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DEVELOPMENT OF GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH
LANGUAGE IN STUDENTS OF NON-PHILOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

The article considers the growing need of grammatical accuracy in both formal and informal intercourse. As language is the core element of human existence and grammar is the cornerstone of organizing our thoughts correctly, we can achieve full understanding of it only by learning it thoroughly and continually. Moreover, it is proven in this article that mastering the grammar of one language can ease the acquisition of other languages. Hence, nominating grammar as the 5th competence of language acquisition is not accidental and it plays a foremost role in all linguistic dimensions.

Keywords: accuracy, linguistic dimension, clause, competence, correctness, grammatical patterns.

The article deals with the problem of developing the a subsystem of exercises for forming productive grammatical competence of prospective teachers learning English after German through independent work activities. The importance of transfer based on previously acquired knowledge and skills in German and its influence on the process of forming prospective teachers' English grammatical competence has been emphasized. The necessity to consider this factor when developing exercises for independent work has been shown. The principles of developing the subsystem of exercises for forming productive grammatical competence have been identified. The requirements the exercises should meet have been analyzed and the stages of the process of forming grammatical competence (preparatory, stereotypical and variational) have been identified in the process of designing the subsystem of exercises. The suggested subsystem of exercises includes three groups of exercises corresponding to the stages of the grammatical competence forming. The types of exercises in each group have been specified. The examples of exercises have been provided in the article. All groups of exercises provide tasks for the development of prospective teachers' contrastive skills to identify similar phenomena in the systems of English and German languages, as well as for the development of reflection in the process of comparing speech phenomena on the one hand and the results of learning on the other. The third group of exercises engages communicative tasks. The presented subsystem is an instrument for organizing independent work of students with grammatical material.

Grammar is considered as one of the important elements within communication in relation to form a speech. Ur (1988:4) defines grammar as the rule of how to combine and construct words into larger units in aspect of meaning. According to Thornbury, grammar is a study of forming possible structures used in a language (Thornbury, 1999). And Thornbury states that grammar is not always about the syntax and morphology, but it is all about linguistic chains and slots. It means that grammar will give such ability to someone (the speaker) to be able to chain some words in particular order (based on the rule) and also to give variation or finding another words which can slot into any link in the chain. In this case, to be able to communicate with others, it is important to develop ability on how to use grammar correctly. Based on our practices, we know that learning grammar does mean to learn about the grammar itself, but also other aspects of language. Radford defines that grammar set of rules or principles that contain how to construct, pronounce and understand phrases and sentences in the language. Learning grammar is not only the aspect of syntax is to be learned, but also the aspect of phonology and morphology as well. By mastering grammar, the language learner can speak about something in the language correctly and smoothly. Moreover, within the context of communication, the role of grammar is not merely regarded as such a device in which it regulates the rules in producing the language. Having appropriate grammatical competence will help our learners to develop such ability in producing the language.

It has been observed that Pakistani university students struggle in developing their grammatical competence which is one of the important sub-skills of the overall English speaking skill. It refers to correct use of grammar, appropriate vocabulary and acceptable pronunciation. The researchers over the years have attributed the problem to teaching methodology, classroom environment, learners' attitude towards English language, anxiety and lack of motivation. However, there has been little research on teaching materials used in classrooms to develop grammatical competence of the students. This study exploited English poetry as language teaching materials to develop students' grammatical competence. The study was a quasi-experimental one having a control and an experimental group. The respondents of the study were second semester non-English-majored university students. The experimental group was taught through poems whereas in the control group traditional teaching materials were utilized. Pre-test and post-test were employed as tools of data collection. Besides, observation field notes were also employed as a supporting tool of data collection to understand the effect of both kinds of teaching materials on the students of both the groups inside their respective classrooms. The data collected through pre-test and post-test were analyzed through independent samples t-tests, whereas observation field notes

were used to support the statistical results of the analysis. The results of the study showed that the students of the experimental group performed significantly better than students of control group on the post-test with regard to grammar rules and vocabulary. However, there was no significant improvement in the pronunciation of the students of the experimental group. The observation field notes indicated that the students of EG were more interactive, participated actively in the group activities and were more collaborative and cooperative in the language learning process. The study recommends that poetry shall be utilized as teaching materials in English language classroom at university level.

Consequently, there arises a question: How did grammar fall out of standard education? First, at the beginning of the 20th century grammar research dried up, later grammar related questions were left out from scholastic programs and tests; finally, it simply died out from education. Therefore, being worried and puzzled we have done some research among my colleagues and internet bloggers trying to reveal the importance of grammar for them by asking a question *Why Does Grammar Matter?*, and the answers are fascinating. Here are presented two of them somehow summarizing a range of opinions:

1. 'Grammar is important because it is the language that makes it possible for us to talk about language. And *knowing about* grammar offers a window into the human mind and into our amazingly complex mental capacity. People associate grammar with errors and correctness. But *knowing about* grammar also helps us understand what makes sentences and paragraphs clear, interesting and precise.' – National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

2. 'Learning grammar is essential for accurate speaking in communication with other speakers of English. Moreover, the grammar aspect is important in writing, e.g. academic essays, business correspondence, etc. Teaching grammar on a constant base helps students be accurate while practicing speaking and writing skills in a classroom and be aware of their mistakes.' – Tatiana Shipunova, ESL teacher, PRUE

It is vital to note that at present most scholastic tests have so called *Grammar Relevance* point to assess separately the writing tasks (IELTS, CAE, BEC, etc). This grading involves all the aspects of grammar – variety of tenses, passive forms, modals, conditionals, prepositions, reporting, inversion, etc. Moreover, grammar is bound up with the meaning and effect of what we write and say; it gives us the words to talk about our choices, preferences, mood and tone. For different discourse situations we apply different sentence patterns, vocabulary layers and structures. Consequently, the due level of grammar competence helps us to realize the *rule of 5Cs*, which make our speech *clear, correct, concise, coherent and cohesive*.

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