

Improving Spanish Language Skills in Students Training as Tourist Guides

Juraev Kh. Abdunazar^a, Munira Ch. Tuychieva, Anorboyeva A. Solikha, Sabirova A. Nilufar and Sojida S. Akhadova
Uzbekistan State University of World Languages, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: The article reflects upon the significance of communicative competence among tourist guides in Uzbekistan, a nation that stands as a compelling destination along the historic Silk Road. Recently, through a presidential decree, Uzbekistan extended a visa-free entry privilege to tourists hailing from over 100 countries, amplifying the appeal and demand for proficient tourist guides. This resolution has rendered the profession even more appealing and professionally demanding. Within our universities, we impart education in the Spanish language, aiming to equip our students with comprehensive preparedness. The article delves into the outcomes of our research, shedding light on the findings derived from our exploration of this pivotal subject.

1 INTRODUCTION


Globally, there is a burgeoning demand for foreign language communication skills, necessitating the development of lexical competence among individuals. In Uzbekistan, a country with a population of 34 million and the highest population in Central Asia, three universities have been offering Spanish language courses since 2000. Despite being a modest figure when compared to other nations, the number of students learning Spanish as a foreign language is steadily increasing. Spanish language education extends beyond Spain, reaching the USA and 70 educational institutions in the UK. Russian MGIMO includes Spanish as a second foreign language, and online platforms like "El portal Español" emphasise communicative competence through pedagogical technologies, focusing notably on common Spanish verbs.

Internationally, fostering students' professional competence in a foreign language, especially oral speech, holds paramount importance for enhancing communication skills through pedagogical technologies. This underscores the necessity for open online courses, including innovative ELE technologies at Instituto Cervantes and the Middlebury School of Spanish's B2 level courses, centred on textual content. In Uzbekistan, ongoing

educational reforms aim to instil foreign language proficiency and cultivate well-rounded, independent thinkers.

Emphasising the significant role of linguistic dictionaries, especially in enhancing Spanish communication skills, collaboration between Uzbekistan, UNESCO, and DGP Research & Consulting has led to a comprehensive higher education development program for 2017-2021. Within the teacher education system, there is a crucial emphasis on mastering information and communication technologies for active integration into the educational process.

The research, drawing from the works of L. Bachman, Teresa Servera Mata, D. Hymes, Jack C. Richards, and C. K. Ogden, aims to improve the communicative competence of students studying Spanish. The research objectives include an extensive study and analysis of relevant literature across linguistic, psychological, psycholinguistic, pedagogical, and methodological domains. Additionally, the research focuses on comparative typological exploration of lexical synonyms in the Spanish language, evaluating the current state of Spanish language education through surveys, teacher observations, and experimentation, all supported by statistical analysis to gauge the effectiveness of proposed exercises.

^a <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3552-3111>

2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research is geared towards enhancing the teaching of synonyms among higher education students, particularly those studying Spanish as a second foreign language. Employing various methods, including theoretical approaches (analytical-statistical, comparative-typological, analogy, modeling), diagnostic techniques (survey, conversation, questionnaires, observation), pedagogical experiments, and mathematical tools (statistical processing, graphic representation), the study ensures a comprehensive examination.

The scientific novelty lies in uncovering features of lexical concept relationships between the Spanish and Uzbek languages through a macro comparative approach. It identifies the typology of difficulties in using Spanish synonyms and proposes improved didactic support for their application. Methodological backing for role-playing and project games, based on didactic imitation communication, was developed to enhance students' communication skills.

Reliability is maintained through the use of established methods, theoretical approaches, and the application of statistical tools. The results find practical value in the developed exercises, recommendations for text drafting and oral speech work, contributing to the gradual improvement of competencies through dictionary use. This system is applied in theoretical and practical language center classes, fostering a new generation of educational materials.

The research explores the theoretical interpretation of improving communicative competence in foreign languages, considering its inclusion in the main categories of language teaching theory and practice. It traces the evolution of communicative competence from linguistic competence, conceptualized by N. Chomsky, to D. Hymes' introduction of the term in the 60s. The study acknowledges the contributions of M. Canale and M. Swain in the 80s, expanding the theory. The practical significance lies in fulfilling communicative tasks in Spanish as a foreign language, emphasizing successful communication in various contexts.

3 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In Uzbekistan, students studying Spanish aim to enhance their communication skills by creating texts using vocabulary, especially focusing on lexical synonyms when using a dictionary. Although the

importance of vocabulary in building oral speech is acknowledged, this area lacks comprehensive exploration and lacks clear rules for selecting words. The differences in meaning and how synonyms contribute to communication remain unclear. Additionally, there is a scarcity of Uzbek resources providing substantial content on the Spanish language's lexicology.

Linguistic competence, an inherent ability grounded in grammatical operations, forms the foundation for speaking and writing. Our study aligns with established criteria for developing linguistic competence through vocabulary, emphasizing an understanding of the language system. The level of a student's competence in their native language inevitably influences the quality of linguistic competence. State standards for continuing education in foreign languages incorporate requirements for linguistic competence, knowledge, skills, and qualifications, with lexical competence, developed through synonyms, being a key component.

Within linguistic competence, the study explores phonetic, morphemic, lexical, and syntactic properties. The comprehension of a language system contributes significantly to mastering linguistic competence. Practical classes affirm the pivotal role of students' competence in their native language in foreign language proficiency. Our focus shifts to synonyms, emphasizing their importance in helping students choose precise concepts relevant to conversations, topics, or texts. Absolute synonyms, fully corresponding in meaning, and partially corresponding synonyms, exhibiting nuanced differences, are explored.

For instance, Spanish verbs like "venir" and "llegar" indicate different directions towards or away from the speaker. Synonyms like "aportar," "prestar," "ceder," "proveer," "entregar," and "dar" convey the meaning of giving, each with varying degrees of transmission. Nouns such as "cara," "rostro," "faz," "facciones," "aspecto," and "jeta" (face) provide distinct descriptions of a person. The chapter on teaching methods in our work discusses the challenges of assimilating synonyms, the use of modern technologies, and a system of lexical exercises. It outlines independent concepts of dependence, correspondence, and partial correspondence, highlighting instances of complete coincidence, partial coincidence, and absolute discrepancy when comparing Spanish and Uzbek concepts.

Drawing from scientific and methodological approaches, the most frequently encountered synonymous words in Spanish speech were meticulously chosen. Notably, the primary section of

Table 1: Comparing Concepts in Spanish and Uzbek: Cases of Complete Coincidence, Partial Coincidence, and Complete Difference.

Attitude value	In Uzbek	In Spanish
Full matching	uy	casa
	xayot	vida
	suv	agua
	yo'q	pan
	talaba	estudiante
	yo'l	camino
	poezd	tren
	gapirmoq	hablar
	yozmoq	escribir
Partial match	jiyan	sobrino, sobrina
	oqituvchi	profesor, profesora
	aqimoq	leer
	qurmoq	ver
	qaramoq	mirar
Complete difference	-----	siesta
		la liga
	bo'lmoq	ser
	bo'lmoq	estar
	bormoq	ir
	ketmoq	irse
		corrida
		sombrero
		rancho
		chupa-chups
		la liga

synonymous words in the Spanish dictionary predominantly comprised synonymous verbs, recognised as the most challenging aspect in learning Spanish grammar. The complexity of verbs, such as the distinction between ser, va, estar (equivalent to "to be" in English and Russian), often leads students to make errors in usage. An innovative aspect of our analysis involved scrutinising and selecting synonyms essential for oral speech, a dimension hitherto overlooked.

In line with methodological research, foreign vocabulary, taking into account comprehension difficulties, is categorised into three groups: 1) easy words; 2) relatively difficult words; and 3) difficult words. While choosing speech exercises, I based decisions on these classifications. The process of introducing Spanish vocabulary occurred in two stages: first, the selection of necessary vocabulary, methodological distribution, classification, and textbook integration, with attention to developing lexical skills. The second stage involved the formation of vocabulary using interactive methods, a pivotal aspect in optimising the teaching of a second foreign language within higher education.

Factors influencing the educational process, including the personal qualities of students, curriculum design, and the interplay between native

and second foreign languages, were taken into account. Synonyms were presented to students through their native language, necessitating a careful selection based on meanings in the Uzbek language. For instance, the verb "xalaqit bermoq" needed clear definition, exemplified by its equivalents:

1. To'sqinlik qilmoq, qarshilik qilmoq, monelik qilmoq;
2. Halaqit bermoq;.
3. Bezovta qilmoq, joniga tegmoq.

Similar meanings in Spanish were elucidated through context:

1. En la habitación la luz era tan intensa que molestaba a su vista - Xonagani chiroq shunday yorug' ediki, bu unga biror narsani ko'rishga halaqit berardi.
2. Hoy hace frio. El tiempo impedio salir- Bugun sovuq. Havo bizga aylanishga chiqish uchun halaqit berardi.
3. Esa silla esta en el centro estorba el paso- O'rtada turgan bu stul menga o'tishga halaqit beryapti.

In the initial training stages, students grapple with selecting the right synonyms while attempting to align the lexical-semantic system of a foreign

language with their native tongue. For instance, the Uzbek word "uchrashuv" (noun) takes on varied nuances and applications across different contexts, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Memorization of new words with the introduction of an associative connection using memorized words.

In Uzbek	In Spanish
-bormoq	-ir
-ketmoq	-irse
-kelmoq	-llegar
-etib kelmoq	-venir
-uchrashuv	- encuentro
-yozuvchi bilan paydo bo'lish	- entrevista de los estudiantes con los escritores
-uchrashuv (qabul marosimi)	-recibimiento
-uchrashuv (harbiy)	- choque armado
- tomonlarni ochishuvi	- colisión de intereses

The selected word, "uchrashuv," exhibits multiple meanings and versatile usage in various combinations. In Spanish, synonyms like *encuentro*, *entrevista*, *recibimiento* may seem high-quality, but their contextual applicability requires attention, as they don't always align perfectly. For instance, "uchrashuv" corresponds to "encuentro" in its word formation, yet it is used differently, such as "yozuvchi bilan uchrashuv" (interview with writers) or "arbi uchrashuv" (armed clash).

A typological analysis of lexical synonyms in Spanish and Uzbek reveals shortcomings and errors in students' speech. By observing the educational process and analyzing textbooks, a typology of learning difficulties was established, identifying points of interference. Methodological typology, considering positive dynamics, aided in addressing vocabulary assimilation challenges by systematizing the vocabulary.

The difficulties encountered in students' assimilation of lexical combinations encompass various aspects:

1. Phonetic-graphic form connections, where similarities exist between Spanish "articulo" and English "article," with differences in pronunciation. The presence of unique Spanish letters like ñ poses additional challenges.
2. Meaning-related challenges, as seen in pairs like Spanish "comer" and English "to come," or "carpeta" and English "carpet," demonstrating variations in meanings.
3. Pronoun complexities in Spanish, involving gender-specific forms like "el-ella," "ellos-ellas," "nosotros-nosotras," and "vosotros-vosotras," pose challenges for learners.

4. Usage distinctions in similar-sounding words, such as "beso-peso," "bara-barra," and "herir-hervir," highlight differences in the native and foreign language systems.

Integrating modern pedagogical and information technologies, along with active methods, aligns with the National Program for Personnel Training. Positive trends emerge in critical thinking, particularly in group discussions, proving the efficacy of this method in enhancing students' oral speech and text construction skills.

The application of various teaching technologies, such as "Brainstorming," "Cluster," "Bloom's Cube," "Insert," "Thick and Thin Question," "Bloom's Chamomile," "Sinkwine," "Telegram," and "Snowstorm," yielded effective results at different stages of the learning process.

The POPS formula, a methodical approach, contributed positively to the learning outcomes. Developing vocabulary exercises, practicing them, and reinforcing skills proved crucial. Exercises, categorized into assimilation and expansion, receptive and reproductive, and various types of lexical units, were tailored to the classroom or home environment, taking into account language assimilation degrees.

Furthermore, an experimental study focused on enhancing communication skills in Spanish, involving students from UzSWLU, SamsFLU, and UWED, emphasized a methodology based on synonymous words. The study addressed practical tasks, including assessing vocabulary's role in communication skill development, organizing student discussions, experimental verification of method effectiveness, and conducting a comparative analysis of results.

Throughout the experimental experience, oral and written forms, drawings, handouts, and tables were utilised. Linguistic material, encompassing vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, was incorporated into teaching methods. A thorough analysis of textbooks, observation of language teaching processes, and evaluation of students' speech and test results contributed to the formulation of methodological recommendations for improving communication skills. The comparative analysis of students' expressions in Uzbek and Spanish revealed equal representation in describing images, with the Uzbek language displaying more complex sentence structures. The findings highlighted the need for nuanced teaching strategies to bridge language disparities and enhance overall communication proficiency.

Table 3: Analysis of student results on the topic “Un artículo de lujo sobre Samarcanda”

Groups	Number of students	Number of sentences		Number of nouns		Number of verbs		Number of adjectives		Number of repetitions	
		in uzb	in Spanish	simple	complicated	Uzbek	Spanish	Uzbek	Spanish	Uzbek	Spanish
1	32	51	35	35	20	122	140	177	140	64	11
2	120	60	50	13	20	230	180	200	150	65	17

The table indicates noticeable differences between the Uzbek and Spanish versions, particularly in the prevalence of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. In the Uzbek version, the proportion of nouns, verbs, and adjectives is higher, with an average distribution of nouns at 25%, verbs at 22%, and adjectives at 7%. In the Spanish version, these rates are comparatively lower, with nouns at 18%, verbs at 15%, and adjectives at 14%. The analysis reveals a linguistic distinction in the frequency and usage of these parts of speech between the two languages.

The experimental experience spanned the academic years 2017-2020, involving students from various institutions. Participants included 120 students from the 1st and 2nd English Philology faculty at UzSWLU (24 in the control group and 96 in the experimental group), 32 students from 3 groups of the 2nd course at Samarkand State Foreign Languages Institute (12 in the control group and 20 in the experimental group), and 126 students from 10 groups at UWED (28 in the control group and 98 in

the experimental group). The total number of students in the experimental groups was 214, while the control groups comprised 64 students, providing a comprehensive participant pool for the study (refer to Table 4 for detailed figures).

Table 4: Distribution of students by groups.

	Control group	Experimental group	Total
USWLU	24	96	120
Samarqand SFLU	12	20	32
UWED	28	98	126
Total	64	214	278

In the process of experimenting, the degree of formation of oral speech skills among students was determined. The indicators of students' speaking skills are shown in the table (see tables 5-6).

Table 5: Performance indicators of students in the control group before the experiment.

Task	Assessment	USWLU (n=24)	Samarqand SFLU (n=12)	UWED (n=28)				
		abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	
Speaking skills	5	5	20,8	2	16,6	5	17,9	
	4	9	37,5	5	41,7	12	42,9	
	3	10	41,7	5	41,7	11	39,3	
Total	24	100	12	100	28	100		

Table 6: Performance indicators of students of the experimental group before the experiment.

Task	Assessment	USWLU (n=96)	Samarqand SFLU (n=20)	UWED (n=98)				
		abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	
Speaking skills	5	20	20,8	4	20,0	21	21,4	
	4	35	36,5	7	35,0	36	36,7	
	3	41	42,7	9	45,0	43	43,9	
Total	96	96	100	20	98	100		

In the control group, before the experimental experiment, there were 58.3%, 58.3%, and 60.8%, respectively.

In the control group, the experimental qualitative indicators were 57.3%, 55.0%, and 58.1%, respectively. According to the Indicators 3 and 4 tables, the CG and the EG indicators were almost the same.

After conducting the experimental experience, after 6 months CG USWLU, Samarqand SFLU and UWED indicators (table 3.5) were respectively received by 5 (20.8%), 3 (25.0%) and 6 (21.4%) students “excellent” 11 (45.8%) 5 (41.7%) 14 (50.0%) students “good” 8 (33.3%), 4 (33.3%) and 8 (28.6%) students “satisfactory” (see table 7).

Table 7. Performance Indicators of Students in the Control Group for 6 Months After the Experiment

Task	Assessment	USWLU (n=24)	Samarqand SFLU (n=12)	UWED (n=28)			
		abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%
Speaking skills	5	5	20,8	3	25,0	6	21,4
	4	12	45,8	5	41,7	14	50,0
	3	8	33,4	4	33,3	8	28,6
Total	24	100	12	100	28	100	

Table 8: Performance indicators of students in the experimental group 6 months after the experiment.

Task	Assessment	USWLU (n=96)	Samarqand SFLU (n=20)	UWED (n=98)			
		abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%
Speaking skills	5	25	26,0	4	20,0	28	28,6
	4	45	46,9	10	50,0	44	44,9
	3	26	27,1	6	30,0	26	26,5
Total	96	100	20	100	98	100	

Table 9: Performance indicators of students in the control group for the final sample of the experiment.

Task	Assessment	USWLU (n=24)	Samarqand SFLU (n=12)	UWED (n=28)			
		abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%
Speaking skills	5	4	16,7	3	25,0	8	28,6
	4	14	58,3	6	50,0	14	50,0
	3	6	25,0	3	25,0	6	21,4
Total	24	100	12	100	28	100	

Table 10: Performance indicators of students of the experimental group according to the final sample of the experiment.

Task	Assessment	USWLU (n=96)	Samarqand SFLU (n=20)	UWED (n=98)			
		abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%
Speaking skills	5	26	27,1	4	20,0	30	30,6
	4	48	50,0	11	55,0	47	48,0
	3	23	22,9	5	25,0	21	21,4
Total	96	100	20	100	98	100	

In the control group, after the experimental experiment after 6 months, there were 66.6%, 66.7%, and 71.4%, respectively. These indicators after the experimental experiment relative to the results before the experiment increased by 8.3%, 8.4%, and 10.6%, respectively. In the control group, the aftermath of the experiment after 6 months, the qualitative indicators were 72.9%, 70.0%, and 73.5%. These indicators increased in comparison with the initial by 15.6%, 15.0% and 15.4% (Table 8.) The results obtained at the end of the experiment are reflected in Tables 9 and 10. (See Tables 9 and 10).

These quantitative indicators prove the effectiveness of conducting classes on the formation of communication skills in a foreign language using modern technologies.

4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research underscores critical challenges in teaching Spanish vocabulary to students, as highlighted by an analysis of linguistic,

pedagogical, and methodological literature. Addressing this issue requires the development of a curriculum aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels, emphasising a communicative form of education and refining knowledge assessment systems. The study reveals that employing synonymy as a linguistic phenomenon is an effective method for enhancing communication skills, especially in foreign language contexts. Experimental experiences confirm the positive impact of using synonyms on students' linguistic susceptibility and communication abilities. The developed exercises exhibit potential for widespread use in educational institutions, language courses, and centres. Working with synonyms during the experimental experience not only piqued students' interest but also improved their communication skills significantly. The study identifies active teaching methods, such as case studies, chain exercises, clusters, round tables, and presentations, as effective tools for improving communication skills. Furthermore, the research highlights the crucial role of vocabulary in fostering communication, oral speech composition, and expanding lexical

proficiency. The questionnaire survey indicates a growing interest in learning Spanish, positioning it as a language of significance amid economic, scientific, and educational developments. Ultimately, the study emphasizes the importance of training Spanish language specialists in line with CEFR requirements, aligning with national strategies for academic growth and linguistic diversity. Students' interest in communicative competence, social linguistics, and the speaker-listener dynamic underscores the broader impact of language education on both individual and societal levels.

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