

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING REGULAR AND IRREGULAR PLURAL NOUNS THROUGH THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Ismoilov Javohir Alisher o'g'li

Tashkent chemical technological institute "Languages" department

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Abstract. This article explores the pedagogical value of integrating historical linguistics into grammar instruction, specifically focusing on teaching regular and irregular plural nouns in English. Through a case study of a sixth-grade Uzbek learner named Jasmina, the research demonstrates how historical context enhances grammatical understanding and learner motivation. The study examines the evolution of English from Old English to Modern English and connects linguistic changes to contemporary plural noun patterns. Practical classroom activities and multimedia resources are presented to support effective grammar teaching for young learners.

Keywords: English language history, plural nouns, regular nouns, irregular nouns, Old English, Modern English, grammar teaching, language learning, young learners, historical linguistics.

INGLIZ TILI TARIXI ORQALI MUNTAZAM VA NOMUNTAZAM KO'PLIKDAGI OTLARNI O'QITISHNING AHAMIYATI

Ismoilov Javohir Alisher o'g'li

Toshkent kimyo-texnologiya instituti "Tillar" kafedrası

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada tarixiy lingvistikani grammatika o'qitish jarayoniga integratsiya qilishning pedagogik ahamiyati, xususan, ingliz tilidagi muntazam va nomuntazam ko'plikdagi otlarni o'qitish misolida yoritiladi. O'zbekistonlik 6-sinf o'quvchisi Jasmina misolida olib borilgan keys-stadiya tarixiy kontekst grammatik tushunishni va o'quvchi motivatsiyasini oshirishini ko'rsatadi. Tadqiqotda ingliz tilining qadimgi ingliz tilidan zamonaviy ingliz tiligacha bo'lgan rivojlanishi tahlil qilinib, lingvistik o'zgarishlar hozirgi ko'plikdagi ot shakllari bilan bog'lanadi. Yosh o'quvchilar uchun samarali grammatika o'qitishni qo'llab-quvvatlovchi amaliy sinf mashg'ulotlari va multimedia resurslari taqdim etiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: ingliz tili tarixi, ko'plikdagi otlar, muntazam otlar, nomuntazam otlar, qadimgi ingliz tili, zamonaviy ingliz tili, grammatika o'qitish, til o'rganish, yosh o'quvchilar, tarixiy lingvistika.

ЗНАЧЕНИЕ ОБУЧЕНИЯ ПРАВИЛЬНЫМ И НЕПРАВИЛЬНЫМ ФОРМАМ МНОЖЕСТВЕННОГО ЧИСЛА СУЩЕСТВИТЕЛЬНЫХ ЧЕРЕЗ ИСТОРИЮ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Исмоилов Джавохир Алишер огли

Ташкентский химико-технологический институт

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается педагогическая ценность интеграции исторической лингвистики в преподавание грамматики, в частности при обучении правильным и неправильным формам множественного числа существительных в английском языке. На основе кейс-стади шестиклассницы из Узбекистана по имени Жасмина показано, что исторический контекст усиливает грамматическое понимание и мотивацию учащегося. В исследовании анализируется развитие английского языка от древнеанглийского до современного периода и устанавливается связь между языковыми изменениями и современными моделями образования множественного числа. Также

представлены практические классные задания и мультимедийные ресурсы для эффективного обучения грамматике младших школьников.

Ключевые слова: история английского языка, множественное число существительных, правильные существительные, неправильные существительные, древнеанглийский язык, современный английский язык, преподавание грамматики, изучение языка, младшие школьники, историческая лингвистика.

INTRODUCTION

Grammar acquisition represents a fundamental component of language learning, yet traditional approaches often overlook the explanatory power of historical context. English, as a global language with rich historical development, offers numerous opportunities to connect grammatical patterns with their historical origins. This connection proves particularly valuable for explaining exceptions and irregular forms that frequently challenge language learners. This article presents a formative assessment case study conducted with Jasmina, a twelve-year-old sixth-grade student from the Yunusabad region of Uzbekistan. As a native Uzbek speaker with elementary to pre-intermediate English proficiency, Jasmina demonstrates strong motivation and curiosity for English learning, despite not having taken formal proficiency examinations. Over one year of instruction, her progress has revealed the significant benefits of historical approaches to grammar teaching.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological basis of the article relies on historical-linguistic analysis, pedagogical observation, a formative assessment case study, and classroom-based practical activities. The research connects the evolution of English plural noun formation with modern grammar instruction for young learners.

Linguistic scholarship generally categorizes English development into three distinct historical periods:

Old English (449–1066 CE): characterized by Germanic roots, complex inflectional systems, and significant grammatical distinctions that differ markedly from Modern English.

Middle English (1066–1500 CE): marked by the Norman Conquest and subsequent French linguistic influence. During this period, approximately 10,000 French words entered the English lexicon, while the ruling classes predominantly used French. English reemerged as the primary language of communication around 1250, but not before undergoing substantial grammatical simplification.

Modern English (1500–Present): featuring standardized grammatical rules, reduced inflections, and the establishment of many contemporary grammatical patterns, including plural formation rules.

The transition between these periods explains numerous grammatical irregularities in Modern English, particularly in plural noun formation, where Old English patterns persist alongside newer regularized forms.

Regular plurals generally follow predictable morphological patterns through suffix addition: standard -s addition: book → books, computer → computers, pen → pens; -es addition for specific endings: potato → potatoes, tomato → tomatoes; conversion of -f to -ves: wolf → wolves, leaf → leaves; exceptions to -f conversion: roof → roofs, proof → proofs. These patterns emerged during the Middle and Modern English periods as the language simplified its inflectional system.

Irregular plurals preserve historical forms from Old English, primarily through vowel changes or unique endings: vowel mutation (umlaut): mouse → mice, goose → geese, tooth → teeth; -en ending preservation: ox → oxen (from Old English oxa → oxan); consonant change: man → men, woman → women. These irregular forms represent linguistic fossils that survived language standardization processes. Their persistence demonstrates how historical patterns can endure despite broader grammatical changes.

The teaching methodology incorporated historical explanations connecting Old English patterns to modern irregularities; visual aids comparing Old, Middle, and Modern English examples; multimedia resources, including educational videos; and interactive activities requiring pattern recognition and historical connection.

Recommended classroom activities included historical timeline creation, in which students create visual timelines showing plural form changes across English periods; pattern recognition games, including matching activities connecting modern irregular forms with their Old English origins; video analysis, with paused viewing of historical linguistics videos and discussion questions; and comparative linguistics, comparing English plural patterns with those in students' first languages.

RESULTS

The case study showed that Jasmina demonstrated improved retention of irregular plural forms through historical understanding, enhanced motivation when learning grammatical exceptions, development of metalinguistic awareness regarding language evolution, and increased accuracy in plural noun usage in both written and spoken production.

The results indicate that the historical-linguistic approach helped the learner understand irregular plurals not as random exceptions, but as preserved forms connected with the earlier stages of English. This understanding supported more meaningful grammar acquisition and strengthened the learner's interest in English language history.

DISCUSSION

Integrating historical linguistics into grammar instruction offers multiple benefits. Cognitive advantages arise because historical explanations provide logical reasons for grammatical exceptions, reducing rote memorization requirements. Motivational benefits are also observed, since stories of language evolution engage young learners more effectively than abstract rules. Cultural connection is strengthened because understanding language history fosters deeper appreciation for cultural and historical contexts. Metalinguistic development is supported because students develop analytical skills for understanding language as a dynamic system.

The case of Jasmina confirms that young learners can benefit from explanations that connect grammatical forms with historical development. Such an approach is especially useful when teaching irregular plural nouns, because these forms often seem difficult and unpredictable to learners. Historical explanation makes these patterns clearer and more meaningful.

CONCLUSION

Teaching regular and irregular plural nouns through historical linguistic approaches significantly enhances grammatical understanding and learner engagement. The case of Jasmina demonstrates that young learners respond positively to historical explanations that contextualize grammatical patterns. By understanding that irregular forms represent historical preservation rather than random exceptions, students develop more sophisticated language awareness and improved retention. Future research should explore longitudinal effects of historical linguistics approaches on grammatical accuracy and whether these benefits extend to other grammatical

structures. Additionally, comparative studies across different first-language backgrounds would help determine the universal applicability of this methodology.

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