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ACQUIRING GRAMMATICAL REGISTERS AND STYLES: A METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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The main emphasis of this study is placed on the issue of teaching stylistic grammar to teacher-trainees. The purpose of the article is to analyze registers and styles of communication, specify their discriminative features, and design a methodology incorporating a corresponding system of activities. Advancing stylistic competence is identified as a target of acquiring stylistic grammar. To achieve the target students are expected to learn how to switch registers and mix styles of communication. With this in mind, a corresponding methodology is designed, which incorporates a system of stylistically oriented activities.

Keywords: foreign language stylistic competence; stylistic grammar; communication styles and registers; switches of styles and registers; variation of styles and registers; building stylistic fields; synonymous variation of verbs; system of stylistically directed activities.

ОВОЛОДІННЯ ГРАМАТИЧНИМИ РЕГІСТРАМИ І СТИЛЯМИ: МЕТОДИЧНИЙ РАКУРС

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У статті розглядається проблема оволодіння стилістичною граматиною студентами ВЗО. Стаття має на меті розглянути різні комунікативні стилі і реєстри комунікації в англійській мові, висвітлити їхні основні граматичні й лексичні характеристики, визначити сфери їхнього вживання, розробити відповідну методику, яка містить завдання, спрямовані на формування

стилістичної компетенції студентів. Означена компетенція характеризується як такий рівень володіння іноземною мовою, який передбачає не лише граматичну і стилістичну усвідомленість, а й здатність продукувати стилістично адекватні тексти відповідно до контексту комунікації в реальних умовах спілкування. Розвиток іноземної стилістичної компетенції є поступовим процесом, який має починатися на початковому етапі навчання і тривати до кінця навчання, адже володіння стилістичною грамотністю є вищим рівнем володіння іноземною комунікацією.

Поступово піднімаючись мовними й мовленнєвими щаблями, студенти формують вміння переключати та варіювати реєстри і стилі комунікації. Своєю чергою, варіювання реєстрів і стилів спілкування є ситуативно детермінованим. До того ж, суб'єкти пізнання навчаються створювати стилістичні поля, розширювати їх відповідно до конотативних значень комунікативних одиниць та варіювати їх синонімічно відповідно до рівня офіційності спілкування. У статті пропонується система стилістично спрямованих вправ і завдань, які за характером є некомунікативними рецептивними, умовно-комунікативними рецептивно-репродуктивними та комунікативними продуктивними.

Ключові слова: іноземна стилістична компетенція; стилістична граматики; стилі і реєстри комунікації; переключення стилів і реєстрів спілкування; варіювання стилів і реєстрів; створення стилістичних полів; синонімічне варіювання дієслів; система стилістично спрямованих завдань.

This study explores the issue of developing foreign language (FL) stylistic competence of University students – teacher-trainees. In particular, the article focuses on the factors, which promote and maintain students' ability to come up with appropriate communicative outputs congruous to communicative settings and corresponding conventions. This issue is deemed momentous, although insufficiently scrutinized in terms of grammatical constituents, as in the methodological literature they are either deficient in support or examined only in relation to lexis (vocabulary). Moreover, for all that it may seem quite reasonable, teachers introduce these issues predominantly to undergraduates, though junior students are also thought to grasp stylistic awareness. At the same time, grammatical appropriateness, norms and usage, relevance to a communication setting and an ability to make a pragmatic effect on the interlocutor largely depend on the level of stylistic competence of FL learners [32, p. 83].

The evidence seems to be strong that currently there are fewer studies of grammatical as opposed to lexical variation in the English language, in order to highlight relative distributions of grammatical forms and social and linguistic factors, which affect them. According to D. Britain, this is due to the fact that larger corpora are needed to analyze grammatical phenomena because of their less frequent occurrence in spoken language than the segmental lexical features that tend to dominate in the methodological literature. The data indicate that research on the social embedding of grammatical variation is even less well advanced [11, p. 76].

The purpose of this article is to identify and analyze registers and styles of English communication, instantiate their lexical and grammatical features, and design a corresponding methodology, which embraces the stages of learning and an applicable system of stylistically oriented activities beneficial for promoting students' stylistic competence.

Commonly, communication outputs of junior students – teacher-trainees – are distinguished as stylistically neutral, which is determined by the application of one of the basic principles of foreign language acquisition (FLA) – the principle of approximation. That is why the spoken output of undergraduates significantly differs from the similar output of native speakers in many respects, including stylistic inadequacy in terms of registers.

Therefore, correctness, accuracy and speech culture are viewed as one of the main foci of teachers from the very start of a University FL course. The compliance with this requirement would eliminate the issue of retraining and consequently increase the effectiveness of FLA, especially in terms of cultural conventions of communication.

Interestingly, the term *register* was first introduced by linguist T. B. Reid [28, p. 45] yet in 1956. In the 1960s, it was brought into common usage by a group of scholars aiming to differentiate between language variants in accordance with the *user* (as dependent upon one's social background, education, location, gender and age) and variations in language in accordance with the *use* "in the sense that each speaker has a range of varieties and choices between them at different times" [15, p. 62]. In their research, the emphasis was placed on the way language might be used in definite settings or spheres, like scholarly fields, news report, entertainment grounds and others.

M. A. K. Halliday, being one of the first linguists to address the notion of *register* in the 1960s and 1970s, elucidates it as a *semantic concept*, which "can be defined as a configuration of meanings that are typically associated with a particular situational configuration of field, mode, and tenor" [16, p. 38]. The linguistic features (specific lexicogrammatical and phonological expressions) and the definite merits of the three dimensions of the field, mode and tenor establish the utilitarian differentiation of a language. These variables can be utilized to identify the contextual clues of a setting in which language is employed [27].

Considerably, the use of a certain register is looked upon as the product of choices concerning the topic of a communicative interaction (*field*), the social distance between the interlocutors to the spoken or written exchange (*tenor*), and the employed means of communication – spoken or written. It largely depends on one's perspective. Conventionally, language variation according to the use is called "register", whereas language variation according to the user is called "dialect": dialects imply the same thing using different lexicogrammatical structures (*mode*) [17, p. 111].

Furthermore, Halliday distinguishes closed and open registers. *Closed (or restricted) registers* possess a set of fixed feasible implications (for instance, "the language of the air" or "the languages of games"), whereas *open registers* imply not so constricted scope of communication (for instance, letters and instructions) [16, p. 39].

Similar to Halliday's concept of register, D. Hymes devised the "Speaking model" to categorize speech situations and consequently, the register employed in them. By dint of eight constituents, interlocutors can distinguish the setting of an interaction, and thus, utilize language adequately. Specifically, Hymes' variables of discourse are: setting, participants, ends, form and content of text, key, interactional norms, medium, and genre [20, p. 244].

Extending the abovementioned, R. Quirk et. al. expose a five-appellation variation to classify language variations and narrow down the range of registers from very formal – formal – neutral – informal to very informal [26, p. 25].

Expounding on the concept of *register*, D. Biber designates it as "situationally defined varieties" [7, p. 1] and concentrates primarily on the grammatical characteristics of different types of text. He characterizes four main registers: conversation, fiction, newspaper language, and academic prose. In addition, the researcher explores lexical and grammatical features of discourse illustrations with each register and focuses on the authentic usage of these features in various English variations [8, p. 8]. In this way, Biber can delineate a particular register in consonance with its language characteristics, and it is plausible to discriminate the basic

registers from each other, with roughly distinct idiosyncrasies.

In his turn, P. Trudgill utilizes the concept *register* implying a linguistic variation stipulated by theme, content or pursuit, such as the register of banking, the register of geography, the register of pedagogy etc. In English, this is almost entirely a question of vocabulary, though several registers, specifically the register of jurisprudence, are alleged to have distinctive linguistic and semantic attributes. It suggests direct implications for universities to set a goal to transmit particular registers to students – for example, academic, technical or scientific registers; and certainly, it is a necessary part of the instruction for students to acquire the corresponding registers [31, p. 118].

Although there seems to be a close relationship between style and register these concepts are considered to be fundamentally different. In particular, Trudgill characterizes *style* as varieties of language viewed in relation to formality, which can be ranged on a continuum from very formal to very informal [30, p. 35]. Moreover, the choice of style usually reflects the formality of a social situation in which it is employed – which does not necessarily imply that interlocutors are “cross-linguistic robots”, who automatically react to a definite level of punctiliousness of a sociocultural situation. Conversely, interlocutors are capable of affecting and transforming the level of punctiliousness of a sociocultural situation manipulating a stylistic choice [14, p. 91].

In essence, the term *style* refers to a language variety that is split up into formal and informal styles based on the opposition: a speech vs. speaking situation. Individuals can speak very formally or very informally; their choice of the appropriate style is governed by circumstances. Besides, interlocutors can employ *style shifting*, which is defined as variation within the speech of a single speaker whereby speakers may shift in their use of grammatical, phonological, and lexical variants in response to social conditions [35, p. 244].

It is worth mentioning that there is also a view (which sounds rather debatable and not shared by everyone) that *style* is rather associated with the graphic discourse (letters, essays, written texts) and appertains to *how* the graphic output is formulated in writing to accomplish a specific purpose (for example, to comment on or explain something, persuade someone, describe a situation, suggest a solution to a problem etc.). Respectively, such writing styles are persuasive (to convince the reader of something), narrative (to tell a story), expository (to explain or expose a topic), and descriptive (to create an image in the reader’s mind) [34].

Furthermore, speaking about *style* it deems plausible to refer to styles of communication – different ways in which individuals approach the process of communication. Specifically, psychologist J. Bourne distinguishes such types of communication styles as [10, p. 312]: **submissive** (focused on pleasing other people and avoiding conflicts); **aggressive** (presuming winning at all costs, which may often happen at the expense of others); **passive-aggressive** (involves people appearing passive on the surface, while *actually* indirectly expressing their anger); **manipulative** (implies shrewd behavior a person takes on in order to achieve the desired outcomes); **assertive** (emerges from self-esteem and represents the healthiest and most effective style of communication one can adopt). For individuals, these styles of communication may either be dominant, or be used in specific situations and with specific people. Definitely, employing the aforementioned styles, subjects will resort to specific grammatical and lexical means.

In the similar vein, M. Murphy at al. differentiate four basic styles of communication [24]: **analytical (focused on data)**, **intuitive (seeing “the big picture”)**, **functional**

(**concentrated on processes**), and **personal (driven by emotions)**. Substantially, these styles of communication assume how individuals prefer to communicate information and hence, what lexico-grammatical units they utilize in various settings.

It seems plausible to hypothesize, in order to bridge the gap between styles and registers, that by tacit conventions of communication they are in close correlation and largely dependent on a scope of knowledge and level of FL proficiency of interlocutors.

From a FL teacher's perspective, the most functional classification of registers may be regarded the one suggested by American linguist M. Joos [22, p. 46]: frozen – formal – consultative – casual – intimate. They are deemed as most relevant for teaching University students; hence they require cursory specification.

Frozen register represents very formalized speech that is mostly produced via recitation rather than spontaneous speech production. This is primarily ritualistic speech, that is why it is also called the “static register” because each time exactly the same utterances are spoken. They embrace reciting a pledge, a prayer, or wedding vows. Typically, the audience knows what the speaker will say because utterances of the frozen register are learned verbatim and do not change over time.

Formal register constitutes precise speech, which is frequently professional, official, or impersonal in nature. In English, many components of the formal register involve the use of standard grammar. A speaker employing the formal register utilizes complete sentences, accurate grammar, standard vocabulary, and the exact pronunciation of words. The topics discussed within the formal register are usually official matters, such as a professional meeting, graduation ceremony, or academic lecture.

Consultative register illustrates speech that involves the participation of all parties. A speaker employs the consultative register to discuss a topic, and the listener(s) is expected to contribute feedback. The speaker and listener(s) are both members of the audience. In English, this register can imply both standard and non-standard grammatical forms, the use of which is heavily reliant on a social context. This type of discourse may commonly occur between a doctor and a patient, a student and a teacher, or a boss and an employee etc.

Casual register instantiates speech that is informal or imprecise. This type of register allows non-standard grammatical forms, incomplete sentences, or regional phrasing. The casual register is often used between people who are already acquainted with one another and relies on a relaxed social context. The topics of discussion for this register are informal but not too personal.

Intimate register describes personal topics used between close acquaintances, such as family members, close friends, or romantic partners, and can employ standard or non-standard grammatical forms. The intimate register is used to discuss topics that the speaker does not wish to be public knowledge, such as personal stories, problems at work or school, or secrets.

Certainly, the above mentioned types of register are not conclusive, but they aim to describe the most typical types of language variations utilized by English speakers. Besides, Joos also defines four differentiating factors that influence the use of a language register. These factors comprise audience (speakers – listeners), topic (the subject matter being discussed), purpose (intentions of the speaker), location (the place of communication). They relate to the modification of a language register because they each indicate to speakers and listeners what is appropriate and influence acceptable uses of speech [22, p. 55].

It is also worth indicating that formality in English is not necessarily confined only to

lexis, however, English grammar structures differ on the scale from informality to formality – for example, it is frequently alleged that the passive voice is often utilized in more formal texts [30, p. 67].

On balance, register and style although often used interchangeably are not similar in their meanings. Register conveys the type of language the writer or speaker chooses to employ, that is *it* refers to the ways individuals use language grounded on **who they are conversing with, under what circumstances, and in what settings**. Register is often mentioned in relation to the level of formality, whereas style implies *how* a text is adjusted to suit a particular context. Both are associated with a specific situation, but whilst register refers to the particular vocabulary chosen, style also includes grammatical variation. Furthermore, grammar use can signify how far formal or informal a narrative is. For example, **a formal** narrative will use standardized grammar, avoid contractions, and follow standard layout guidelines. **An informal** narrative is less constrained to standardized grammatical structures and vocabulary, and may employ acronyms and shorted forms. Admittedly, English instructors adhere to five basic types of register – **frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate**. The register of a definite text can be identified by the spelling, grammar, and vocabulary choices.

Irrespectively of the controversies in interpretations of register and style, their appropriate manifestation is viewed as being dependent upon the level of stylistic competence of students. Hence, enhancing stylistic competence requires a relevant methodology compatible with educational goals and expected learning outcomes. That is why it is worthwhile at this stage to consider the stages of FLA with regard to stylistic grammar and a pertinent system of activities.

Results. Unfortunately, currently the number of English text- or workbooks for junior students with a focus on registers or communication styles is rather limited. They do not encompass stylistically marked texts, which students receive as samples for communication. Withal, such books contain insufficient exercises aimed at stylistic differentiation of language material. One of them is illustrated beneath [4, p. 322]: *Synonyms within the following pairs differ in style. Identify which of them are formal, conversational or neutral: picture – house – cinema; to get on in years – to age; to endeavor – to try; to sing (perform) – to render; desolate – sad; to clap – to applaud*. Such exercises occur in the textbooks sporadically. They may be thought valuable from a linguistic perspective but they definitely do not conduce to effective communication. In most cases, exercises of this type are mainly targeted at differentiating the studied vocabulary, whereas grammatically oriented exercises remain disregarded.

There are different approaches to the issue at what year of study students should get familiarized with stylistic differentiation of communicative inputs. This is where the disagreements and controversies begin. In particular, some researchers (see for instance, Ye. I. Passov [5, p. 41]) advise students not to rush to learn registers. Therefore, it takes a quite a time (namely, two years) to assimilate stylistically undifferentiated or neutral information. This view has a clear theoretical basis. Before imbibing stylistically congruent information, it is necessary that oral communicative skills and abilities should be fully developed in terms of fluency, grammatical accuracy, lexical appropriateness, syntactic correctness etc. Only after reaching the requisite level of communication skills and abilities, it is possible to set the task to students to employ language tools adequate to various

communication settings. Thus, the phasing here is seen in the gradual transition from learning to speak correctly in terms of FL standards and norms to the correctness and accuracy in terms of adequate usage of registers.

Other methodologists [6, p. 59] justify FLA based on neutral lexis and grammar by the need to master the “neutral” literary language (standards and norms) asserting that junior students acquire FL basics, and the focus on language “neutrality” does not direct students’ attention to the context of communication and choice of language means. This idea is deemed arguable, since literary standards significantly differ in their spoken manifestations (for example, professional and routine communication). In order to avoid such artificial detachment from “live” communication, the concept of basic language should incorporate the factor of real functional and stylistic differentiation. Consequently, knowledge of the literary norm involves mastering not only the neutral language stratum, but also registers and functional styles of communication.

To elaborate, functional styles are to be the starting point for teaching a FL to non-native speakers, as it is possible to assimilate linguistic means of the target FL for different purposes only by being familiarized with linguistic features of different registers and styles of communication. That is why it is expedient to focus on stylistic differentiation of communication at the initial stage of a University FL course, which may appear conducive to enhancing students’ stylistic competence – the ability to produce utterances adequate to a specific setting when exposed to real life communication [2, p. 91; 6, p. 60; 33, p. 95]. It must therefore be recognized that such an ability implies a certain stylistic proficiency not only with regard to FL lexis but also to FL grammar.

As an illustration of this premise, W. Labov introduces the progressive model of language development, which *inter alia* involves an individual’s awareness of speech differentiation and control over speech. This model incorporates six stages [23, p. 81]: 1) basic grammar, 2) the vernacular, 3) social perception, 4) the consistent standard; 5) stylistic variation, 6) the acquisition of the full range. Amenably to this model, young learners are looked upon as monostylistic speakers until late adolescence. In this view, they are monostylistic in the dialect used in their family environment until the age of five, when they become monostylistic in the preferred dialect of their peer group. It is only after having understood the social value ascribed to linguistic variants that they become able to vary their use of dialect and standard forms according to the degree of formality of the situation. Moreover, Labov’s model implies the gradual transition from non-standard to standard language, the change from informal to formal style, and it also emphasizes the need to master the stylistic variability of communication.

To extend the abovementioned, educators distinguish between five levels of grammar that an individual acquires in their language development [25]: a) the organization of words; b) studying the rules of organization and use of words; c) judgments based on the use and organization of words; d) school grammar; e) stylistic grammar. Thus, mastering stylistic features of speech is also mandatory here. Pursuant to P. Hartwell, most teachers take into account only one of the five above levels of grammar, paying attention to the grammatical accuracy of statements following “rules of the language being studied”. Instead, one should also take account of both the stylistic adequacy of speech and its stylistic differentiation and variability [18]. Therefore, stylistic grammar acquires increasing importance in language development, especially for University students.

Some experts [9, p. 443] pinpoint the idea of the established “variation theory”, which describes different variations in language and its use. This theory is based on the postulate, conforming to which, the real verbal behavior of a person is determined not only by their linguistic competence, but also by their knowledge of socially determined connotations, or additional meanings accompanying the main meaning of a word. The indications are therefore that inasmuch as people master language in different social conditions they eventually acquire “different grammars of this language” (see for example, the interlanguage or intermittent grammars), so it is requisite to describe these differences via special “extension rules”, which allow for the information about both linguistic units themselves and about their connotations: *cf.: It's chow time./ I am hungry./ I am starving./ I am as hungry as a hunter./ I feel like eating./ Isn't it time we eat something?/ I guess we might have a bite etc.* [1, p. 100].

It is noteworthy that there are two approaches to teaching stylistic grammar: romantic and classical [18]. The romantic approach, which is predominately based on the philosophical theory of language, rather than linguistic, is aimed at implementing declarative knowledge of an individual. This approach is successfully applied by teachers, but causes difficulties for students because it does not involve introducing stylistic differentiation of spoken and written outputs. The classical approach, which offers prescriptive rules concerning the choice of style / register of speech, is aimed at implementing the procedural knowledge of an individual. It is clear therefore that the main emphasis in FL classrooms should be placed on the classical approach since it has an indubitable practical value.

In addition to the aforementioned, Hartwell posits that teaching stylistic grammar involves advancing the skills of two levels [18]: rhetorical and metalinguistic. The former provide communication in a variety of settings. The latter ensure active manipulation of language to achieve a stylistic effect on the interlocutor. At this, more attention is paid to the external form of lexical and grammatical units. Accordingly, when acquiring FL grammar, it is crucial to equally enhance in students both rhetorical and metalinguistic skills, which will conduce not only to a high level of their stylistic competence but to FL proficiency in general.

The pragmatic effect of communication plays a pivotal role in affecting the speaker's goal while constructing a narrative. This effect occurs within such parameters as expressiveness (eloquence), correctness (semantic and grammatical), and stylistic colorings of speech (considering speakers' social status and age, as well as communication settings). The stylistic “design” of the narrative contributes to the effect it exerts on the interlocutor, and this influential force can be regarded as one of the sides of the pragmatic aspect of speech, which is based on the selection of special linguistic means [3, p. 137].

Given the evidence, it may be inferred that FL instructors are supposed to familiarize students with stylistic differentiation of spoken and written speech starting from the junior years of study in the University. Gradually students are to be inured first in recognizing and differentiating stylistic variations of speech units, later – reproducing and stylistically modifying them, and in senior years – producing communication outputs of different registers and styles.

The following part of this study will illustrate the stylistically oriented activities targeted at advancing FL stylistic competence of University students – teacher-trainees.

The advancement of stylistic competence begins, foremost, with receptive non-communicative activities aiming at differentiation of registers and styles. For instance:

Example 1

Identify who the reporter addresses in the picture gallery. Do the matching work:

1. Do you like it? 2. Like it? 3. May I ask you if you like it? 4. Excuse me, please. Would you mind if I ask you whether you like the picture?	a) a worker b) a gentleman c) two teenagers d) an old lady
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Example 2

Arrange the following answers from the most informal to the most formal.

How are you?	Who's calling?
1. I'm very well, thank you. 2. Oh, not so bad, you know. 3. Fine, thanks. 4. Oh, surviving.	1. My name is White. 2. This is White. 3. White here. 4. White speaking.

The next activity, which is a modification of the exercise [29, p. 111], instantiates a more complex task completing which students are expected not only identify and differentiate speech registers but also do the matching work and make stylistic grading of requests according to the level of their formality.

Example 3

Read the text "Polite requests" [29, p. 111] and do the assignments that follow.

The assignments to be completed:

- Match the phrases of the requests to dance with the people who expressed them.
- Grade the requests to dance according to the level of their formality (ranging from casual to formal).

1. Would you mind having the next dance with me? 2. Can I ... I mean ... could I ...no, might I have the next dance with you? 3. Would you like to dance? 4. I wonder if you would be so kind enough to dance with me ... er ... if you don't mind. 5. Do you want to dance? 6. Would you be so kind as to have the next dance with me? 7. Er ... dance? 8. Excuse me, may I have the pleasure of the next dance?	A. The fellow who was wearing an old jacket and trousers, and nobody could say that he was good-looking. B. A fellow in a blue suit, a nice tie, and with a little moustache. C. A posh guy, wearing a dinner-jacket and a bow tie. D. The unknown character. E. A very good-looking guy with white teeth and black hair.
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3. Answer the questions:

- Why do you think the girl preferred Mr. Millward to all the other guys, who asked her to dance? Substantiate your answer.
- Do you suppose she turned them down because they were excessively polite?
- Could you categorize the guys, who asked the girl to dance, by their education and social status?
- Do you believe these factors determine a person's manner of speech?
- If you were to find yourself in a similar situation what guy would you choose?

The illustrated examples of activities do not have an ostensible communicative focus, as their purpose is not producing an adequate stylistically coloured communicative output, but differentiating styles or registers, which does not make these cases less important. At the initial stage of FLA, stylistic grammar is mainly introductory and receptive.

The next stage of advancing students' stylistic competence is the transition to quasi-communicative receptive-reproductive activities, completing which students first perceive and then reproduce fully, partially or with transformations the communication input.

Example 4

Request your mates in the dormitory: to clean after themselves; not to speak so loudly; to have quieter parties; to stop smoking in the room; to turn down the volume; keep silent. Employ various styles to achieve your purpose.

Model:

St. 1: Could you, please, keep silent!

St. 2: Please, keep silent!

St. 3: Silent!

Example 5

Make the following orders of your rude roommate less imperative.

Model:

St. 1: Shut the door!

St. 2: Would you be so kind as to shut the door?

*1. Open the window! 2. Give me some bread! 3. Reach the jar on the upper shelf!
4. Pay back the debt! 5. Help me with my homework! 6. Follow the instructions!
7. Remember to drop a few lines! 8. Take out the trash!*

The illustrated quasi-communicative receptive-reproductive activities involve not only the identification and differentiation of communication registers, but also the stylistic transformation of definite speech patterns, which complexifies the assignment.

It is worth emphasizing that the transition to activities of the communicative nature should be moderate and gradual. To this end, the FL instructor is supposed to create or simulate communication settings, the conditions of which may ensure the correlation of outworking one's communicative intention with a definite stylistic feature, that is in a particular setting the speaker's choice of certain grammatical forms should be stylistically marked [33, p. 98]. The corresponding instances are illustrated below.

Example 6

You cannot keep your promise to come over and help. Get your reason across to different people. Employ the relevant register. Talk to: a) your mate; b) the Dean; c) the top manager of the firm where you work part-time; d) your father.

Further, we will illustrate the activity that takes into account the situational context and the dependence of the chosen register on the status or social roles of interlocutors.

Example 7

Account for your missing the class to the monitor of the group, the Dean and your intimate friend. Consider the register you will employ.

Completing the given assignment, students are expected to express themselves within a definite context, varying registers and using appropriate lexical and grammatical means. Their speech will be changing from an intimate register when conversing to a friend, to casual when talking to the monitor, and to formal when talking to the Dean.

As can be seen from the examples offered above, the suggested activities are aimed at observing stylistic adequacy of communication taking into account the social status and age of the recipients. This implies primarily the alternation of formal and informal registers and communication styles.

The evidence seems to be strong that learning formal and informal speech is important in enhancing stylistic competence of University students. It stands to reason to begin with a synonymous variation of verbs to express a certain idea and gradually move to mixing different registers. Starting from junior years, students are confronted with samples of both formal and informal registers and styles. Systematically, they come to understand that native speakers' speech is affected by their social status, cultural conventions, conditions of communication and so on. In order to avoid "stylistic salad" in speech, at the initial stage students should be taught to clearly distinguish between formal and informal registers and styles of communication, and adequately correlate them with corresponding communicative settings.

In this regard, the idea of J. Hill about changes in registers of communication and their mixing in the process of learning FL communication seems opportune [19, p. 98–99]. The point is that each speaker possesses a number of registers, which allows them to "switch" from one register to another according to a communication setting, the speaker's social role, addressee, topic of conversation, presence / absence of social control and self-control and so on. For instance, a doctor uses a casual register speaking to his family and friends, and a consultative register communicating with patients, a formal register and medical jargon conversing with the staff. Changing registers according to the context is called *situational switching* [21, p. 128].

Naturally, native speakers switch registers subconsciously, but non-native speakers should be purposefully trained in such switching. Therefore, in the process of FLA there should be a sufficient number of activities aimed at mixing and varying communication registers in order to avoid stylistic inadequacy. The FL instructor is expected to familiarize students with non-specific language units, teach them to navigate the situation, create stylistic fields according to the situation, be able to "switch" to a new modality, using appropriate grammatical structures and varying pertinent lexical means.

To implement this idea, students are to be taught to synonymously vary verbs according to a communicative setting. A language register may be considered a type of linguistic variation. Linguistic variation describes the complex ways speakers modify their language use in agreement with social cues, communication context, and personal expression. Language register, therefore, can be defined as a type of linguistic variation that indicates a level of formality and speaker-audience relationship. For instance, English learners are supposed to be aware that phrasal verbs are widely utilized in informal communication, for example, *to brood over*, *to spit out*, *to sound out* etc. In formal communication, in written speech, on the contrary, it is more appropriate to avoid phrasal verbs and use more formal verbs that can convey the similar idea, for example, instead of *to spell out* it is more appropriate to use *to expound*, *to elucidate*, *to explicate*, *to delineate*, *to specify*, etc., instead

of *to speak up* – *to converse, to parley, to discourse, to confer*, etc., instead of *to chat* – *to communicate, to verbalize, to articulate, to enunciate*, etc. [2, p. 98]. The activities that follow illustrate the mentioned above requirement.

Example 8

Identify the register and the odd verbs, which do not correspond to this register. Categorize the verbs in agreement with their implications: to learn, to study, to investigate, to research, to scrutinize, to read up on, to examine, to inspect, to consider, to regard, to survey, to analyze, to review, to enquire, to cram.

Example 9

Classify the verbs that follow conforming to the given registers “formal – informal – casual”: *to advise, to comment, to desire, to praise, to report, to refute, to appraise, to ascertain, to claim, to converse, to chat, to explain, to recognize, to conclude, to infer, to elicit, to explore, to find, to notice, to recommend, to suppose, to admit, to confirm, to assume, to think, to believe, to allege, to guess, to decide, to state, to announce, to say, to remind, to argue, to warn, to disagree, to insist, to beg, to urge, to suggest, to add, to propose, to boast, to brag, to deny, to accept, to concede, to persuade, to remind.*

The instantiated examples of activities are of non-communicative but rather linguistic character; they are targeted at developing the skill to stylistically differentiate the input. Nonetheless, they are valuable since they are targeted at training students in differentiating formal and informal linguistic units, which is important at the initial stage of FLA.

In senior years, the activities enhancing students’ stylistic competence should also encompass communicative productive assignments. Completing such assignments students are expected to produce communication outputs employing relevant styles and registers congruous with the settings [12, p. 11; 13, p. 9]. The congruous instances of activities are exemplified below.

Example 10

You are eager to have a better command of English but you struggle with fluency. Request your English language instructor for some pieces of advice. Employ the appropriate register.

Write an article to a university student bulletin about some important event in your life. Make use of the appropriate style.

To summarize, the methodology of fostering stylistic competence of University students – teacher-trainees – incorporates a system of activities comprising receptive non-communicative, receptive-reproductive quasi-communicative and productive communicative activities targeted at producing different types of communicative outcomes. Acquiring the sought-for competence is a gradual process continuing throughout the University FL course.

Language registers indicate the way a person speaks in relation to their audience. A speaker modifies their language register to signal levels of formality conforming to the relationship to their audience and the intended purpose of speech. A speaker might modify their speech to fit a formal language register by employing more complex vocabulary and grammatical structures, and by omitting any slang or informal speech.

One of the important educational tasks of a University FL course is to familiarize students with registers and styles of communication. This is a phase-in and staged process, which requires students' progressing through different grammatical levels as well as interlanguages. Students are supposed to be consistently and systematically taught the elements of stylistic differentiation and linguistic variation, which will significantly conduce to their stylistic competence and FL proficiency. Moreover, students are expected to be aware how to create stylistic fields and be able to switch registers in consonance with conditions and conventions of communication. The issues of both registers and styles are particularly important for learners of English – teacher trainees, as they are expected to know how to teach such issues in their future occupations.

This study though far from being conclusive yet offers several insights into an issue of how stylistic grammar can be taught to and acquired by University students. Simultaneously, in the light of this discussion the study entails a question whether registers and styles of communication overlap as well as how close their correlation may be, which outlines a perspective for further research in this respect.

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