

**GRAMMATICAL, SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND OPERATIONAL
COMPETENCE AS THE GOAL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE
TEACHING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MODERN
COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH**

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Over the past few years, a significant change in the orientation of the subject of study has occurred in the practice of teaching a foreign language [1; 2; 4]. The emphasis is now not on presenting the language as a collection of grammatical, phonological and lexical forms that need to be learned and applied in practice, but on presenting the language as a functional system that is used to satisfy numerous communicative needs [3]. Thus, the ability to use the language is considered as a communicative competence, the components of which are the grammatical, sociolinguistic and operational competence of the speaker.

Traditionally, methods of teaching a foreign language in educational materials focus on grammatical competence, almost completely neglecting other components. Therefore, a teaching program or textbook in which grammar, vocabulary or phonology of a language is presented as a set of forms and rules for memorization, was intended to form in the student the ability to build grammatically or phonologically correct sentences in a foreign language. It is the development of such competence that is mostly the main goal of many students studying a foreign language at a university.

Of course, without mastering the grammar of a language, it is impossible to achieve any significant success. However, focusing only on grammatical competence will not ensure the ability to build correct statements, since this requires two more important conditions: the presence of context and the correct interpretation of the statement. This ability, called sociolinguistic competence, allows the speaker to choose from all possible options exactly that form of expression that is considered communicatively correct in a particular communicative act or within a certain language environment.

In teaching a foreign business language, it is now very common to interpret language taking into account its communicative functions. Instead of presenting, illustrating and consolidating grammatical phenomena in practice, examples

of language functioning are given. However, in this regard, many textbooks are similar to ordinary phrasebooks with a typical set of expressions for memorization. There is only an indirect hint that there is a certain connection between each speech expression and a specific communicative function.

Therefore, many teachers feel very insecure when they are asked whether this or that expression is correct, and usually answer that it depends on the context. They intuitively understand that the communicative function cannot be isolated from the sociocultural context, and that functional significance cannot be attributed to a linguistic expression in isolation.

Thus, the development of sociolinguistic competence should be associated with the development of the student's awareness of speech variability in different social contexts. After all, it is not enough to learn by heart numerous phrases that serve the purpose of satisfying some communicative settings. The speaker must know the social conditions that will influence the choice of one of the many phrases that is most successful in a certain social context.

The third important component of communicative competence is operational competence. Its study is associated with communicative behaviour, which allows the speaker to construct his statement as effectively as possible in order to convey it to the listener. This "operational" component of the speaker's general language competence has not yet received sufficient attention in modern foreign language teaching methods.

Much of research has focused only on studying how students cope with a situation in which there is a gap between the communicative goal and the possible means of its expression.

For example, it has been studied what a student should do in a situation where he does not know the appropriate word: to remain silent and not even try to speak on a given topic or to find a way to competently bypass this gap in knowledge. As practice shows, only a few students possess the necessary operational competence in a foreign language.

In order to achieve communicative competence in students, factors that were traditionally not considered components of a language lesson are now taken into account, in particular, giving the necessary significance to the interlocutor's personality in the interpretation of sociolinguistic and operational competence.

After all, the construction of situationally correct statements depends very much on the person to whom this statement is addressed, and on the interlocutors present during communication. The correctness of the statement also depends very much on the correctness of the assumptions about the extent to which the interlocutor is competent.

Usually, during a traditional lesson, the teacher is the only interlocutor for students in a foreign language. His status is relatively stable, and his knowledge, of course, is considered indisputable. Therefore, when the focus is on the communicative needs of the speaker, changes in the organization of the lesson

(more role-playing and work in small groups) are necessary, taking into account the range of linguistic variability according to the specifics of the topic or the nature of the communicative task.

All these are aspects of the concept of “field of learning”. It has expanded to include communicative interaction, which has much more dimensions than language as a static object. However, an expanded field of learning does not necessarily lead to more successful language acquisition by students. On the contrary, it even conceals more opportunities for insecurity and confusion on the part of the speaker.

That is why an effective analysis of what exactly a student needs when learning a foreign language, and, accordingly, which aspects of competence the teacher should pay more attention to, is very relevant.

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