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A Systematic Approach to Teaching German Grammar After English

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the use of a systematic approach as the main method of teaching grammar of a second foreign language, according to which, conscious language acquisition is fundamental. Analyzing the cognitive model of grammatical competence of students in the first foreign language from the perspective of cognitive science, namely in the form of a semantic network of concepts, categories, prototypes, frames, scenarios and schemes, the features of the formation of grammatical competence in the second foreign language are considered. The article considers the expediency of using a systematic approach in the formation of grammatical skills and abilities in German as a second foreign language after English to activate speech–thinking activity, and as a consequence - to optimize the learning process. The methodology of the system approach covers both objective and procedural vision of the subject of research. The system approach is based on the consideration of an object (in our case, a language) as a system. A system is primarily a combination of elements. This combination is unified by certain features that interact with one other. This interaction is aimed at achieving certain goals. Almost all sciences are built on a principle of systematicity. It is proven that the use of the principle of systematicity is especially advisable when forming grammatical competence in a second foreign language, in particular German after English. Taking into account that grammar is a system, the application of a systematic approach allows one to use a systemic effect. Specifically, as a result of a special re-organization of system elements (grammatical skills, skills of the first foreign language), when the whole (grammatical competence in L2) becomes larger than the simple sum of the parts of the formed grammatical competence in L1.

Keywords: system; system approach; grammatical competence; second foreign language

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The purpose of the research is scientific justification to use a systematic approach to form grammatical skills and abilities when learning German as a second foreign language after English.

Achieving this purpose involves solving the following theoretical **research tasks**:

1. To analyze the structure of the grammar competence as a system,
2. To describe the cognitive model of the grammar competence,
3. To consider the features of the formation of grammatical skills and abilities when learning German as a second foreign language after English in the framework of a systematic approach.

The study focuses on the process of teaching German after English in a secondary school.

The methods used to solve the tasks are theoretical:

1. The axiomatic method (the axiom is ‘grammar is a system’)
2. The analytical methods (the analysis of the cognitive model of a grammar competence),
3. The deductive methods (to determine peculiarities of the forming grammar skills in German after English in the framework of a systematic approach).

The relevance of the topic is due, on the one hand, to the study of German as a second foreign language in schools of the humanities, but the lack of academic hours for its study. On the other hand, the lack of methodological tools in the practice of teaching German as a second foreign language in secondary school for the implementation of a communicative-cognitive approach.

In the most general form, grammatical (linguistic) competence was defined by Chomsky as the theoretical and practical significance of a limited number of grammatical rules that allow generating an unlimited number of correct sentences (Chomsky,1965). The formation of grammatical competence comes

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down to the formation of skills and the development of an ability to apply grammatical means of the language, based on knowledge of the principles governing the combination of lexical elements into meaningful phrases, i.e. the ability to both understand and recognize competently formulated sentences of the speaker, and express their own thoughts when speaking (as opposed to rote memorization and further reproduction of dogmatic samples). The ability to combine and modify words to construct grammatically correct phrases and sentences is one of the most important conditions for practical language acquisition, namely its use as a means of communication. Improving the effectiveness of the learning process largely depends on the creation of strong skills in the grammatical side of speech, which will further contribute to the development of skills in receptive and productive speech activity in a foreign language.

Grammatical competence is an integral part of linguistic competence, which is part of communicative competence. It is obvious that the structure of grammatical competence has a systemic organization. As the American linguist Langacker emphasized, grammar is a self-sufficient cognitive system, and it is an integral part of cognition, as well as the key to understanding it (Langacker, 1986). Being a part of the language system, grammar itself acts as a private system or subsystem. There are many definitions of a system. Mostly, they come down to understanding the system as, first of all, a combination of elements; secondly, this combination is united by certain properties that are in interaction; thirdly, this interaction is aimed at achieving certain goals.

When considering language as an integral object, the Russian scientist V.M. Solntsev relied on some of the most important concepts of the general theory of systems and structures, believing that when characterizing language as an integral object, it is advisable to use general scientific concepts of systems and structures (Solntsev, 1977). F. de Saussure theoretically justified the systemic nature of language, pointing out that language is a system of signs that they are psychic in their essence, but at the same time, they are associations (F.de Saussure, 1977). Language is recognized, for example, as a system formation by those who consider language to be a descriptive formation as well as who deny

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the descriptive character of language. Systematicity is the most important characteristic of a language.

For a systematic description of the structure of students' communicative competence, one must use the scientific apparatus of cognitive psychology and linguistics, including terms such as *instances*, *concepts*, *categories*, *prototypes*, *frames* and *scenarios*. This makes it possible to build a cognitive model of students' grammatical competence, as Milrud emphasizes (Milrud, 2014). Let us explain this terminology. *Grammatical instances* are specific examples of the use of language in natural communicative circumstances. Language instances stored in the memory of native or trained speakers are an integral part of their grammatical competence. *Grammatical concepts* for students are a language of terms with which you can describe, analyze and correct the grammar of a sentence. *Grammatical categories* are used not to describe, but to explain grammatical phenomena with the help of appropriate concepts and rules. Patterns and rules are information contained in any scientific category. Typical examples illustrating a particular grammatical category are *grammatical prototypes*. Grammatical frames (knowledge of characteristic differentiating features of structures) are needed by students in order to recognize a grammatical phenomenon in specific language examples, group examples of the same grammatical phenomenon, distinguish examples of different grammatical phenomena, formulate a judgment about the correctness of a sentence, make a decision about the correct grammatical design of their thoughts, perform a test grammatical task for multiple choice, etc. *Grammatical scripts* are the speech mechanism of the chain links that generates a sentence (Milrud, 2014). *Schemes* in the grammatical competence of students mean previously acquired knowledge, as well as the process of assimilation of new knowledge. At the same time, it can be assumed that the degree of stabilization of the acquired knowledge of grammar affects the achieved level of language development. Depending on the formed grammatical schemes, students formulate correct sentences with varying degrees of success, and judge the correspondence of sentences to the grammatical norm with varying degrees of adequacy.

Based on the cognitive model of grammatical competence proposed by Milrud, we consider the features of the formation of grammatical competence of

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the second foreign language (German after English). Therefore, considering grammatical concepts, it should be noted that a language of terms has already been formed with the help of which students can describe, analyze and correct grammar of a sentence. Important concepts for mastering English grammar, as Milrud pointed out, can be considered parts of speech (noun, verb, adjective, etc.), their function in a sentence, word order, morphological features, etc. Studying grammar of German, students use the terminology base formed during the study of English. However, for the purpose of positive transference on the part of L1, students should pay attention to the difference in grammatical concepts, if any. Transfer, as I. I. Kitrosskaya emphasizes, is a complex phenomenon of the human psyche, the hidden mechanism of which allows a person to use in his mental and motor activity what he knows under completely new or relatively new circumstances (Kitrosskaya, 1970). The success of the transfer of methods of activity depends on how correctly the similarity of tasks, conditions and ways of solving them is evaluated. If the tasks, conditions and ways of solving them are not similar, but are only perceived by a person as similar, then a negative process occurs – interference.

Let us analyze an example: the word order in affirmative English and German sentences:

1. *I go to school.*

Subject	Predicate	Secondary Part of the Sentence
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2. *Ich gehe in die Schule.*

Subject	Predicate	Secondary Part of the Sentence
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But:

In die Schule gehe ich.

Secondary Part of the Sentence	Predicate
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Describing the word order in a German sentence, the teacher uses generalized concepts from L1 (noun, verb), as well as their function in the sentence (subject, predicate, secondary parts of the sentence). The attention of students is drawn to the fact that in a German simple affirmative sentence there may be a reverse word order when the secondary parts of the sentence may come first.

Grammatical phenomena are combined into larger areas of grammatical knowledge, namely grammatical categories (Milrud, 2014). Each language has its own grammatical categories, but many meanings essential to human experience turn out to be part of the grammatical categories of a very large number of languages (such are, for example, the number of objects, duration of action, time of action relative to the moment of speech, subject and object of action, desirability, etc.). The most important grammatical category for students studying English and German is grammatical tense. Without this knowledge, the formation of grammatical competence of students in L1 and L2 is impossible. To consider the grammatical category of Present Perfect in English and das Perfekt in German, a teacher uses similar phenomena in the formation of tense (the auxiliary verb *haben/have* plus the past participle PII) for the explanation. He also emphasizes the differences (the use of this tense, the word order in English and German sentences, as well as the formation of das Perfekt with using the verb *sein* in German):

L1: *I* *have* *done* *my homework.*

L2: *Ich* *habe* *meine Hausaufgabe* *gemacht.*

A prototype in a grammatical category is a collective image that serves as a reference during the comparative analysis, the purpose of which is to determine the degree of belonging to a category of a particular representative. The grammatical prototype is the organizing center around which the grammatical category is structured. The knowledge of grammatical prototypes in English, namely knowledge of typical language examples, allows them to be used for the formation of grammatical skills and abilities in German. Studying, for instance,

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the passive voice in German, a teacher considers its feature model using common characteristics of the component composition and external structure, semantic features of the voice in English:

L1: *Passive Voice = to be + PII.*

(Auxiliary verb to be in the right tense, number, person and past participle)

L2: *Zustandspassiv = sein + PII.*

(Passive voice of state: auxiliary verb sein (to be) and past participle).

Naturally, the passive voice in German differs significantly from that in English. However, it is the teacher's tasks to use the skills already formed by students. When presenting this grammatical material when teaching the German language as L2, it can be used along with an inductive approach (familiarization with a grammatical phenomenon based on the observation of this phenomenon in speech, on concrete examples, followed by generalization in the form of a rule), also a deductive approach. For example, the above structure of the Passive voice of state in German can be given first in comparison with English, and then other forms of the passive voice (Passive voice of acting, impersonal passive) can be worked out.

A student who is studying /has studied English is already prepared for the fact that grammatical prototypes combine not only the typical, when the same language examples can simultaneously belong to different grammatical categories, for example, the use of modal verbs in the meaning of assumption:

L1: *He must be at work. I saw his car leaving the garage.*

L2: *Er muss gleich kommen. Ich habe ihn gerade sehen.*

In order to distinguish grammatical phenomena, the grammatical competence must include knowledge of structural and semantic differences that will form the so-called frames. Initially, the term *frame* was introduced by M. Minsky in the 70s of the XX century into the theory of artificial intelligence, and interpreted it as a data structure to represent a stereotypical situation. Different types of information are associated with each frame. One part of information indicates how this frame should be used, the other - what can presumably entail

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its implementation, the third - what should be done if these expectations are not confirmed (Minsky, 1970). Relying on the conclusions of Zh.V. Nikonova, that the frame is the semantic framework of the future utterance, that is, it correlates with a certain verbal structure (Nikonova, 2007, 2008); we consider it expedient to use frames of L1 to optimize the learning process of L2 when studying German as the second foreign language after English. For example, a grammatical frame that allows students to distinguish between Present Perfect Tense and Past Perfect Tense includes, among a number of other distinguishing features of each of these grammatical tenses, an indication of the completion of one event to the beginning of another event in the past in Past Perfect Tense (Milrud, 2014). In L2, when creating a statement about an event that ended by the beginning of another event in the past, the student uses the formed slot of the grammatical frame in L1, which is gradually filled with new differentiating features peculiar to L2:

L1: *She **did not have** any money because she **had lost** her wallet.*

L2: *Sie **hatte kein** Geld, weil sie ihre Brieftasche **verloren hatte**.*

This example demonstrates in both cases a stereotypical situation: two actions, one of which occurred before the other in the past. That is, a static frame is a kind of cell of a schematized human experience. When forming grammatical competence, the dynamism of the frame appears itself in L2: old knowledge (in L1) is represented and new knowledge (in L2) is presented. In the process of preparing for verbalization in L2, the volume and content of this cognitive structure are focused in the frame as in the semantic framework of the future statement.

In the frame, certain normative behavioral prescriptions concerning both verbal and nonverbal communication are implemented, the totality of which is a script. The script is characterized by stereotyping, scenario and prescriptiveness. The stereotype of the script is manifested as behavior according to a given pattern, scenario - as algorithmization of a communicative event, prescriptivity – as the choice of certain behavioral moves in accordance with the values and norms of culture (Karasik, 2007). The script as a unit of discourse is a two-level formation: the script as a logical scheme that organizes the lexical and

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grammatical means used by the participants of communication; and the script as a dynamic model. (In this sense, it is a set of typical communicative moves and roles with an understanding by each of the participants of how to behave in this situation, and with a set of rules-expectations of appropriate behavior from other participants). Let us consider the *Smalltalk* scripts in L1 and L2. This linguacultural script is universal and identical in terms of its functional purpose. Hence, we can see the similarity of speech formulations of greetings in German and English linguistic cultures objectively (see Tab.1). It is obvious that in the presence of universal signs of politeness, this linguacultural script represents certain differences in terms of its lexical and semiotic content:

Table 1: Phrases and expressions for Smalltalk and conversation in English (Phrasen und Redewendungen für Smalltalk und Konversation auf Englisch).

Opening conversation	Ein Gespräch eröffnen
Hi, fancy seeing you here – how are you?!	Hallo, toll Dich hier zu sehen – Wie geht es Dir?
Hi..how are you doing?	Hallo wie geht es Dir?!
I haven't seen you for/in ages – how are things?	Ich habe Dich seit Ewigkeiten nicht mehr gesehen – wie geht es Dir?
Talking about the weather	Über das Wetter sprechen
Beautiful day, isn't it?	Wunderschöner Tag, nicht wahr?
The weather has been really fantastic the last few days, hasn't it?	Das Wetter war wirklich traumhaft die letzten Tage, nicht wahr?
We could not ask for a nicer day, could we?	Wir könnten uns keinen schöneren Tag wünschen, oder?
Closing the conversation	Ein Gespräch beenden
It's been great to see you again but I'd better be off	Es war schön dich wiederzusehen, aber ich muss jetzt weiter....
Have a good day!	Ich wünsche dir einen schönen Tag!
It was nice seeing you again.	Es war schön Sie wiederzusehen.
You, too. Take care.	Gleichfalls. Passen auf Dich auf

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When forming skills and developing communicative skills to hold a conversation in L2, a grammatical scenario for constructing a sentence in L1 is stored in the student's memory, in which, for example, when carrying on a conversation, the interlocutors use *tag questions*:

Beautiful day, isn't it ?	Wunderschöner Tag, nicht wahr ?
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With no asking the question directly, one interlocutor encourages another interlocutor to answer, and expresses politeness.

Another example: the use of the modal verb *can* in the form of *could* in English and *können* in Konjunktiv - *könnten* in German to express dreams, desires, politeness:

We couldn't ask for a nicer day, could we?	Wir könnten uns keinen schöneren Tag wünschen, oder?
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Of course, the grammatical scenario is complemented by a *cultural scenario*. In English linguistic culture, as in German, the possession of the small talk genre is a necessary component of national communicative competence.

Depending on the formed grammatical schemes in L1, students master English grammar with varying degrees of efficiency. In doing so, we find that it is advisable not only to select grammatical material for the formation of grammatical schemes in L2, especially for the beginning of studying and teaching L2, but also to rely on educational and strategic skills and skills of working with grammatical material already formed in the process of mastering L1. Using positive transfer from L1 and interlanguage reflection, grammatical schemes of L2 integrate elements of knowledge into an integrated system of the German language.

Results of the research show that it is reasonable to use a systematic approach to form grammatical skills in German as a second foreign language after English to optimize the learning process.

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To conclude it should be noted that the main thing in the system approach is to consider the object as some kind of integrity or system, if, of course, the object has the appropriate properties, and to analyze the components and various properties of the object precisely from the point of view of the whole. A systematic approach to teaching grammar methodologically involves considering it not only at the level of the whole, as an integral system education, but also at the level of individual parts, elements of the whole. A systematic approach to teaching grammar in L2 allows us to analyze the integrative properties of the phenomenon, to identify various connections and structures with the help of the formed grammatical competence in L1. In order to strengthen the positive transference and avoid interference from L1 at the grammatical level, it is necessary to direct the attention of students to finding coincidences and discrepancies in the studied languages when they know the correlates of the compared phenomena; work to prevent and overcome grammatical interference should be carried out on the basis of analytical actions.

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