

VISUALIZATION OF SUBORDINATE CIRCUMSTANTIAL SENTENCES FOR CONCESSION IN THE CONTEXT OF SYNTAX TRAINING IN 8TH GRADE (PROJECT-RESEARCH MODEL)

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Abstract. The article shares experience from the application of a model for project and research activities related to the acquisition of knowledge of complex compound with subordinate circumstantial sentence for concession – through the obtained additional information about subordinate circumstantial sentences for concession students upgrade their knowledge of syntax. The research focuses on the visualization of the acquired new knowledge by the students as a result of their active learning, which includes independent search, selection, interpretation and attractive presentation of the studied information. These series of consecutive actions of the student directly correspond to the role of the teacher – this is where the skills of the teacher-innovator become apparent – he not only prepares an interesting project topic for work, but also correctly selects and distributes learning tasks, taking into account students' abilities, provoking their interest. Thus, having received support and guidance, students are highly motivated and willing to work on the project assignment.

Keywords: syntax; subordinate clause for concession; visualization

1. “Metamorphoses” in the educational space

Assessing the dynamics of the times in which we live, and understanding the difficulties facing our society, and in particular – the Bulgarian teacher, a sober assessment of the specifics of the educational process is needed. The educational process today is different, and the role and functions of its participants are different. Modern digital reality has completely changed the essential vision of the student – today it is difficult to surprise and motivate him, it is difficult to keep his attention in the “traditionally” constructed learning environment, in which the place and position of the teacher is strictly fixed. It is from here that the “metamorphoses” begin in search of ways to provoke the student's interest – from transforming the

educational process by overcoming the imperative in it; from the change of the status of the teacher – he becomes a skilled supporter and accomplice, a leader in the experiments for mastering the innovations; transformation also occurs in the learner – from a “passive listener” the student becomes a researcher who seeks, researches, studies, analyses, develops, searches, tries, etc.

1.1. Active learning as a demonstration of the student's abilities

Learning, considered both as part of the educational process and as the main activity through which the students structure their knowledge, arranging it in a system, also undergoes a kind of metamorphosis in modern times. *Knowledge cannot simply be “transferred” from teacher to student* – writes Adriana Damyanova (Damyanova 2005), *it is necessary to be understood, to make sense of the level of conceptual connections in the “subject”*. Looking at learning through the optics of constructivism in education, the author emphasizes “learning by participation”. Through active learning, the students get the opportunity to “declare” their presence in the educational process, to upgrade their knowledge and to demonstrate it in a way chosen by them. We observe a similar type of active learning in the participation of students in a learning project – performing a task, students “fit” into the learning environment, change its parameters, giving it its own look, corresponding to their attitudes and interests.

The project method has established itself as one of the most used methods in the educational process, through which the student's attention is focused on scientific areas that are interesting and relevant to him. Part of innovative educational technologies and strategies, the project method is usually combined with traditional methods, diversifying the learning process. Its specific feature is the different perspective from which the acquisition of new knowledge is approached – *through practical and applied activities* based on the already acquired knowledge and competencies. The main advantage of participating in a project is that it allows the students to be engaged in a new educational environment, different from the classroom lesson, where, guided by a specific goal and task, to create their own product, showing creativity, assiduity, diligence, competitive drive.

Constructivist design of learning is associated with student activities – both during class and outside the school environment. The project activities are diverse, and each of them aims to encourage student creativity, as well as a manifestation of insight, imagination, innovation. The student is expected to study actively, making use of the already acquired knowledge, i.e. conditions are created for “transfer” of what has been learned in real conditions, giving the learner the opportunity to present his idea (concept, opinion) to an audience, and, showing sense and knowledge, to defend it with arguments. Emphasis is also placed on students' thinking, encouraging their independence. The presentation of the finished project product or the results of the search or research (depending on the specifics of the project activities)

allows the student to demonstrate not only knowledge but also presentation skills, fills him with positive emotions and motivates him for new participations. The abundance of student activities, directly subordinated to the goals of the teacher, can be demonstrated both within the classroom and in extracurricular activities (developing an individual project, making a poster, model, etc.).

1.2. Content accents of the visualization

The finished project product can be accepted as a kind of visualization of the problem, students work on. Viewed from this perspective, the content highlights of the *visualization* concept can be sought in *two separate directions*:

1. The *relation educational goal: visualization* – as an element of teaching new knowledge is traced. An example of this type of attitude is the preliminary preparation of the teacher for a lesson, as a result of which he *envisages the use of a set of various tools* (presentation, image, map, diagram, etc.) through which he will illustrate the new information in the lesson.

2. The *relationship learning task: visualization* – as a result of active learning, i.e. student design research product.

The article focuses on the second type of attitude – the visualization of new knowledge acquired by the student as a result of his active learning, which includes search, selection and interpretation of the studied information. This series of consecutive actions directly corresponds to the role of the teacher – this is where the skills of the teacher innovator become apparent – he will not only prepare an interesting project topic for work, but will also correctly select and distribute learning tasks, taking into account students' abilities and provoking their interest. Thus, having received support and guidance, students will be highly motivated and will work willingly on the project assignment.

2. Visualization of the subordinate circumstantial sentences for a concession in 8th grade – project-research model

Through syntax education in 8th grade, as well as through comprehensive Bulgarian language education, students aim to master the key competencies¹⁾ provided in the regulations. The teacher is given the freedom to select and apply the appropriate technological solutions, and among the most commonly used is the visualization. A number of factors influence the teacher in choosing the specific form within the class: the educational goal, the students he works with, the level of difficulty of the acquired knowledge and others. Illustrating linguistic phenomena is an educational method that facilitates the perception and assimilation of linguistic information in order to achieve knowledge. It has already been mentioned that it is achieved through various forms, whose main function is with an image, picture, table, diagram, etc., to visually supplement and clarify the text in the textbook.

2.1. Presentation of the project idea

With the clear idea that the language is a kind of abstraction that students must perceive and make sense through the educational process in Bulgarian, I decided to use the project method. The project method is used as a way to visualize new information, break the framing of the traditional lesson and overcome the monotony in the learning process. Guided by the idea that by visualizing linguistic knowledge, students will more easily comprehend and assimilate new syntactic information, I set myself the goal to deepen and consolidate their knowledge of complex compound sentence through independent research in a personal project.

The model I present is of *a project-research project – it combines work on a project task and research activity*. A distinctive marker of the project-research model is the combination of the idea of innovation and attractiveness for students (in formulating the tasks) with updating and applying syntactic knowledge (in the implementation of project activities). The project is related to assignments on a specific topic, which is developed at different levels, i.e. the project tasks and activities are hierarchical and in accordance with both the age characteristics of the students and their individual abilities. The work on the project tasks is carried out by several separate groups, which work on a specific topic, but interpreted from different angles. The inclusion of a research element in the implementation of the study guarantees the relevance of the training.

The main goal of the project is to make the students rationalize the complex compound sentence with a subordinate circumstantial clause for concession. The type of the subordinate clause is not a random choice – although listed in the textbook as a type of subordinate circumstantial clause, it is among the lesser known (as opposed to “for time”, “for place”, “for way”), and at the same time the specifics of its semantics, as well as the concessive linking means would arouse the students’ interest. The research activity planned for implementation has been reduced, as students with a pronounced interest in the Bulgarian language have been given more difficult tasks to perform, e.g. some of the students from the humanitarian profile will study the use of *a specific type of subordinate circumstantial clauses for concession* in works by Bulgarian authors. Each participant chooses a variant of: way of work, scope of the research, place and time of realization of the idea, as well as presentation of the results (through a poster, report, multimedia presentation, etc.). Deadline for submission of finished products: the last week of June according to a preliminary schedule.

Expected result: to assimilate and consolidate the new information related to the subordinate circumstantial clauses for concession through independent research with a specific research task, which will lead to upgrading the syntactic knowledge of complex compound sentences of 8th grade students.

2.2. Design-research model implemented by 8th grade students at Secondary Comprehensive School “Vasil Levski” – Dulovo

In the paper I present a *project-research* model for a large-scale project on the topic: “Concessive relations in the world around me and in books”. It includes 3 separate projects (See Fig. 1), which I classify by degree of difficulty.



Figure 1. Design and research model

Knowledge of complex compound sentences is an important component of students' language culture, directly related not only to their skills for literate writing at the level of punctuation, but also to the demonstration of rich and figurative speech. I started the research activity after mastering and consolidating the new knowledge of syntax, provided for study in 8th grade. Within the section, the students got acquainted with the specifics of complex compound sentences as a tool for forming skills for their use first in the learning tasks for exercise, and then in the intentional speech of the students. After each type studied, a training lesson was provided in order to consolidate the knowledge – practical work on various syntactic tasks.

In the lesson for a complex compound sentence with a subordinate circumstantial clause, following the logic of the textbook, I presented to the students the different types of subordinate circumstantial sentences: for time, for place, for way, for degree and quantity, for condition and concession, etc. In the textbook there was not information about the sentence for concession, although it was mentioned among the other types, but examples of such sentences were included in the exercises. On this occasion,

a question was asked by a student, which was a signal to me that there is interest from students and it is necessary to present more detailed information through which to upgrade their knowledge so far.

For the next lesson I presented a presentation, through which I visualized the new information about the subordinate circumstantial sentences for concession. The presentation reflected the division of the concessive sentences according to the degree of resistance – they are divided into two: ascertaining and summarizing. Emphasis was also placed on the linking means, which are the hallmark of the specific type of subordinate concessive clause. The theoretical part of the lesson was followed by a practical one. Together with the students we commented on the solutions of the language problems in the exercises, which contributed to a more in-depth understanding of the specifics of the concession, as well as the conjunctions through which the subordinate sentences for concession are introduced.

The students' interest in the new information and their active participation in the classroom formed the idea to look for concessive sentences on their own: in texts from newspapers and magazines, in works of art, on the Internet. The students accepted the challenge, and I finalized the idea in a research project with different tasks, tailored to the profile of the students I work with.

Students are provided with work guidelines, a parsing algorithm, assessment criteria, and more. All 8th grade students were involved in the implementation of the research activities, and the tasks were *reduced*:

- only humanities students who were familiar with the additional information worked on the types of concessive sentences. (Project I)

The research activities are related to the upgrading of the syntactic knowledge of the students – they have to study the two types of subordinate circumstantial sentences for concession. They are randomly divided into two groups and work accordingly on:

1. Ascertaining subordinate circumstantial sentences for concession. They are linked to the main clause through the conjunctions: although, even if, even though, despite everything, though, etc.

2. Summarizing subordinate circumstantial clauses for concession. They are linked to the main clause through the conjunctions: if it will, even if, whoever, whatever, wherever, etc.

Students choose whether to look for sentences in the work of only one Bulgarian author or work on several authors. They may also turn their attention to newspapers or magazines to track the frequency of use of concessive sentences.

- Students from the other two profiles: “Natural Sciences” and “Software and Hardware Sciences”, *who are also interested in syntax*, were given a relatively difficult research task. They had to study the use of subordinate circumstantial sentences for concession in the work of a Bulgarian author of their choice (Project II). In order to carry out the research, they had to look for conjunctions, introducing the concessive clauses. The information they needed for the study was available in the textbook, and it

was further updated in the exercise class. This group of students was also given a work algorithm.

– The other students were randomly assigned project tasks related to the use of different types of subordinate circumstantial sentences: for place, time, way, condition, concession, etc. (Project III). An important requirement for each individual project was: first to present theoretical information about the specific type of subordinate circumstantial sentence, and then to apply the sentences discovered by the “researcher”.

After the distribution of the project tasks and the research activities among all students, it was pointed out that *it is not enough just to rewrite the sentences* they have found. It is necessary in each sentence to highlight the boundaries of the main clause and to indicate the subordinate conjunction that introduces the subordinate sentence. In addition, the type of the subordinate sentence (by an appropriate question) and the place it occupies in relation to the main sentence have to be determined. Since students have the right to study the work of different authors, as a requirement I also indicated the inclusion of additional information: author's name, title of the book, title of the story (if the sentence is from a story), page, etc. Students could also include an image of the specific book (if the project product is presented in the form of a presentation).

To make it easier for the students, I also prepared an algorithm for parsing. By performing the syntactic analysis, I aimed not only at the students to consolidate their skills, but also to highlight the different position that the subordinate clause can take within the main sentence. They can stand before or after the main clause, or they can be inserted into it, separating it. Considering this information will not only help students strengthen punctuation rules, but will also improve their spelling culture.

The assessment of the student's work is a special motivator in the educational process. For each student, the grade is of particular importance – everyone strives for it to be as high as possible. As I planned to include students in the assessing of the projects, I also gave them the assessment criteria (See Fig. 2).

An important condition in the project work is that all students are placed under approximately the same conditions for conducting their research activities. In this regard, I was facilitated by the fact that all my students have personal computers and internet access. Each of them could choose a suitable time for work, as the practical activities were set as homework with a specified deadline. It has already been noted that students are given the freedom to make the project product. Here is the place to point out that almost all students turned to the multimedia presentation as an attractive way to present the research. Regarding the skills of students to make a presentation, they are excellent – all students have the skills to work in cyberspace to extract scientific information and prepare images to use as a background for their presentations. In addition, all students have the necessary syntactic knowledge, they are provided with an algorithm for work, the requirements for the development of the project product, evaluation criteria and more.

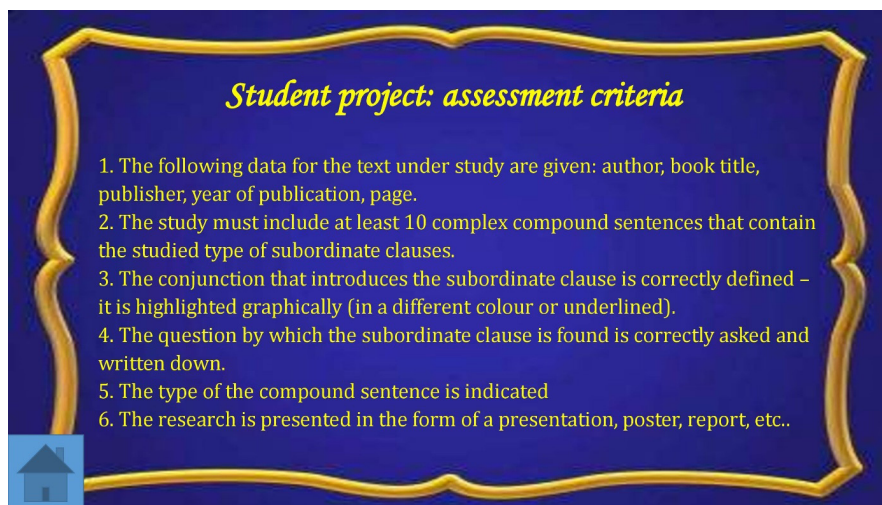


Figure 2. Criteria for assessment of student projects

2.3. Comment on the implementation of the research project

After the completion of the project work, analysing the results, I can confidently say that the set goals have been achieved. Regarding the research work carried out by the students, although extremely labour-intensive, it was done very diligently, showing the application of the acquired knowledge of the subordinate circumstantial sentences. The demonstration of the finished products was full of very pleasant emotions for the students – 8 posters, 11 reports, 16 “books” (hand made by the students) and 43 presentations were presented. Each of the students had taken seriously the research task – I found that most of the students are able to present their projects well and justify the choice of their sentences.

The development of the following skills and competencies in the students can be considered as achieved results from the implementation of the project: Updating the basic knowledge of syntax studied in the previous classes and upgrading them through research project work; Development of digital skills through work on the Internet; Expanding and deepening the knowledge of a complex compound with a subordinate circumstantial sentence and its subtypes; Application of punctuation rules when using complex compound sentences; Getting acquainted with the structure and peculiarities of the subordinate circumstantial sentences for concession; Making sense of and deepening the knowledge about the boundaries of simple sentences in the composition of a complex compound sentence, as well as about the place of the subordinate sentence within a complex compound sentence; Strengthening the knowledge of parsing and the function of the linking means; Understanding the possibilities for syntactic synonymy in the use of subordinate circumstantial sentences for concession, etc.

Conclusions

Regarding the construction of a qualitatively new model of education that meets the expectations of modern education, it is necessary to emphasize the active learning of students. In addition, it is necessary to introduce a variety of technological solutions in both classroom and extracurricular educational environment. As a result of these “innovations” Bulgarian language education will undergo its “metamorphosis” and will change its nature and specificity. The visualization of the learning content, based on the conscious transfer of syntactic knowledge and skills in a real practical environment, through the work on a project research task, is established as one of the most effective models of learning. Involving students in real research contributed to upgrading their syntactic knowledge, to strengthening their skills for highlighting the concessive sentences in new (communicative-speech or artistic-creative) situations. This, in turn, helps to improve students' syntactic sense of finding different types of complex compound sentences (and in particular – subordinate circumstantial sentences for concession), as well as understanding the correct punctuation in their use. Students' skills in the correct application of punctuation are an indicator of their level of written literacy. The knowledge of syntactic synonymy and demonstration of its possibilities, through the subordinate clauses for concession, provided an opportunity for students to appreciate the richness and beauty of the Bulgarian language.

NOTES

1. 1. Communication in the native language 2. Communication in foreign languages 3. Mathematical competence and basic knowledge in the field of natural sciences and technologies 4. Digital competence 5. Learning skills 6. Social and civic competences 7. Initiative and entrepreneurship 8. Cultural awareness and creative performances

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