*Olena Gladka*

*The Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University*

**DEVELOPING UPPER-INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS' LEXICAL COMPETENCE**

Learning a foreign language is inseparably connected with the formation of students' communicative competence which comprises a range of abilities and skills. Lexical competence plays a significant role in this process due to the fact that it reflects the relations between categories and generalizes the obtained information. Moreover, lexicon individualizes an utterance attaching a specific meaning to it. Lexis being the main acting force in the system of language means conveys semantically meaningful links which defines its important place in the English classroom.

Lexical competence is an aspect of both linguistic and communicative competence. The term implies the ability to recognize and use words in a language in the way that speakers of the language use them understanding the different relationships among families of words and the common collocations of words. Moreover, lexical competence includes a student's ability to define the contextual meaning of a word, compare the scope of its meaning in both languages, understand the structure of the meaning of the word and single out specifically national characteristics in the meaning of the word basing not only on lexical skills, but also on personal lingual and language experience. For example, learners of English must be able to recognize the concept of *hand* and what makes it different from *an arm, a shoulder, an elbow.* They also need to know that *a hand* is a part of the body, including expressions *to shake hands, hand in hand, Hands up!* etc. In addition, they must be aware that *hand* is now used in an extended sense for *control, handwriting, applause, etc.* as in *get out of hand, small hand, big hand.*

The formation of students' lexical competence at elementary and pre- intermediate levels does not need special effort from the teacher while organizing an English class. All students are highly-motivated and enthusiastic about getting to know new lexical items, their contextual meaning, cultural peculiarities of their usage in order to find equivalents for all the language units familiar to them in their mother tongue, to be able to feel fluent in everyday situations.

Having achieved the results, having obtained sufficient vocabulary for expressing themselves with some paraphrasing on the majority of everyday topics: family, hobbies, work, travelling, latest events, students start feeling reluctant towards learning new, often academic, sometimes challenging vocabulary which turns out to be beyond regular lexis in their mother tongue.

According to the European Recommendations on Language Education [1], upper-intermediate students' lexical competence is characterized by rich vocabulary allowing a speaker to express themselves on a wide range of topics connected with their professional sphere; fluent usage of idioms and colloquialisms; understanding connotative levels of meaning.

For a teacher work on developing upper-intermediate students' lexical competence turns out to be as challenging as for students themselves. Alongside regular lesson plans focused on enlarging students' lexicon with a wide range of vocabulary activities such as "Dress Up" words, vocabulary flash-cards;: formal vs informal language, "have you heard the one about", "worth a thousand words", "word play", "giant crossword puzzle", "word of the day", "word form chart", word-centric board games, most notably there is a number of instructional strategies for developing upper-intermediate students' lexical competence: Scaffolding, Knowledge Ratings, Context Clues, Morphemic Analysis, Peer Talk, Keep it Simple, etc.

To sum up, developing upper-intermediate students' lexical competence in a foreign language is an essential part of language learning and teaching process. If forming elementary vocabulary is highly motivating, developing upper-intermediate learners' lexicon can be challenging for both teachers and students. To achieve the goal the educators must be aware and skilled in usage of a wide range of instructional strategies and special techniques. The more diverse, creative and effective teaching strategies the teacher employs, the richer the students' vocabulary becomes.

***References***

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