process is the best way to achieve this goal.

One of the most important stages of the formation of grammatical competence is the stage of presentation of grammatical phenomena, since it is at this stage that the student gets a basic idea of the grammatical form and its main function in the language. The clarity of awareness affects the speed and quality of the stage of their automation, therefore, undoubtedly, the way of presenting a grammatical phenomenon is decisive and the most difficult from the point of view of its choice. The communicative approach defines this method as "focusing on form". Focusing on form is a way in which students become aware of the grammatical form of language phenomena that they can already use in communication.

Focusing on form is a teaching method that draws students' attention to language forms in a communicative context. For example, it can be any

grammatical form presented in a context that students analyze, independently coming to the conclusion about its meaning and structure, while using it in their speech. This approach was advocated by an American psycholinguist, a professor at the University of Maryland. Michael Hugh Long, who argued that a focus on form has some psycholinguistic value because it encourages learners to pay conscious attention to particular forms in a communicative context.

The need for attention is obvious. So, it can be considered to be an effective way of learning the grammatical structure. In addition, the concept of focusing on form, which involves drawing students' attention to grammatical structures in context, aims to predict or correct a problem in understanding or producing utterances in the language being studied. Long contrasts this method with "focusing on forms" method, which requires a focus on linguistic forms during target language learning, often consisting solely of practice exercises.

The method of focusing on form is integrated into the communicative teaching method, and since every student has a certain point of readiness for focusing on form, teachers should always develop alternative teaching strategies. That is, teachers should monitor the language development of students and, if necessary, use the possibility of transition from focusing on form to focusing on forms. Therefore, the choice of forms and the time to focus on them should correspond to the linguistic development of the students.

Recognition of the fact that focus on form can be achieved by performing communicative exercises, gave impetus to the development of the Communicative approach through the use of task-based language teaching. Thanks to the analytical work on authentic language material, students' grammatical competence develops, and wide opportunities to use a foreign language, in turn, have a positive effect on language fluency, and therefore improve overall communicative competence, since students are more focused on the language they use than on grammar form (Nunan, 2004: 35-37).

Such learning does not necessarily take place at the presentation stage and is part of the grammar lesson, it can take place at any stage of the lesson as a result of the teacher's conscious intervention when he analyzes the students' work, or as a result of analytical work students themselves during paired, group or individual work in class. The focus on form is often accidental or spontaneous, resulting from the need to achieve a communicative goal defined in the communicative tasks that students perform, which is more useful than the grammar exercises prescribed in a textbook or in the curriculum.

Another effective method of focusing on form in learning a foreign language within the framework of the Communicative Approach is the method of "focusing attention" described by Richard Schmidt, an American linguist, professor of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Hawaii. According to him, students notice a language structure if they encounter it during various types of communication: watching a video, reading a newspaper, communicating with colleagues and the teacher in class, etc. The teacher's task is to draw the student's attention to a certain grammatical construction or to create favorable conditions under which students will definitely pay attention to this grammatical construction.

The goal can be achieved by using the communicative method of the British methodologist Robert Callan with his development of dialogic speech through conversational practice in the question-answer model. With the help of questions and answers to questions, the grammatical structure is learned through repetition. As a result, students become more attentive and engaged in the learning process, which contributes to better memorization of target vocabulary and grammar (Callan, 2012: 7).

Thus, we can conclude that students learn grammatical constructions better if they focus on them in the process of performing communicative tasks.

This way of forming and improving grammatical competence is worth attention, since its indisputable advantages are live communication, co-creation, and research, which should dominate over formal scholastic learning of ready-made grammatical constructions.

**Conclusions and prospects of further research.** All in all, we should admit that the review of the communicative methods presented above gives an opportunity for all teachers to expand their teaching skills and adapt them to their audience. These communicative methods can be used as an effective tool for developing students' grammatical competence, particularly students of higher education institutions.

In addition, their comprehensive implementation enables the teaching staff to be more creative, establishing good relations with students. By using these methods each lesson can become a positive experience on the way to the deep knowledge of a foreign language, which is extremely important nowadays.

Thus, students of higher education institutions will be able to develop their grammatical competence in a relatively short period of time, which will allow them to communicate freely with peers and colleagues, thus contributing to their personal and professional development.

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