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# **Towards the Use of the Model Method in the Teaching of English Grammar and Vocabulary**

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**Abstract:** The first part of the paper offers a theoretical outline of models and the model method as regards the stimulation of students' mental capacities. It tackles the different aspects of modeling in the process of tuition and discusses the creation of models, their nature, and elements. In the second part we offer a model that introduces the peculiarities of word-final consonant voicing through the formation of the present simple tense (third person singular ending). The model is designed in such a way as to stimulate students' understanding of sound change in morphological markers by associating these with particular sentences that demonstrate the specific functions of the tense. The second model we offer draws on the belief that language is innately metaphorical. It presents visually the relations between terms from the semantic field of water with expressions that employ metaphorical mappings of their semantic elements on a number of abstractions. The purpose of the model is not only to aid students' memory, but also to attune them to the culture-specific traits of English as presented in its phraseology. Such visualizations can be designed for all metaphorically presented abstractions in English and can be an excellent navigating tool in the difficult phraseology of the richest language in the world.

**Key words:** model, types of models, transversal competence, hierarchical structure of language, metaphorical presentation of abstractions

## **A. Theoretical aspects of the use of the model method in education and language teaching.**

Since the creation of mankind, the course of both historical and social development has in fact been an exchange of information, relevant to the past, the present and the future. Often the transfer of this information is performed through various linguistic means and through verbal communication.

More and more futuristic studies show an increase in the relative share of the symbolic communication and behavior of man. Depending on the mode of generation, creation and functioning of symbols and their processing and perception, a symbol can be considered an intermediary between reality and its possible meanings. Undoubtedly, we communicate daily by exchanging information with the help of different symbols. Therefore one of the most important tasks of education is the improvement of the system of education. This imposes the need to search new methods and techniques for the management of students' development. Their activation and the assurance in the orderliness of the knowledge they obtain is a fundamental requirement for the perfection of the methods of tuition. It is advisable that education create in adolescents solid cognitive interests, striving and skill for independent acquisition of knowledge - a result of a motivated and purposeful search. The triggering of the mental process, the stimulation of the reflective search as the

main substance of cognition may be reached through properly organized and well managed cognitive activity. Among the diversity of educational tasks, the cognitive ones are those that lead to new knowledge, to new cognitive results

The work of teachers is focused on the development and use of such methods of tuition as to stimulate the active and responsible participation of students in the educational process. These methods are often called interactive – they convert education from an algorithm to a game.

When solving different didactic problems, modeling may be used as the main logistic instrument for education and development, as incentive to cognitive activity, as it contributes to the formation of skills in the reflexive activity.

It is known that the surrounding world is an imprint (pattern) in the human consciousness in every stage of its development, starting from the sensory images and concepts and ending with the scientific theories, which are nothing more than a form of models with a different degree of depth, truthfulness and verisimilitude.

Modeling in the process of tuition can be analyzed in two aspects:

1. as dynamic, developing substance that can be absorbed by the students in the process of tuition; as an educational activity that represents a fundamental element of the educative activity;
2. as a personal mapping of certain fragments of reality.

The educational knowledge is displayed and is offered to the students in different forms. The form could be imagistic, verbal, objective, symbolic and index. Each of these differs from the others in the way of its information encoding, so that with the help of recoding, the form of the educational content changes, i.e. the models transmute. This leads to a change in the system of models, their transformation into one another, the enhancement of their informational value and the strengthening of their cognitive role.

Models have different functions in the process of tuition: cognitive, heuristic, prognostic, inductive, deductive, explanatory, etc.

Didactic diversity suggests the creation and use of specific educational realia – a condition for the existence and realization of both creative thinking and the ability of solving different cognitive problems.

Learning and tuition through modeling have several obligatory stages:

1. Creation of models:
  - preliminary analysis of the contents of the object;
  - construction of the model; selection of a model
2. Use of models:
  - working with the model (degree of its internalization);
  - conveying of the knowledge, acquired through the system of models, onto the corresponding objects of reality.

It is clear that the model is a multi-layered and dynamic system in the specific situation of tuition. The study of relations between all components of the system (subjective or objective), as well as the dynamic stability, lie at the basis of the assurance in the authenticity of the newly acquired knowledge for the didactic realia and have a crucial meaning for the effectiveness of modeling as an activity. If used to its full degree, the correct enunciation of the objectives when constructing a model in the educational process is of essential significance

Therefore the necessity of a detailed study of the process of modeling and of classroom realia is of fundamental importance to education.

Foreign language teaching, as part of the educational process in its turn, is becoming more and more difficult as it is extremely abstract. Additionally, students

are constantly being discouraged in their learning of languages because of the fast computer communication. This stipulates a new search of methods of language teaching in order to make this knowledge more entertaining and fascinating for students.

Linguistics is connected with the use of different types of models which undoubtedly abet language learning:

- ❖ phonetic
- ❖ lexical
- ❖ morphologic
- ❖ stylistic
- ❖ syntactic

Guiding students in the use of models, which are a buffer zone between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, leads to the formation of certain competences – analysis, synthesis, argument, abstract and logical thinking, self reflection. All this lies at the basis of the *portable ( transversal) competence* of students. It is formed as a manner not as a function of foreign language teaching.

### **B. Practical aspects of the use of the model method in English language teaching. Preliminary analysis of the content.**

In the process of language teaching an instructor needs to always have in mind the fact that language is a system of its own right. It is built up of interrelated structures hence the learning and mastery of any language requires systemic knowledge. This means that at any given moment of the study of language students must be aware of its systemic character. Learning a language is, therefore, the gradual introduction of structures in such a way as to preserve their peculiarities as part of a bigger whole. When teaching phonetics, we need to consider its relation to morphology. In teaching morphology, we need to keep in mind syntax. In teaching syntax, we should make allowance for pragmatics – the effect we can achieve through the use of certain phrases and collocations. And last but not least, the whole process should be subordinate to semantics – the meanings and the sense relations of lexemes.

All this means that it is best to teach language through models that give idea of its structural unity. It is important to note that linguistic structures are bound by a hierarchical principle, which should be preserved in the educational models as well. There is no phonetics without morphology, morphology without syntax, syntax without semantics, etc. But then again, semantics is rooted in syntax, which is in its turn based on morphology, which lies on phonetics. Likewise, the models presenting these structural levels of language should follow the hierarchical principle that lies at the basis of the structure of language.

#### **I. Phonetic and morphological model.**

Since learning a language starts with sounds and ends up with good style, we have chosen a class assignment which demonstrates how phonetic, morphological and semantic categories can be presented by one hierarchical model suggested by the structure of language itself.

It is impossible to teach the English sounds without introducing phonetic changes like reduction, voicing, devoicing, etc. For any Bulgarian learner of English it is of utter importance to realize that, unlike in Bulgarian, no devoicing of word final consonants occurs in English unless the consonant is preceded by a voiceless sound. Additionally, morphological markers like the “s” ending for the plural of nouns and the ending of the third person singular in the present tense, although voiceless is voice

by the preceding sounds. Thus, for example, *go* transforms to *goes* in the third person singular where the final “s” is voiced and pronounced as “z”. In the case of verbs ending in sonorants or voiced consonants the ending is also pronounced as “z”. If we manage to tie up the peculiarities of sound change with specific examples of finite verb forms, we will establish a clear connection between phonetics and morpho-syntax, showing how the principles of the former are demonstrated in the forms of the latter. In this way, learners will establish for themselves an association between pronunciation and grammar that will help them learn more complicated categories in the future.

Similarly, we can and should teach tenses not only in terms of their form but also as regards their functions. The best way to do this is by associating each function with a prominent example. Here is a suggestion for teaching the present simple tense through sentences illustrating its various uses.

#### The Present Simple Tense (Functions)

Tense function	Teacher’s examples	Student’s Examples
Expressing habit	She drinks a vodka or two every night before going to bed.	
Expressing universal truths or scientific facts	Jealousy kills love. Sanskrit <i>is</i> the mother of all Indo-European languages.	
Time-table future	The train leaves at 15.00 as soon as the debris from the accident is cleared away.	
Conditional future	What will you do if she <i>is</i> pregnant?	
Sports commentaries	Berbatov is just about to score a goal when the captain of the guest team takes the ball away from him.	
Historical past	Alexander the Great is a figure of historical prominence.	
Telling jokes	A snail goes into a bar, takes out a pistol and threatens the bartender.	

Keeping the hierarchical principle in mind, we can use this model in three ways. To connect the phonetic category of sound change with the functions of the present simple tense, we can ask students to transcribe the verb forms in each sentence and explain what the pronunciation of the third person singular ending is and why. At the same time this attracts their attention to the fact that there is a specific ending for the third person singular in the present simple, which is a morphological characteristic of the tense. Additionally, by asking students in what kinds of texts the examples can occur, we associate the functions of the tense with a particular kind of discourse. Finally, we can have them build their own models of the present simple tense by giving examples for each function. At last, learners should be able to do three things: a) differentiate between voiced and devoiced consonants in other phonetic contexts; b)

use particular kind of language typical for specific registers; c) say what we can *do* by using the present simple. They should realize that this tense allows us to speak about **science, social norms, habits, historical events**, talk about **the future** or **tell jokes**. By asking students to give their own examples, we activate their knowledge of semantics, while by telling them to assign an example to each tense function, we go into text linguistics and pragmatics, making them aware of language functions. Thus, with the help of a simple table we achieve four goals:

- From a phonetic point of view, we introduce the linguistic peculiarity of English concerning the voicing of final voiceless consonants in various phonetic environments;
- From a morpho-syntactic point of view, we draw learners' attention to the presence of an ending in one of the forms of the present simple by using it to illustrate the aforementioned peculiarity of sound change in English;
- From a semantic point of view, by giving examples that are typical of various registers, we activate students knowledge of specific language that is used in particular spheres of communication;
- From a pragmatic point of view, we associate particular language with particular functions implying a connection between semantics and pragmatics.

To sum up, our model preserves, or rather reflects, the hierarchical structure of language employing it in its teaching. And is there a better way to reveal the complexity of a system than to use its own principles as a means of learning?

## II. Semantic model.

The element of language which most readily succumbs to a representation through models is conceptual metaphor. In his seminal article "A Contemporary Theory of Metaphor" George Lakoff discerns between three types of metaphors: a. ontological; b. structural; c. orientational [1]. They are experientially motivated mappings from one linguistic domain to another. In this way a connection is established between semantic fields that are, on the face of it, unrelated. In the teaching of vocabulary, instructors should be able to make students aware of the similarities and differences between the mappings in the source and target languages, so that in the future mistakes caused by transfer from Bulgarian can be avoided. One way to do this is to find a way to represent the differences visually. It can be most easily done by representing the nature of structural metaphors which are characterized by a systemic mapping of semantic elements from one field onto elements of another or others in order to represent the diverse sides of one and the same phenomenon, event, state, emotion, etc.

The metaphorical mappings of a number of concepts onto the semantic field of water are a good example of a structural metaphor. The reason for this, in our opinion, is rooted in the omnipresence of water and its significance to our life. It is easy to explain abstractions through something which is close, comprehensible and tactile. This has been given detailed analysis in *The Cognitive Significance of the Semantic Domain of Water: Metaphorical Representation of Some Abstract Concepts* by Levunlieva [2]. The paper establishes a systemic representation of 9 abstractions in terms of water and its qualities:

- Mind, intellect, and understanding (*clear-cut answer, lucid explanation/answer, clear conclusion, get something clean, bright or brilliant mind, dry* (uninteresting), *dry up* (stop having ideas), *thick* (stupid), *soaked in* (well-versed

in, interested in), *deep in thought* (contemplating), *deep person* (profound), *still waters run deep*, *still waters have deep bottoms*, *fruitful imagination*, *fruitful plan*, *pick up one's brains*, *as dull as ditch water*, *dull*, *impervious*, *vague idea*, *enlightened*, *Enlightenment*, *elucidate*, *throw light on*, *pour their life stories*, *spill the beans*, *spill out a piece of news*)

- Emotions (*feelings can flow from someone or evaporate and drain away*, *a wave of emotions*, *panic or alarm*, *let off steam*, *blood boils*, *we bottle up our anger*, *we blow our top*, *simmer down*, or *feel our gorge rising*)
- Ethic categories (conscience is *clear*, *in the clear*, clean record, clean reputation, *come clean*, *clean up a place from crime/violence*, *as pure as driven snow*, *as weak as water*, *as unstable as water*, (*wet behaviour/achievement*, *watery smile*)
- Favorable/Unfavorable situations, problems and their solutions (*to be in hot water*, *wade in deep waters*, *in low waters*, *keep our head above water*, *be in desperate financial straits*, *be (caught) in a whirlpool of violence*, *be in the creeks*, *tide somebody over a difficult situation*, *steer clear of trouble*, *swim upstream*, *keep one's head above water*, *pour oil in troubled waters*, *get **in** and **out** of a situation*)
- Intensity, energy and speed (*steam off*)
- Quantity. (*oceans of*, *seas of*, *a river of*, *a flood of*, *a flow of*, *flood the market*, *a stream of*, *a tidal wave of*, *a spray of*, *a drop/dash/splash of*, *a dash*, *splash*, *drop of*)
- Light (*stream, flow, or flood of light*, *bright splashes of light*, *light oozes through*)
- Time (*water under the bridge*, *a lot of water has passed/flowed under the bridge*, *water over the dam*)

It becomes clear from the examples that there are three major types of intra-domain mappings in this structural metaphor: a) mappings of semantic features of water sources on abstractions; b) mappings of qualities of water/liquids on abstractions; c) mappings of elements of the three states of water on abstractions. This facilitates the construction of a model representing the relation structurally (see fig. 1).

Students can be asked to complete the model using actual expressions demonstrating the links it implies. At the same time the model, if properly used, can achieve a twofold long-term goal. One, students become aware of the interconnection between language and experience. Two, they learn structurally related and extra-linguistically motivated phrases, which is an excellent way to aid their memory. In the age of high technologies and state-of-the-art equipment, in which students rely more and more on self-education, they still have to memorize the words and expressions of a language. Models that demonstrate the internal logic of language and the generation of meaning can be a challenging new way to learn.

It is important to note that the model we offer is applicable in all situations where one concept is consistently conveyed through mappings on the elements of another. Such models can be built to introduce phrases expressing states, emotions, human relations, a number of abstractions like events, processes, phenomena, etc. For students at the advanced level they have not only didactic significance, but they also teach them how to think in the terms of and with the categories of the target language. They also initiate them into the traditional beliefs and culture of the English speaking world. This, in its turn, will make them more attuned to their own culture and traditions.

The point of models and the model method is not just educative. By making and decoding models, students learn first to analyze the educational content becoming active participants in the process of teaching. Secondly, they gradually improve their abilities to synthesize, analyze, deduce, induce and observe critically. That is, they learn how to deal with

information. In the modern age, where young people are virtually bombarded with data, this is a matter of survival.

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