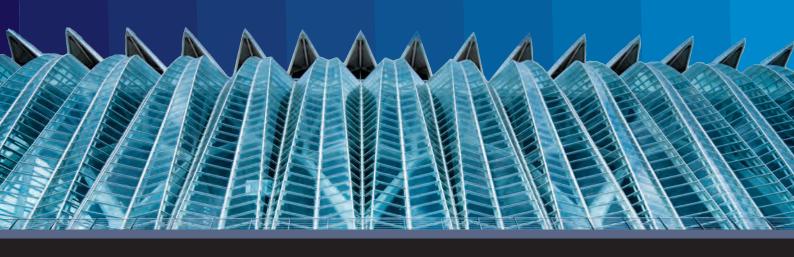# INTED 2018

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DEVELOPING PHRASEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Abstract

The paper is a result of the project "Supplemental instruction as a tool for improving students' language competence at the Faculty of Philology". Students enrolled in the first year at the Faculty of Philology in Stip come with various language competencies that they have developed or acquired during their previous education. The aim of the project is to provide supplemental instruction in Macedonian / English / German language that would help students overcome the difficulties or so-called obstacles that may occur during their studies. The project is divided into two stages that will be implemented in the first and the second semester. This paper refers to the supplemental instruction organized in the second semester when group A is the control group, and group B is the experimental group. Group A will not attend supplementary instruction, and Group B will learn the language implicitly through the use of literary texts according to the principles of language-based approaches to using literature in the language classroom. At the beginning of the second semester the participants will be tested in order to determine their phraseological competence, and at the end of the semester there will be a post-test to determine the benefits of this approach to their language competence. We expect that the results will confirm our thesis that developing the phraseological competence of students is of great importance for improving their overall language competence. The aim of the project is improving the language competence of students through supplementary instruction, but in this paper, we focus on the phraseological competence as an important element of the written and the spoken language competence, because with the development of the phraseological competence learners simultaneously develop their linguistic competence - they go hand in hand. Therefore, our goal will be to develop learners' ability: "Phraseologismen entdecken - entschlüsseln - festigen - verwenden" (Phraseologisms to be discovered-to be consolidated-to be used) ([8], [7]).

Keywords: supplemental instruction, language competence, phraseological competence, explicit learning, implicit learning.

1 PHRASEOLOGISMS AS LEXICAL UNITS

Phraseologisms are, in principle, a specific category of lexemes that cause an increasing interest for deeper and more comprehensive research by many linguists, scientists, teachers, as well as many language lovers. We, as teachers, linguists, scientists and of course language lovers, are interested in this category of lexemes and we will try to make our contribution through a study within the framework of the project titled "Supplemental instruction as a tool for improving students' language competence at the Faculty of Philology" in which we will try to improve the language competence of students by developing their phraseological competence, because we consider these two competences to be interwoven with one another, that is one competence cannot be imagined without the other competence as you cannot imagine a language without phraseologisms.

 Phraseologisms are a large group of lexemes which, according to Burger ([6]), possess four basic properties, such as polylexity, stability, reproducibility and idiomaticity, which could define phraseologisms in the broader sense of the word. If we talk about them in the narrower sense of the word, these lexical items should possess the most important property, which is the idiomaticity, which Burger ([6]) defines as the difference between the phraseological meaning and the meanings of the individual lexemes which are part of the phraseologism. The greater this difference, the more confident we are that we are talking about phraseologisms. Phraseologisms are language universals, because, as Ross says ([4]), they are essential for every natural language or, as Kühn ([8]) say, they are constantly present both in the written and in the spoken language. Apart from being language universals, they also represent significant cultural features in every language.

2   THE ROLE OF PHRASEOLOGISMS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

There are different opinions about the role of phraseologisms in foreign language teaching. On the one hand, they are lexical units that are on the margins of communication and as such are not necessary in communication. On the other hand, there is an opinion that without a minimal knowledge of phraseology, even in the wider sense of the word, communication is not possible or it would be limited ([10]). Knowledge of phraseology is in fact the benchmark for language competence, that is, the benchmark for the level of mastery of a language ([8]). For the supporters of the first theory, phraseologisms in language teaching are a real luxury, while for supporters of the second theory they are the main precondition for high language proficiency. The more phraseologisms are known, the higher the linguistic competence of the language learners ([9]).

Phraseologisms in language teaching often constitute a "stumbling block" for language learners, probably because of their most authentic characteristic, their idiomaticity, which actually leads the language learners in the wrong direction when they take into account the meaning of the individual components of phraseologisms, rather than the meaning of the whole phraseologism. The answer to the question: "What leads learners in the wrong direction?" is simple - it is the ignorance of phraseologisms in the language that is being studied. This raises a series of questions: "How can we remove the so-called stumbling block in language teaching?", that is, "How can learners develop their phraseological competence?", "How can we, as teachers, help in the process of easier acquisition of phraseology in the teaching process?", "Is there a way and which is the easiest way to do it? "and so on.

This project at the Faculty of Philology at Goce Delcev University in Stip, Macedonia, will try, through supplemental instruction for first year students of Macedonian, English and German language, to help them acquire this specific category of lexemes and to confirm that phraseologisms are indeed the basic precondition for a mastery of a language. In order to facilitate their acquisition, they need to be understood as a semantic and syntactic whole ([4]).

2.1   The three steps of the phraseological model of Kühn

According to Kühn [8], the experience in mastering phraseology in language instruction is accompanied by difficulties and frequent mistakes, which is the main reason that they are neglected in the process of language learning or not enough attention is devoted to their acquisition. This fact prompted us to explore this topic and to try to find the right way of learning phraseologisms in a simple and easy way, which at the beginning of our research does not seem easy at all. Based on theoretical and practical experiences from teaching, Kühn [8] promotes the so-called phraseological model composed of three steps, which actually explains the methods for acquisition of phraseologisms in foreign language teaching. This model consists of the following steps:

1   Recognition of linguistic chunks as a phraseological unit;

2   Unveiling the phraseological meaning through an image, through context or by using dictionaries;

3   The use of phraseologisms as a language unit composed of form and meaning created for use in a particular communication situation.

This didactic model composed of three steps was created as a result of the need to find an appropriate approach to phraseologisms in the teaching process, which actually involves recognizing them in a given context, discovering or understanding their meaning, and then as a result of it their proper use in a given discussion, situation or text. It seems to be a simple and easy model, but it is not clear enough, as Lüger thinks [7], so he complements it with one more step and creates a phraseological model of four steps by adding another step between the second and the third step, which is the consolidation of phraseologisms. In the original it reads: "Phraseologismen entdecken - entschlüsseln - festigen – verwenden" [8], [7]. We will try to implement this didactic model composed of four steps in language instruction and to encourage our students, future teachers, to use it in their teaching. In the next section we will try to give a more detailed description of every step of this didactic model that we will implement with the experimental group B who will learn the language implicitly through the use of literary texts according to the principles of language-based approaches to using literature in the language classroom. At the beginning of the second semester the participants will be tested in order to determine their phraseological competence, and at the end of the semester there will be a posttest to determine the benefits of this approach for their language competence. We expect

that the results will confirm our thesis that developing the phraseological competence of students is of great importance for improving their overall language competence.

2.2   The Four Steps of the Phraseological Model according to Lüger

1   The first step is the recognition, discovery, identification of linguistic chunks as a phraseological unit, or their separation from the other linguistic units in a given text. At this stage, learners should have developed a sense of recognition, that is, they should have developed a sensibility for phraseologisms so that they can find them in the given text. To this end, they should know the four basic properties of phraseologisms: polylexity, stability, reproducibility and of course the most important feature - idiomaticity, which plays a major role in the process of recognizing these language categories. So we have to respect the rule that reads: "The greater the degree of idiomaticity, the greater the probability that the lexical item is a phraseologism".

2   The second step is uncovering the phraseological meaning through associations, images, through context or by using dictionaries or the Internet. After the phraseologism is recognized, its meaning should be uncovered, which represents a great obstacle, a stumbling block for language learners. The obstacle is due to the fact that the phraseologism is not seen as one lexical unit with a strictly defined meaning, which most often contains elements of the culture of that language. If learners do not understand phraseologisms in this way, they search for the individual meaning of all the elements of the phraseologism, which usually leads to serious errors and to a deviation from the actual process of revealing their meaning. In order to be successful at this phase, learners require knowledge related not only to language, but also to folk customs, habits, traditions, in other words they require cultural knowledge.

3   The third step in this didactic model is consolidation of phraseologisms. This is the step introduced by Lüger [7] as a result of his practical and theoretical insights, using the phraseological model of Kühn [8] who in fact includes this step in the previous one. Here, in fact, we talk about determining the morphosyntactic structures and the stable lexical components together with their variable forms.

4   The fourth step is the use of phraseologisms and it is the final step in Lüger's phraseological model ([7]). So after determining the form and meaning of the phraseologism, and after its consolidation, comes the stage of creativity of the students in its use in written and oral communication. This step has a decisive role, as Kühn ([8]) says, because language learners will be able to use the phraseologism correctly if it is appropriate for the given context. This points to the fact that phraseologisms are a necessary language category in every logical situation or context.

3   EXERCISES FOR DEVELOPING PHRASEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE

With the development of phraseology as a separate discipline from lexicology, there was a need for a greater number of studies dedicated to phraseology and, of course, didactic models for their inclusion in the teaching process. And how can they be included if it is not through the use of different exercises for their successful integration in the teaching process. In this section we will try to give an overview of exercises which will be used in the supplemental instruction within this project in order to improve the language competence of students through the development of their phraseological competence.

Lüger ([7]) believes that phraseological exercises should not rely on traditional didactics and says that phraseologisms should be learned in context, not as isolated lexical units. When choosing phraseological exercises, it is necessary to take into account the following aspects: determining the components, discovering the structural differences, familiarizing with the possible limitations in the text itself, understanding the full meaning and the ability to determine the semantic-pragmatic value.

According to our practical and theoretical insights, the most appropriate exercises for the development of phraseological competence of the students, the participants in this project are the following:

1   Gap-fill exercises that serve to identify and harmonize phraseologisms in a given text;

2   Combined exercises that help identify and control the so-called phraseological chaos;

3   Recognition exercises that offer possible explanations of specific phraseologisms, even though they are not used in text, but as separate lexical units which should be matched with their given phraseological meanings. These exercises aim at a correct understanding of phraseologisms, that is, correction of the incorrectly understood meanings;

4   Exercises for matching phraseological phrases with given pictures, which according to Lüger is not an appropriate way of learning phraseologisms, because they often lead to acquiring only superficial knowledge or incorrect meaning of phraseologisms;

5   Paraphrasing exercises which are more complex because they require an explanation of the meaning in the target language, that is the learners need to use other words to explain its meaning.

6   Translation exercises are also a more complex way of practicing phraseologisms, because they require greater phraseological competence both in the mother tongue and in the foreign language, that is, finding the appropriate equivalent in the target language;

7   Exercises for inserting phraseologisms in a particular context in order to determine the students' ability to use phraseologisms in a given situation, text, or dialogue correctly.

Such exercises, according to Babillon ([5]) are of great importance for successful everyday communication, which is also an important moment for the development of phraseological, that is, the language competence of the students, the participants in the project.

4   CONCLUSION

Some linguists doubt the existence of phraseological competence, but it undoubtedly constitutes a complete linguistic knowledge. The phraseological competence of the mother tongue plays a major role in the development of the phraseological competence of the foreign language. The mother tongue is, in fact, the basis on which knowledge of other foreign languages is acquired, and we can freely conclude that the greater the phraseological competence of the mother tongue, the greater the one in the foreign language. In other words, possessing greater phraseological knowledge in the mother tongue enables foreign language learners to acquire phraseological competence of a foreign language easier. In order to develop linguistic competence, it is necessary to nurture and develop phraseological language competence. Our goal in this project is to emphasize this essential phraseological competence that significantly influences, whether we like it or not, the language competence of the students, and we expect this, except theoretically, to be practically confirmed after the completion of our project "Supplemental instruction as a tool for improving students' language competence at the Faculty of Philology". Students enrolled in the first year at the Faculty of Philology in Stip come with various language competencies that they have developed or acquired during their previous education. The aim of the project is to provide supplemental instruction in Macedonian / English / German language that would help students overcome the difficulties or so-called obstacles that may occur during their studies. The project is divided into two stages that will be implemented in the first and the second semester. This paper refers to the supplemental instruction organized in the second semester when group A is the control groups, and group B is the experimental group. Group A will not attend supplementary instruction, and Group B will learn the language implicitly through the use of literary texts, and there will be a focus on phraseologisms according to Lüger's phraseological model [7] presented and discussed in the paper. At the beginning of the second semester the participants will be tested in order to determine their phraseological competence, and at the end of the semester there will be a post-test to determine the benefits of this approach for their language competence. We expect that the results will confirm our thesis that developing the phraseological competence of students is of great importance for improving their overall language competence. The aim of the project is improving the language competences of the students through supplementary instruction, but in this paper we focus on the phraseological competence as an important element of the written and the spoken language competence, because with the development of the phraseological competence learners simultaneously develop their linguistic competence, they go hand in hand.

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