

TEACHING INTONATION OF SPEECH ACTS: COMMUNICATIVE-COGNITIVE APPROACH

НАВЧАННЯ ІНТОНАЦІЇ МОВЛЕННЄВИХ АКТИВ: КОМУНІКАТИВНО-КОГНІТИВНИЙ ПІДХІД

The paper is focused on the application of communicative-cognitive approach in teaching intonation of English speech acts. The authors maintain that the increasing number of studies devoted to various issues of pragmatics prove the urgency of conducting pilot studies in this field. However, most of present research on the problem focus on teaching of the vocabulary and grammar of various speech acts, whereas intonation remains beyond the scope of such studies. It is claimed that teaching intonation of speech acts should take into account the essence of this multi-facet category, which is, on the one hand, a crucial marker of the communicative competence; and on the other hand, manifests itself as a unit of profoundly cognitive character. That is why it is hypothesized that teaching intonation of speech acts should be based on employing communicative-cognitive approach. The point of interest of the research was the speech act of request – the act actualized in the situation when the addresser is asking the addressee to take some action, in most cases, for the benefit of the first. Within the scope of the given study weak, neutral and strong request was distinguished. The purpose of the paper was to present the results of the experimental work aimed at teaching students intonation of the speech act, namely, the speech act of request. The experimental study helped check the efficiency of the suggested framework of teaching intonation of the speech act of request in the light of the communicative-cognitive approach. The experiment was conducted in three stages – diagnostic testing, training and output testing. The focus of the first stage was to determine the level of students' proficiency in perception of the intonation of speech act of request and the realization of these speech acts. The second phase was aimed at developing students' perceptive and productive skills of correct intoning of the speech acts of request, which included raising cognitive and pragmatic awareness, receptive skills formation, productive skills formation, free integrated practice. The aim of the final stage of the experiment was to check the efficiency of the worked out framework by measuring the values of receptive and productive skills development. The obtained results confirmed the hypothesis that the suggested training framework results in considerable increase of the proficiency in pragmatics.

Key words: teaching, intonation, speech acts, communicative-cognitive approach.

Стаття присвячена дослідженню можливостей застосування комунікативно-когнітивного підходу при навчанні інтонації мовленнєвих актів англійською мовою. Автори зазначають, що збільшення кількості дослі-

джень, присвячених різноманітним питанням прагматики, доводить актуальність проведення пілотних розробок у цій галузі. Однак більшість сучасних досліджень з цієї проблематики підкреслюють необхідність експліцитного навчання лексики та граматики різних мовленнєвих актів, тоді як інтонація залишається поза межами уваги цих розвідок. Акцентовано, що навчання інтонації мовленнєвих актів має враховувати сутність цієї багатоаспектної категорії, яка є, з одного боку, визначним маркером комунікативної компетентності; а з іншого боку, виступає одиницею глибоко когнітивного характеру. Тому висунуто гіпотезу про те, що навчання інтонації мовленнєвих актів має враховувати базові засади комунікативно-когнітивного підходу. У фокусі уваги даної наукової розвідки був мовленнєвий акт прохання – акт, актуалізований у ситуації, коли адресант просить адресата вчинити якусь дію, у більшості випадків на користь першого. В рамках цього дослідження було виділено слабе, нейтральне та сильне прохання. Метою наукової розвідки є опис результатів експериментальної роботи, спрямованої на навчання здобувачів інтонації мовленнєвого акту, а саме мовленнєвого акту прохання. Метою експериментального дослідження була перевірка ефективності розробленої методики навчання інтонації мовленнєвого акту прохання на засадах комунікативно-когнітивного підходу. Експеримент проводився у три етапи – діагностичне тестування, навчальне та вихідне тестування. На першому етапі визначався рівень оволодіння здобувачами сприйняттям інтонації мовленнєвого акту прохання та реалізацією цього мовленнєвого акту. Другий етап було спрямовано на формування у здобувачів перцептивних і продуктивних навичок правильного інтонування мовленнєвих актів прохання, що передбачало підвищення пізнавальної та прагматичної обізнаності, формування рецептивних навичок, формування продуктивних навичок, вільну інтегровану практику. Метою заключного етапу експерименту була перевірка ефективності запропонованої системи роботи шляхом вимірювання показників розвитку рецептивних і продуктивних навичок. Отримані результати підтвердили гіпотезу про те, що запропонована система навчання призводить до значного підвищення рівня сформованості прагматичної компетентності.

Ключові слова: навчання, інтонація, мовленнєві акти, комунікативно-когнітивний підхід.

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Formulation of the problem. Recent studies in the field of teaching foreign languages have been marked with an increased interest in explicit teaching of pragmatics in the broadest meaning, which covers whole discourses, and in its narrow meaning – teaching certain speech acts in particular.

The shift to cognitivism in communicative linguistics and language teaching methodology enabled application of pragmatic categories, which lie in the plane of cognitive studies, in the sphere of language teaching. As a result, there appeared a number of methodological pilot works centered around the issue

of teaching speech acts, means of actualizing one's communicative intentions, communicative techniques aimed at effective speech interaction. Herewith, most investigations in this field are predominantly focused on teaching vocabulary and grammar of speech acts, whereas the question of teaching their intonation is somewhat neglected.

Review of recent research and publications.

As the analysis of related literature sources proves, the vast majority of contemporary studies on teaching certain English speech acts include awareness-raising and discourse based tasks. For instance, B. Zeff [11] offers a set of interactive tasks aimed at learning to render various intentions of greetings by means of journaling and role-plays. A. Can [4] claims that using drama in explicit teaching of the speech acts of complaint and refusal accompanied by giving instructions (awareness-raising stage) and students' free production of these speech acts in written (discourse based, or productive stage) is quite effective. However, attention in these studies is paid mostly to purely lexical and grammar structure of the analyzed speech acts. T. Yeremenko & I. Lukyanchenko suggest the project work for teaching speech acts focusing on questioning speech acts [9]. D. H. Tatsuki & N. R. Houck [8] put forward the idea that it is vital to take into consideration the context of the speech acts and recommend to employ in the process of teaching both form focused instructions and interactive methods to achieve maximum effectiveness.

Thus, as the review of theoretical sources demonstrates, there are only a few fundamental studies focused on the issue of teaching intonation of speech acts. For example, the research on the intonation of the speech act of agreement/disagreement by L. Pickering et al. [6] is devoted to the study of pitch (dis)matching in speech of native American and Chinese interlocutors, which proves the importance of explicit teaching intonation of the speech acts under analysis. A. Yumrukuz [10] conducted a pilot study and offered a complex of tasks focusing on correct intoning of the speech act of consent, which implied awareness-raising and discourse-based activities.

Teaching intonation of speech acts should take into account the essence of this multi-facet category. On the one hand, speech act is a crucial marker of the communicative competence; on the other hand, it is a unit of profoundly cognitive character [3, p. 120]. That is why, we can draw tentative conclusion that teaching intonation of speech acts should be based on employing communicative-cognitive approach. It is worth mentioning that "communication-centered teaching model focuses primarily on creating conditions for getting message across, though the form could be sometimes ignored, the focus of the communicative and cognitive approach is on

meaningful learning and meaningful practice on the basis of comprehending the linguistic knowledge and rules, structuring and systematically arranging new knowledge units, storing and applying them" [5, p. 65]. In elaborating the framework of teaching intonation of speech acts, we employed the Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains in its adapted version [7], which implies a step-by-step sequence of low and high order thinking processes in mastering the language: remember (describe, relate, find, list etc.), understand (explain, compare, outline etc.), apply (classify, illustrate, solve etc.), analyze (contrast, investigate, categorize etc.), evaluate (justify, assess, prioritize etc.), create (invent, construct, design etc.).

Thus, the increasing rise of pragmatically oriented studies, on the one hand, and the lack of fundamental studies on teaching intonation of speech acts, on the other hand, justify the relevance of conducting research in this field. The point of interest of the given research is teaching intonation of the speech act of request. In the requesting situation, the addresser is asking the addressee to take some action, in most cases, for the benefit of the first. Therefore, he uses various strategies to eliminate such an imposition on the addressee. According to the form of expression the request can be direct or indirect; according to the intentional load – strong or softened [8, p.134]. Within the scope of this study we distinguished weak, neutral and strong request. Depending on its character, the speech act of request is implemented by different lexical and syntactic means – questions, lexical and grammatical intensifiers, deintensifiers etc. [2, p. 212].

The purpose of the paper is to present the results of the experimental study aimed at teaching students intonation of the speech act, namely, the speech act of request. To achieve the purpose, the following objectives were set forth: (1) to formulate the aim and preconceived hypothesis of the experimental study; (2) to outline the methods of the study; (3) to provide results and critical conclusions.

Presentation of the main material. The aim of the experimental study was to check the efficiency of the worked out framework of teaching intonation of the speech act of request in the light of the communicative-cognitive approach. Our hypothesis is that constructed training framework will result in considerable increase of the proficiency in pragmatics.

A total of 39 MA students and 3 lecturers of the Foreign Languages Department, Ushynsky University participated in the experimental study during the second semester of 2021-2022 academic year. The form of our study was natural experimental teaching. It was conducted within the course "Theory and Practice of Speech Communication".

Data sources included testing for skills level assessment, expert assessment, mathematical and statistical processing of obtained data, observation.

Traditionally, three phases were realized during the experimental study – diagnostic testing, training and output testing.

The aim of the first stage was to determine the level of students' proficiency in perception of the intonation of speech act of request and the realization of these speech acts.

The learning material was arranged in the following way. Three native English speakers read out and recorded 120 realizations of the speech acts of weak, neutral and strong request embedded in the context – 40 samples (mini-dialogues) of each. The students were asked to identify these speech acts (60 realizations) according to the three subtypes of request; state the perceived intonational characteristics (chunking, melodic, dynamic and temporal parameters). Their answers were converted into percent data (60 correct answers equaled 100%) and further assessed with employing the V. Bepalko coefficient [1]. Afterwards, they were asked to read out another 60 realizations with the given intention of request. Experts were to identify the types of request conveyed and intonational means used (chunking, melodic, dynamic and temporal parameters).

The aim of the training phase was to develop students' perceptive and productive skills of correct intoning of the speech acts of request, which included following steps: (a) raising cognitive and pragmatic awareness; (b) receptive skills formation; (c) productive skills formation; (d) free integrated practice. They are described in detail below.

Raising cognitive and pragmatic awareness aimed at forming steady images of the concept of request, its possible collocations with other categories and intentions, which implied making the conceptual scheme based on the individual and group study of reference dictionaries; comparing it with the analogous conceptual schemes of the Ukrainian concept of "прохання"; excerpting English examples from fiction, audio- fragments of the English corpora, video recordings etc. paying attention to the context; analysis of the intonational means of expressing certain type of request (number of intonation groups, level of tone, direction of tone in pre-terminal and terminal segments of intonational group; degree and fluctuation of loudness; speech rate and its fluctuations).

Work on developing *receptive skills* implied conscious identification of intonation patterns employed in realization of certain intention of request and matching it with this intention. It involved bottom-up and top-down approaches to, firstly, establish the sensory data and the invariants, and later to add contextual and higher-order inferences and deductions. This included individual work and work in mini-groups. The learning material at this stage was performed by short fragments (not longer than 10 minutes) of video- and audio-recordings.

Productive skills formation was aimed at developing students' ability to correctly produce speech acts conveying the additional senses of request. Thus, for example, students were given an intention they had to express using appropriate intonation patterns, the rest of the class had to understand it. As an assignment for self-guided work, they were offered to prepare, read out, record and present in class 30 realizations of each type of request.

When having *free integrated practice*, learners had to role-play the situations provided by the teacher which covered such scenario as daily conversation, business meeting, interaction in academic sphere etc. Students were allocated a task to react in the context using the correct intonational pattern.

The aim of the final stage of the experiment was to check the efficiency of the suggested framework by measuring the values of receptive and productive skills development. The tasks set were the same as when conducting the diagnostic testing.

To verify the data obtained we used the *t-test* for independent samples.

The results of diagnostic testing are shown in Table 1.

In terms of V. Bepalko, the mean learning coefficient of academic achievements is relevant in case it is more or equal 0.7 ($C \geq 0.7$) [1]. Nevertheless, according to diagnostic testing results the obtained mean learning coefficients in EG are 0.42 in the first section of the test (receptive skills) and 0.39 in the second (productive skills), in CG – 0.41 and 0.35, respectively. As the sufficient learning coefficient of 0.7 is not attained, we conclude that MA students' low level of proficiency in perception and production of speech acts of request requires development of their skills of correct intoning.

The changes in the levels of students' proficiency in pragmatics are given in Table 2.

As can be seen in Table 2, the situation can be viewed as a positive one in EG as respondents succeeded in attaining the sufficient mean learning coefficient more than 0.7 ($C > 0.7$) in both receptive and productive skills – 0.85 and 0.81. At the same time, students of CG have demonstrated appropriate level of receptive skills – 0.71 ($C \geq 0.7$), but the level of productive skills remained insufficient – 0.66.

The *t*-criterion of Student for independent samples allowed us to verify the data.

Thus, our findings confirm the hypothesis that the suggested training framework will result in considerable increase of the proficiency in pragmatics.

Conclusions. This study has traced the development of students' learning outcomes in intoning speech acts of request. It is pretty obvious that native speakers of the English language are used to navigating in intonational patterns when actualizing speech acts and various intentional senses quite naturally; however, for those learning English as a

Table 1

Mean values of diagnostic testing

Index of the group	The 1 st section		The 2 nd section	
	Mean number in points (Max. 60)	Mean learning coefficient	Mean number in points (Max. 60)	Mean learning coefficient
EG	26.50	0.42	23.14	0.39
CG	26.00	0.41	22.70	0.35

Table 2

A comparative table of mean values of diagnostic and output testing

Index of the group	The 1 st section		Increase	The 2 nd section		Increase
	Mean learning coefficient			Mean learning coefficient		
	Diagnostic testing	Output testing		Diagnostic testing	Output testing	
EG	0.42	0.85	0.43	0.39	0.81	0.42
CG	0.41	0.71	0.30	0.35	0.66	0.31

foreign language these choices of prosodic patterns are not so evident. Consequently, it is important and reasonable to teach students intonation of speech acts explicitly.

Finally, we may resume that this article sets a background for further elaboration of tasks aimed at teaching intonation of speech acts accounting for the influence of other pragmatic factors, such as registers of communication – informal, strictly formal, quasi-formal etc., additional emotional moduses – emotionally neutral, emotionally positively coloured, emotionally negatively coloured etc., intensiveness – strong, neutral, weak etc.

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