

THE DISCURSIVE APPROACH TO WORD-FORMATION COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

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Keywords: communication process; discursive approach; foreign languages; linguistic competence; professional discourse; word-formation competence; word-formation models.

Abstract: The modern system of teaching foreign languages to university students is discussed. The development of linguistic competences, including the word-formation competence is analyzed. The discursive approach to the word-formation competence development is described. Three types of the professional discourse – economic, political and engineering – are analyzed from the perspective of those word-formation modes which are typical of them. The most common models are distinguished. It is proved that affixation and compounding are characteristic of the political and economic types of the professional discourse, while compounding is prevailing in the engineering discourse. The conclusion is made that the knowledge of word-formation models specific for different types of the professional discourse can help students to develop the word-formation competence for successful communication in a foreign language.

Introduction

The modern system of teaching foreign languages in Universities is a complex of various aspects including generic competences, linguistic competences which must be developed as a result of learning languages as well as methods and approaches used in the educational process.

Generic competences include:

– instrumental competences which show cognitive abilities to understand and evaluate ideas and thoughts; time management and problem solving skills; linguistic skills in the areas of oral and written communication;

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- interpersonal competences which are connected with students' abilities to express their feelings; social skills;
- systemic competences which imply skills and abilities to understand and know how the parts of a whole are connected [1].

A linguistic competence is defined as the knowledge of the language being studied which includes all its levels: phonemic, morphemic, lexical and syntactic. A student has a language competence if he knows the system of the language being studied and can use the former in practice [2]. The linguistic competence combines other competences such as lexical, grammar, word-formation ones. The latter is often neglected in higher educational institutions or paid little attention to. Despite the fact that the communicative approach to teaching foreign languages focuses on communication skills, we think that these skills can be developed only on the base of excellent knowledge of words, their models of formation and grammar.

We agree with N. Yurieva who claims that the word-formation competence is a necessary condition of learning a language as the establishment of word-formation derivation rules is a long-lasting period of speech development with the former being the nucleus of vocabulary practice [3]. She also states that a derived word, unlike a simple word, is a nomination of a special type because it names something reflecting the unknown through the known, combining a new experience with the old one, generalizing types of connections and relations in the surrounding world [3].

Therefore, the aim to teach students word-formation models and develop their word-formation competence can be considered to be one of the most important ones. The problem is to find out the most appropriate methods and approaches to achieve this goal. In many modern coursebooks of English there are sections in which word-formation models are described and assignments are given to check students' knowledge and understanding of them. From our point of view, that is not enough. So, we suggest using the discursive approach to help students develop their word-formation competence.

The discursive approach to teaching foreign languages

The term 'discourse' and the discursive approach focus on the study of communication acts, speech patterns and language used by participants of the discourse to succeed in their communication [4]. Learning a foreign language students always deal with different types of the discourse.

There are many ways to interpret the term 'discourse', but we think that the following definition is the most suitable for our research. The discourse is a text comprising a unity together with pragmatic, socio-cultural, psychological and other factors; a text related to some event; speech which is considered to be a goal-oriented social act, a component needed for people's interaction [5]. Thus, the discourse reflects not only linguistic but also extralinguistic aspects of the community and can be differentiated according to the sphere of its use, people who use it etc. So, there can be such types of the discourse as economic, political, medical, religious etc.

As O. Obdalova notes, the discursive approach to teaching foreign languages is aimed at teaching students a language which is not simply a system

but an element of the communication process which shows ethnic and socio-cultural features, the professional context and speech patterns of the discourse participants [4].

It is possible to distinguish groups of factors which represent interconnected elements of the complicated communication process based on the foreign discourse. The first group of factors is stipulated by communication as a process of information exchange; the second group is based on cognition as a mode of perception and acquisition of ideas; the third group represents pragmatics in the form of knowledge of the communication subject and abilities to use this knowledge in practice; the fourth group includes socio-cultural features (the knowledge of communicative as well as non-communicative aims which helps realize different aspects in particular communication acts) [ibid].

So, the discursive approach is an appropriate instrument for providing students with the required knowledge and skills on the base of the discourse.

The discursive approach to word-formation competence development

The discursive approach to the word-formation competence development covers three aspects: contextual, cohesive and coherent. The contextual aspect helps to pay attention to different words and their meaning which depends on the context and at the same time it may focus on word-formation models that can vary in accordance with the discourse type.

The cohesive aspect represents a certain lexical basis made of interconnected words forming the discourse.

The coherent aspect of the discourse is related to students' understanding of the context and words based on their meaning, which is stipulated by word-formation models.

We suggest focusing on the written discourse that students deal with in the process of reading a text in a foreign language. In this case, the problem of establishing a relationship between the reader and the text is rather relevant. Doing a reading task students are engaged in a complicated intellectual process looking for and identifying those ideas, which are needed for this activity [6].

To illustrate these ideas we considered examples of three different types of the modern discourse: political, economic and engineering. This is an excerpt of the political discourse:

“European Union leaders yesterday formally signed off on the start of post-Brexit trade negotiations but in private talks this morning expressed frustration at the “lack of seriousness” about Britain’s preparations for leaving the bloc.

The approval of a negotiating mandate for talks on Britain’s future economic relationship will herald the beginning of trade talks this spring and follow three months of intense negotiations over a withdrawal treaty and a 21-month transition period.

Theresa May called for a “new dynamic” in the next stage of negotiations following a Brussels summit dominated by her successful appeal, working closely with Emmanuel Macron, the French president, for other EU countries to take against Russia over the Salisbury attack” [7].

The following words, which were formed according to word-formation models, were paid attention to: *formally, post-Brexit, frustration, seriousness, approval, negotiating, relationship, beginning, trade negotiations, trade talks, withdrawal, withdrawal treaty, 21-month transition period.*

To analyze word-formation models used in this discourse the following classification of word-formation processes was applied:

- affixation/derivation (adding affixes to words);
- compounding (joining two or more words);
- borrowing (taking over of words from other languages);
- conversion (taking a word from one grammatical class to another one);
- stress shift (shifting of stress from one syllable to the other);
- clipping (reducing a long word to get a shorter form);
- acronym formation (using initial letters of a group of words that designate one concept);
- blending (putting parts of words together);
- backformation (taking a word from one grammatical class to another reducing affixes);
- coinage (adopting brand names);
- onomatopoeia (imitating different sounds with the help of words) [8].

The received results are shown in Table 1.

Thus, the analysis of the words showed that in this example of the political discourse the most frequently used word-formation models were affixation (8 words) and compounding (5 words) while blending was a rare model (1 word).

We compared this discourse with the economic one. The excerpt of the economic discourse was as follows:

“The US plans to impose tariffs on up to \$60bn (£42.5bn) in Chinese imports and limit the country’s investment in the US in retaliation for years of alleged intellectual property theft.

Table 1

Word-formation models of the political discourse

Words from the discourse	Word-formation model
formally	affixation (-ly)
Brexit	blending (Britain’s exit)
post-Brexit	compounding
frustration	affixation (-tion)
seriousness	affixation (-ness)
approval	affixation (-al)
negotiating	affixation (-ing)
relationship	affixation (-ship)
beginning	affixation (-ing)
trade negotiations	compounding (noun + noun)
trade talks	compounding (noun + noun)
withdrawal	affixation (-al)
withdrawal treaty	compounding (noun + noun)
21-month transition period	compounding (numeral + noun + noun + noun)

Table 2

Word-formation models of the economic discourse

Words from the discourse	Word-formation model
retaliation	affixation (-tion)
investment	affixation (-ment)
alleged	affixation (-ed)
intellectual	affixation (-tual)
property theft	compounding (noun + noun)
unfair	affixation (-un)
competition	affixation (-tion)
state-led	compounding (noun + verb)
trade war	compounding (noun + noun)
trade terms	compounding (noun + noun)
roughly	affixation (-ly)
Thursday morning	compounding (noun + noun)
briefing	affixation (-ing)

The White House said the actions were necessary to counter unfair competition from China's state-led economy.

Beijing said it would "fight to the end" in any trade war with the US.

Mr. Trump said the US and China were negotiating and he was looking for "reciprocal" trade terms for American companies.

He said the tariffs might be imposed on up to \$60bn in Chinese goods – boosting the number from the roughly \$50bn figure White House officials cited on Thursday morning during a briefing" [9].

The following words were focused on: *retaliation, investment, alleged, intellectual, property theft, unfair, competition, state-led, trade war, trade terms, roughly, Thursday morning, briefing.*

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

According to the data received affixation (8 words) and compounding (5 words) are also often used in the economic discourse. Therefore, the comparison of these examples of the political and economic discourse allowed us to make a conclusion that in the modern world economy and policy are so interconnected that the same word-formation models are used in the discourse related to these spheres (mainly affixation and compounding). The same analysis of the engineering discourse (civil engineering in particular) showed that compounding was used more often than other models.

Consequently, University students can learn word-formation models on the base of the discourse. Depending on their future profession they can focus on those models which are typical for their professional discourse.

Conclusion

The discursive approach to teaching University students foreign languages has several advantages:

1) it allows to make connections between real events and the language used for their description;

- 2) it helps involve students into the communication activity;
- 3) it is necessary to provide students with the opportunity to acquire language competences including the word-formation competence. The latter can be developed as a result of different exercises based on the discourse study. Word-formation models are not only learned but understood from the context. Students are aimed at using those models in their speech which are specific for their professional discourse.

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Дискурсивный подход к формированию словообразовательной компетенции

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Ключевые слова: дискурсивный подход; иностранные языки; лингвистическая компетенция; профессиональный дискурс; процесс коммуникации; словообразовательная компетенция; словообразовательные модели.

Аннотация: Рассмотрена современная система обучения иностранным языкам студентов вузов. Внимание акцентировано на формировании лингвистических компетенций в целом и словообразовательной компетенции, в частности. Представлен дискурсивный подход к формированию словообразовательной компетенции. Проанализированы три типа профессионального дискурса: экономический, политический и инженерный, с точки зрения типичных для них словообразовательных моделей. Выделены наиболее часто используемые модели. Доказано, что аффиксация и словосложение характерны для экономического и политического типов профессионального дискурса, в то время как словосложение преобладает в инженерном дискурсе. Сделан вывод о том, что знание специфичных для различных типов профессионального дискурса словообразовательных моделей может способствовать формированию словообразовательной компетенции студентов, необходимой для успешной коммуникации на иностранном языке.

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