

DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF STUDENTS AT ENGLISH LESSONS

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Summary

In the article the importance of developing communicative competence of students at English lessons, as one of the backgrounds for forming an individual is considered. The recent studies of solving this issue, as one of the necessary conditions in learning a foreign language, are overviewed. In the article the notion “communicative competence” and its components are determined: grammatical competence, discourse competence, that is the ability to build sentences in discourse for the purpose of forming meaningful integrity from a set of utterances, sociolinguistic competence, which lies in understanding the right usage of language standards, that depend on a particular context and strategic competence, which determines language techniques, that are used when interlocutors have a communication gap as a result of imperfect language knowledge. These techniques include: correction, paraphrase, parable, repetition and pause. The article exercises, tasks for developing communicative competence worked out by its author. Special attention is paid to the brainstorming activities, as an example, the author gives spidergram “Teacher”. The developed approach allows to monitor communicative competence development of students and to fulfil additional methodological approaches for developing creative activities of students.

Key words: communicative competence, prepared speech, unprepared speech, developing communicative competence.

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1. Introduction

The will to possess all the features of modern European society involves excellent English speaking and teaching English language is one of the components of educational policy. Modern society requires individuals, who can speak fluent English and can practically apply it. Exactly such individuals are needed in different industries. One of the conditions of achieving this aim is to improve the teaching level of English and to search new approaches to its learning, to develop communicative competence in particular. Thus, the theory is introduced only with practical aim – to help students perceive speech practice, develop speech intuition, form the abilities of self-control in building consistent patterns.

Analysis of the latest researches. The subject “communicative competence” has been studied by native, as well as foreign scientists. These are the researches of such native scientists as I. L. Bim, I. A. Zymova, H. I. Ibrahimova, A. M. Novikova, M. V. Pozharska, R. P. Mylrud, S. E. Shyshkova, A. V. Khutirsky and others. The psychological aspects of the problem of forming communicative competence are represented in the works of L. Shcherba, L. Vygotskiy, M. Zhyunkina, I. Cynytsa. Pedagogical and methodical problem of its forming were as well

developed by modern scientists: V. Bader, O. Biliaev, T. Ladyzhynska, M. Pentyluk, L. Matsko, H. Shelekhova, V. Melnychenko. Attempt to single out the component composition of communicative competence in foreign didactics and methods is connected with the names of such scientists as D. Hymes, A. Holiday, Jan van Eyck and others. D. Hymes, in particular, united the definition “communicative competence” (language rules), sociolinguistic (dialect language rules), discourse (rules of building the sense of utterance), strategic (rules of holding speech with an interlocutor).

The aim of the article is to determine the basic methods of developing communicative competence.

2. Main text

The term “communicative competence” refers to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence (competence knowledge of grammar rules) and sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of rules of language use). The definition of communicative competence encompasses four different components. They are grammatical competence, discourse to form a meaningful whole out of a series of utterances, sociolinguistic competence, which refers to knowledge of sociocultural rules of the social context in which language is used and strategic competence which refers to communication strategies which a speaker uses when communication breaks down as a result of imperfect knowledge of the language. These strategies include correcting, paraphrasing, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance and guessing.

However, grammatical rules should also be taken into account in developing communicative competence. Without having at least elementary level of grammatical competence one can’t communicate with an English native speaker. Thus, grammatical competence is a part of communicative competence. According to psychological point of view speech development occurs in both native and foreign languages from the moment of perception till utterance and from listening to speaking if we consider methodological terms. According to the quotes of N. Brooks “Language is not an object, but a process” and of P. Stevens “Language doesn’t exist, it occurs” we have to clarify what is meant under “it occurs” (*Bob Hastings, Marta Uminska, 2010: 16*).

What are the psychological features of oral speech?

First of all, speech should be motivated, that is the speaker should be willing to inform the listener about smth important, interesting or to get some information. In learning a foreign language the motives of students’ communication should be considered. They should be willing to communicate not only in order to get a good mark, but also to express their own thoughts and feelings (*ANNAMARIE, 2004: 31*). In no case should students reproduce a particular utterance word by word, learning it by heart.

Secondly, speech is always addressed to the interlocutor, that’s why the educational process should be organized in the way, that could allow students to speak freely with each other. The message will be successful if it is addressed to the class, not to the teacher or to the window, the last happens often, unfortunately.

Thirdly, speech should be emotionally marked, express personal thoughts, feelings, personal attitude to what is being informed. Thus, particular attention should be paid to the usage of intonational methods in order to express attitude and feeling to what is being expressed. This can be fulfilled through such tasks as: to tell the reason for liking the information, to affirm or to object a particular opinion, to express own pint of view as for the formulated problem.

Fourthly, any speech always depends on a particular situation. That's why tasks to develop students' communication in a particular situation should be developed.

In order to develop communicative competence of students I apply the following exercises for developing coherent speech.

Information-gap activities. an information gap is where two speakers have different bits of information and they can only complete the whole picture by sharing that information. One popular information-gap activity is called Describe and draw. In this activity one student has a picture and he mustn't show it his partner. The partner has to draw the picture without looking at the original, so the one with the picture will give instructions and descriptions, and the "artist" will ask questions. *Describe and draw* is the activity called *Find the differences*. In pairs students each look at a picture which is very similar to the one their partner has. They have to find, say, ten differences between their pictures without showing their pictures to each other. They will have to do a lot of describing and questioning and answering to find the differences.

Telling stories. one way of getting students to tell stories is to use the information-gap principle to give them something to talk about. Students are divided into groups. Each group is given one of a sequence of pictures which tells a story. Once they have had a chance to look at the pictures, the pictures are taken away. New groups are formed which consist of one student from each of the original groups. The new groups have to work out what story the original picture sequence told. For the story reconstruction to be successful, they have to describe the pictures they have seen, talk about them, work out what order they should be in, etc. The different groups tell the class their stories. Another variant of telling stories is when the students are shown a picture. One student starts telling the story in one sentence. Another student adds his own sentence, repeating the previous one. Next students give their versions, the last student retells the whole story. Teachers can also give students some objects or pictures of objects. In groups they have to invent a story which connects the objects. Teachers can encourage students to retell stories which they have read in their books or found in newspapers or in the Internet. The best stories, of course, are those which the students tell about themselves and their family or friends. Teachers can also offer their students chances to be creative by asking them to talk about their hobby or to describe the previous day in either a positive way or a negative way. When students tell stories on personal experience, their classmates can ask questions in order to find out more about what happened. Storytelling like this often happens spontaneously. But sometimes students need time to think what they are going to say.

Celebrities. Students name 5 celebrities. (This task can be also done in teams). Then students are asked to introduce the celebrities they would like to communicate with, invite for dinner, and what dishes they would like to treat them to.

Portrait interview. Students are divided into three teams. Each team gets a picture in order to be able to prepare as many questions as possible and to put them to other team.

Discussion. Before organizing a discussion, a teacher should always remember that students need time to prepare. It is necessary to give students time to think. Students can also be divided into small teams to study the topic, which is to be discussed.

Problem solving. These exercises make students think. Besides they help develop the ability to work in a team.

Questionnaire. Students discuss a particular issue in teams. For example, the following questions can be chosen for discussion: do you spend a lot of time on the phone? Who with? Have you ever got annoyed or frustrated when making a phone call? Why?

Making up problem situations. Students should prepare a story, relying on a problem situation. For example, how would you feel if: got married/failed an important exam/ met the Queen of England/ became homeless/had your car stolen/inherited million dollars and so on.

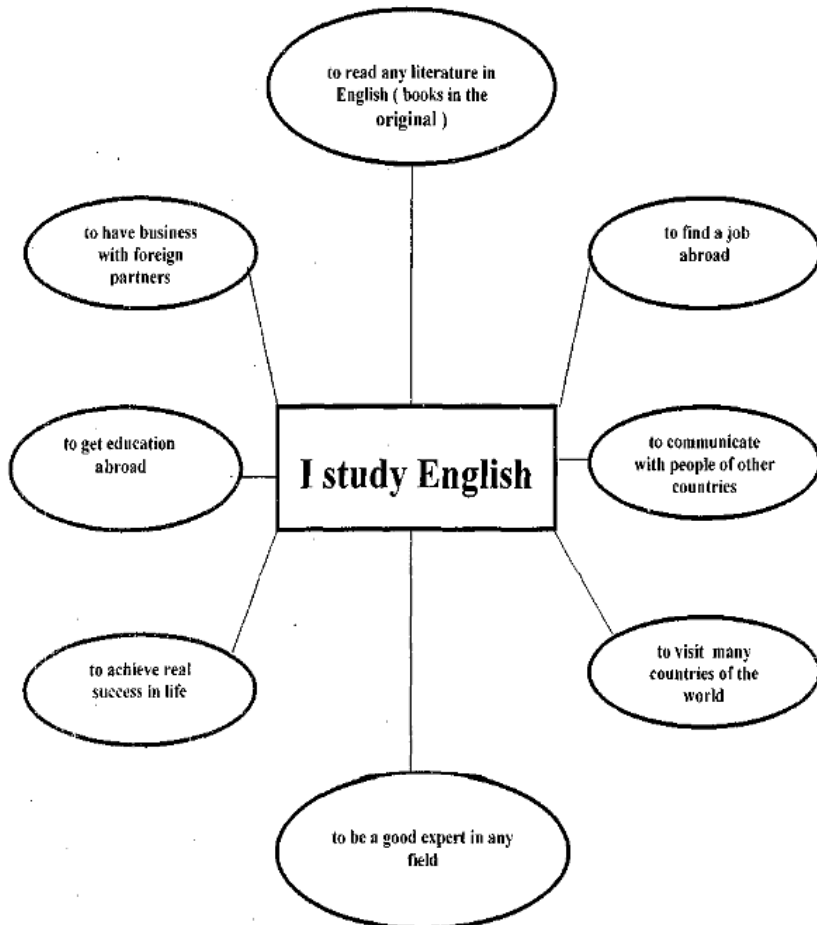
Mind mapping. This kind of work lies in making up a story using a picture and key-words. Spidergrams are also used as one of the means of mind mapping.

Spring

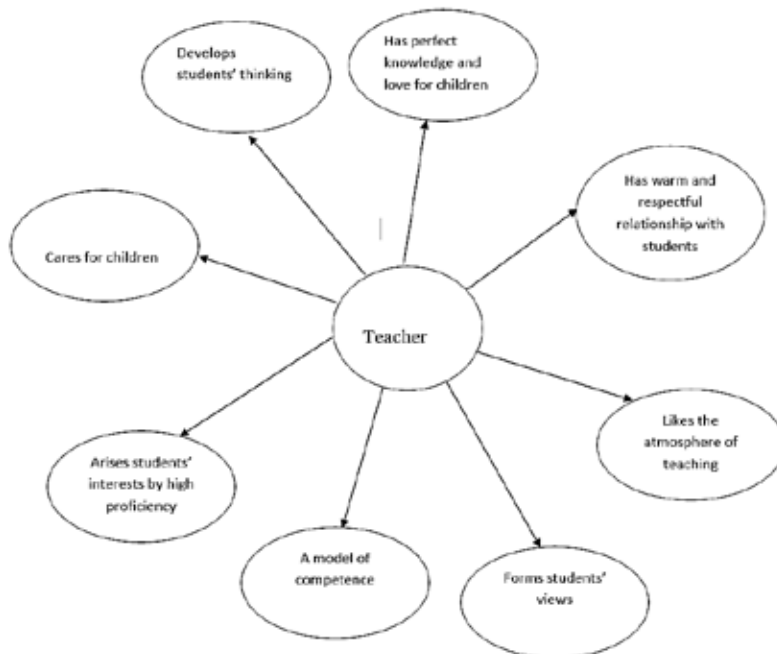
- The sun shines brightly
- Green leaves
- The most beautiful season of the year
- Fine weather
- A lot of flowers
- Blue sky
- Birds come back home
- Stay much time outdoors



Spidergram “Why should I study English?”



Spidergram “How do you describe an ideal teacher?”



To our mind, such kind of work as “brainstorming activities” deserves particular attention. First of all, a problem or a question should be clearly formulated.

Afterwards, students should suggest as many variants of its solving as possible.

For example, a problem “The reasons why I learn a foreign language” foresees lots ideas, even the most unexpected. At this stage it is necessary not to limit the participants of brainstorming activity, for them to suggest a lot of variants. Even the most unusual and absurd ideas are welcomed, as the aim of this kind of activity is to stimulate the creative skills of students. As a result, all the ideas and suggestions are analyzed, the best are singled out, some of the ideas are amended and the team leader draws a spidergram on a blackboard.

Role play activity

You are the secretary for David Beckham, the famous football player. He is away today, but he said that if anyone from BBC Focus called, you should try to make an appointment with him/her. Below is his diary for the next two days. It is not possible to cancel any of his appointments, and you cannot make an appointment before 8 a.m. If he is not available at any time, say why.

Expressing arguments against /for activity

- Everyone should have the right to choose whether they smoke or not.
- You can't force people to stop if they don't want to.
- Banning smoking would only force people to smoke in secret.
- Treating people with smoking-related illnesses is very expensive.
- The case that passive smoking harms people seems very strong.

Exchanging the ideas activity

Look at the picture below. How many of the people do you recognize? What is strange or unusual about the picture? Can you guess why the people are together at the table? If you organized a party who would you invite and why?



Fact or Myth?

Read the commonly held beliefs below.

Only three are actually true. Do you know which?

1. A sudden fright or terrible shock can turn your hair white overnight
2. Women have one more rib than men
3. New-born babies have more bones in their bodies than adults
4. One bite from a tarantula is usually deadly
5. Elephants are afraid of mice
6. If you are struck by lightning you will die
7. Turkeys cannot fly
8. When faced with danger, ostriches bury their heads in the sand.

3. Conclusions

Speech is a process of communication by means of language. Oral exercises are quite indispensable to develop speech competence. However, they only prepare students for speaking and cannot be considered to be “speech” as some teachers are apt to think and who are often satisfied with oral exercises which students perform following the model. In conclusion it should be said that prepared and unprepared speech must be developed simultaneously from the very beginning. The relationship between prepared and unprepared speech should very depending on the stage of learning the language. In the junior stage prepared speech takes the lead, while in the senior stage unprepared speech should prevail. The communicative activities developed should foster functional communicative competence among the children taught. The teacher should serve as a model for communication learning. A variety of situations can be created in the classroom for students to practice the different language functions. In teaching the students the teacher should be aware of the cognitive and communication developmental stages of the students.

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