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GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY AS THE OPERATIONAL BASIS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING AT SCHOOL

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Abstract

The article views the problem of interrelated training of grammar and vocabulary. G.V. Rogova paid great attention to this matter. The scientist emphasized that high proficiency in vocabulary and grammar is a key factor in teaching any language. She thought that a methodical system of teaching these language aspects is likely to be developed. It is interrelated teaching. The works of Russian researchers (linguists and psycholinguists) mention that the concept of a following statement being developed in the learning and cognitive competence of human beings is determined by the correct and consistent choice of syntactic structures of the future speech act (statement). The meaning of the statement is determined by an appropriate choice and simultaneous grammatical expression of lexical units. The statement realization is fulfilled by speech organs through articulating sound blends and their rhythmic and intonation patterns. According to Rogova, an optimal balance between vocabulary and grammar at school foreign language lessons and their close interaction is said to be an important issue both in theory and in practice. The ideas of interrelated teaching vocabulary and grammar are developing at present. The papers of young researchers prove that fact. The young researchers continued further forming G.V. Rogova's ideas of interrelated teaching and expanded the understanding of the issue under discussion.

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1. Introduction

The meaning of grammatical and lexical aspects is determined by the fact that knowledge of the grammatical and lexical subsystems of the target language facilitates not only mastering the language system, but also the speech system and speech activity in the language as a whole. The structure of the sentence, the morphological design of the sentence components and their position in the sentence structure play a major role in foreign language speech production and perception.

2. Problem Statement

In order to better master the grammar and vocabulary of the target language, methodical science has developed a certain system that meets the tasks of language teaching at school. The methodical system of training of the above mentioned aspects of the speech takes into account: 1) the psychological regularities of the language acquisition process as a whole, 2) objectively existing regularities in acquiring lexical and grammatical knowledge, and 3) regularities developing grammatical and lexical skills and abilities. The revealed regularities ensure acquiring various aspects of grammatical and lexical phenomena, developing skills and abilities to use grammar constructions and word patterns when producing speech in the target language, and the use of the acquired grammatical forms, syntactic structures and lexical units to understand the content of the texts heard or read. All this creates favourable conditions for the development of a new phenomenon, in other words grammatical and lexical competences as parts of the linguistic competence (Shamov, 2017).

The analysis of the theoretical and scientific-methodological research of Rogova and Vereshagina (2000) show that the scientist considered a new way to build the grammar and to enrich the vocabulary of the foreign language speech. This is an interrelated teaching of vocabulary and grammar.

3. Research Questions

To find the answer to the question how to provide such training, Rogova and Vereshagina (2000) read the works of foreign researchers: Minsky (1979), Carter and McCarthy (1997) and Lewis (1993).

Rogova met the term ‘constructicon’ in foreign scientific works. This term was introduced into the scientific use by Goldberg (2003). In his opinion, the constructicon is responsible for the use of language means. This concept incorporates various language units, including vocabulary and grammar. Stefanovitsch (2003) use such term as ‘colloconstruction’ (Stefanovitsch, 2003). Such psycholinguistic constructions establish a close and strong connection between grammatical and lexical phenomena of the target language. Scinevener (2005) notes that ‘collocations’ and ‘chunks’ are integral components of the concept ‘lexis’ being a broader concept in comparison with the term ‘vocabulary’. ‘Lexis’ refers to the ‘internal base’ of words, which are set, and relatively stable combinations of words. We quickly recall them, refresh and use in our speech while solving various communicative tasks. The term “lexis” refers to cognitive entities related to the grammar and vocabulary.

4. Purpose of the Study

The interrelated teaching/training of the lexical and grammatical aspects of the speech is understood to be the “training aimed at the simultaneous development of lexical and grammatical mechanisms of the speech based on a special set of tasks” (Pronina, 2010, p. 45).

5. Research Methods

According to Rogova and Vereshagina (2000), vocabulary and grammar can interact in three ways. The first way is connected with language teaching at school. It is focused on improving communicative speech skills based on the text. Reading is the starting point in this process. The selection of texts coincides with the grammatical and lexical topic to some extent. The vocabulary is supposed to be the content of selected syntactic constructions. Rogova and Vereshagina (2000) believe that school students’ work with the text is similar to the work of the researcher who interprets and summarizes the rules on applying grammatical and lexical material.

The second way in the interrelated teaching of vocabulary and grammar concerns the appropriate use of the semantics of a foreign language sentence and the use of didactic possibilities of the predicative base of a foreign language sentence. Researchers and grammar specialists focus primarily on the predicate. It can be represented by certain lexico-semantic groups (LSGs). Lexico-semantic groups also demonstrate school students’ strong links of vocabulary with morphology and syntax. According to Rogova and Vereshagina (2000), the experience of describing LSGs, for example: verbal groups of speech, movement, location, emotional state and some others proves their didactic value and stimulates the search for effective teaching methods of training them. Thus, the semantics of different types of verbs as separate lexical units performing a key function in sentences are absorbed here. At the same time the grammatical aspect of the speech of the target language is learnt.

The third way in the interrelated teaching of foreign grammar and vocabulary is implemented through the wide use of ideas and didactic possibilities of the situational-thematic approach. Training foreign speech skills is known to be based on the situational-thematic approach. The situation selects the vocabulary followed by choosing a set of syntactic structures with alternative morphological content.

When applying the ‘lexico-centric’ approach, the grammar plays a supporting role. Speech situations represent patterns of communicative fragments that should or can be used for school students to produce speech statements. Thus, the classification of grammatical phenomena of the target language dominates according to no form but to the meaning and the communicative function performed in the speech.

The ideas expressed by Rogova and Vereshagina (2000) were a starting point for the further development of interrelated teaching of vocabulary and grammar. Under professor Shamov’s (2017) scientific supervision, candidate’s dissertations have been written.

Pronina’s (2010) research on the teaching schoolchildren to communicatively significant grammatical phenomena of the English language based on a lexical approach’ focuses on G.V. Rogova’s scientific ideas. The researcher provides the theoretical justification and scientific research results of the above mentioned ideas. Pronina (2010) rethinks the lexical approach and applies it when training grammar. The lexical approach to learning grammatical phenomena of the target language is understood to “be certain

<...> grammar teaching when school students learn grammatical phenomena as word forms, word combinations, and models; in other words they consider grammatical phenomena as lexical units without learning grammar rules” (Sokirko, 1963, p. 22). Rogova (Rogova & Vereshagina, 2000) considers the named approach as a way of absorbing grammatical material in the ‘bottom-up’ way.

Both types of speech habits are always in a complex synthesis in speech (Rogova & Vereshagina, 2000). Their interaction is clearly detected in the material linguistic substrate in the form of speech patterns (typical phrases) and in the form of stable speech formulas. Having considered the nature of the relations of lexical and grammatical material, the internal structure of lexical and grammatical skills and the nature of operations in the structure of these skills, we can conclude that the lexical and grammatical material have some common components in the form of morphology and syntax elements. And they also closely related to such linguistic concepts as ‘meaning’ and ‘sense’. Each grammatical form or structure involves not only an external form but also a meaning and a sense. The sense appears when a grammatical phenomenon performs a particular function in speech. The future action can be expressed not only by the Future Indefinite verbal form (should or would) but also by the Present Indefinite grammatical form if the adverbial modifier of time ‘tomorrow’ is added.

Both types of skills have similar components in their psychological structure (the subskill of the word invoking / the choice of a grammatical structure; the subskill of the word combination / a morphological pattern of a grammatical structure and a combination of grammatical structures in speech in the target language).

For all grammatical forms to be learnt in a lexical way, the following two features are common: 1) abstraction from particulars or singulars; 2) the expression of morphological changes in the word structure and the arrangement of word connections in speech.

At English lessons while working on a dialogue school students learn incomplete interrogative and negative sentences without the subject (or with the subject) and without a part of the predicate, namely: the auxiliary verb to have (Present Perfect) or the verb to be (Present Continuous): Been here long? Going home? In this case they learn incomplete questions and questions-requests without the subject you, without the auxiliary verb would or do: Mind if I join you? The above examples can be considered to be examples of colloquial speech, and some indicator of the linguistic characteristics of dialogical speech. They are properly arranged according to the norms of the English grammar and at the same time they are constantly filled with various lexical units. Thus, the combination of lexical material occurs in selected grammatical structures. Such facts clearly indicate a close relationship and the simultaneous functioning of the vocabulary and grammar in speech activity.

The selection of the grammatical structures such as set phrases, utterances and word combinations in process of teaching a language makes the school student's statement communicative-oriented and makes them closer to the natural speech of a native speaker. The application of ideas of the lexical approach when learning grammatical phenomena of the target language facilitates the grammar acquisition as a whole (globally). Hence, a wide range of grammatical phenomena is likely to join vocabulary units in school training of a foreign language. On the one hand, basic grammar turns out to be clearly structured and task-oriented. On the other hand, basic vocabulary has a wider range of free and context-sensitive lexical and grammatical word combinations.

Within the interrelated teaching of the vocabulary and grammar, the following three main stages of work are proposed: 1) preparatory and static (at the level of words and phrases); 2) preparatory and dynamic (at the level of a word combination, a speech pattern and a set phrase); and 3) pre-speech and speech (at the level of the text both oral and written). The fourth stage is also possible, being the final one. It concerns speech practice and generalization. This last stage is reached much later compared with first three stages. During this stage school students generalize their speaking experience of using the target grammatical structures in their speech, and they formulate and generalize the rules on using the target vocabulary, and finally they apply the vocabulary within grammar rules and as grammatical phenomena.

Acquiring the normative (constructed) grammar always occurs via the close interaction between lexical and grammatical skills. In speech, sentences are constructed according to certain grammatical rules. Such attitude to acquiring foreign grammatical material develops the cognitive function in the school students' speech activity. The cognitive component in the school students' activities facilitates some verbal and cognitive processes associated with comparison, classification, analysis, synthesis and generalization.

6. Findings

The application of interrelated teaching grammatical and lexical skills as an educational technology is widely used in modern textbooks on foreign languages. Comprehensive learning vocabulary and grammar at foreign language classes has become certain axioms for the teacher: 1. Lexical skills must be formed before working with the text and on the basis of previously learnt speech patterns (standard phrases). 2. New grammatical structures (speech patterns) should be explained only with acquired vocabulary. 3. Grammatical skills are improved through the use of new vocabulary and due to the combination of this new skill with the previously formed ones. All these activities result in: 1) improving the stability level of both lexical and grammatical skills; 2) combining lexical and grammatical skills with the previously formed skills; 3) forming necessary psycholinguistic qualities (characteristics) and indices in these skills (Arkhipova, Belova, Gavrikova, Lyulyaeva, & Shapiro, 2018; Arkhipova, Belova, & Shutova, 2018).

The assessment of the vocabulary and grammar development according to the method of interrelated teaching and their functioning in speech can be conducted on the basis of indices formulated by Zimnyaya (1978). She suggests using external and internal criteria. According to the author the external criteria are the following: a) the accuracy and quality of language and speech skills of the utterance (no mistakes); and 2) the speed of performing individual operations or their sequence (in comparison with the native language the speed of performing 'foreign language' operations is to be almost equal to the speed of their performing in the native language). The internal criteria are the following: 1) the lack of consciousness within the mode of performing the action; 2) the lack of tension and fatigue; 3) the drop of intermediate operations, i.e. the reduction of actions (Zimnyaya, 1978). The time and quality of performing lexical and grammatical actions remain permanent in the context of increasing complexity of speech activity comprising all these actions.

7. Conclusion

The idea of interrelated teaching vocabulary and grammar in different educational environments is going to attract the attention of researchers. Professor Rogova's ideas, expressed many years ago, are still

popular among young researchers and scientists. Simultaneous (interrelated) teaching vocabulary and grammar at foreign language lessons is a modern peculiar technology for creating the operational base for all types of speech activity being aimed at school education. A solid operational base in the target language ensures that the goals of language learning are achieved, a high level of the target competences is reached and that the target language has become an effective means of verbal and intercultural communication.

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