Development of English Grammatical Competence Through the Use of the Project Method

Abstract. The paper considers the features of applying the project method as the latest pedagogical technology in the process of developing English grammar skills in students of philological specialities. The relevance of the study is conditioned by the need to find an effective methodology for implementing video projects (a type of project method) in teachers' universities. The purpose of the study is to find out the effectiveness of using video project technology to improve the grammatical competence of philology students. In the course of the study, the method of critical analysis of literature was applied to investigate the goals, methods, and means of project technology and to formulate the conclusions; the method of scientific observation of the educational process contributed to the direct observation of students' activities; the method of studying and generalising the experience of teachers revealed methodological techniques and methods in the development of proper grammar skills of students; the questionnaire method helped to establish the level of knowledge of students about the ways of learning and teaching a foreign language; the experimental method was used to prove the research hypothesis; the method of systematisation and generalisation was used in the analysis of findings. It is found that the essence of the concept of grammatical competence of a philology student consists in a set of knowledge about the grammatical organisation of the language system, and in the ability to operate with this knowledge in a certain speech activity. It is proved that by improving grammar, students develop their speech competencies — in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The expediency of using information and communication technologies in studying English grammar, especially in distance learning, is substantiated. The use of the project method is proposed to improve the grammatical and informational skills of future foreign language teachers. It is confirmed that this method stimulates the development of cognitive and creative skills of students, is based on the systematic organisation of searches of a problem-based educational nature, encourages the independent acquisition of information, its comprehension, and application in practice. In addition, project technology helps students acquire teamwork skills, careful planning, and increased motivation to improve their own communication competence.

Keywords: distance education, post-graduate education, preschool teachers, technological difficulties, organisational difficulties, pedagogical difficulties

INTRODUCTION

The study of ways to implement professional foreign language education of philologists in the context of integration into the global educational space involves considering the problem from the standpoint of various sciences and their branches: linguistics, pedagogy, methods of teaching foreign languages, psychology, sociology, linguoculturology, and philosophy. The ability to integrate various aspects of professional knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal qualities in their activities contributes to the development and improvement of the key professional competence of future teachers-philologists. However, it includes not only a set of formed subject and intersubject competencies but also
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non-subject skills necessary for effective cooperation with both students and colleagues. Research activities that contribute to the development of a creative personality occupy a prominent place in the process of professional training of a teacher-philologist. After all, it develops the student’s ability to solve search problems, to use information technologies efficiently, and encourages them to take the initiative and be responsible for their own decisions. Without a doubt, encouraging students to engage in research activities determines the development of a key competence – the ability to learn throughout life [1].

It is modern pedagogical technologies that are characterised by an information-developing, activity-based, and personality-oriented approach. With the introduction of distance learning in educational institutions, there is a need to help future teachers master new digital tools, pedagogical methods, and technologies. For example, project technology when learning English in higher institutions stimulates interest in independent solutions to problems [2] and contributes to the improvement of students’ skills to use theoretical knowledge in practice [3].

As the analysis of literature has shown, teaching English based on the latest pedagogical technology of the project method has been the subject of study by many Ukrainian and foreign researchers. Their papers outline those skills that strengthen interdisciplinary connections [4], provide methodological recommendations [5; 6], describe the features of teaching a foreign language using the project method [7], and highlight the use of information and communication technologies in education [8], in particular, the issue of media literacy of teachers [9]. Special attention should be paid to the papers that substantiate the use of the project method in the process of teaching English in higher education institutions [2] and in which the growth of motivation of students to learn a foreign language using the project method is proved [10].

Special attention should be paid to the latest format – the creation of video projects, or video presentations, as a modern way of teaching a foreign language, communication and cooperation between students and teachers [11-13]; as an example of active creative search and the ability to master the language through the creation of their own videos [14], provided that the student is autonomous in a favourable learning environment [15]. The video project provides for the presentation of information in animation and sound accompaniment [9, p. 99]. The functional load of this type of work is correlated with the didactic goals of a particular lesson: development of speech skills and abilities, systematisation of the material studied, or control of skills and abilities. A video project can be performed individually, as well as in pairs or groups. The results obtained should have both theoretical and practical significance and be designed in accordance with the stages of implementation in material form: video, interview, report, video portrait, etc.

To successfully implement a video project, performers should apply knowledge and skills from various spheres of life and branches of science. For example, the introduction of the analysed technology in English classes at the Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University required students to know a specific grammatical topic, well-developed speech skills, certain skills of video filming and editing, and skills of rational use of time and teamwork.

The purpose of the study – to find out the effectiveness of using video project technology to improve the grammatical competence of philology students. The achievement of a set purpose involves solving the following tasks:

1) clarify the content of students’ grammatical competence;
2) describe the methodology for implementing video project technology in English grammar classes;
3) experimentally test the effectiveness of the developed methodology for improving students’ grammar skills.

The purpose and objectives of the study determined the formulation of the following hypothesis: the level of formed grammar skills of students directly depends on the active use of project-based teaching technologies in English classes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Due to the constant development of information and communication technologies (ICT), and significant changes in the field of education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the needs and opportunities of the educational environment are changing. Forced distance learning has determined the wider use of the latest pedagogical technologies in higher education institutions. The study considers the project method, which promotes the independent creation of blogs, podcasts, animations, films, electronic newspapers and video exhibitions, and the placement of video materials on the YouTube video hosting. It was proposed to use this educational technology in English classes to improve the educational competencies of philology students, in particular, their grammatical and informational competencies.

The project was devoted to modal verbs and their forms – Must, Have to, Mustn’t, Needn’t, Don’t have to, Didn’t need to, Needn’t have done, Can, Could, Be able to, May, Might, Shall, Will, Would, Should, and Ought to. It was attended by 11 2nd-year students of the Polish-English Department of the Faculty of Philology of Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University. They were divided into 3 teams of 3-4 people. Participants were asked to create a 5-8-minute educational video presentation on their own in order to explain the characteristics and important features of the chosen grammatical topic. This film/presentation was part of a 15-minute training session that was fully supervised and conducted by students. They were required to consolidate what they explained with self-contained exercises of a reproductive and receptive nature. Participants prepared handout materials (graphs, tables, diagrams), which contained brief information (rules) on the topic of the selected project, and also concluded five test questions (in the form of a multiple-choice test). The project took 14 days to prepare.

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Students were immediately presented with a clear assessment system: the maximum score is 100 points – for the entire group divided into the following categories: compliance (accuracy) of teaching, creativity, professionalism, lesson duration, independent search, concluded visibility, handout materials, 5 control questions, group activity, control/management. For each category, the group could get up to 10 points. The task was as follows (Table 1):

**Table 1. Project objectives and evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal verbs project</th>
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<td>You should have background knowledge on the modal verbs. You and your group members will be in charge of teaching / reviewing the assigned modal verbs to the group.</td>
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| You will be split into 3 groups of 3-4. Each group will be assigned the following topics: |
| Must – Have to – Mustn’t – Needn’t – Don’t have to – Didn’t need to – Needn’t have done; |
| Can – Could – Be able to – May – Might; |
| Shall – Will – Would – Should – Ought to |

| Guidelines: |
| 1. You will have 15 minutes to present your lesson. You must stay in this time frame. |
| 2. Your lesson should include: |
| a) a visual aid — a video film. |
| b) a short group activity for class participation — interactive, not a worksheet! |
| c) a handout material on the modal verb and what you are teaching. |
| d) at least seven minutes of talking about the modal verbs. |
| e) all members must participate in the teaching! |
| 3. Your group will develop five questions related to your modal verbs that may be included on the test (Multiple Choice). |
| 4. Your lesson plan, along with all other parts, must be submitted beforehand for correction. |
| 5. You will have two weeks to prepare and work in your groups. |

| Grading: |
| Teaching: |
| Lesson Accuracy | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| Creativity | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 0 |
| Professionalism | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| Length of lesson | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| Research/Preparedness | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| Supplements/Other: |
| Visual aid | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| Handout material | 10 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 |
| 5 Test Questions | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| Group activity | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| Management | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |

To help students, the teacher met with all the teams in advance. Their task was to submit their work plan and handout materials in accordance with the specified requirements. In addition, the teacher had the opportunity to assess at what stage of preparation each team is.

Thus, the project itself consisted of three stages and included a short oral report on the chosen grammatical topic, a screening of a grammar film, several exercises, and a test. During the presentation and checking the completed tasks of their classmates, students performed the function of a teacher.

During the preparation and implementation of the project, students were invited to independently conclude a reflexive report, where they recorded all the stages of preparation for the presentation, the teaching process and the results/achievements of their work, and an evaluation of their own achievements. They submitted this report to the teacher at the end of the project. Their reports will help the mentor consider the strengths/weaknesses of the task in further work, and teach students how to compile reports and evaluate their work objectively.

To test the effectiveness of the proposed project method, experimental training of students was prepared, organised, and conducted. The conducted training experiment provided for improving the level of grammar skills of the 2nd-year students using ICTs and further monitoring the development of their grammatical competence. This goal led to the solution of such tasks of the training experiment:

1) prepare materials for conducting experimental training;
2) develop criteria for assessing the level of English grammatical competence;
3) determine the level of English grammatical competence of students before starting the experiment;
4) organise experimental work by applying the project method to improve students’ grammar skills;
5) assess the level of students’ grammatical competence after the project presentation and analyse the results obtained;
6) test the validity of the hypothesis about the effectiveness of using ICTs in mastering English grammar.

The study was conducted mainly in the process of independent learning activities and partly during English classes. Therefore, the experiment is considered natural and open, because it took place in real conditions, and tasks were reported to students.

In order to prove the effectiveness of applying the project method using information and communication technologies to the development of students’ grammar skills, the following actions were performed:
1) survey was conducted to determine the level of grammatical competence;
2) for two weeks, students prepared a project with the assistance of a teacher;
3) teams presented their training projects and were evaluated by the teacher according to pre-announced criteria;
4) results of the ascertaining and final sections are compared and the evaluation coefficient is determined.

This educational experiment consisted of three stages. The first stage included finding out the initial level of grammar skills; setting goals, tasks, and developing a methodology for experimental research; developing criteria for assessing the development of grammar skills; preparing materials. The main stage involved the development and testing of the project method using ICTs – the creation of an educational video on a grammatical topic. The final stage was characterised by the implementation of a theoretical understanding of experimental data and the interpretation of learning results.

The methodology is outlined by the tasks and material of research, therefore, it has a complex character. In the course of the study, a number of methods of pedagogical research were used. They include:

1. Method of critical analysis of Ukrainian and foreign methodological, pedagogical, and linguistic literature on the topic. It is applied in the analysis of the peculiarities of applying the project method in learning a foreign language in HEI, in particular, in the process of improving grammatical awareness, skills, and abilities of philology students. For this purpose, recent studies are considered, which highlight the goals, methods, and means of the mentioned pedagogical technology. In addition, the method of critical analysis helped to determine the essence and structure of grammatical competence of the future foreign language teacher. This method is also used to formulate the conclusions of the study.

2. Methods of studying and generalising the experience of teachers in teaching grammar to philology students. For this purpose, the system of work and monitoring of the activities of teachers of English and German languages of the Department of comparative pedagogy and the methods of teaching foreign languages of Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University were studied. In addition, conversations were held to identify the peculiarities of teaching grammar of a foreign language to the 2nd-year students. In the process of generalising the experience of colleagues, techniques and methods for achieving a positive result in the development of proper grammar skills were identified. In particular, it was found that the methods of teaching grammar vary depending on the purpose of the lesson.

3. Method of scientific observation of the educational process allowed directly monitoring the activities of students in grammar classes, and helped to collect factual material about the features of the process of forming reproductive grammar skills.

4. Survey method allowed the study to find out the level of students’ knowledge about how to learn grammar and how to teach grammar in a foreign language. Students independently assessed their level of speech skills and ability to work in a team, described their own video recording and editing skills, as well as their skills of rational time allocation before and after the experiment.

5. Method of the ascertaining experiment helped to find out the initial level of development of grammar skills of students, formulate a research problem, and develop criteria for assessing the development of grammar skills. Methods of the formative experiment were used to conduct experimental activities by introducing an innovative pedagogical method of projects into the educational process and analysing control sections of academic performance.

6. Method of systematisation and generalisation was used in the theoretical understanding of experimental data and interpretation of findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Therefore, to understand the ways to improve the communication skills of philology students, it is necessary to characterise the structure of foreign language communicative competence and clarify the content of grammatical competence. Foreign language communicative competence includes a number of integrated competencies: language (or linguistic), speech, socio-cultural, linguocultural, educational, informative, strategic, cognitive, discursive, and pragmatic competencies [16]. Language competence instead consists of phonetic, lexical, grammatical, stylistic, and spelling competencies and involves awareness of the expressive features of language units and covers language skills and abilities [17]. According to O. Vovk, in order to understand the interlocutor and compose own coherent statements, it is necessary, first, to learn the appropriate linguistic knowledge – lexical, phonetic, morphological, spelling, syntactic, and stylistic. Second, master the grammatical concepts of a foreign language (for example, the morphemic structure of a word, parts of speech, sentence types, etc.) and the means of expressing grammatical categories (for example, word order, active/passive state, sequence of tenses). Third, it is...
important to acquire grammatically oriented communication skills and abilities [18], namely, the ability to formalise oral and written statements grammatically correctly and understand interlocutors. However, researchers have different interpretations of the essence and structure of foreign-language grammatical competence. Thus, T. Stech enko explains it as the ability to correctly form collocations and sentences, correctly apply and sequence grammatical tenses, as knowledge of parts of speech and processes of constructing sentences of different types [19, p. 33]. V. Cook, considering the ways of learning a foreign language, interprets grammatical competence as knowledge of language stored in a person's mind [20, p. 19]. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages indicates that language grammatical competence is the ability to understand the content of speech, produce and recognise phrases constructed according to certain principles [21, p. 112-113].

According to D. Rusnak, knowledge of the grammatical system of a foreign language is implemented by applying reproductive and receptive grammar skills and the ability to use the studied grammatical structures both in their own speech and the ability to analyse the speech of interlocutors [22].

The authors of this study are of the opinion that the essence of grammatical competence consists in a set of knowledge about the grammatical structure of the language system, and in the ability to operate with this knowledge in certain speech activity. Therefore, a sign of a properly developed grammatical competence of a philology student is their ability to formalise their own oral and written statements grammatically correctly and appropriately evaluate the grammatical design of the speech of the interlocutors (Fig. 1).

![Figure 1. Structure of grammatical competence of a philology student](image)

It is found out that methods of teaching grammar can be combined around 2 criteria: the object (language, speech activity) or the method (direct, activity, conscious) of teaching. In the first case, for example, students learn grammatical structures by translating the original text (grammar-translation method) or memorising language grammatical models, and use wildcard tables to form grammatical skills (oral method by G. Palmer). In the second case, grammatical models are explained to students in situations close to everyday life (situational approach) or through connection with the processes of cognition of the world through perception, attention, memory, or thinking (cognitive approach) [23]. The modern method of studying and teaching grammar of a foreign language adheres mainly to competence-based, and communicative and activity approaches, according to which students grasp the grammatical structure they are learning in the context with the help of specific communicative tasks. The essence of teaching grammar within the framework of these approaches is to develop the skills of future teachers to independently study the language material, deduce grammatical rules by induction, and explain them clearly. The latest pedagogical technologies, in particular, the project method, contribute to productive learning (both independent and group), provided that the student's activities are properly organised. The results of applying this method in the process of consolidating grammatical knowledge about modal words showed the following:

- first, the preparation of the project helps to develop students’ cognitive skills, encourages them to independently search for information, process it, and then apply it in practice;
- second, the possibility of using information and communication technologies contributes to the deepening of students’ knowledge, skills, and abilities in the technical aspect;
- third, the analysed grammatical project – work in a group. Its main goal is collaboration in a team, joint actions to attain the best way to achieve the goal and, at the same time, the joint overcoming of obstacles. Since the evaluation is given to the entire group, the teacher should encourage mutual assistance. Therefore, in the process of demonstrating the project, the main focus is on the interaction of students;
- fourth, there is an incentive for each team member to take the floor, while demonstrating the richness of their oral speech. There should be no silent participants in the project, even if they perform the functions of a director or cameraman. At the organisational stage, the teacher clearly explains the requirements for the project in general, and also helps during the preparation of the project. It is up to the students to decide what their video will be in particular, or a presentation in general. In addition, students are given the opportunity to redo their project as many times as they need until they agree on the final version. This approach helps students independently develop, improve, and adjust different levels of language skills within the group without involving a teacher.
• fifth, the use of digital video allows making several options from which participants can choose the one they are most satisfied with. This selection is a process of critical reflection and analytical work with language material. After the presentation, students receive a detailed review from the teacher, both group and individual. For example, in the reviews of the experiment, the teacher considered the reports of students, which encouraged them to independently think about their own learning experience and work performance;

• sixth, the task of the teacher is to clearly explain to students the goals and objectives of the project, discuss them in advance; to convey to students that certain problems that arise in the process of creating a film, tasks, or when formulating thoughts in English improves their experience and means that they simultaneously get the opportunity to independently deepen their knowledge (in this case, about the features of modal words in English).

Figure 2 shows the results of a survey of students on the possession of the following knowledge, skills and abilities: knowledge of ways to learn grammar; knowledge of how to teach grammar; knowledge of a specific grammatical topic; speech skills; video recording and editing skills; time management skills; teamwork skills. The analysed diagram shows the participants’ responses before the project starts. Thus, 11 students were asked to perform a self-evaluation from 1 to 3, which corresponds to high, medium, and low levels. According to the survey results, before the project started, 1 student had a high level of knowledge about how to learn grammar, 4 students – had an average level, and 6 students – had a low level. 2 students had knowledge of how to teach grammar at a high level, 3 – at an average level, and 6 – at a low level. Knowledge of a specific grammatical topic was revealed at a high level by 1 student, at an average level – by 4, and at a low level, respectively, by 6 students. 3 students had a high level of video recording skills, 6 students – a medium level of video recording skills, and 2 students – a low level of video recording skills. Accordingly, 3 participants demonstrated their shooting and editing skills at a high level, 4 at an average level, and 4 at a low level. Oral skills were mastered at a high level by 4 students, at an average level – by 4, and at a low level – by 3 respondents. The next criterion was the skills of rational use of time and the following data were given: 3, 4, and 4 students, respectively. The last, but no less important criterion in the questionnaire was teamwork skills: 2 students participated in charity events and extracurricular activities, so they had such skills at a high level, 5 students showed an average level of skills, and 4 showed a low level.

![Figure 2](image)

**Figure 2.** Self-evaluation of students before starting the project

Figure 3 shows the results of the survey after the project presentation. The indicators in all categories have significantly increased, which, for its part, indicates the expansion of students’ knowledge about how to learn grammar, how best to convey it to peers, the development of their own speech skills, the deepening of technical skills of video recording and editing, and time management skills. In addition, obtaining certain skills of working in a team, the ability to cooperate, and distribute functions, according to students themselves, is the most valuable experience for them.
Thus, the data obtained confirm the hypothesis and show that the carefully developed project method in teaching English grammar using ICTs is more effective than the conventional teaching method.

However, several problematic points were noticed that should also be considered by the teacher when organizing project work using ICTs. As the experience of organizing a project has shown, some participants admire the artistic side of the project (although this is only 10% of the total score), not paying attention to the fact that the score is the sum of various indicators. The most difficult things for students were features of pronunciation, vocabulary expansion, improvement of intonation, spelling and grammar skills, as well as technical aspects such as cutting out bad moments, superimposing sound/melodies, video editing, time management, and the creative aspect in general. Therefore, it is worth considering the expediency of using a video project (as a type of project method) in groups with a low level of knowledge and training, since such students need an individual classroom load, reducing stressful or conflict situations, encouraging them to learn a foreign language by achieving personal success in the classroom, including careful monitoring of the teacher’s activities for each student in particular.

The analysis of academic performance and its interpretation allowed the study to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of applying the project method in English language classes. The introduction of this technology in the educational process of higher education institutions demonstrates positive changes and an increase in the level of grammatical competence of students. In addition, the versatility of the analysed project provides a number of advantages: language awareness increases; motivation to study more complex grammatical structures increases; it provides an opportunity to find their own ways to solve certain problems; there is a right to make mistakes; it encourages students to independently find connections between meaning and form of expression. The implementation of the project method leads to the acquisition of additional, but no less important skills for students, namely: learning to work in a team implies subordination, the ability to discuss, the ability to solve current problems, take responsibility for themselves and others, etc. This type of work determines the deepening of knowledge and skills both in the technical aspect and in the organisation of time allocation.
Considering the expediency of using a video project (as a type of project method) in groups with a low level of knowledge and training, since such students need an individual classroom load, reducing stressful or conflict situations, encouraging them to learn a foreign language by achieving personal success in the classroom, including careful monitoring of the teacher’s activities for each student in particular.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of academic performance and its interpretation allowed the study to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of applying the project method in English language classes. The introduction of this technology in the educational process of higher education institutions demonstrates positive changes and an increase in the level of grammatical competence of students. In addition, the versatility of the analysed project provides a number of advantages: language awareness increases; motivation to study more complex grammatical structures increases; it provides an opportunity to find their own ways to solve certain problems; there is a right to make mistakes; it encourages students to independently find connections between meaning and form of expression. The implementation of the project method leads to the acquisition of additional, but no less important skills for students, namely: learning to work in a team implies subordination, the ability to discuss, the ability to solve current problems, take responsibility for themselves and others, etc. This type of work determines the deepening of knowledge and skills both in the technical aspect and in the organisation of time allocation.

There are prospects for further research in the scientific substantiation of the effectiveness of methods and techniques for creating educational English-language podcasts and posting these videos on the YouTube video hosting.

REFERENCES

Анотація. У статті розглянуті особливості застосування методу проєктів як новітньої педагогічної технології в процесі розвитку англомовних граматичних навичок у студентів філологічних спеціальностей. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена необхідністю наукового пошуку щодо з’ясування ефективної методики впровадження відеопроєктів (різновид методу проєктів) в педагогічних закладах вищої освіти. Мета статті – з’ясувати ефективність застосування технології відеопроєктів для вдосконалення граматичної компетентності студентів-філологів. У процесі роботи застосовано метод критичного аналізу наукової літератури з метою дослідження цілей, методів та засобів проектної технології та для формулювання висновків роботи; метод наукового спостереження за освітнім процесом сприяв прямому спостереженню за діяльністю студентів; метод вивчення і узагальнення досвіду викладачів дозволив з’ясувати методичні прийоми та методи при формуванні належних граматичних навичок студентів; метод анкетування допоміг установити рівень знань студентів про способи вивчення та викладання іноземної мови; метод експерименту використано для доведення гіпотези дослідження; метод систематизації й узагальнення застосовано при вивченні результатів роботи.

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Розвиток англомовної граматичної компетентності шляхом використання методу проєктів

**Ключові слова:** комунікативна компетентність, інформаційно-комунікаційні технології, проєктні технології, відеопроєкт, навчання в команді, студент-філолог