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METHODOLOGICAL STEPS OF FORMING NON-PHILOLOGICAL STUDENTS’ GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE (CASE STUDY OF THE INFINITIVE AND THE GERUND)

Abstract. The formation of foreign language communicative competence is an important aspect of the preparation of non-philological students. Grammatical competence as a constituent part of foreign language competence appears as the final goal of learning grammar and, therefore, mastering grammatical means of communication. Possessing grammatical competence ensures the correct understanding of language structures and prevents students from having certain difficulties and mistakes when studying grammatical topics. It is noted that a whole system of abilities and skills must be formed in the process of performing a set of actions for mastering grammatical phenomena.

The article highlights twelve methodological steps of the formation and improvement of non-philological students’ grammatical competence on the grammatical topic “Infinitive and Gerund” at classes of “Foreign language (English)”. The purpose of the mentioned methodological steps is to provide teachers of higher educational establishments with certain tips when teaching the infinitive and gerund as non-finite forms of the verb. It has been noted that the essence of the given tips is based on our own pedagogical experience.

The article demonstrates the following methodological steps: establishing the difficulty of studying the infinitive and the gerund; analysis of textbooks in order to identify subtopics and consider the number and types of exercises; delineation of the semantic principle regarding the differentiation of verbs followed by the infinitive and the gerund; the introduction of theoretical material on the topic with an emphasis on the infinitive and gerund forms in comparison with the native language; determination of cases of their usage and tense forms; comparison of the
gerund and the Continuous tense; illustration of verbs followed by either the infinitive or the gerund or both non-finite forms of the verb; practising the theoretical material with the help of training exercises of various types.

**Keywords:** non-philological student, foreign language communicative competence, grammatical competence, infinitive, gerund, semantic principle of verb differentiation, pedagogical experience, English textbooks.

Совач Катерина Олегівна старший викладач кафедри готельно-ресторанного та туристичного бізнесу й іноземних мов, Херсонський державний аграрно-економічний університет, просп. Університетський, 5/2, м. Кропивницький, 25010, тел.: (095) 57-284-97, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8376-7623

**METODOLOGІЧНІ КРОКИ ФОРМУВАННЯ ГРАМАТИЧНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНЦІЇ У СТУДЕНТІВ НЕФІЛОЛОГІЧНИХ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТЕЙ (НА МАТЕРІАЛІ ТЕМИ «ІНФІНІТИВ І ГЕРУНДІЙ»)**

Анотація. Важливим аспектом підготовки здобувачів нефілологічних спеціальностей є формування іншомовної комунікативної компетентності. Граматична компетенція як складова частина іншомовної компетентності постає кінцевою метою навчання граматики й, отже, овладіння граматичними засобами спілкування. Володіння граматичною компетенцією забезпечує правильне розуміння мовних структур і запобігає виникненню у здобувачів певних складностей і помилок при вивченні граматичних тем. Зазначається, що ціла система умінь і навичок повинна бути сформована у процесі виконання комплексу дій з овладіння граматичними явищами.

У статті висвітлено дванадцять методологічних кроків щодо формування та вдосконалення граматичної компетенції у студентів нефілологічних спеціальностей з граматичної теми «Інфінітив і герундій» на заняттях з дисципліни «Іноземна мова (англійська)». Мета зазначених методологічних кроків полягає в тому, щоб надати певні поради викладачам вищих навчальних закладів у викладанні інфінітиву та герундію як безособових форм дієслова. Зазначаємо, що сутність наведених порад базується на власному педагогічному досвіді.

У статті продемонстровано такі методологічні кроки: констатування складності питання вивчення інфінітиву та герундію; аналіз підручників з метою виявлення підтем і розгляду кількості та різновидів вправ; окреслення семантичного принципу щодо
диференціації дієслів, після яких вживаються інфінітив і герундій; введення безпосередньо теоретичного матеріалу з теми з акцентом на форми інфінітиву та герундію у порівнянні з рідною мовою; визначення випадків їхнього вживання та видо-часових форм; порівняння героудію та форми подовженого часу; ілюстрація дієслів, після яких вживається або інфінітив, або герундій, або обидві безособові форми дієслова; опрацювання теоретичного матеріалу за допомогою тренувальних вправ різних видів.

Ключові слова: здобувач нефілологічної спеціальності, іншомовна комунікативна компетентність, граматична компетенція, інфінітив, герундій, семантичний принцип диференціації дієслів, педагогічний досвід, англійськомовні підручники.

Defining the problem and argumentation of the topicality of its consideration. One of the most significant grounds for updating foreign language education in a higher educational establishment is a competency-based approach that focuses students’ attention on the ability to use the acquired knowledge in their future professional activities and develop their readiness to solve professional problems. A significant aspect of preparing a graduate of this level is the formation of foreign language communicative competence, the successful development of which is impossible without the formation of all its basic components, one of which is grammatical competence.

As our practical experience shows, many students undergo certain difficulties in the situational use of grammatical structures and do not have sufficiently developed skills and abilities to use grammatical means in foreign speech, which significantly reduces the overall level of their communicative competence.

The study of grammar and the correct composition of statements as well as the recognition of grammatical forms in speech and writing occurs thanks to the formation of grammatical skills [1, P. 74].

According to B. Nufeisen and N. Marx, it is the experience of learning the first language and acquired learning strategies that are the main factors influencing the process of learning a foreign language. At the same time, students should be taught to use these strategies and existing language knowledge consciously [2].

Previous Research in the Area. The problem of teaching the grammatical aspect of a foreign language is traditionally one of the priorities in the theory of teaching foreign languages [3]. The critical and analytical review of scientific sources shows that in Ukrainian and foreign language
teaching methodology the issue of grammatical competency is presented by academic writings of A. Boichuk, O. Tytun O., H. Sivkovych [4], O. Kasatkina [5], I. Miroshnyk [6], L. Oriekhova, R. Lisovska, T. Rychka [7], I. Tryhub [1], M. Shemuda [8], I. Savka, T. Yaremko [9], I. Shumylo [10], M. Ilankumaran [11]. Therefore, the important issue is the formation of grammatical competence in professionally oriented foreign language learning, and, moreover, the research results are based on scholars own pedagogical experience.

One of the major topics to be investigated in this field is grammatical competence. M. Ilankumaran thinks that “grammatical competence refers to the unconscious knowledge of grammar that allows a speaker to use and understand language. […] The learners are required to pay attention to grammar so that they can obtain accuracy as well in effective communication” [11].

I. Miroshnyk considers grammatical knowledge, grammatical skills and grammatical awareness to be the main components of linguistic grammatical competence (the student’s ability to register and recognize grammatical phenomena in oral and written speech, their features and regularities of their formation and functioning) [6, P. 100].

L. Oriekhova states that grammatical competence involves: 1) knowledge of grammatical units as carriers of generalized grammatical properties as well as means of expressing grammatical meanings; 2) good command of grammatical concepts; 3) the contrast of the knowledge obtained on the basis of the comparative typology of the native and foreign languages being studied; 4) the ability to use the grammatical phenomena of the foreign language adequately in various communication situations to solve various communicative tasks. A whole system of skills and abilities must be formed in the process of performing a set of actions to master grammatical phenomena. This system can include: a) skills in choosing language phenomena and their grammatical structuring; b) the correct combination of the studied phenomena in the sentence; c) their morphological composition; d) the ability to use grammatical phenomena in language communication to convey certain meanings [7].

Teaching any grammatical topic to students of non-philological specialities is accompanied by a number of problems, and their solution depends on the qualified and proficient participation of the teacher. And studying the topic “The Infinitive and the Gerund” is no exception. This is typically a complex problem, we must admit. As for recent papers focusing on overcoming the problem of teaching the infinitive and the gerund we can point out the only one proposed by J.R. Vawser [12]. In her quasi-experimental
analysis of teaching gerunds and infinitives, J.R. Vawser mentions that “gerunds and infinitives persist in being a major problem for students of English as a Second Language” [12, P. 1]. There are also some teaching techniques found on the Internet [13; 14; 15].

Thus, the present paper aims to describe some consequent steps to teachers of higher educational establishments to develope their students’ grammatical competence at English lessons within the discipline “Foreign Language (English)”. We can apply our algorithm to solve this problem judging by our own pedagogical experience while teaching infinitives and gerunds.

Results and Discussion. Teaching gerunds and infinitives is quite complicated and students always have many questions. As teachers, we must definitely describe the gerunds and infinitives, give simple examples for the students to see and understand; moreover, to clear up the confusion between these two grammatical terms. Thus, a few tips for you to make your teaching easier.

Tip 1. First of all, the teacher should note that the complexity of teaching infinitives and gerunds connects with the fact that there is a non-finite verb form (the infinitive) in Ukrainian, but we do not have any gerunds. Moreover, all Ukrainian verbs can form the infinitive. In addition, there is the only form of the infinitive in our native tongue. “The usual way to teach gerunds and infinitives has been to have students memorize those verbs which take gerunds, those which take infinitives and those which take both” [12, P. 1]. For this reason, the teacher should, to our mind, draw a parallel or point out these very peculiarities of two different languages focusing on the complexity of the issue, on the one hand, and the ways of its solving, on the other hand.

Tip 2. Before introducing the theoretical material as for infinitives and gerunds we think the teacher should scan the textbook the students are going to follow. In our case according to the academic programme “Foreign Language (English)” we use the textbook “Grammarway 3” by J. Dooley and V. Evans [16]. One unit (Unit 14) of the textbook is designed for the topic discussed (“Infinitive – Too/Enough – The -ing form – Participles”) [16, P. 42]. Having analyzed the unit, we see the first section presents the information about the types of the infinitive (to-infinitive and bare one), the rules of the use of the infinitive including the list of the verbs after which it is used, tenses of the infinitive (active as well as passive), and only six exercise students should perform [16, P. 42-44]. The second section is titled “The Subject of the Infinitive”, just one exercise being added. The third section demonstrates the usage of too/足够的 in combination with the infinitive;
three exercises are recommended to do [16, P. 45]. The same concerns the sections explaining what the gerund and the participle are, when and where, and in what forms they are used [16, P. 46-51].

To our mind this textbook as well as other English ones, for instance “Round-up 5” [17], presents too much theoretical information simultaneously for students to comprehend, on the one hand, but, not enough training exercises, on the other hand. One remark is the textbook mentioned above contains undifferentiated theoretical as well as training material [17, P. 33, 34]. We mean that the information is not dosed; it is given by big, not systemic portions and, as a result, it causes difficulties for both – teachers and students.

That’s why we recommend to work out more training exercises to perform them at classes, in small groups of students and individually as well. To achieve this goal one need to consult and scan other English textbooks as for the grammar material discussed.

Tip 3. Here we must note that at English classes the textbook compiled by the teachers of Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University is widely used alongside with other foreign resources. This textbook is “for those teaching and studying specialized English, as well as for those struggling to pass their IAE/IEI in English” [18, P. 5]. We will illustrate our thoughts by giving the examples from the textbook mentioned above.

To explain students the difference between the infinitive and the gerund, the teacher must himself/herself know that it is based on the semantic principle: the infinitive itself usually indicates something imaginary, problematic, unperformed and future, whereas the gerund generally demonstrates something factual, true and performed/done. This principle shows why there is a list of certain verbs taking either the infinitive or the gerund. To prove this thesis let’s illustrate: dealing with the meanings of the verbs (expect, decide, hope, agree, plan, ask, want, etc) we realize what unites them – something in the future: “Private property rights means that business owners cannot expect to own their land, buildings, machines, etc., and keep the majority of their profits, except for taxes” [18, P. 109].

The verbs taking only the gerund (admit, discuss, practice, enjoy, deny, complete, detest, start etc) manifest something that is going on or that has already happened or taken place. “A person cannot enjoy something that he has not yet done or finish something that he has not yet started” [12, P. 3]. Here the teacher may draw students’ attention to -ing as a marker of Continuous Tenses as well as the gerund to express something that is going on: “But while you saved your money, you started playing more basketball, and now you want a pair of pump sneakers” [18, P. 25].
One more remark should be taken into account. If something is factual/true/real, then -ing brings the action more vivid. The verbs (expect, command, hope, want, wish) take the infinitive since they apply to unrealized possibilities: “…there already is a cash purse with loose strings and you want to make the best of this bonanza” [18, P. 130]. The verbs (approve, deny, enjoy, detest, like, dislike, understand, visualize) are used with the gerund as they relate to realization of the action, on the other hand: “he who likes borrowing dislikes paying” [18, P. 101].

We support J.R. Vawser’s thought that “the rationale for doing this study is that if it made any appreciable difference, then teachers could be made aware of this method and begin to incorporate it in their teaching of gerunds and infinitives” [12, P. 4]. Only after the teacher’s full comprehension the bright difference between the infinitive and the gerund, he/she may introduce the topic to students for sure.

**Tip 4. The infinitive** is the first as we can give a parallel with our native language. Focus on the forms of the infinitive. The teacher can start with the information given in the textbook [16, P. 42], presenting the full and bare infinitives. Here we can compare English and Ukrainian infinitives paying students’ attention to English forms and mentioning that the infinitive is a verb preceded by to in most cases. At this stage we can recommend some sentences for students to listen to and identify the infinitives in the sentence defining full and bare infinitives. For example: “If the market fails, then government intervention designed to correct the market failure may bring benefits to society” [18, P. 166]; “As market economy may produce unacceptably high levels of inequality of income and weather” [18, P. 164]; “The tax would encourage paper mills to clean up their discharges, or it would generate the funds needed to pay someone else to do it” [18, P. 155]. To accompany this task one may write some infinitives (two forms of them) on the blackboard. Afterwards, some simple exercises for performing this kind of task should be offered.

**Tip 5.** Thus, the students can identify the infinitive in the sentence. The next goal is to explain the cases of its usage. A bright illustration of this aspect is presented in the textbook [16, P. 42]. Eight rules within the subtopic “The to-infinitive is used” include the list of verbs after which one can find the infinitive. Here the teacher should refer to Tip 3. Other rules relate to some functions of the infinitive (purpose, for instance). If we remember the textbooks we personally were taught at higher educational establishments (it was a long time ago), the focus was on syntactical functions of the infinitive and the infinitive constructions. But today, especially for students of non-philological specialities, it is out of the question, in our opinion, if only
for translation specific passages of professionally oriented texts. It is enough to pay attention to the function of purpose for the students to differentiate, for instance, the usage of the infinitive and the gerund after some verbs, *to stop*, in particular. Judging our pedagogical experience, I always clarify it by giving two examples – *He stopped to smoke* (purpose – the infinitive) and *He stopped smoking* (object – the gerund). These illustrations can also help to feel the difference: “In their efforts to increase the production of tanks and other military vehicles, factories stopped producing automobiles” [18, P. 7]; “We stopped our business not to play dirty” [18, P. 147].

Special attention should be paid to the usage of the infinitive after certain adjectives, *too* and *enough*, *would like*, *would prefer* [16, P. 42]. We guess the comprehension of these rules must be presented either in phrases or situations by the teacher, on the one hand, and a similar algorithm to follow the students’ side, on the other hand. The performance of additional training exercises is obligatory [17, P. 39, 40]. Again referring to our basic textbook we can exemplify some sentences: “These factors are too complicated to deal with” [18, P. 107]; “The expense of designing and perfecting rockets for space exploration was too great for individual firms to undertake” [18, P. 136]; “Suppose you saved enough money to buy the tablet you have always wanted” [18, P. 25]; “…that barely have enough resources to feed and clothe their people” [18, P. 45]; “All business owners or managers – and even coaches of professional basketball teams – must pick and choose from among the employees or equipment they would like to have” [18, P. 7].

For activizing students’ grammatical competence, the teacher may offer to make up the situations expressing their emotions either negative or positive. In this way the realization of the rules mentioned above may have a great effect. For example, giving the students the pattern *I am glad/happy/sad/afraid/ashamed*, one can ask to continue his/her emotional situation (happy or not), using *too* and *enough*, *would like* or *would prefer*. In this way, we are sure, 90 % of the information will be remembered. One should remember: everything must be written by students and checked by the teacher.

The teacher should follow the same algorithm while explaining and training the rules as for the bare infinitive [16, P. 42], paying students’ attention to the construction *had better* and *would rather* as well as *be made/be heard/be seen+to+infinitive*.

**Tip 6.** The next step is to introduce tenses of the infinitive. We must admit it is hard for students to perceive this piece of information as they must remember not only Present Tenses, but the types of the Voice as a grammatical category (Active vs. Passive). The table of the Tenses of the
Infinitive [16, P. 42] must “give a hand” with the teacher’s assistance. Give each of the students any verb and ask to form all tenses of the infinitive in the written form, firstly, then – read them aloud. Here we should focus their attention on stative verbs (love, prefer, understand, etc.) and intransitive ones (arrive, stand, stay, etc.). Stative verbs are not used in Continuous tenses, whereas intransitive verbs can not take the passive form. We are absolutely sure the teacher must speak out that it is impossible to use, for example, to be understanding or to be come.

Moreover, the set of training exercise must be applied. We must affirm some exercises from “Grammarway 3 with answers” can be useful to perform [16, P. 43-44]. We can’t say the same as for “Round-up 5” [17]; our argumentations have been outlined above (Tip 2). Besides, the table on page 43 is a good illustration of how to reveal the infinitive form if you are aware of verb tenses (such a prompt for students) [16, P. 44]. And, afterwards, the students can practice the exercises of various types training the infinitive and all connected with it.

Tip 7. The next is the gerund. First of all, students should be informed that there is not any in Ukrainian (Tip 1). A very simple explanation of the gerund may be given: “a gerund is a verb ending in -ing that is used as a noun, either as a subject, object or complement” [15]. The students must realize the key idea: the gerund shows an action being used as a thing or idea. At this stage we always give such an example – Reading is my hobby, comparing with the Ukrainian equivalent of translation. Draw the students’ attention that the gerund is an activity (a non-physical object). Remember them again that the infinitive is a verb preceded by to. But at the same time it is used as a subject, object or complement of the sentence. Not your students be confused, we should state “that gerunds sound more natural than infinitives when used as subjects or complements of a sentence. This explanation will get students to only use gerunds as subjects and complements, but it will decrease the number of mistakes and awkward sentences. Show students sentences that sound clearer with the gerund as opposed to the infinitive” [15]. For example: “But studying economics concerns you as an individual, as an earner and spender, and as a citizen” [18, P. 8]; “Understanding how economic systems operate help make decisions on your future” [18, P. 18]. These sentences may be transformed into the ones with the infinitive (this task can be given to students for them to compare the sentences). The teacher should point out that “gerunds are used to express actions that are real, concrete and completed. Infinitives are used to express actions that are unreal, abstract or may be in the future” [14] (Tip 3). Ask your students make up their own sentences, focusing on the infinitive
and the gerund as a subject of the sentence. Then a set of training exercises should be performed just to visualize the gerund in the sentence.

**Tip 8.** Thus, the students can identify the gerund in the sentence. The next step is to explain the cases of its usage. A bright illustration of this aspect is presented in the textbook [16, P. 46]. Seven rules within the subtopic “The -ing form is used” include the list of verbs after which one can find the gerund. Here the teacher should refer to Tip 3. A very significant aspect, to our mind, is the usage of the gerund with prepositions. Unfortunately, we have not a list of the prepositions in the textbook we follow at English classes just exactly on its pages. But there is Appendix 1: Verbs, Adjectives, Nouns with Preposition [17, P. 174]. The problem arises: the material we are interested in is not grouped systematically and the teacher, in his/her turn, should choose those phrases or word combinations relatively corresponding the topic. It can be presented in the form of Quezlet – five-six portions, to our personal calculations. It should be mentioned there is no appendix in “Grammarway 3 with answers” [16], only one exercise for practising [16, P. 47].

Special attention should be paid to the usage of the gerund after *it’s no use, it’s (not) worth, it’s no good, can’t help, can’t stand, etc* [16, P. 46]. We are sure the comprehension of these phrases must be given either in phrases or situations by the teacher, on the one hand, and a similar algorithm to follow the students’ side, on the other hand. The teacher may refer to Internet resources where students can not only find the phrases above, but listen to native speakers practising the pronunciation and audio training as well [19; 20]. Separate training exercises are not offered by any of two textbooks we are dealing with [16; 17].

**Tip 9.** Introduce gerunds with the progressive tense. A lot of students may state: the -ing form of the verb signals about the progressive tense. “Students need to review the verb tense to better understand gerunds” [15]. Students need to see the placement of the words in a sentence to catch the difference between gerunds and progressive tense verbs. After revising the progressive verb tense, offer the class a set of example sentences containing both the verb tense and gerunds. Point out where the gerund is and where the verb is: “Froebel was planning to build a shopping center on the site” [18, P. 117]; “In planning an advertising program, for example, a store owner might have to choose between a series of radio or TV commercials or a direct-mail campaign” [18, P. 26]. These examples should orient the students to identify the verb (*was planning*) and the gerund as well (*In planning*). The teacher should emphasize the preposition that precedes the gerund, that is obligatory as it is its signifying feature.
Tip 10. The next stage is tenses of the gerund. Here we must admit that only one of the textbooks we follow has a brief information as for this aspect [17, P. 33]. Here one can offer some English Internet resources where native speakers present tenses of the gerund and explain the difference with the tenses of the infinitive, on the one hand, and, moreover, the contrast between present and perfect gerunds, on the other hand. Some of such resources point out there is no important distinction between present and perfect gerunds – it is up to you what tense form of the gerund to use (present or perfect) [21]. Probably, for this reason, English textbooks do not pay any special attention to this grammar field.

Thus, the teacher may either propose some ready-made videos or ask the students to find out the answer to the question – What tenses of the gerund are there in English? – at the same time giving them some references to the resources [21; 22]. These resources, in our opinion, assist to comprehend not only the given issue, but to visualize and recall the previous passages of the topic discussed.

Tip 11. The next stage is to pay the students’ attention to two tables – verbs taking to-infinitive or -ing form without a change in meaning and verbs taking to-infinitive or -ing form with a change in meaning [17, P. 37]. Some other resources may also help [23; 24; 25]. We may offer such illustrations as, for example, with the verbs continue and allow after which one can use either the infinitive or the gerund without a change in meaning: “Government subsidies (payments) and loans have helped thousands of farmers to continue farming their land” [18, P. 156]; “Elise knew that she could receive much more by selling the property than if she continued to farm it” [18, P. 117]; “On the other hand, profit opportunities in a fast-food business allowed hiring additional help” [18, P. 117]; “Others believe that the government sector of the economy is being starved and that government should be allowed to do more” [18, P. 150].

We guess that nothing, but the list of verbs is to be of use. Students should remember that “the list of verbs followed by gerunds is more concrete while the verbs followed by infinitives are more abstract” [14]. It is the teacher’s choice what lists to give: either long [17, P. 37] or short ones [14]. “The teacher can write a list of verbs on the board and have students try to put them in categories for either gerunds or infinitives. Alternatively, the teacher can hand out a list of common verbs for students to create their own categories. Take this opportunity to include verbs that are most common for the students’ level. With more advanced students, you can include more academic vocabulary for them to use in essays” [15]. Anyway, students will need them while doing final fixing exercises.
Tip 12. The last goal is to perform exercises containing such tasks as, for instance, “put the verbs in brackets into the correct infinitive form or the -ing form” [16, P. 47; 17, P. 34] or “fill in infinitive with or without “to”, or the -ing form” [17, P. 36, 38]. Some Internet sources may help [26]. For improving non-philological students’ grammatical competence, the teacher may use various training exercises, among which his/her making stories for students to learn best through them [13]. On the contrary, students can make up their own stories for them to keep in mind and share them in the classroom.

Conclusions and perspectives. The present findings confirm that teaching infinitives and gerunds is a complicated issue requiring special teacher and students’ attention as well as quite a lot of academic time. Overall, our results demonstrate a strong effect of non-philological students’ grammatical competence formation which can be reinforced by their individual findings and presenting the video material within the matter discussed or searching the Internet and analyzing YouTube videos. Dialogical and monological speech is preferable.

It is a question of future research to investigate the algorithm of teaching the participles (active and passive) as there are some nuances as for their usage, on the one hand, and the differences between the participle I and the gerund, besides.

References:


**Література:**


