

THEORETICAL ISSUES ON IMPROVING LEXICAL COMPETENCE AS A SIGNIFICANT COMPONENT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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Annotation: this article discusses the current issues on improving Lexical competence in language teaching process. Lexical competence is quite a new term and not many researches were conducted so far. Author of the article tries to explore it as a crucial part of FLT and gives reliable literature review. Dissertations and research works related to the topic were analyzed.

Annotatsiya: ushbu maqolada Leksik kompetensiyani rivojlantirishdagi joriy muammolar tahlil qilinadi. Leksik kompetensiya bu nisbatan yangi atama bo'lib hali ko'p izlanishlar olib borilmagan. Maqola muallifi Leksik kompetensiyani XTO' ning muhim qismi sifatida o'rganib bir nechta adabiyotlar sharhini taqdim etadi. Mavzuga dahldor dissertatsiyalar va ilmiy ishlar analiz qilingan.

Аннотация: в данной статье рассматриваются актуальные вопросы совершенствования лексической компетенции в процессе обучения языку. Лексическая компетентность – довольно новый термин, и до сих пор было проведено не так много исследований. Автор статьи пытается изучить его как важнейшую часть FLT и дает надежный обзор литературы.

Key words: competence, Lexical competence, lexis, dimension, vocabulary size test, lexical approach

Ключевые слова: компетентность, лексическая компетентность, лексика, измерение, тест размера словарного запаса, лексический подход.

Kalit so'zlar: kompetentsiya, leksik kompetentsiya, leksika, o'lchov, lug'at hajmi testi, leksik yondashuv

In recent decades, the purpose of language teaching and learning is mostly directed to the issue of improving communicative competence. First of all, the term competence in Cambridge dictionary is defined as “the ability to do something well”, “the quality of being [competent](#); adequacy; possession of required skill, knowledge, qualification, or capacity” (Dictionary.com). In language teaching competence refers to broader concept. According to Chomsky (1965), competence is the ideal language system that enables speakers to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences in their language, and to distinguish grammatical sentences from ungrammatical sentences. This is unaffected by "grammatically irrelevant conditions" such as speech errors. That was the concept of linguistic competence in which the great attention was still paid to the grammar issues. The term ‘communicative competence’ first was used by D.H. Hymes as a reaction to the Chomsky’s theory of ‘grammar competence’ (1967) In 1972, D.H. Hymes introduced his theory of communicative competence describing it as interaction of Grammatical, Psycholinguistics, Sociocultural, and probabilistic systems of competence.

Communicative competence is a term in linguistics which refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately. According to Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence is a global competence which is subdivided into four main components or so-called sub-competencies:

- 1) Grammatical (an ability to produce grammatically correct speech act)
- 2) Sociolinguistic (a skill to combine sociolinguistically appropriate communication)
- 3) Discourse (an ability to apply cohesion and coherence to the utterance)
- 4) Strategic (a sub-competence to tackle the communication issues if they occur)

Many scholars and researchers agree with this idea but still the lexical competence as a separate aspect of the communicative competence appeared much later than expected.

Word, as a scientific term- lexeme is one of the main component of any language and speech act.

Meara (1996) stated several reasons behind the disvalue of lexical competence, and one of them is “ill-informed” language teachers and instructors about the importance of lexis in language teaching process. According to Decarrico (2001) another reason is related to the dominance of Linguistic theories in the years 40s and 60s which means grammatical and phonological structures with constant repetitions and teaching strict sentence patterns were the main issues in language methodology. Students mainly dealt with grammar rules and ready sentence structures which require nothing that reciting and remembering while having a communication. But the speech act is more than a form or a structure, it has concept, meaning and discourse and many other things to include. After the main focus of language learning was shifted from the structural patterns to meaningful communication in 1970s when Hyme’s communicative competence concept was introduced (1979). The sudden switch in learning and teaching language was the implementation of Lewis’s Lexical Approach in which learning chunks to produce an utterance. Lexical Approach makes lexis the main component of speech. The publication of *The Lexical Syllabus* (David Willis, 1990) and *The Lexical Approach* (Michal Lewis, 1993) shifted the main focus of language teaching from grammar-based approach to lexical-based approach. Actually “language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalized grammar”. Lexical Approach does not have a detailed learning theory, that is the only drawback. According to Lewis lexical approach is a development of Communicative approach. Lewis’ lexical approach concentrates students’ linguistic development on lexis and word combinations

Lexical competence is an aspect of L2 which has not received a great deal of attention (Meara,1996). Lexical competence is the most important aspect of communication no matter the language is native, second or foreign (Decarrico, 2001). the basic dimension of Lexical competence is size, according to Meara (1996). “The basic problem seems to be that there are no reliable tests of vocabulary size which

could be used to resolve these questions” concluded Meara in his research paper (1996). Of course it is impossible to assess something large with the help of a sheet of exam paper of any kind of online assessment tools. Identifying and evaluating the amount of the words learner has is not global problem, but the implementation of these vocabulary supply into speech act is an issue. For that reason, many scholar (Li, Baki and Ayub, etc, Lin, Chan and Hsiao, Oberg) are working on creating innovative methods to teach and improve Lexical competence of L2 learners. Especially, after the introduction of CALL (computer assisted language learning) to the foreign language teaching, process became easier and more efficient. Starting with the recent studies in the literature, Li's (2010) research on the investigation of ESL learners' vocabulary learning outcomes through reading illustrates that the students achieved greater results in learning new vocabulary with access to computer-mediated dictionaries than those who read the books and analyzed new words without it. Another study by Lin, Chan and Hsiao (2011) attempted to explore how effective would be the vocabulary perception of 91 learners. they divided the participants into three: those individually with computers, collaboratively without computers, and lastly group works with computers. Result was 70 % positive towards CALL.

To conclude, lexical competence is important to improve communicative competence, because as Wilkins stated ‘without grammar a little can be conveyed, without words nothing can be conveyed’.

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