

Integrating Form-Focused Instruction into Communicative English Language Teaching to High School Students

by

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Abstract

The study focuses on integrating Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) into the communicative teaching of English in high school. The aim is to find out how the systematic introduction of FFI episodes into the structure of communicative lessons affects the development of students' language competence. The hypothesis is that regular, purposeful appeals to language forms in the process of communication result in a statistically significant increase in speech competence indicators compared to training where attention to form is absent or sporadic.

The study examined three issues: (1) the impact of FFI on improving speech competence when learning a foreign language; (2) students' attitudes towards learning using FFI; (3) the effectiveness of different FFI methods in developing both accuracy and fluency of speech. The methodology involved experimenting with a group of students. Observation, questionnaires, grammar tests, and oral production assessments were used.

The results showed that students demonstrated higher grammatical accuracy, logic, and coherence of statements, better control of communicative moves (initiation, maintenance, and correction), and a more positive attitude towards learning English. The study contributes to the development of communicative teaching methods, demonstrating that FFI can be effectively integrated with communicative tasks, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of learning and student motivation.

Keywords: Form-Focused Instruction, grammatical accuracy, language competence, communicative teaching, integrated episodes of FFI.

Анотація

Дослідження присвячене інтеграції Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) – навчання з акцентом на форму – у процес комунікативного викладання англійської старшокласникам. Сучасна методика навчання іноземних мов будується на засадах комунікативного підходу, в якому основна увага приділяється змісту та ефективності спілкування. Однак практика показує, що при повній відмові від усвідомленої уваги до форми учні часто роблять системні граматичні помилки, що ускладнюють комунікацію. Отже, виникає необхідність поєднувати увагу до змісту промови з цілеспрямованою роботою над формою.

Метою дослідження стало визначення ефективності систематичного включення FFI-епізодів до структури комунікативних завдань та виявлення їх впливу на розвиток граматичної точності, швидкості та прагматичної доречності мови старшокласників. Гіпотеза дослідження полягає в тому, що регулярна, інтегрована увага до мовної форми в рамках комунікативних вправ забезпечує статистично значуще підвищення показників мовної компетентності

порівняно з традиційним навчанням, де робота над граматикою має епізодичний чи ізольований характер.

У ході дослідження проведено пробне навчання, в якому брали участь 17 учнів. Для збору даних використовувалися методи спостереження, тестування усного та писемного мовлення, а також анкетування, спрямоване на виявлення ставлення учнів до вивчення мови. Організація FFI-епізодів здійснювалася через короткі, контекстуально мотивовані завдання: обговорення в парах та групах, рольові ігри, письмові міні-проекти, де вчитель звертав увагу на конкретні мовні структури – граматичні часи, прийменники, колокації, інверсію тощо. При цьому коригування помилок відбувалося ненав'язливо, без переривання комунікації.

Результати експерименту підтвердили гіпотезу учні показали значне покращення за параметрами граматичної точності, зв'язності та логічності висловлювань. Аналіз мовних записів продемонстрував зменшення кількості граматичних та лексичних помилок, більш впевнене володіння комунікативними ходами (ініціювання, підтримка, завершення, корекція), а також збільшення довжини та різноманітності реплік. Дослідження показало, що інтеграція FFI позитивно впливає на мотивацію і впевненість учнів: вони стали активнішими у спілкуванні, менше боялися помилитися, і сприймали граматику не як окремий предмет, а як інструмент ефективного вираження думки.

Висновки, які отримано у ході дослідження, свідчать, що FFI, інтегроване в комунікативне навчання, сприяє формуванню гармонійного поєднання точності та швидкості мови, розвиває усвідомленість у використанні мовних структур та зміцнює загальну мовну компетентність. Такий підхід особливо ефективний у старших класах, де учні здатні до метакогнітивної рефлексії та усвідомленого контролю мовних дій.

Ключові слова: Form-Focused Instruction, комунікативне навчання, граматична точність, швидкість мови, методика викладання англійської мови.

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Introduction

The main goal of learning a foreign language is to develop the ability to communicate effectively in various life situations and to form a communicative culture among students. The educational space today offers a large number of both traditional and modern teaching methods. Still, their effectiveness depends on how consciously the teacher chooses approaches and technologies, understanding their didactic possibilities. Therefore, the teacher's primary task is to select methods, forms, and means of organizing the educational process that correspond to the level of preparedness and individual academic needs of students, ensuring differentiation of learning, flexibility of approaches, and the gradual development of foreign language communicative competence.

Studies of Ellis (2001), Spada (2011), and Coyle (2007, 2010) show that when students consciously pay attention to the language form-grammatical structures, accuracy of statements, during communicatively oriented classes, the level of their speech accuracy increases significantly. This proves the importance of combining communicative tasks with purposeful work on language form. FFI is a practical mechanism for integrating form into communicative instruction. This study examines the preferred format of EFL learners and EFL teachers: isolated versus integrated FFI – two ways to focus learners' attention on form during content-oriented activities. Language teaching methodologies have evolved from a predominantly grammatical approach (grammar–translational) to a meaning-oriented approach (communicative instruction), and have now reached a stage where form and content are addressed simultaneously within FFI.

FFI in communicative English instruction in high school enhances students' speaking (oral production and interaction) competence through targeted, brief, and appropriate interventions during content-oriented tasks. An increase in fluency, turn-taking, coherence of expression, pragmatic relevance, and basic phonetic and prosodic expressiveness is expected. Modern schools require solutions that foster learner-oriented, engaging, and effective development of oral communication in realistic situations. Integrated FFI is considered an operational mechanism: form (language frames, clichés, discourse markers, intonation patterns) is processed within communication, supporting meaning rather than replacing it.

Research questions:

1. How does using form–focused instruction in English lessons help high school students improve their grammar in speaking?
2. What do high school students think and feel about learning English when form–focused instruction is added to communicative activities?
3. Which form–focused instruction methods work best to improve fluency and accuracy in students' English communication?

This study aims to clarify the role of integrated FFI episodes in the development of speaking skills in high school students and to demonstrate how they enhance grammar knowledge and contribute to the long-term acquisition of speaking abilities.

Research methods:

1. Questionnaire and survey of students.
2. Testing the level of grammatical and lexical competence before and after using the applications.
3. Experimental study.

Main conclusions and results:

1. Students who studied English with FFI demonstrated an improvement in accuracy in their oral speech, which was trained exclusively by communicative methods. This confirms that focused attention to language forms within the communicative context directly contributes to their acquisition.
2. The participants in the group became more confident in their communication, initiated dialogue more often, and attempted to correct their own mistakes independently.
3. Strategies based on a combination of proactive and reactive FFI were the most effective for achieving language accuracy and fluency simultaneously. The systematic and planned introduction of forms (proactive FFI), combined with an immediate response to errors during communication (reactive FFI), ensured a deeper assimilation of the material and contributed to a more confident use of it in real communicative situations.

Literature review

Despite the absence of the term FFI in current Ukrainian regulations, their conceptual framework (communicativeness, integration of speech activities, and orientation to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – CEFR) – implicitly supports short, relevant episodes of attention to form within communicative interaction. These include interventions such as reactive corrective feedback (recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic prompts) or preventive “micro–explanations” before completing a task.

According to Yin (2014), FFI refers to any action taken by a second/foreign language teacher aimed at drawing students' attention to language form. By "form" we mean not only grammatical structures, but also orthography, punctuation, word–formation patterns, and so on.

Pica (2002) distinguishes between two approaches:

- i. Integrated FFI – attention to form is drawn to during communicative activities;
- ii. isolated FFI – lessons focused on form are conducted separately, and content/meaning is relegated to the background.

For high school, where students are already capable of conscious analysis of language phenomena and at the same time need a large amount of interaction practice, both formats can be helpful, especially in a classroom with a common mother tongue and predominantly classroom access to English. Isolated episodes provide clarity and control over linguistic "frames" (ready-made interaction formulas, coherence markers, intonation patterns), while integrated interventions facilitate the transfer of these tools into spontaneous communication, supporting the coherence of utterances, turn-taking, and pragmatic appropriateness.

The optimal path combines them sequentially: a short introductory sprint on the form before a complex task or, conversely, a summary and refinement of the form after the need for it has become apparent during a discussion, role-playing game, or task with an information gap. In practice, it is advisable to use "microdosing" of the form (30–90 seconds at the pre/during/post – task stages) so as not to disrupt the semantic flow of the lesson and at the same time ensure the visibility of those elements that are easily "lost" in the flow of speech (e.g., discursive markers, politeness signals, prosodic accents) (Burger, Chrétien, 2001).

The choice between integrated and isolated modes is determined by the nature of the goal (interaction strategy, "chunk", prosody – more often integrated; visibility, but critical for understanding elements – with short isolated preparation), the complexity of the task, and the level of the class, as well as organizational factors (time, group size). In their opinion, if students are no longer preschool age and interact with English primarily in a classroom where everyone shares a common native language, both formats can be helpful.

Xanthou's (2011) study examines the impact of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) on the development of lexical competence. The author argues that when working with subject content in a second language, there is a natural focus on linguistic form, even when the primary goal of the lesson is to acquire knowledge. She emphasizes that short explanations of lexical or grammatical elements, embedded in communicative tasks, help students learn new words and grammatical structures more effectively. This approach is a typical example of integrated FFI, where attention to form is combined with content learning, contributing to more conscious language mastery.

Yin (2014) developed an effective methodology for studying the educational process based on case study design, which involves an in-depth analysis of educational phenomena in real conditions. His approach facilitates the application of FFI in pedagogical practice, as it helps to systematically study how the integration of attention to form affects the development of language skills, motivation, and the level of language acquisition by students. Thanks to the clear structure of case analysis and the comparison of results between groups, Yin's method enables an objective assessment of the effectiveness of communicative learning with FFI elements.

In the article by Zyzik and Polio (2008), the incidental focus on form in the process of learning Spanish in university literature courses is investigated. The authors found that when analyzing texts, teachers and students naturally turn to linguistic aspects – word meanings, grammatical structures, and errors in speech. Such micro-episodes of attention to form, which arise in the context of meaningful discussion, significantly increase the accuracy and depth of language acquisition. This confirms the effectiveness of the integrated FFI approach, where language learning and the development of meaningful thinking occur simultaneously, without separation from real communication.

There is evidence that FFI helps students notice forms in incoming speech/text; without a focused focus, they may not notice and learn new elements (Ellis, Spada & Lightbown). "Form" here encompasses lexical (including pronunciation and spelling), grammatical, and pragmatic aspects.

According to Long's (1998) classification, three main ways of focusing attention on linguistic form can be distinguished:

1. *Focus – on – forms* – traditional grammar trajectory: lessons, textbooks, and exercises are built around structures (phonemes, sentence patterns, rules). The goal is to learn rules and forms. Focus – on – forms can be:

- i. Explicit:
 - ✓ deductive (the teacher provides the rule),
 - ✓ inductive (students “discover” the rule on the material themselves).
- ii. Implicit: learning of rules occurs without awareness (DeKeyser).

There is also the structured input approach proposed by Ellis (2001): students are given a large number of examples of a particular language structure, encouraging them to notice patterns on their own and apply this form in completing tasks. This approach is close to isolated FFI and can be seen as a stage of preparation for further communicative practice.

2. *Focus – on – meaning* is a “radical” shift of the pendulum towards meaning: the main thing is communication. This has promoted communicative learning, but studies have shown that without attention to specific forms, progress in L2 may be slower.

3. *Focus – on – form* is a compromise: during content tasks, the teacher briefly and appropriately draws attention to the specific form that arose as a need, for example, after an "information gap" – a brief analysis of the grammatical moment that caused difficulties.

Focus – on – form can be:

- reactive: corrective feedback at the moment of speaking – recast (rephrase in the correct form), clarification request (request to clarify), repetition (repeat the problematic fragment);
- pre-emptive: a very short "reminder/highlight", before the communicative activity that will be performed.

Both of these options (planned and situational) correspond to integrated FFI (Omaggio, 2001), which means that attention to form is built into the communicative work, not separated from it.

The works of Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010) present a holistic concept of CLIL, which is based on the simultaneous development of subject knowledge and language competence. The authors emphasize that effective acquisition of a second language is possible only when students not only communicate, but also become aware of the language structures they use. This approach is directly related to the principles of FFI, as CLIL combines communicative learning with short episodes of attention to form, including both lexical and grammatical aspects. In the process of working on the content, students naturally notice language patterns, and the teacher supports this observation with targeted questions, explanations, or prompts.

In the article by Coyle (Coyle, 2007), the author demonstrates that drawing attention to language form through content-based tasks does not reduce student motivation; instead, it makes learning more conscious and effective. Coyle emphasizes that linguistic accuracy and communicative spontaneity should develop in parallel, and the teacher should maintain a balance between these components, using both proactive and reactive FFI – that is, brief explanations before the task begins and gentle corrections during its implementation.

Yoshiko Ishikura (Ishikura, 2015) focuses in her study on the use of English as a language of instruction (EMI – English-Medium Instruction) in Japanese universities. The author demonstrates that teaching subjects in English is practical only when teachers intentionally incorporate language support into the learning process. This can be an explanation of the structure of statements, phrases of academic language, or key phrases necessary for discussions and presentations. Thus, Ishikura demonstrates that the integrated use of FFI helps students improve language accuracy without reducing the level of communication.

Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (2003) consider content-based instruction (CBI) as an effective way to combine content learning with the development of language skills. Sandra Berger and Marie Chrétien's study (Burger & Chrétien, 2001) presents the results of a study on the development of oral speech in university courses based on the CBI model. The authors prove that students achieve significantly better results in speaking when teachers integrate short language explanations and make moderate corrections during communicative tasks. This reactive form of FFI enables students to improve linguistic accuracy in real-world communication without compromising the naturalness of their speech.

Cammarata and Tedick (2012) analyze the experience of teachers working in immersion programs. They emphasize that teachers often focus only on content, ignoring language, or, conversely, pay too much attention to grammar. The authors suggest finding a balance between content and form by planning short but regular episodes of attention to linguistic structures within

communicative tasks. Such planning aligns with the principles of planned FFI, where the linguistic form becomes a natural element of communication, rather than a separate learning block (Lyster, 2015, p. 5).

The main difference between these two types is that proactive FFI is planned well in advance of the lesson; during the planning phase, the teacher selects a specific language structure on which he wants to focus the students' attention. In contrast, reactive FFI addresses language problems as students make mistakes regarding a particular language structure (Tedick & Young, 2014), i.e., directly during the lesson.

According to Ishikura (2015), practical English language learning in dual-focus courses (English-Medium Instruction) requires not only authentic communication but also targeted language support during the learning process. The author emphasizes that providing brief explanations of language structures or key phrases before completing tasks, as well as offering gentle corrections during communication, helps students better master the correct forms without compromising the naturalness of their speech. This approach corresponds to the methods of *proactive and reactive FFI*, when attention to form is organically integrated into communicative activities.

According to Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (2003), successful Content-Based Instruction (CBI) is possible only if attention to content and language form is balanced. The authors emphasize the need to plan language and content goals simultaneously so that students not only learn the material but also improve their grammatical and lexical competence. This approach reflects the principle of an integrated focus on form, where students learn grammatical structures through real communication, rather than through isolated study of rules.

As research by Burger and Chrétien (Burger & Chrétien, 2001) shows, students achieve better results in oral speech when teachers provide brief and relevant prompts on the correct use of language forms or gently correct errors during classes. The authors argue that this reactive form of FFI promotes the development of speech accuracy without disrupting the communicative flow, since students immediately notice and learn correct patterns in real communication situations.

Cammarata and Tedick (2012) emphasize in their research on balancing content and language in immersion programs that teachers should avoid extremes, specifically excessive attention to content or grammar. They suggest using planned episodes of FFI, that is, short and purposeful pauses during which students focus on grammatical or lexical forms, without breaking away from the communicative task. This approach allows you to maintain natural speech while ensuring the gradual formation of grammatical correctness.

Lightbown (2007) believes that in bilingual and immersion-communicative learning, students need opportunities to become aware of and reflect on language form in the context of real communication. The author warns that exclusively meaning-oriented learning leads to the

consolidation of errors, while targeted FFI interventions – both explicit and implicit – stimulate long-term language improvement. Her findings support the idea that integrating attention to form is a necessary condition for the development of language competence in a communicative environment.

The current stage of development of teaching methods includes not only the works of foreign authors. Ukrainian methodologists also do not stand aside and contribute to the development of education. Panova L. S., Andriyko I. F., Tezikova S. V. et al. (2010) "Methodology of teaching foreign languages in general education institutions" is a work that systematizes the forms and methods of teaching a foreign language. Special tasks were developed to help students practice the material they studied, including grammar and vocabulary, in real-life situations. The authors emphasize that communicative practice not only develops speaking skills but also listening skills, which allows you to understand the material better and immerse yourself in the language environment.

Methodology and Procedure

The empirical study was conducted in the 2025/26 academic year at the Bila Tserkva Academic Lyceum "Vector" - Gymnasium No. 18. The group of students consisted of 17 individuals (10th grade; average age, 15 years).

The pedagogical research in our topic is considered a methodologically verified procedure for studying educational phenomena under controlled conditions, aimed at testing the effectiveness of FFI in communicative teaching of English in high school. Its subject is the influence of short, relevant episodes of "attention to form" (proactive and reactive) on the development of speech competence of high school students – primarily on indicators of oral interaction and production (fluency, turn-taking, coherence, and pragmatic relevance), provided that the content focus of the tasks is maintained. The study is conducted with 10th-grade students and lasts for several academic weeks, ensuring the comparability of conditions (level of preparation, class size, and educational topics).

In parallel, factors that can influence the results (organizational, didactic, socio-pedagogical) are recorded, as well as the parameters of the FFI interventions themselves (type: recast, prompt, clarification request, meta-linguistic prompt; duration; frequency).

The methodological tools of the research include: a literature review (theoretical foundations of communicative language teaching, focus on form, interactional competence; comparison with the requirements of the CEFR and Ukrainian regulatory documents), documentation analysis (work programs, notes, assessment rubrics, observation protocols), observations with coding of FFI episodes and behavioral indicators of interaction (conversation management, repairs, polite strategies), pre – /post – assessment of oral and written product according to CEFR descriptors and CAF indicators (with a "blind" expert rating of transcribed fragments), as well as assessment of student and teacher attitudes (questionnaires, short interviews) to record the acceptability and perception of the integrated FFI.

Research methods:

1. Questionnaires and surveys of students were used to collect subjective data on students' attitudes towards language learning, their motivation, perceptions of learning effectiveness, and personal impressions of using the applications. A special questionnaire was developed that may include both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

2. Testing the level of grammatical competence before and after using the applications provided objective quantitative data to measure the effectiveness of the applications. Students have taken identical or parallel tests before the start of the intervention (pre-test) and after its completion (post-test).

3. Research. This method is key to identifying cause-and-effect relationships between variables. The research process involves three stages: pre-testing, training impact, and final testing. Comparing the post-test results of a group with its own pre-test results allowed us to clearly determine whether the use of applications led to an improvement in grammar competence.

The research aims to empirically verify whether the integration of FFI into communicative activities enhances the speech competence of high school students and under what conditions (types of interventions, frequency, and placement in the lesson structure) this effect is most stable.

The hypothesis is that the systematic incorporation of integrated FFI episodes into the structure of communicative activities will provide a statistically significant increase in speech competence indicators compared to training where attention to form is absent or provided episodically and in isolation. It is expected that students in the experimental group will demonstrate better fluency and coherence of speech, more precise control of communicative moves (initiation, maintenance, repair), as well as higher pragmatic relevance in typical school communication scenarios.

Students have different learning needs and learning styles. For some, systematic and consistent explanations of grammatical structures are most effective, while others learn better through spontaneous, reactive interventions that occur directly during communicative situations. In addition, the level of motivation also determines the attitude towards the accuracy of speech: some students are oriented towards an internal desire for correctness and expressiveness in speech, while others respond more to external stimuli, such as the successful completion of tasks or the achievement of communicative goals.

The following stages were carried out to implement the study:

- a) analyzing the curriculum to identify opportunities for integrating FTI into communicative tasks;
- b) surveying students about their attitudes towards learning grammar and its role in the development of speaking skills;
- c) determining the initial level of development of students' speaking skills;

- d) developing a series of lessons that integrate grammar into a communicative context;
- e) implementing an integrated approach to learning and analyzing its impact on speaking skills;
- f) assessing the effectiveness of the proposed approach.

At the initial stage of the study, a survey was conducted among students to assess their attitudes toward the English learning process. The questionnaire aimed to obtain subjective information about the level of motivation and perception of the effectiveness of the classes. The questionnaire enabled us to determine how students evaluate communicative teaching methods, react to brief corrective prompts from the teacher during speaking, and identify the advantages they see in combining traditional learning with online applications. The answers received made it possible to determine the general attitude of students to learning English in the conditions of a communicative approach supplemented with elements of FFI.

Table 1. *Levels of positive attitude and motivation to learn English*

Level	Score Range	Characteristics
High level	64-80 points	Students demonstrate high motivation for communicative learning, actively participate in speaking tasks, respond positively to prompts and corrections, and confidently use English in oral communication
Average level	48–63 points	Students are generally positive, but have some difficulties with initiating dialogue, using learned phrases, or perceiving corrections. Motivation is moderate; additional support is needed.
Low level	less than 48 points	Students demonstrate low interest, avoid communication, do not feel a sense of progress, rarely use new phrases, and may perceive educational interventions as a barrier.

The initial stage of the study involved assessing the level of development of high school students' speech skills before the introduction of the research. Diagnostics of the development of speech skills was carried out by testing. A specially developed tool for assessing the accuracy and fluency of speech is presented in Appendices B and D. Pre- and post-tests are used to determine the initial level of students' speech competence with a focus on grammar, which ensures the semantic accuracy, expressiveness, and spontaneity of oral speech. The tests consist of 5 parts (20 tasks), which cover the main aspects of grammar competence.

Assessment procedure: 1 correct answer = 1 point; maximum result – 20 points. The results obtained are converted into percentages or an average score ($\times 5$).

Table 2. *Levels of speech competence formation*

Leve	Score Range	Characteristics
High level	16–20 points	The student uses grammar tenses correctly, has a vast active vocabulary, easily selects language resources in accordance with the communication situation, owns phrasal verbs and collocations, and is capable of accurately and naturally expressing thoughts.
Average level	11–15 points	The student can express himself in typical situations, but has limited variability of language means, allowing lexical inaccuracies that do not significantly affect understanding. Students use grammar structures, but not always in the proper way.
Low level	0–10 points	The student makes mistakes in grammatical sentences and struggles to understand the usage of tenses, often having difficulty with word choice. They often lack necessary phrases, and statements are complicated or interrupted due to the search for lexical units.

Results

According to the results of the questionnaire, the level of motivation to learn English among the study group's students (17 people) is distributed unevenly, which reflects the typical state of interest among high school students in learning foreign languages. In general, a moderate level of motivation is observed, with some students showing a high interest in improving their language skills. In contrast, others demonstrate only a situational or low level of learning activity. This suggests the need for further implementation of methods aimed at strengthening internal motivation, particularly the integration of form-oriented learning into a communicative approach.

Table 3. *Results of testing a group of students on the level of motivation to learn English*

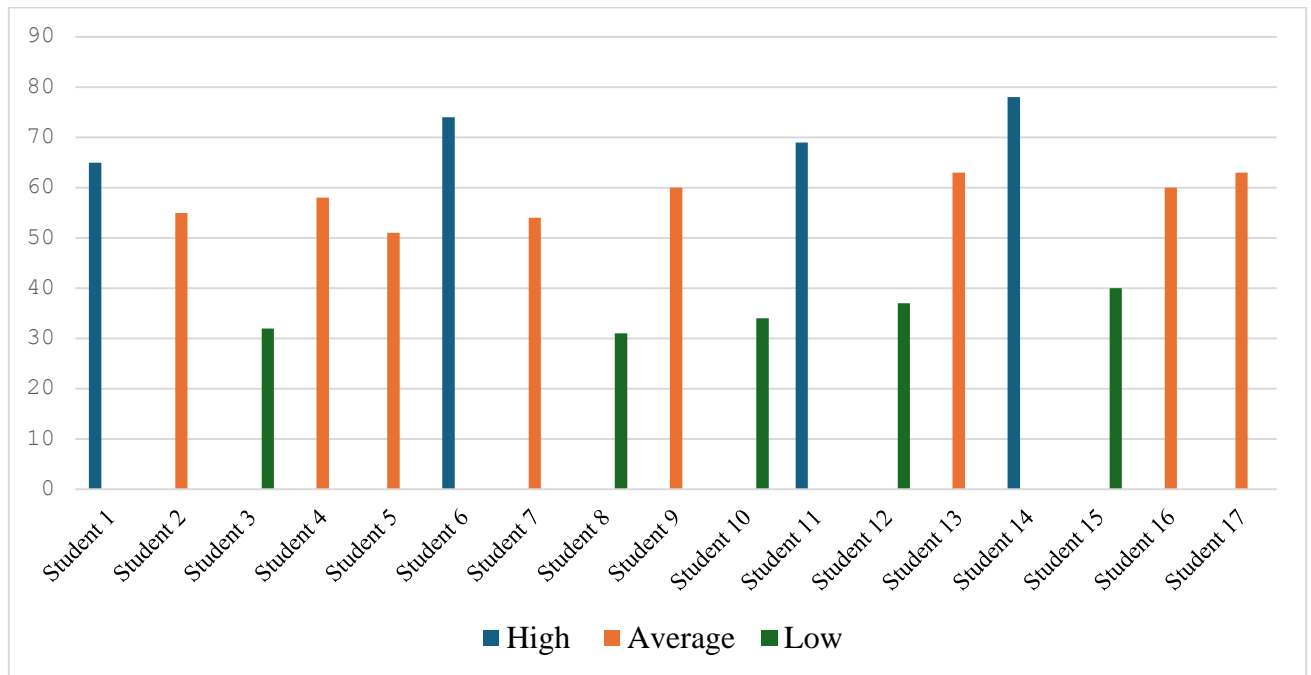
Motivation level	Absolute value	Relative value
High	4	24%
Average	8	47%
Low	5	29%

The results of the survey indicate that the level of motivation to learn English among the study group's students (17 people) is distributed unevenly, which is a typical pattern for high school students.

Students with a high level of motivation (4 out of 17, 24%) consistently demonstrate a strong interest in English as a means of communication and personal development. Their motivation is mainly internal: they strive to improve their knowledge not for the sake of grades, but for self-realization and to expand their future opportunities. Such students typically have clearly defined educational goals, demonstrate responsibility, and possess self-confidence. To maintain their level of motivation, an individualized approach, working with authentic materials, and engaging in creative or project tasks that allow them to develop autonomy in learning are effective.

The average level of motivation is inherent in the most significant part of the group, eight students (47%). They show interest in learning the language, but it is situational and unstable. Their motivation is mainly external – the desire to get a good grade or fulfill school requirements. The group with a low level of motivation includes five students (29%), who show little interest in learning English. Their motivation is external primarily – learning is determined by the requirements of the teacher or parents.

Figure 1. Results of testing a group of students on the level of motivation to learn English



In general, the group is characterized by an average level of motivation, which is typical for high school students. However, the presence of both highly motivated and poorly engaged students requires the teacher to take a differentiated approach to organizing learning. The optimal approach is to combine Form-Focused Instruction with a communicative approach (Communicative Language Teaching), which not only improves language skills but also increases motivation through the practical significance, interactivity, and personal involvement of students in the learning process.

The results of the entrance test (Pre-test), which consisted of 20 tasks and was aimed at testing the grammatical competence of students – knowledge of basic grammatical structures, the ability to use them in context, recognize tense forms, conditional constructions, passive voice, and tense agreement, – showed a generally homogeneous level of grammatical skills in a group of 17 students.

Table 4. Level of formation of grammatical competence of students at the initial stage

Level of competence	Absolute value	Relative value
High	6	35%
Average	6	35%
Low	5	30%

Students with a high level of grammatical competence (6 students – 35%) demonstrate a deep understanding of the grammatical patterns of the English language and the ability to apply them in speech flexibly. They confidently use a wide range of grammatical structures – from simple to complex, easily recognize temporal and aspectual differences (Simple, Perfect, Past), correctly use conditional constructions, use to/get used to/would be, etc.).

This group of students is capable of learning autonomy, quickly learns new structures, and can also serve as an example for others. It is advisable to offer them in-depth tasks, such as analyzing authentic texts, translating complex grammatical constructions, participating in debates or project activities, where it is necessary to use complex grammatical forms naturally.

Students with an average level of grammatical competence (6 students – 35%) have a sufficient amount of knowledge for basic communication in English, but their skills are not always stable. They are well oriented in basic grammatical topics – tense formation, articles, personal and possessive pronouns, but often make mistakes in details – for example, in choosing the correct tense. Such students can build simple and common sentences, but experience difficulties in formulating complex constructions and conditional sentences. They understand grammar rules, but cannot always apply them automatically, especially during oral speech.

Students in this category need a targeted system of repetition and practical consolidation of grammar in communicative situations. Tasks with a gradual increase in complexity are practical for them: from controlled exercises to free speech, role-playing games, and discussions, in which grammatical correctness becomes a means of effective communication.

Students with a low level of grammatical competence (5 students – 30%) have a limited understanding of the grammatical system of the English language. They often confuse tenses, misuse auxiliary verbs, fail to distinguish between sentence types (affirmative, negative, and interrogative), and struggle to construct coherent grammatical structures. Their utterances are usually short, simplified, and often modeled after their native language.

Such students demonstrate a fragmentary knowledge: they can recall individual rules, but do not understand their interrelationships. Often, learning anxiety or fear of making a mistake restrains their activity in speaking. At the same time, this group has the potential for growth if learning is organized in a friendly, supportive atmosphere. For these students, it is advisable to use a step-by-step approach to developing grammatical skills, accompanied by numerous examples, visual aids, and constructive feedback. The most effective tasks are those that involve repetition in the form of games, short training dialogues, cards with prompts, and exercises of the "error correction" type with teacher comments. It is essential to gradually transition from isolated grammatical structures to their application in real-world communicative situations.

For a visual presentation of the results, we entered the obtained data in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Results of the students' pre-intervention questionnaire

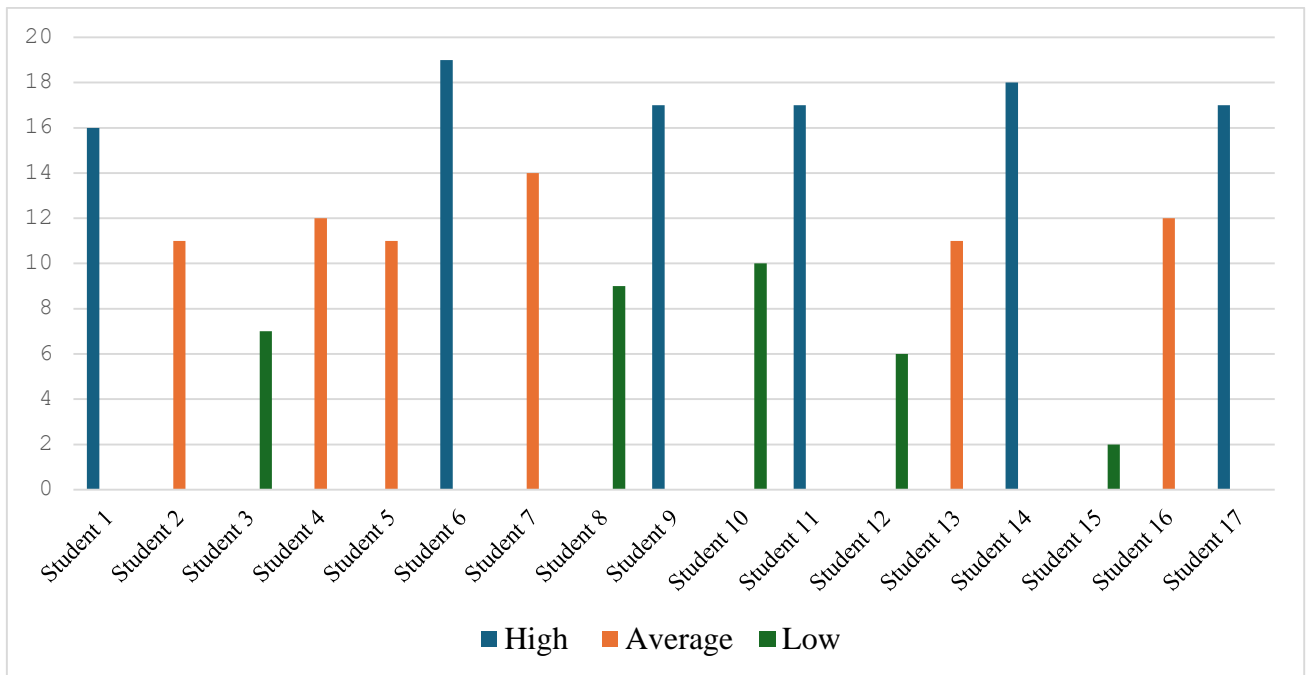


Figure 2 shows that the level of speech (grammatical) competence is not sufficiently developed. Thus, the distribution of levels of grammatical competence in the group is relatively balanced: approximately one-third of the students have grammatical structures at a high level, another third at an average level, and the rest require basic repetition and gradual development of skills. This creates favorable conditions for the implementation of FFI, which combines the conscious assimilation of grammatical rules with their practical application in speech. Such an approach will contribute to leveling the playing field for students, enhance their grammatical accuracy and fluency of speech, and increase their motivation to learn English.

At the second practical stage, the group was introduced to the learning program, which encompasses a range of topics that combine communicative tasks with brief episodes of FFI. It involves a combination of real communication situations with short episodes of attention to language form, which helps students not only speak fluently, but also do so grammatically and lexically correctly. Appendix C provides a plan for the training program.

The goal of the program is to improve the grammar through the communication of high school students by integrating short and focused FFI episodes into communicative tasks so that students:

- i. speak more grammatically correct and naturally.
- ii. use new vocabulary more actively.
- iii. become aware of language forms during communication.

At the third generalization stage, we again conducted a diagnostic section in the group by testing (Appendix D).

After conducting the final testing (Post-test), which aimed to determine the level of grammatical competence upon completion of the educational stage, a reflective assessment of students' knowledge, skills, and abilities was carried out. The test included tasks on the correct use of tenses, conditional sentences, tense agreement, and constructing grammatically correct statements in a communicative context. The results obtained are presented in the table below.

Table 5. *Results of the final testing of students*

Level of competence	Absolute value	Relative value
High	9	60%
Average	5	25%
Low	3	15%

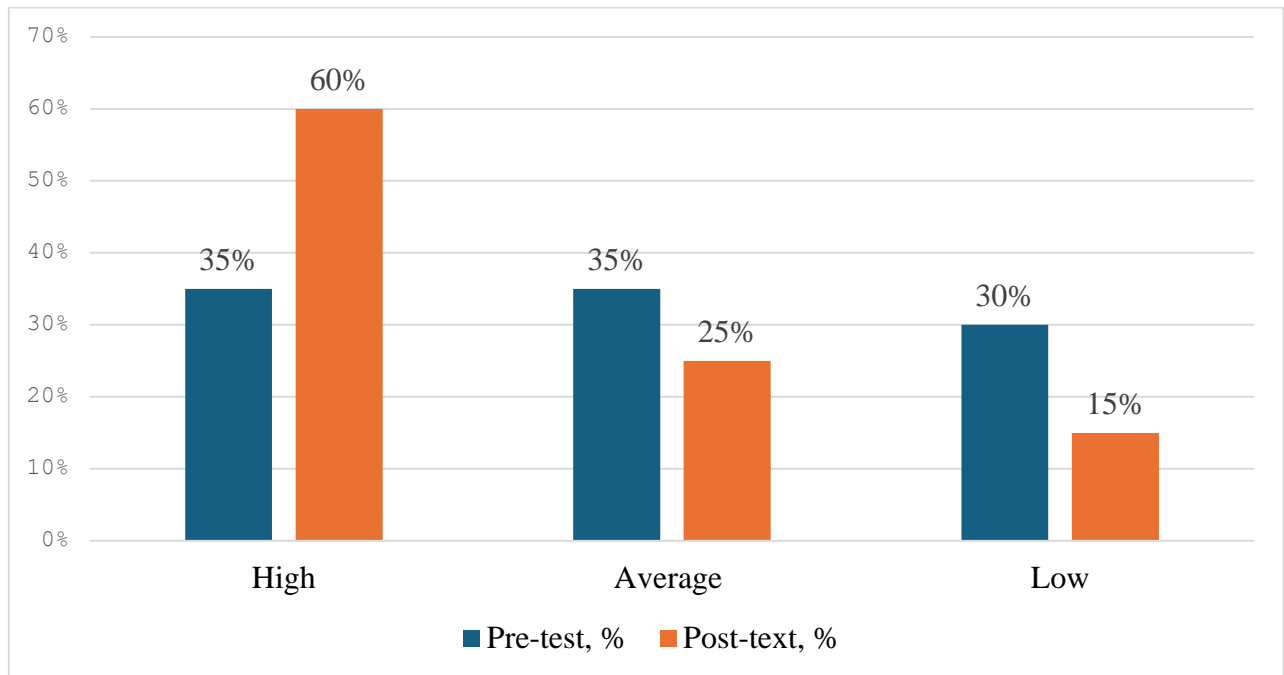
Table 6 shows the dynamics of changes in the level of grammatical competence of students before and after experimental training using the form-oriented approach (FFI) within the framework of communicative learning (CLT)

Table 6. *Comparative results of the level of grammatical competence of students at the initial and final stages*

Level	Pre-test	Pre-test, %	Post-test	Post-test, %
High	6	35%	9	60%
Average	6	35%	5	25%
Low	5	30%	3	15%

For a visual presentation of the results, we entered the obtained data in Figure 3.

Figure 3. *Comparative results of the level of grammatical competence of students at the initial and final stages*



A comparative analysis of the results before and after the implementation of FFI within the framework of the communicative approach reveals an improvement in the level of students' grammatical competence formation. At the initial stage (Pre-test), the group structure was characterized by a reasonably even distribution: 35% of students demonstrated a high level of grammatical skills, another 35% – an average level, and 30% – a low level. This indicated the presence of some basic training, but also a significant number of students whose grammatical skills remained unformed or fragmented. At the final stage (Post-test), the situation changed: the number of students with a high level of grammatical competence increased to 60%, the average level decreased to 25%, and the low level to 15%.

The comparative analysis shows that the most significant shift occurred in the direction of improving the quality of mastery of grammatical structures. If, at the beginning of the intervention, most students could correctly reproduce individual rules only in standard situations, then after integrating form-oriented elements of learning, they demonstrated the ability to use grammatical means flexibly in communicative contexts. Students with a high level of grammatical competence not only mastered complex grammatical constructions, such as conditional sentences, tense agreement, or indirect speech, but also learned to apply them in real communicative tasks, where accuracy is combined with naturalness of speech. In the group with an average level, there was a gradual yet noticeable improvement in knowledge. Students began to understand better the functions of grammatical forms in context, rather than merely mechanically reproducing the rules.

The progress among students with a low initial level is noticeable. If, before the beginning of the experiment, they demonstrated a weak command of basic structures, then after completing the training, these students were able to achieve a basic level of proficiency sufficient to understand and construct simple, grammatically correct statements.

In general, positive dynamics are observed: students are beginning to use grammatical means in speech more accurately, confidently, and diversely. The number of typical errors related to the choice of tenses, articles, auxiliary verbs, and word order decreased. Such results demonstrate the effectiveness of combining the form-oriented approach with the communicative one, as it was this integration that contributed to the transition from mechanical mastery of grammar to its conscious, flexible, and contextually appropriate use. Thus, the research confirmed that the FFI method, in combination with CLT, provides a qualitative increase in the level of grammatical competence among students, contributes to the development of speech confidence, and fosters a stable motivation for further improvement in the English language.

Discussion

The study involved 17 students who formed one experimental group. The study aimed to investigate whether integrating FFI into the process of communicative English teaching contributes to an increase in the grammatical competence level of high school students. The study aimed to investigate the dynamics of students' grammatical skill development following the introduction of FFI elements into the regular teaching system, as well as to assess the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing speech skills in real communication contexts.

The research program lasted several weeks and consisted of thematic lessons (“Stay active and be healthy”, “Discover Ukraine: sport heroes”, “Solving Problems”, etc.), which combined communicative tasks and short speech episodes – that is, moments when the teacher drew students’ attention to grammar or typical errors.

The study's results showed an improvement in the level of grammatical competence among students following the introduction of form-oriented teaching. In particular, within the group, the proportion of students with a high level of grammatical competence increased from 35% to 60%, the number of students with an average level decreased to 25%, and those with a low level decreased to 15%. This indicates a significant improvement in mastering grammatical structures and the development of the ability to use them in communicative speech.

Thus, the program with integrated FFI episodes gave significantly better results. Students in the group began to speak not only more confidently, but also to formulate thoughts more accurately, correctly use phrasal verbs, grammatical structures, and fixed expressions.

The results of our study are in good agreement with the conclusions of foreign authors who studied similar methods. Thus, Coyle, Hood & Marsh (2010) in their work on CLIL emphasize that students better remember grammar and vocabulary when they are used in real communication situations. In our case, students practiced modal verbs, conditional sentences, and adjectives with prepositions, among other concepts, in real dialogues and role-plays – precisely as the authors of the CLIL approach advise. Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (2003) demonstrate that providing short explanations of grammar or vocabulary immediately before the task (i.e., proactive FFI) and offering gentle corrections during the task (reactive FFI) yield better results than traditional grammar exercises. In our intervention, the teacher acted on this principle: she did not interrupt the students, but gently corrected their mistakes during the dialogue, and then briefly summarized typical difficulties at the end of the lesson. Burger & Chrétien (2001) demonstrated that even minor linguistic comments during communication can significantly enhance the quality of oral speech. We observed the same effect: in the experimental group, students began to confuse grammatical forms less and built sentences more confidently. Cammarata & Tedick (2012) also emphasize that the main task of the teacher is to find a balance between content (i.e., communication) and form (grammar, vocabulary). Too much emphasis on rules can make learning boring, and too much emphasis on communication can lead to many errors. In our program, this balance was maintained: students actively communicated, but constantly received short linguistic feedback.

Although the results of our study confirm the effectiveness of FFI, it is worth considering several points critically, such as:

- i. The students in the group may have been more active simply because they were participating in the "new methodology". They perceived the lessons as more interesting, so they made an effort to try harder. This could have partly influenced the final results.
- ii. The study lasted only a few weeks. Although the changes are already noticeable, there is no guarantee that the effect will be maintained after several months without additional practice.
- iii. The success of FFI depends very much on the teacher. The teacher must be able to balance communication and grammar explanation without interrupting the flow of communication. Not every teacher has this experience or confidence.
- iv. Not all topics are equally conducive to the integration of FFI. For example, during lessons on the topics of "Solving problems and giving advice" or "Comparing past and present habits", it is easy to introduce the form into the context. However, when discussing complex topics (e.g., debates or abstract subjects), it takes more time to do so.

Despite these observations, the results remain convincing: the systematic inclusion of FFI episodes indeed helps improve language competence without compromising communicative competence.

Based on the results obtained, several practical recommendations can be made for the further work of English teachers and researchers. First of all, it is worth expanding the use of the FFI method not only during speaking, but also in all types of speech activity – writing, reading, and listening. For example, after reading a text, the teacher can briefly highlight interesting language structures, fixed expressions, or useful collocations. During written tasks, brief tips or sample sentences can be provided to help students express their thoughts accurately. This will make attention a natural part of the learning process, and not a separate stage.

It is also important to develop short training sessions or seminars for teachers, where they can learn how to implement FFI in their lessons without overwhelming students with grammatical explanations. Such training should show simple and effective techniques – how to organically combine communication and grammar, how to correct errors without pressure, and how to explain language form through context. This will help teachers create more engaging, modern, and communicatively oriented lessons.

Another important step is to conduct long-term monitoring of learning outcomes. It is advisable to organize a re-test two to three months after the end of the course to check whether the positive effect is maintained. If the results remain stable, this will provide additional confirmation that the FFI method not only yields quick results but also long-term benefits.

To increase the reliability of the results, it is worthwhile to expand the sample of experimental participants. Similar studies can be conducted in schools across different regions, involving students with varying levels of English proficiency (from A2 to B2), as well as in various learning formats – face-to-face, blended, or online. This will help identify the conditions under which the FFI method works best, making it a universal tool for various educational contexts.

Additionally, it is advisable to incorporate student self-assessment. It is helpful to introduce short surveys or reflective diaries in which students describe how brief language explanations help them, which ones are remembered more effectively, and which ones require additional training. This approach will provide valuable qualitative data on students' perceptions of FFI, and will also help teachers better understand the needs of the classroom.

Further research could be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of how FFI works and under what conditions it is most effective. First, it is worth finding out how students acquire language form, whether through their own observations, teacher corrections, or through awareness of their own mistakes. This will help determine more accurately what type of work with forms is most effective for different age groups and levels of English proficiency.

A separate study is needed to compare the different types of FFI: proactive (paying attention to form before the task begins), reactive (paying attention during the task), and reflective (paying attention after the task is completed). It is necessary to investigate which of them produces the best

effect in different types of classes, such as dialogues, debates, or written assignments. Such a comparison will help create a more accurate model of FFI use in real school practice.

Another important direction is to study the cultural characteristics of the perception of FFI. In different countries, students react differently to corrections. For example, Ukrainian students may perceive mistakes as something negative, whereas students from other cultures may view them as a natural part of the learning process. Therefore, researchers should consider both national and psychological characteristics when planning classes and determining the role of feedback.

It is also promising to study the impact of FFI on students' emotional state. It is interesting to explore how brief language comments or corrections impact students' confidence, self-esteem, and level of anxiety when communicating in English. A properly organized FFI not only improves linguistic accuracy but also helps to reduce the fear of making mistakes. Finally, it is worth exploring the possibilities of using FFI in the context of academic English, specifically in preparation for international exams (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL) or writing scientific papers in English. This will help determine whether the FFI approach can support the development of more formal language skills, including academic writing, understanding complex texts, and presenting information effectively.

In summary, the results of our research fully confirmed the central hypothesis: integrating FFI into communicative learning significantly improves students' speech competence. Students not only spoke more freely, but also became aware of the structure of the language, noticed their own mistakes, and used correct grammatical and lexical models. This indicates the development of not only practical but also cognitive language skills. Thus, FFI does not contradict the communicative approach – on the contrary, it enhances its effectiveness. It helps students speak both correctly and naturally.

As noted by Coyle (2007), Brinton (2003), Cammarata (2012), and other researchers, the main strength of FFI is its flexibility and naturalness: it does not turn the lesson into grammar training, but gradually forms linguistic accuracy in real communicative situations.

Our research has shown that even brief episodes of attention to form, if systematically integrated into a lesson, can significantly improve the quality of students' speech.

Conclusion

The study aimed to test the effectiveness of integrating FFI episodes into the process of communicative English language teaching among high school students. The main idea was that even brief but systematic moments of focusing on grammatical structures can enhance the quality of speech without compromising the communicative approach.

The results of the experiment fully confirmed the hypothesis put forward: the systematic inclusion of FFI episodes in communicative tasks significantly contributes to an increase in students' speech competence. A comparison of the indicators before and after the experiment showed a clear

positive trend in the group. This indicates that the proposed program not only stimulates the development of lexical and grammatical skills but also increases confidence in communicating in English.

The results obtained showed that the effectiveness of FFI is due to its natural combination with communicative activity. Students did not perceive language form as a separate, isolated element of learning. On the contrary, due to the well-structured lessons – comprising pre-task, during-task, and post-task phases – attention to form was organically integrated into the communication process. At the pre-task stage, students received a brief explanation of a language phenomenon (for example, conditional sentences or modal verbs), while performing the task (during-task), the teacher gently corrected errors without interrupting the dialogue, and at the end (post-task), he conducted a brief generalization, focusing on typical difficulties and correct patterns. This approach enabled the combination of spontaneity in speech with accuracy and conscious use of lexical and grammatical structures.

A comparative analysis revealed that FFI had a positive impact not only on language accuracy but also on the overall activity and motivation of students. The participants in the group became more confident in their communication, initiated dialogue more often, and attempted to correct their own mistakes independently. They began to notice patterns in language, understand how statements are constructed, and apply this knowledge in new situations. This indicates a transition from mechanical memorization to conscious language proficiency – an essential step towards the formation of actual communicative competence.

These studies are consistent with the conclusions of leading foreign authors – Coyle (2007, 2010), Brinton, Snow & Wesche (2003), Burger & Chrétien (2001), Cammarata & Tedick (2012), Ishikura (2015), who proved that attention to language form in the context of content-based learning (CLIL or CBI) contributes to better assimilation of the material and increased linguistic accuracy without loss of spontaneity. All these studies emphasize that it is the integrated approach, where language is studied through content and communication, rather than in isolation, that is the most effective in modern foreign language teaching methodology.

Despite these factors, the experiment's effect can be considered stable and pedagogically significant. The systematic combination of communicative methods with brief explanations of forms facilitates a deeper assimilation of the language, promotes self-correction, enhances confidence, and reduces the language barrier. Students who participated in the program not only improved their grammar but also became more open in communication, which indicates the positive impact of FFI on the emotional and motivational sphere of learning.

Summarizing, we can draw the main conclusion: attention to language form, when integrated naturally and systematically, does not limit communication, but, on the contrary, enhances it, making

it higher quality, more accurate, and more conscious. The results obtained confirm that the use of FFI within CLT is an effective way to enhance students' language preparation, develop their cognitive and communicative skills, and form confident, motivated users of English.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Purpose: to collect subjective data on attitudes towards learning English, motivation, perceptions of the effectiveness of lessons, and impressions of using applications.

Instructions (questions 1–16): choose an option on a scale.

1 – strongly disagree · 2 – rather disagree · 3 – hard to say · 4 – rather agree · 5 – strongly agree

Questions:

1. I like learning English in lessons where there is a lot of communication.
2. The teacher's short tips on the correct phrases help me to speak.
3. Easy corrections during a conversation help me to speak better.
4. Because of corrections during a conversation, I am afraid to speak. (reverse statement)
5. Over the past month, I feel progress in my oral speech.
6. I want to work more in pairs and groups.
7. It is easy for me to start a conversation in English in class.
8. I can politely ask for clarification.
9. Listening to audio help me practice useful phrases.
10. Recording my voice/video helps me notice mistakes and improve my speaking.
11. Tips in apps during assignments do not distract me.
12. I regularly use the phrases I have learned in different topics and situations.
13. I understand my classmates well during group assignments.
14. I usually have enough time to express myself in class.
15. Short “phrase sprints” before an assignment are useful for further conversation.
16. Lessons with hints on language expressions make my speech more natural.
17. What in class helps you the most to speak fluently?
18. What 2 – 3 phrases have been the most useful to you recently?
19. Which method has helped you and why?
20. What should I change in class to make it easier for you to speak English?

Grammar Pre-Test**Part 1. Adjectives with Prepositions / I'd rather – I'd prefer – I think that***(Choose the correct answer)*

1. My brother is really ___ reading books.
A) interested at B) interested in C) good at D) afraid in
2. I'm not ___ walking in the park when it raining.
A) good in B) afraid at C) keen on D) bored in
3. She's ___ spiders, so she never goes camping alone.
A) interested of B) afraid of C) good at D) keen on
4. I'd rather ___ to the gym than stay at home today.
A) going B) go C) went D) to go

Part 2. Conditional Sentences Type I–II*(Choose the correct answer)*

5. If I ___ more time, I would learn how to play the guitar.
A) have B) had C) will have D) would have
6. If you ___ every day, you'll feel healthier.
A) exercise B) exercised C) will exercise D) would exercise
7. If I were you, I ___ join a football club.
A) will B) would C) am D) was
8. If it ___ tomorrow, we'll go hiking.
A) doesn't rain B) didn't rain C) won't rain D) wouldn't rain

Part 3. Present Perfect vs Past Simple*(Choose the correct answer)*

9. I ___ already ___ my breakfast.
A) have / eat B) have / eaten C) had / ate D) have / ate
10. ___ you buy a new phone last week?
A) Did B) Have C) Do D) Were
11. I ___ tennis last weekend.
A) have played B) played C) was playing D) have been playing
12. She has never ___ sushi before.
A) eat B) eats C) eaten D) eating

Part 4. Constructions used to/would...be/get used to

(Choose the correct answer)

13. I used to ___ basketball after school.

- a) play
- b) playing

14. When I was a child, we would ___ in the park every day.

- a) play
- b) playing

15. I am used to ___ up early on school days.

- a) get
- b) getting

16. She couldn't get used to ___ healthy food.

- a) eat
- b) eating

Task 5. Answer the questions

1. What sport are you good at or interested in? Why?
2. If you were a famous athlete, what would your day look like?
3. What healthy habits have you started recently?
4. What sport did you use to try?

Appendix C

Experiential learning program plan

	Lesson topic	Communicative activity	Focus FFI (form)
1	Describing Students and Emotions	Pair work' Extravert vs introvert' , Description of a Friend or Celebrity	Adjectives with Prepositions (afraid of, interested in, good at)
2	Expressing Opinions and Preferences	Debates "Food and Emotions "	Constructions I'd rather / I'd prefer / I think that
3	Mood matters	Speed dating answering questions	Constructions I'd rather / I'd prefer / I think that
4	Solving Problems and Giving Advice	Role Playing "Friendship Conflict"	Conditional Sentences Type II (If I were you, I'd...)
5	Stay active and be healthy	"My Health Journey" Mini Story	Present Perfect and Past Simple Tenses
6	Discover Ukraine: sport Heroes	Interview with famous sportsman	Constructions used to/would...be/get used to
7	Comparing Past and Present Habits	"Sport Timeline Story"	Constructions used to / be used to-would...be
8	Reviewing and Reflection	"Phrase sprint" + oral final testing	Review of basic forms and collocations

Appendix D**Grammar Competence Post-Test**

Goal: To check improvement in students' grammar use in speech contexts.

Assessment: 1 correct answer = 1 point (maximum – 20 points)

Part 1. Adjectives with Prepositions / I'd rather – I'd prefer – I think that

(Choose the correct answer)

1. Many teenagers are ___ social media than books nowadays.
A) interested on
B) keen on
C) afraid of
D) good in
2. I'm really ___ talking in front of a big audience.
A) good at
B) bored with
C) afraid of
D) interested to
3. My teacher thinks that regular exercise is ___ our health.
A) good of
B) good for
C) good at
D) keen on
4. I'd prefer ___ sport outdoors rather than stay inside all day.
A) do
B) doing
C) to do
D) did

Part 2. Conditional Sentences Type I–II

(Choose the correct answer)

5. If I ___ more confident, I would speak English more often.
A) am

- B) was
- C) were
- D) will be

6. If you eat more vegetables, you ___ better.

- A) felt
- B) feeling
- C) will feel
- D) would feel

7. If my friend asked for advice, I ___ tell him to be more active.

- A) will
- B) would
- C) do
- D) did

8. If it ___ cold tomorrow, we won't go jogging.

- A) will be
- B) is
- C) was
- D) would be

Part 3. Present Perfect vs Past Simple

(Choose the correct answer)

9. I ___ to a gym since last year.

- A) joined
- B) have joined
- C) join
- D) was joining

10. We ___ a volleyball match two days ago.

- A) have watched
- B) watch
- C) watched
- D) were watching

11. ___ you ever ___ yoga before?

- A) Did / try
- B) Have / try
- C) Have / tried

D) Do / try

12. She ___ already ___ a healthy routine this month.

A) started

B) has / started

C) has / start

D) have / started

Part 4. Constructions: used to / would / be used to / get used to

(Choose the correct answer)

13. I didn't like early mornings at first, but now I am used to ___ up early.

a) get

b) getting

14. My sister used to ___ fast food very often.

a) eat

b) eating

15. When we lived near the stadium, we would ___ football every evening.

a) play

b) playing

16. It took him some time, but he finally got used to ___ in a team.

a) work

b) working

Task 5. Answer the questions

1. What sport or physical activity do you prefer? Explain your choice.
2. If you were responsible for students' health at school, what would you change?
3. What healthy habit have you developed in the last year?
4. Compare your lifestyle now with the past. What did you use to do differently?