Ways to Overcome Word Order Problems in French Language Learners

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Abstract: This article describes a method for teaching and resolving word order problems among students learning French.

Keywords: problems, word order, construction, communicative, type, grammar, text, syntence, characteristic, function.

Introduction. Among the problems dealt with by the methods of teaching the French language, teaching word order in a simple narrative unemotional sentence remains insufficiently studied. The authors of the textbooks we analyzed on oral practice, grammar, and special manuals on syntax, intended for first- and third-year students, at best introduce students to some variants of subject inversions. At the same time, there is not even a consensus on the classification of inversions (for example: some consider inversion after such conjunctive adverbs as "peut-être" and some others to be obligatory, others to be optional). Not to mention the fact that most often the proposal is considered in isolation, out of context. However, we cannot help but note that such authors as V.G. Gak, E.A. Referovskaya, A.G. Basmanova, A.N. Tarasova recognize the leading role of the communicative factor in the construction of a French sentence as an element of a connected text. The works of these scientists, undoubtedly, make it possible to become familiar with the peculiarities of the syntactic structure of the French language, but do not provide a complete theoretical justification and practical solution to the problem of teaching word order in a simple narrative unemotional sentence (nuclear structure).

Main part. Analysis of texts of a narrative non-emotional nature revealed several models of word order in a simple sentence, describing the inversion of the subject with the placement of the adverbial adverbial place (time), direct and indirect objects in the preposition. The experience of teaching French in the first year of the language department, as well as the ascertaining cross-section carried out in the I-III years of the French department, confirmed our assumptions that phrases that do not fit into the SVC model (direct word order, where S is the subject, V is the predicate , C - addition), cause difficulties in understanding and construction among third-year students.

Complex ones include the phenomenon of actual division of the sentence, which is the leading factor determining the order of words, as well as the fact that the sentence is constructed taking into account the previous (left) context and exists outside the context only in exceptional cases. This is due, in particular, to the fact that these issues are not given special attention in grammar textbooks.

However, it is also known that the teacher is usually focused on other, more serious, from his point of view, errors, and what is connected with the order of words and the actual division of the sentence remains outside the scope of his attention. All of the above determines the relevance of the topic of our research.

It is important to note the following three points:

1) None of the analyzed manuals contains an accessible and complete presentation of the main provisions of the theory of actual division, which is of particular importance when teaching word order.

2) The true meaning of a sentence is revealed only in context: usually a sentence is based on the previous context, but it is also connected with the subsequent one. Only in exceptional cases is a sentence perceived out of context (slogans, advertisements), but here it is related to the situation. Therefore, it is necessary to study word order not in an isolated sentence, but in context, which is why we study word order in microtext.

3) When teaching word order in a French sentence in exercises, it is important to take into account the role of the Russian language when compared with the specific features of French syntax, which makes it possible to expand the linguistic horizons of students, to better understand and comprehend the features of the objective word order (theme precedes the rheme).

Thus, the object of study is the word order of a simple narrative unemotional sentence in French. By unemotional sentence we mean a sentence that is not an expression of feelings, i.e. an ordinary declarative sentence that does not contain emotional vocabulary.

Analysis of the results of the ascertaining section confirmed that without targeted work and without special training, schoolchildren and students do not know how to construct a French sentence or use authentic means of actual sentence division.

The study of the issue of teaching word order in the French language made it possible to understand that the most effective way to understand the patterns of construction of a French simple narrative unemotional sentence lies through mastering the basics of the actual division of the sentence.

The use of actual sentence division (ASD) as a specific guideline, which, as is known from the theory of methods of teaching foreign languages, plays a decisive role in the assimilation of difficult grammatical phenomena, made it possible to create a method of differentiated teaching of word order with a system of exercises that provide for the main difficulties of this phenomenon.

Teaching word order is designed for the practical grammar course of the language department. However, for a more solid and deeper understanding of phenomena related to word order, additional training is provided in the course of theoretical grammar.

The following questions are included in teaching word order: teaching direct word order (WO)(SVC); differentiation of subject and direct object expressed by nouns; introduction of the basic principles of the theory of ASD (given-new, known-unknown; determination of the topic-rhematic composition of a sentence; teaching the relationship between syntactic and actual division of a sentence; the use of articles (definite and indefinite) before the topic and rheme; means of emphasis themes and rhes (presentatives, separators, reprise); the use of inversion in objective word order (theme precedes the rheme); word order in microtext; main theme-rhematic progressions.

In accordance with the selected content of teaching the order of words in a simple narrative unemotional sentence, considered in context, exercises were developed, the material for which was excerpts (microtexts) from the works of modern French writers. Distributed according to the stages of developing skills and abilities adopted in the methodology, these exercises, for better understanding by students, were initially carried out in their native language, and then in French. Each series of exercises not only offered new material, but also reinforced what was learned. The results of these three-course series of exercises were very encouraging. The cross-sections conducted before the start of training and at the end of the training course confirmed the increased competence of students in the use of word order in a simple French sentence.

Conclusion. The cross-section carried out in order to determine the level of students' training in the phenomenon under consideration, observations during the learning process confirmed our assumption that students' mistakes in constructing a French simple sentence are predetermined by insufficient attention to this problem on the part of textbook authors. Studying the issue of teaching word order helped us identify the additional steps in grammar that need to be taken to teach students to correctly navigate the patterns of French sentence structure.

Purposeful work on word order based on the theory of actual division of sentences, a comprehensive study of grammatical and actual division of sentences using specific guidelines for differentiated teaching, based on consciousness and mental activity, made it possible to achieve significant success in students' mastery of the basic patterns of word order and the fundamentals of the theory ASD, get rid of many difficulties: in the use of articles before the topic and rheme, in placing the rheme in the last place in the sentence (after the topic), in the use of means of highlighting the topic and rheme, in finding the rheme by asking a question and analyzing the surrounding context, in taking into account various factors with the leading role of the communicative, when choosing the word order.

Students study of word order in superphrasal unity (microtext), taking into account the connecting (organizing) role of word order and the actual division of a sentence, allowed them to take a fresh look at the construction of a coherent whole, to obtain a clear understanding of the patterns of the word order of a simple narrative unemotional sentence and the conditions that determine it.

Thus, experimental training has shown the ability and effectiveness of the methodology we have developed, which allows us to recommend it for teaching the word order of a simple narrative non-emotional sentence to language departments.

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