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APPLYING DIRECT LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES WHEN TEACHING ENGLISH

This methodological article deals with the issue of language learning strategies. Different approaches to the definition and classification of LLS are studied. The authors of the article focus on applying direct learning strategies in the process of teaching English. The goal of the present research was to prove the effectiveness of direct language learning strategies to form students' lexical competence. In the article, the methods and techniques used in the process of the experiment are presented. The result shows that direct learning strategies in teaching English have a positive effect on students' achievements. Authors' findings also confirm that a system of practical tasks based on LLS got positive feedback from the participants of the experiment.

Keywords: *language learning strategies, direct strategies, cognitive strategy, memory-related strategy, compensation strategy*

Introduction. Today, the use of English has increased on an unprecedented scale. It holds a globally important position in various domains. As a widely recognized lingua franca, English language skills in Ukraine have been treated as crucial for career success. As of foreign language learning tendencies, learning English is the most common. According to the External independent evaluation results of 2019 (testing is obligatory for high school graduates to check academic performance), number of students who took English was reported to be 79,594, while all other foreign languages totaled 2,129 (German – 1,549, French – 485, Spanish – 95) (*Ukrainian Center, 2019*).

From a very young age, children attend language courses and have individual lessons. Besides parental initiatives, there are a number of laws and education standards aimed at strengthening foreign language learning. Since 2012, learning a foreign language in the first grade of primary school has been made compulsory (*Foreign languages, 2018*). In 2015, Go Global was developed to promote foreign language learning. As 2016 was the year of the English language in Ukraine, the initiative was supported with the 2016 plan of events to integrate the national education system into the European framework, furthered with the Law On Education (2017), the Concept of the New Ukrainian School (2017), and the National Standard of Primary Education (2018).

In general schools, there are two lessons of English every week. According to the Foreign language curriculum designed for 1-4 grades of general and specialized schools, the main purpose of language learning is building communicative competence. After the fourth grade, the students of general

primary schools are expected to have achieved A1 level, while at specialized schools with intensive learning of foreign languages A2 is expected. The levels are aligned to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment). The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine created the concept of developing English in Universities: B1 – mandatory requirement for university entrance, B2 – graduation requirement, necessary for teaching subjects in English and language tests.

In 2019, the English for Universities Concept was adopted, according to which in 2023 B1 will be obligatory to get enrolled to university and B2 to get a university diploma. As a result, fluency in English is considered a contemporary life skill, thus making communicative competence of utmost importance. It is based on effective language learning strategies (LLSs). According to studies, if they are followed by language learners with strong motivation, the result can be rewarding language learning outcomes (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Kim 2013).

Learning strategies are part of strategic competence. It is an aspect of communicative competence, which R. Oxford (1990a) characterized as the learner's main goal. Communicative strategies were brought into focus by M. Canale and M. Swain (1980). They are studied from different perspectives, e.g. from the interactional perspective, from the perspective of error causes, from psychological perspective, etc. (Lin, 2011). E. Bialystok (1990) determines them as those intentionally and consciously used by speakers to deal with difficulties in foreign language communication. They are generally considered a type of LLS.

Initially referred to as behaviours and actions, later the definitions of LLSs were broadened in order to include mental processes which are then acted upon. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) define learning strategies as "methods and techniques that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information". Oxford (1990a) chooses "steps taken by students influencing" further learning progress. Broadly, LLS are a very complex phenomenon, combining the communicative (aimed at developing language skills), metacognitive (involves self-control and self-realization of learning) and educational (involves building linguistic knowledge) aspects.

There have been numerous researches aimed at summarising LLS. Those on developing classification systems by J. Rubin (1987), R. Oxford (1990b), O'Malley et al. (1990) and A. Chamot et al. (1999) are classical. J. Rubin was among strategy pioneers who examined direct and indirect contribution to learning, at the same time classifying three types. They are:

- learning strategies that include cognitive (clarification, guessing, deductive reasoning, practice, memorization, and monitoring) and metacognitive strategies (self-direct and regulate language learning)
- communication strategies refer to conversation participation
- social strategies are used when there are opportunities to practise knowledge.

A. Chamot, S. Barnhardt and J. Robbins (1999) divide LLS into two groups: metacognitive and task-based strategies, where the former mean individual approaches and the latter are based on task type.

Alternatively, J. M. O'Malley and his colleagues focus on the way the strategies are used by language learners and categorise LLS as metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies are used to plan, organise learning, reflect and evaluate learning (making a vocabulary). Cognitive strategies are necessary to actively and consciously use developed skills and learned materials (note-taking, revision, memorization, etc.). Socio-affective strategies are about socialising and interacting with others. Thus, some of them are also referred to as communication strategies (consultations, group tasks, work in groups, etc).

R. Oxford (1990b) singles out direct and indirect categories which, in turn, are divided into 6 LLS. Direct LLS directly involve the subject matter. They refer to the ability to concentrate, plan learning activities and evaluate achievements. They are categorised into cognitive (aim at learning languages in a receptive and productive way through thinking, collecting, processing and saving information), memory-related (help enter information into long-term memory to later seek and retrieve it, turning to visual or audio images, associations, rhythms, repetition, abstraction, etc.), and compensation strategies (enable communication despite any gaps in speech with gestures, pauses, word guessing, etc.).

As for indirect LLS which "do not directly involve the subject matter itself, but are essential to language learning nonetheless", they are metacognitive, affective and social (Oxford, 1990b, p. 71). They

regulate and motivate learning. Affective strategies "enable learners to control feelings, motivations, and attitudes related to language learning." They are breathing control, anxiety decrease, motivation increase, positive attitude, etc. Metacognitive strategies are based on thinking over learning in order to increase efficiency, e.g. goal setting, self-assessment, planning, preparation, etc. They "help learners exercise 'executive control' through planning, arranging, focusing, and evaluating their own learning." Social strategies "facilitate interaction with others," empathy, cooperation, etc. The LLS classification by Oxford is considered full and widely used.

Since the introduction of LLSs there have been numerous studies. For example, J. O'Malley et al (1990) found that strategies employed in classrooms varied greatly. Griffiths and Parr (2001) reported that among SILL (the strategy inventory for language learning) the most frequently used in New Zealand for adult ESL learners were social and metacognitive strategies. Another study carried out by Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) proved that metacognitive strategies were reported as the most frequently used by intermediate level students.

Individual learners employ different LLSs. Maximum efficiency is achieved when they match with classroom ones. Here the influence of the teacher is crucial. In addition, learning lexis is an association-based process influenced by a number of factors. Oxford lists "motivation, the language learning environment, learning style or personality type, gender, culture or national origin, career orientation, age, and the nature of the language task" (Oxford, 2001, p. 170–171).

Therefore, learning strategies are one of the main factors in determining how effectively students learn a foreign language. Understanding the essence of learning strategies for the formation of foreign language communicative competence of students can allow teachers to identify a set of the most appropriate systems of exercises to improve the effectiveness of mastering a foreign language, its lexical composition. Among the learning strategies for mastering foreign vocabulary, it is very difficult to identify the most effective. It can be argued that a combination of several strategies can increase the effectiveness of learning and mastering foreign language knowledge, skills and abilities.

Finding effective ways of learning foreign languages has been in focus. Despite the fact that language learning strategies were introduced several decades ago, there are ongoing researches dedicated to their overview (Lessard-Clouston, 1997), frequency (Chang, 2003), gender dependency (Shi, 2015), use in different settings and countries, by different groups of students (e.g. from preschoolers to advanced students) and others.

Despite the fact that some discussions in the literature relate to using direct LLS at different levels of English learning, empirical evidence in Ukrainian universities is lacking.

Purpose of the article. This study was designed to determine effectiveness of direct language learning strategies to form students' lexical competence.

Methods and methodology of research

The experimental and research work was held at the Municipal Establishment 'Kharkiv Humanitarian-Pedagogical Academy' of the Kharkiv Regional Council during the autumn semester (September-November, 2021). To investigate the changes in English lexical competence by utilizing direct LLS, the present study analyzed the third-year students of the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, the Chair of Ukrainian Linguistics, Literature and Methods of Teaching. At the time of the data collection, they were in the fifth semester of the four-year bachelor program. All the participants gave the written consent on taking part in the pedagogical experiment.

In the 2021–2022 academic year, there were 23 third-year students. They are future teachers of the Ukrainian language and literature with the additional specialization of teaching English. According to the program, they were taught several English courses in the fifth semester, including Practical Course of English, Theoretical Course of English, and Methods of Teaching English. Each course included one class of two academic hours every week. The experiment was held within the Practical Course of English curriculum. Since the first semester, the students were divided into two subgroups for the course. The learning achievements of both subgroups were largely on the same level. Therefore, the first subgroup of 12 students was chosen to be EG, while the second was CG with 11 students. The EG participants were taught with implementing direct LLS, while those of the CG were taught in a traditional way.

Data Collection and Analysis

The experiment program envisaged fulfilling the following tasks: to determine the primary level of formed English lexical competence of the students, to check the effectiveness of using direct LLS when forming English lexical competence by means of developed sets of exercises, and to evaluate the experiment results.

The program of the pedagogical experiment was realized at three stages: confirmatory, formative and control. During the confirmatory stage, the level of formed English lexical competence was evaluated. The formative stage was about implementing a set of direct LLS in order to form a high level of English lexical competence. At the control stage, the obtained results were analyzed to determine efficiency of using direct LLS when forming English lexical competence of students.

Results. At the confirmatory stage, the students of EG and CG were offered a test on the recently mastered topic Health in order to define the level of formed English lexical competence at the beginning of the experiment.

The following levels were defined: high, medium and low. Within the ECTS grading scale, the levels were distributed in the following way: high – A (90–100), medium – B and C (89–81 and 80–74), and all other levels corresponded to low.

In order to test the research hypothesis, the formative stage of the experiment was organized and carried out, aimed at increasing the level of English lexical competence utilizing direct LLS, namely cognitive, memory-related, and compensation strategies. Therefore, the classes of EG were planned and taught accordingly. It should be noted that choosing an appropriate set of exercises was key. In general, all exercises were grouped to focus on 1) memorizing new vocabulary, meaning, pronunciation and grammatical peculiarities, 2) forming combinations.

According to the curriculum, the exercises for class and individual work were on the units In the spotlight and Good citizens. The following methods and techniques were used:

1. Tasks on grouping vocabulary
 - 1.1. Please arrange the words into two columns Participants and Organizers. Explain your choice:
Presenter, contestant, producer, judge, singer, producer, competitor, artist, band.
 - 1.2. Complete the table with the necessary parts of speech.

Verb	Noun	Noun (person)
Example: <u>to donate</u> <u>imimaginebroadcast</u>	<u>donation</u>	<u>donator</u>
_____	<u>audition</u>	_____
<u>to help</u>	_____	_____
_____	_____	<u>friend</u>
_____	<u>appreciation</u>	_____
<u>to employ</u>	_____	_____
_____	<u>engagement</u>	_____

The technique can help students summarize vocabulary. It is also efficient for revising and enhancing vocabulary, developing associative thinking and pinpointing lexical connections by grouping words according to grammatical forms, particular classes, etc.

2. Semantization with synonyms, antonyms or homonyms
 - 2.1. Make pairs of base and extreme adjectives, e.g. tired-exhausted, little-tiny, etc.
 - 2.2. Think of synonyms for the phrasal verbs: to come up with, to keep up with, to come across, to get to well with.

The method of semantization using synonyms or antonyms stimulates better memorization of English words, broadens vocabulary, creates associations, etc.

Storytelling

Create a story about a famous place (e.g. a palace, a bridge, etc.) in the Passive using the given words.

to locate, to construct, to use, to find, to neglect, to knock down.

The method of storytelling develops logical thinking, imagination and fantasy, as well as helps to better remember thematically related vocabulary.

Memorization methods included phonetic, lexical and autobiographical associations. Each home assignment had a task to learn a word group from the vocabulary bank available after units in the student's book, e.g. society and politics, charity, etc. Moreover, in the workbook, students can write a mother tongue equivalent for unit vocabulary.

Compensation strategies were also utilized in the experiment. Students practised using clichés when there could be difficulties in understanding conversation exchanges. They were given phrases grouped by formality (only a few examples are offered below):

- 1) What to say when you don't understand someone
 - short formal sentences: Pardon?, I beg your pardon?
 - longer formal sentences: I'm sorry, I'm afraid I don't follow you/I didn't catch that. Excuse me, could you repeat please? Could you say it again? Would you mind speaking more slowly?
 - informal: Sorry? / Sorry, what?
 - more informal: Huh? What?
 - slang: Come again? / Pass that by me again?
 - idioms: I can't make head nor tail of what you're saying / This is all Greek to me / Sorry this is as clear as mud to me.

- 2) What to say when someone doesn't understand you: That is (to say).../ I mean that.../ What I mean is.../ In other words...

The use of compensation strategies when learning English vocabulary helps students do lexical exercises that require dictionaries and reference books to find unknown lexis, to check collocations, to develop skills to replace similar vocabulary, to paraphrase opinions, etc.

During English lessons, students were offered the following exercises based on compensatory strategies:

- 3). Find in the text and write down the words based on the definitions below (from the Longman dictionary). Look at the example.
 - a) Pleasure you feel when you realize something is good, useful, or well done – Appreciation
 - b) The condition of having a paid job
 - c) Something that you get because you have done something good or helpful or have worked hard
 - d) An agreement between two people to marry, or the period of time they are engaged
- 4). Underline the term you think proper in the given context (note the word store of Unit 8).
 - a) Good, bad, great at / in something. b Help sb out / in
 - c) Give somebody a hand / an arm
- 5). Explain the meanings of the phrasal words below
 - a) to live up to something
 - b) to get into

During the experiment, cognitive strategies were also utilized. To practice speaking patterns or grammar construction students had to do such tasks as:

- 6). Make your own sentences using the patterns. Tell about your skills and interests.

_____ isn't my thing at all. I am really good at__.

I'd rather draw a landscape today. I'm really into volunteering.

- 7). Suggest proper Ukrainian equivalents to the English phrases below:

Make sb's day, hold sth against your ear, white noise, put hands over ears.

- 8). Make as many sentences using the Passive as possible. Tell about a mysterious experience.
Last night I had a dream. I was sleeping and then I felt I was being dragged. My mouth was shut and my eyes were covered with a cloth...

The above listed and other tasks were offered to the students from EG when they were studying

the units *In the spotlight* and *Good citizens*. To determine the impact of utilizing direct LLS on the formation of English lexical competence and their effectiveness, the authors created the end-of-the-experiment test on the studied vocabulary of the two units. The same test was given to both EG and CG. The aim was to check whether there was an increase in the formed lexical competence of the students from EG and CG. The results are available in table 1.

Table 1

The results of the confirmatory and control stages during the experimental verification of formed English lexical competence

Indicator		EG (12 students)			CG (11 students)		
		At the beginning of the experiment	At the end of the experiment	Growth rate	I check	II check	Growth rate
Formed English lexical competence	H	8,3	16,7	+8,4	18,1	18,1	-
	M	41,7	58,3	+16,6	36,4	46,5	+10,1
	L	50	25	-25	46,5	36,4	-10,1

Note: H – high, M – medium, L – large.

It can be seen from the table above that there is a difference between the formed lexical competence of EG and CG. During work in class and at home with a focus on direct English LLS, there was a noticeable improvement of lexical competence in EG in comparison with CG when writing the end-of-the-experiment test. The changes were even more significant when contrasting the data from the confirmatory stage. This implies that utilizing direct learning strategies in mastering English has a positive influence on students' achievements.

Discussion. The teachers in EG noted an increase in students' interest in English and general in-class performance. Analysing different tasks, there were more cases of using active vocabulary both in oral (listening, speaking) and written (reading, writing) speech. Students themselves pointed out that more efforts to memorize new vocabulary and grammar patterns were helpful. They also reported better understanding and ease of using new words, especially idioms, phrasal verbs and collocation.

Conclusion. This study has so far indicated that utilizing direct language learning strategies has a positive influence on forming English lexical competence of students. Students from the EG showed better results during the initial and end-of-the-experiment checks in comparison with those from the CG. A system of practical tasks based on direct learning strategies received positive feedback from the EG participants. It can be concluded that the formation of students' lexical competence by utilizing direct LLS is more efficient. For further research, it would be useful to study indirect LLS as well as encourage learner reflection on LLS use.

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ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ ПРЯМИХ СТРАТЕГІЙ НАВЧАННЯ МОВИ В ПРОЦЕСІ ВИКЛАДАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

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Науково-методична стаття присвячена питанню стратегії вивчення мови. Досліджено різні підходи до визначення та класифікації навчальних стратегій вивчення мови. Автори статті зосереджені на застосуванні стратегій прямого навчання в процесі викладання англійської мови. Метою цього дослідження було довести ефективність стратегій прямого вивчення мови для формування лексичної компетентності здобувачів освіти.

У статті зазначено, що правильне вживання лексики та насичений словниковий запас – головний ключ до іншомовного спілкування. Тому актуальним завданням сьогодення є пошук ефективних шляхів опанування іноземних мов та їхнього лексичного складу. Саме навчальні стратегії здатні допомогти людині сформувати комунікативну компетенцію належного рівня, набутти відповідних мовленнєвих навичок та опанувати іншомовну лексику. Тому пошук ефективних навчальних стратегій – це одна з найважливіших складових сучасної системи навчання. У статті представлені методи та прийоми, які використовуються в процесі формуючого експерименту.

Програма експерименту передбачала виконання таких завдань: визначити первинний рівень сформованості англійської лексичної компетентності здобувачів вищої освіти, перевірити ефективність використання стратегій прямого навчання при формуванні лексичної компетенції за допомогою розроблених комплексів вправ та оцінити результати експерименту. Програма реалізовувалась у три етапи: констатуючий, формувальний та контрольний. Під час констатуючого етапу оцінювався рівень сформованої англійської лексичної компетентності. Формуючий етап стосувався застосуванню набору прямих навчальних стратегій з метою

формування високого рівня досліджуваної компетентності. На контрольному етапі проведено аналіз отриманих результатів з метою визначення ефективності використання прямих навчальних стратегій під час формування англомовної лексичної компетентності здобувачів освіти.

Результат показує, що стратегії прямого навчання у викладанні англійської мови позитивно впливають на досягнення здобувачів освіти. Висновки авторів також підтверджують, що система практичних завдань на основі прямих навчальних стратегій вивчення мови отримала схвальні відгуки учасників експерименту.

Ключові слова: стратегії вивчення мови, прямі стратегії, когнітивна стратегія, стратегія, пов'язана з пам'яттю, стратегія компенсації.

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