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## MODERN METHODS OF IMPROVING GRAMMATICAL SKILLS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

**Abstract.** This study investigates modern pedagogical approaches to the possibilities of improving grammatical competence in higher education foreign language instruction, and emphasizes the importance of the integration of lexical, phonetic, grammatical, and communicative components. Grammar functions as an element that ensures structural coherence and accuracy in both academic and professional communication, so requires special attention in university settings. Despite continuous debate as to the optimal methods for grammar instruction, researchers agree that effective teaching should facilitate both the understanding of grammatical rules but also their application in authentic communicative contexts. This study highlights the importance of contextualized grammar learning, which allows learners to experience the interplay of form, meaning, and use. Editing tasks, grammaticality judgment exercises, and error-correction activities are identified as effective strategies and help language learners acquire flexible, context-dependent application of grammatical knowledge. Differentiated instruction is emphasized as essential for addressing the diverse needs of higher education students that takes into consideration differences in proficiency, learning styles, motivations, and cultural backgrounds. Combining deductive and inductive approaches facilitates both the recognition of patterns and the comprehension of rules, professionally oriented texts, communicative exercises, and semi-structured tasks provide meaningful contexts in which grammar is applied. The study points out the role of implicit and explicit knowledge in language acquisition. The concept of “grammaring,” in which learners use grammar dynamically and meaningfully, is discussed as a framework for



integrating grammar into communicative practice rather than treating it as a static set of rules. Task-based and task-supported instructional models are evaluated for their capacity to enhance engagement, motivation, and practical application of grammar in professional and academic contexts. The findings suggest that the future of grammar pedagogy should focus on creating specialized materials that integrate grammatical practice with professional discourse, supporting the development of both conscious and unconscious grammatical knowledge.

**Keywords:** grammatical competence, foreign language instruction, higher education, professional communication

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## **СУЧАСНІ МЕТОДИ ВДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ ГРАМАТИЧНИХ НАВИЧОК У ПРОЦЕСІ ВИВЧЕННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ У ЗАКЛАДАХ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ**

**Анотація:** У роботі досліджуються сучасні педагогічні підходи до можливостей покращення граматичної компетенції у викладанні іноземної мови у вищих навчальних закладах та підкреслюється важливість інтеграції лексичних, фонетичних, граматичних та комунікативних компонентів. Граматика виконує функцію елемента, що забезпечує структурну узгодженість та точність у академічній та професійній комунікації, тому вимагає особливої уваги в університетських умовах. Незважаючи на тривалі дискусії щодо оптимальних методів викладання граматики, дослідники погоджуються, що ефективно навчання повинно сприяти як розумінню граматичних правил, так і їх застосуванню в автентичних комунікативних контекстах. Дослідження підкреслює важливість контекстуалізованого вивчення граматики, яке дозволяє студентам усвідомлювати взаємодію форми, значення та використання. Редагування текстів, вправи на граматичну оцінку та завдання з виправлення помилок визначені як ефективні стратегії, що допомагають студентам досягати гнучкого та контекстно-залежного застосування граматичних знань. Диференційоване навчання підкреслюється як необхідне для врахування різноманітних потреб



студентів, їх рівня знань, стилів навчання, мотивації та культурного контексту. Поєднання дедуктивного та індуктивного підходів сприяє як усвідомленню граматичних закономірностей, так і розумінню правил. Професійно орієнтовані тексти, комунікативні вправи та напівструктуровані завдання забезпечують значущі контексти для застосування граматики. Дослідження також підкреслює роль імпліцитних та експліцитних знань у засвоєнні мови. Концепція «grammaring», у якій студенти використовують граматику динамічно та змістовно, розглядається як рамка для інтеграції граматики у комунікативну практику, а не як статичний набір правил. Аналізуються моделі навчання, засновані на виконанні завдань з точки зору їх ефективності у підвищенні залученості студентів, мотивації та практичного використання граматичних структур у професійних та академічних комунікативних контекстах. Результати дослідження свідчать, що майбутнє граматичної педагогіки має зосередитися на створенні спеціалізованих матеріалів, що поєднують граматичну практику з професійним дискурсом, підтримуючи розвиток як усвідомлених, так і неусвідомлених граматичних знань.

**Ключові слова:** граматична компетенція, викладання іноземної мови, вища освіта, професійна комунікація

**Problem statement.** Successful foreign language acquisition in higher education institutions involves the integrated development of all components of language competence — lexical, phonetic, grammatical, and communicative. Among these, the grammatical aspect plays a particularly important role as a system-forming component that ensures structural coherence and correctness of speech. In higher education institutions this component requires special attention, since students face the need not just to learn grammar, but to apply it in academic and professional communication.

Pawlak [1] also highlights that grammar instruction has long been a controversial issue in second and also foreign language teaching. Although many researchers agree that grammatical explanations can be beneficial, there is still no general agreement on the concrete way they should implement most effectively. Because there are many theoretical approaches, numerous instructional approaches have emerged, aiming not only to enhance learners' understanding of grammatical rules but also to help them apply these rules in communicative contexts. However, these numerous possible solutions have not truly resolved the long-existing, fundamental problems of grammar teaching. Moreover, university students usually show strong logical thinking and an ability to abstract and analyze information that should be considered when planning the learning process [2].

In order to develop their grammar skills effectively it is important to use contextual learning where grammar appears naturally in real communicative situations, while also combining inductive and deductive ways of explaining new structures so they can both notice patterns and understand rules clearly [3].



Together, these points show that these factors highlight a key problem that is, despite the availability of numerous theoretical and methodological approaches the search for modern, effective methods of improving grammatical skills in foreign language learning at higher education institutions remains an unresolved challenge, and it requires further investigation.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Knowledge of a foreign language in the modern period of integration into the global community requires understanding and correct use of grammatical structures in communication. Without knowledge of grammar fluent communication is impossible, either in written or spoken form. Therefore, the formation of grammatical competence in higher-education students is an important component of the educational process, which involves developing solid and high-quality knowledge of a foreign language [2].

The study of grammatical structures at university level should not happen in isolation but in close connection with other aspects of the language. This is especially relevant in the context of limited instructional time, where deep acquisition of grammatical material must be combined with the development of students' practical communication skills [4].

In higher education institutions, especially during the first two semesters, a key objective is to systematize and expand the grammar knowledge acquired in secondary school and to apply it in professional learning environments. According to the observations of Tarnopolskyi and Kabanov [4], in-depth grammar learning in higher education institutions is complicated by the lack of classroom hours, which prevents the full correction of gaps left from previous stages of education. That is why the focus should shift from merely re-teaching grammar to improving it through inclusion in professionally oriented language tasks. This approach helps develop functional grammatical competence which is essential for performing professional communicative actions [5].

One of the most effective tools for improving grammatical skills is the use of educational texts tailored to students' specializations. These texts perform several functions at once, such as stimulating interest due to their informative content, introducing grammatical structures naturally in context, and they providing opportunities for communicative tasks focused on professional interaction. It is also useful to include interactive work in the classroom, such as games, project activities and role-plays because these help students apply grammar in meaningful situations and keep them more engaged. Their motivation plays a major role as well: when they clearly see how grammar can be used in real life and why it matters for their future academic or professional activities, they tend to participate more actively, take responsibility for their own progress, and work more independently on improving their language skills [2].

The **aim** of this study is to investigate and evaluate modern pedagogical methods for improving grammatical skills in foreign language learning at higher education institutions, and to determine which approaches most effectively support students'





accurate and communicative use of grammar. Furthermore, the study seeks to determine which instructional approaches, techniques, and learning environments most effectively contribute to students' accurate, meaningful, and communicatively oriented use of grammatical structures.

**Presentation of the main material.** A frequent concern in contemporary research on grammar instruction is how grammatical phenomena can be taught not as isolated units but as resources that enable meaningful communication. Traditional approaches that focused on form and are valuable for providing structural awareness often do not support learners in transferring explicit knowledge to real-time language use. Consequently, current pedagogical discussions increasingly emphasize functional perspectives that integrate form, meaning, and use. This orientation highlights the necessity of presenting grammar within authentic communicative tasks allowing learners to experience how linguistic choices operate in context and how grammatical patterns contribute to communicative effectiveness.

A grammatical phenomenon should be studied not as an abstract unit, but as a functional element in a specific communicative act. As Qureshi [6] emphasizes, it is not only the form that matters, but the understanding of its function in a given situation. One effective method is editing texts with errors, which helps students realize the contextual importance of grammar. The grammaticality judgment tasks require learners to decide whether a sentence is correct or not and is widely used in language assessment.

It is important to highlight that learners often rely on intuitive language sense rather than conscious grammatical knowledge, and incorporating error-correction tasks allows teachers to evaluate not only whether students detect mistakes but also the way they apply grammatical rules and generate alternative solutions. Learners often correct the same error in different ways, demonstrating that grammatical knowledge is context-dependent and flexible. It indicates that traditional assessment methods highly benefit from being enriched with tasks that involve active error correction because these encourage learners to reflect more consciously on linguistic structures. Teachers are encouraged to accept alternative corrections that are grammatically acceptable rather than focusing exclusively on a single "correct" form.

Emphasizing the practical application of rules over passive recognition, the integration of editing tasks into instruction enhances both assessment validity and the learning process. Such tasks promote deeper consolidation of grammatical knowledge, conscious processing of language structures, and exploration of alternative linguistic solutions [6].

Differentiated instruction is another key approach in effective English grammar teaching, which is especially important for higher education students learning English as a foreign language. This pedagogical method considers the diversity of students, including different language proficiency levels, learning styles, academic and cultural backgrounds, and motivations for language learning and adapting four main components of instruction: content, process, product, and the learning environment.



Learning outcomes improve by adjusting teaching methods, instructional pace, and learning materials to individual student needs, while combining deductive and inductive grammar approaches allows students to learn grammar rules most effectively. Differentiated Instruction increases student motivation, develops critical thinking skills, and creates a supportive and inclusive classroom environment where all students have equal opportunities to succeed. Using this approach together with digital tools helps to create dynamic and inclusive digital learning spaces. By thoughtfully and strategically varying these instructional elements, every student, regardless of their starting level or prior knowledge, can understand complex grammatical concepts, practice them, and achieve high academic performance in a flexible, student-centred learning environment [7].

Professionally oriented texts can also enable students not only to see how grammar functions in speech, but also to apply it within the topics that have practical value for their future profession. This contributes simultaneously to the development of linguistic intuition, grammatical accuracy and lexical flexibility [8]. The learning process should be based on the principle of gradually increasing task complexity: from language-focused to communicative tasks. The most effective are semi-communicative and communicative exercises, which simulate real-life communication situations, require active use of learned grammatical forms, and motivate students to express their own ideas and opinions.

Larsen-Freeman [9] identifies three connected dimensions in the study of grammatical phenomena that is the form, the meaning and the usage. The form deals with how a given structure is built and how it fits with the other parts of a sentence (morphology and syntax) and includes orthographic and pronunciation patterns. The second dimension is meaning, which focuses on semantic aspects, including lexical and grammatical meaning. The use refers to the way a grammatical structure expresses meaning in a particular context, taking into account social, linguistic or situational factors. Even though knowing the three dimensions, that is form, meaning, and use is helpful for teachers and learners, it does not automatically leads to the use of the second or foreign language in real-time communication which is the key difference between explicit and implicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is conscious, can be explained enlisting rules, is not limited by age or developmental stage, and can only be used when learners have enough time to think through the rules. Implicit knowledge, on the other hand, develops unconsciously, cannot really be put into words, and comes from natural language acquisition. Its advantage is that it works automatically, supporting real, fast communication.

Ellis [10] provides both theoretical and empirical arguments to show that implicit grammatical knowledge is essential for real linguistic competence. This is not simply because implicit knowledge forms an important part of what learners know about a language, but also because of the way language is acquired and used in practice.

According to Ellis, successful language learning and a full understanding of linguistic ability rely heavily on processes that operate implicitly, meaning that learners



need this unconscious, automatic knowledge in order to develop a reliable and effective level of linguistic competence [11].

The implementation of the flipped classroom model makes it possible to move the study of theoretical material outside of class, freeing up time for practical application. On the LMS Moodle platform, students gain access to grammar explanations, practice exercises, and instructor feedback. In the classroom, active work takes place: completing tasks based on thematic texts, analyzing grammar in real contexts, constructing utterances [6]. Equally important is working with tables, schemes, and diagrams, which help visualize grammatical patterns. For example, tables with verb tenses and aspects assist students in better navigating time forms and grammatical structures in English [9].

Improving the grammatical aspect of foreign language learning requires the use of modern educational technologies, communicative methods, and the integration of grammar with professional vocabulary. Instruction should not move from theory to practice, but rather from real communication tasks to the awareness of grammatical regularities. Larsen-Freeman [9] suggests that grammar should not be viewed as a static set of rules but as a dynamic skill, referred to as "grammaring," where learners use grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully, and in accordance with their communicative intentions.

Ellis [11] emphasizes that language teaching is to start from real communication rather than from pre-determined grammatical rules, and learners are to be engaged in tasks where meaning and communication are the primary focus. Grammatical structures become conscious through the experiences gained during completing these tasks. The role of the teacher is to highlight these patterns. Like researchers, language teachers, materials developers, and course designers have also quickly recognized the value of tasks, but they apply them in different ways. Some methodologists simply integrate tasks into traditional, language-focused teaching methods, while others take a more radical approach by treating the tasks themselves as the basic units of instruction and building entire courses around them. "These two ways of using tasks can be referred to respectively as task-supported language teaching and task-based language teaching." [1] In both cases, tasks have been used in order to make language teaching more communicative.

The use of LMS Moodle, flipped classroom technologies, and professionally focused texts creates optimal conditions for developing grammar skills adapted to the needs of students. Looking forward, it is worth directing efforts toward the development of specialized teaching materials — in particular, sets of exercises that combine grammar with professional context, motivating students to actively master the language.

The development of grammatical competence requires teaching methods that recognize grammar as a complex system and consider the mental processes involved in language use. When teachers combine communicative tasks, differentiated instruction, and digital learning tools in a thoughtful way, grammar instruction



becomes more effective and academically grounded. This perspective treats grammar as a resource for creating meaning rather than a fixed set of rules, and it supports the growth of both conscious and unconscious knowledge.

**Conclusions.** The level of grammatical competence of higher-education students largely determines their ability to correctly use grammatical structures of the language both in writing and in speaking. The development of grammatical competence not only strengthens the skills of practical language use but also enables students to apply grammatical rules and structures effectively in a variety of different communicative situations. This process contributes to greater accuracy, clarity, and confidence in language production. Therefore, it can be confidently stated that grammatical competence is an essential and integral part of overall communicative competence, forming a foundation for successful interaction in both academic and everyday contexts.

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