DEVELOPING GRAMMATICAL AND SPEECH COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH THROUGH INTEGRATED, TEXT-BASED LEARNING

Author: Sharipova Firuza Mekhriddinovna , the 3rd year doctoral student at Navoi State University

Abstract

This article examines the theoretical foundations of grammatical and speech competence in English language teaching at the secondary school level. It clarifies the concepts of "competence" and "competency" as they appear in linguistic, pedagogical and lexicographic sources, and reviews the contributions of Chomsky, Hymes, Canale and Swain, and Widdowson to the communicative view of grammar. It also considers the CEFR framework and the role of text-based learning (reading comprehension) in teaching grammar in context. The study argues that grammar should be taught not as isolated rules but as a means of performing communicative tasks, and that the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) should be developed in integration. Typical learner difficulties, such as limited vocabulary, insufficient automatization and fear of making mistakes, are identified, and interactive, communicative approaches supported by digital resources are recommended.

Keywords: grammatical competence, speech competence, communicative competence, CEFR, text-based learning, reading comprehension, integrated skills, English language teaching

Introduction

Creating new methodologies within the continuous education system is becoming a requirement of our time. In Uzbekistan, the reform of education, including primary and secondary schooling, has been set as a priority by the President in 2022, who noted that many methods used in schools are outdated and that modern, innovative technologies and methodologies are needed to improve quality. Foreign

language learning is especially important in a globalized world: learners must be able to express themselves orally and in writing, and to communicate effectively and fluently with speakers of English across cultures. Given young people's close connection with information and communication technologies, digital materials, multimedia resources and interactive platforms can be used systematically to consolidate grammar knowledge and develop speaking skills.

Competence and Competency: Conceptual Background

The terms "competence" and "competency" are interpreted differently in the scientific literature, and no single approach has yet been established. The term "competence" was introduced into linguistics in the 1960s by Noam Chomsky (1965), who linked it to a speaker's internal knowledge of the language system; his earlier theory of generative grammar (Chomsky, 1957) holds that every well-formed sentence rests on a structural model. A language user therefore needs certain knowledge of the grammatical system in order to produce correct speech.

The word derives from Latin *competere* (to be suitable, to be fit for). The Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language defines competence both as the scope of authority of an official or body, and as a person's level of awareness and knowledge in a given field. Britannica likewise describes competence as the ability to apply acquired knowledge, skills and experience effectively in practical situations.

In the pedagogical literature, competence is understood as a general, person-related category, whereas competency has an individual character and is manifested in practice through knowledge, skills and experience. Competency thus includes not only a body of theoretical knowledge but also readiness to apply it in different situations.

Communicative Approaches to Grammar

Hymes (1972) argued that rules of grammar are useless without rules of use, which justifies teaching grammar in real communicative situations. Canale and Swain (1980) interpret communicative competence as the interaction of grammatical

competence and the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts: learners must know not only a grammatical form but also with whom, when and for what purpose to use it. Widdowson (1978) distinguishes "usage" (forming correct structures) from "use" (applying them for communicative purposes), so grammar patterns should be learned as tools that perform particular speech functions rather than as forms only.

The Council of Europe's CEFR (2001; 2020) treats communicative language competence as a combination of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic components. Its modern description enriches the four-skills model with communicative activities and strategies. Consequently, developing the grammatical competence of, for example, sixth-grade learners in close integration with listening, speaking, reading and writing is methodologically sound.

Text-Based Learning and Speech Activity

Text-based learning (reading comprehension) involves reading a text, understanding its content and interpreting it. In English teaching it helps learners acquire grammar in context and develops speech competence: while working with texts, learners practise grammatical units and express ideas orally and in writing. Reading and speaking are mutually complementary, parallel processes, and one of the main obstacles to comprehension is linguistic difficulty. This can be reduced by integrating text work with grammatical and language competence, and by relying on learners' lexical and grammatical knowledge. Since no one can read or speak without an adequate vocabulary, vocabulary development is a prerequisite.

Lessons should be organized so that every learner reads, writes, speaks and listens to authentic texts. Oral communication in particular combines linguistic and non-linguistic components and is characterized by speed, spontaneity and immediate feedback, so speaking-based activities hold an important place in forming speech competence.

Learner Difficulties and Pedagogical Implications

Difficulties in acquiring grammar and speech usually result from the complexity of grammatical rules, insufficient automatization of language units, limited vocabulary and little speaking experience. Psychological factors, such as lack of confidence and fear of errors, also reduce speaking effectiveness. Identifying these difficulties and their causes is essential, and grammar and speech competence should receive systematic attention at all stages of teaching. Lessons based on modern pedagogical technologies, interactive methods and the communicative approach ease language acquisition and raise learners' speaking activity. Encouraging learners to form sentences independently and to take part in communicative situations also strengthens their self-confidence, which in turn increases learning effectiveness.

Conclusion

Grammatical and speech competence are best developed when grammar is taught in context rather than in isolation, and when listening, speaking, reading and writing are integrated through text-based work. The distinction between competence (general) and competency (individual, practice-based) clarifies the aims of instruction, while the communicative theories of Hymes, Canale and Swain, and Widdowson, together with the CEFR, provide a sound basis for lesson design. Systematically identifying learners' difficulties, using interactive methods and digital resources, and creating a supportive atmosphere that reduces fear of mistakes will improve learners' ability to communicate accurately and fluently in English.

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