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Grammatical-Discourse Competence as A Linguistic-Didactic Goal in Teaching Foreign Languages to Students

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Abstract: In the field of foreign language teaching, the development of grammatical-discourse competence has emerged as a critical linguistic-didactic goal. This competence integrates grammatical accuracy with the ability to produce and interpret discourse in context, enabling learners to communicate effectively and appropriately in the target language. This article explores the theoretical foundations of grammatical-discourse competence, its significance in language education, and practical strategies for its development in the classroom. By bridging the gap between form and function, grammatical-discourse competence fosters both linguistic proficiency and communicative competence, making it an essential objective in modern foreign language pedagogy.

Keywords: Grammatical competence, communicative competence, didactic goal, grammatical accuracy, coherence.

Introduction: The teaching of foreign languages has evolved significantly over the past decades, shifting from a focus on isolated grammatical structures to a more holistic approach that emphasizes communicative competence. Within this framework, grammatical-discursive competence has gained prominence as a key objective in language education. This competence encompasses not only the mastery of grammatical rules but also the ability to use language in context, taking into account factors such as register, coherence, and cultural appropriateness. As such, it represents a synthesis of linguistic knowledge and pragmatic skills, enabling learners to navigate the complexities of real-world communication.

This article examines the concept of grammatical-discursive competence, its theoretical underpinnings, and its role in foreign language teaching. It also discusses practical approaches for fostering this competence in the classroom, with the aim of equipping students with the tools they need to engage in meaningful and effective communication.

Theoretical Foundations of Grammatical-Discursive Competence

Grammatical-discursive competence is rooted in the broader framework of communicative competence, as proposed by Hymes [2] and further developed by Canale and Swain [1]. Communicative competence comprises four components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical-discursive competence aligns closely with the integration of grammatical and discourse competences, emphasizing the interplay between linguistic form and communicative function.

➢ Grammatical Competence: This refers to the knowledge of grammatical rules, including syntax, morphology, and phonology. It enables learners to produce structurally accurate sentences.

➢ Discourse Competence: This involves the ability to construct coherent and cohesive texts, both spoken and written, by organizing ideas logically and using appropriate cohesive devices.

Competence is a broad concept that refers to the ability, knowledge, skills, and behaviors required to perform a specific task or function effectively. In the context of language learning and linguistics,

competence often refers to the underlying system of knowledge that enables individuals to understand and produce language. Below are definitions of competence provided by various researchers, particularly in the fields of linguistics and language education:

-Noam Chomsky (1965) introduced the concept of linguistic competence in his theory of generative grammar. He defined it as the innate, subconscious knowledge of language rules (grammar, syntax, phonology) that allows a speaker to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences [5].

-Dell Hymes (1972) expanded on Chomsky's idea by introducing communicative competence. He argued that competence is not just about grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately in social and cultural contexts [3]. Grammatical-discourse competence bridges these two dimensions, requiring learners to apply grammatical knowledge in the production and interpretation of discourse. It also incorporates sociolinguistic and pragmatic considerations, such as understanding the cultural and situational context in which language is used.

The Significance of Grammatical-Discursive Competence in Language Teaching

The development of grammatical-discursive competence is essential for effective communication in a foreign language. While grammatical accuracy ensures clarity, discourse competence enables learners to adapt their language use to different contexts, audiences, and purposes. Together, these skills allow students to engage in meaningful interactions, whether in academic, professional, or social settings. Moreover, grammatical-discursive competence supports the development of critical thinking and metacognitive skills. By analyzing and producing discourse, learners become more aware of how language functions in different contexts, enhancing their ability to reflect on and refine their own language use.

Strategies for Developing Grammatical-Discursive Competence in the Classroom
- To foster grammatical-discursive competence, language educators must adopt a balanced approach that integrates form-focused instruction with communicative activities. The following strategies can be employed to achieve this goal: [4]

1. Contextualized Grammar Instruction: Rather than teaching grammar in isolation, educators should present grammatical structures within meaningful contexts. For example, students can analyze how specific grammatical forms are used in authentic texts, such as news articles, dialogues, or essays. This approach helps learners understand the functional role of grammar in discourse.

2. Discourse Analysis Activities: Students can engage in activities that involve analyzing and producing different types of discourse, such as narratives, arguments, or descriptions. By examining the structure, cohesion, and coherence of texts, learners develop a deeper understanding of how language is organized and used in context.

3. Task-Based Learning: Task-based activities provide opportunities for learners to use language in purposeful ways. For instance, students might be asked to plan a trip, debate a topic, or write a formal letter. These tasks require them to apply both grammatical knowledge and discourse skills to achieve a communicative goal.

4. Collaborative Learning: Group work and peer feedback encourage students to engage in meaningful interaction and reflect on their language use. Collaborative activities, such as role-plays or group projects, provide a supportive environment for practicing grammatical-discursive competence.

5. Integration of Technology: Digital tools, such as corpus linguistics software or online discussion platforms, can enhance the development of grammatical-discursive competence. For example, students can use corpora to explore how specific grammatical structures are used in real-world contexts or participate in online forums to practice producing coherent and culturally appropriate discourse.

Challenges and Considerations

While the development of grammatical-discursive competence is a valuable goal, it presents certain challenges for educators. One key challenge is balancing the focus on form and function, as overemphasis on either aspect can hinder the development of the other. Additionally, learners may struggle to transfer their grammatical knowledge to real-world communication, particularly in contexts that require cultural or pragmatic awareness. To address these challenges, educators must provide ample opportunities for practice and reflection, offering constructive feedback that highlights both grammatical accuracy and discourse effectiveness. It is also important to create a supportive learning environment that encourages risk-taking and experimentation, as learners develop their grammatical-discursive competence over time.

CONCLUSION

Grammatical-discursive competence represents a vital linguistic-didactic goal in foreign language teaching, bridging the gap between grammatical accuracy and

communicative effectiveness. By integrating form-focused instruction with discourse-based activities, educators can equip students with the skills they need to navigate the complexities of real-world communication. As language teaching continues to evolve, the development of grammatical-discursive competence will remain a central objective, enabling learners to achieve both linguistic proficiency and communicative competence in the target language.

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