

Філософія сучасної освіти. Сучасні педагогічні технології та методики

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STUDENTS' ACTIVITIES IN LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The positions of the English language in the world as the leading means of international communication are connected first of all with the fast development of high technologies, economy, PR-technologies. In the modern society studying of foreign languages has gone beyond the scope of usual subjects and training courses, and practical knowledge of at least one foreign language has become a necessary routine skill as it provides a possibility not only to receive good education, but also to have good living and working conditions. It especially concerns the students whose major is not philology. Learning a language is becoming more functional: future experts in different areas of science, culture, business, technology and all other spheres of human activity need training in foreign languages as an instrument of production. They need neither the theory, nor the history of a language – they require nothing but practical knowledge of a foreign language just to use it in different areas of life as a means of communication with people from different countries.

To satisfy this demand, it is necessary to reconsider the content and methods of teaching. In this connection the problem of choice and use of an effective technique of teaching English in a university of economics seems extremely important.

It is known, that while choosing a method of teaching it is necessary to take into account the features of the group in which it will be used, personality of students, their age, interests, a level of training, period of education, and technical equipment of an educational institution as well. You must also remember that the basic feature of teaching a foreign language in a nonlinguistic higher school is its professional

orientation. The main purpose of such teaching is to satisfy the students' needs in mastering a foreign language which are determined by characteristic features of their specialized field or profession line. Therefore it is absolutely clear, that the methods used in teaching foreign languages for linguists are not effective for the students of nonlinguistic higher educational institutions where major subjects are economics, management, marketing, accounting, computer science, etc.

It seems that we'll never be able to find the universal technique that would equally consider these specific features, the tasks that we've set to ourselves, period of education, etc. We think therefore that the integrated approach which combines the features of functional and methodical aspects could become the most effective approach to the English language teaching of students of nonlinguistic professions.

The functional approach defines the necessity to combine methods and means applied to teaching a student and the individual purposes of this student. These purposes in our case can be the person's ability to use independently his or her knowledge of a foreign language in professional area, for example, to write a summary of some foreign papers on an investigated problem; to write an annotation, a research paper or a report, to make a presentation or a speech, to understand clearly the information during negotiations, meetings or lectures, and even for teaching his or her own subject in a foreign language.

Methodic basis of the integrated approach is defined by the communicative technique together with some practical fundamentals of traditional techniques (grammar drilling, translation, listening, writing).

The communicative technique of teaching English appeared as a response to the need to master the language quickly. The main task for people of all areas of activity is learning how to speak a foreign language and to form speech behaviour, rather than studying the system of the language. The main thing in the communicative approach is not to learn words and grammar rules by heart but to teach the student how to realize their own communicative intentions. Thus, from four kinds of speech activity (speaking, listening, reading and writing) the emphasis is on the first two. However everyone who wants to be a professional in his or her field of activity should

regularly read original published works on the subjects in foreign editions. For this purpose it is necessary to expand one's vocabulary and improve the knowledge of grammar.

What kinds of educational activity do we use while teaching the English language to form the skills and knowledge that are necessary to read and understand original professional texts, to communicate effectively foreign colleagues?

Experience shows that most attention is concentrated on the work with texts: reading and discussing the information, doing before reading and after reading tasks, translating. And it is not only because we are keeping an old tradition. In fact if the students learn to read professional texts they will be able in their further educational and professional work to look for more information, process it and use it in their purpose. It is natural, that the texts that are to be used for teaching future professionals should be authentic, scientific, cognitive, have practical value, and should be appropriate to the subjects of the educational institution.

As to translation, many methodologists regard it as an annoying obstacle that is in the way of mastering a foreign language just speaking it and thinking in it. The emphasis is on interpersonal communication. However, studying the practical use of a foreign language by most professional people we have noticed that the overwhelming majority (90 %) of them have to read in a foreign language, and approximately 70 % of them use a foreign language in their professional sphere only for reading. Translation has always been the core of the controversies on whether it can be a valid and effective tool in foreign language learning. Until recently, translation was out of favour with the language teaching community. Translation as a language learning activity was considered as being unsuitable within the context of foreign language learning. It was criticized because of the close association with traditional grammar translation. Even today translation is often regarded as some kind of mechanical linguistic transfer of meaning from one language to another. It is still ignored as a useful language learning tool because of being not a communicative activity that is not suited to the general needs of the language learner. Translation is considered as time-consuming, boring, and irrelevant. However, in the last few

decades there has been an increasing interest in the translation practice in the foreign language classroom. Recently foreign language teachers have been reviving the use of translation for different learning purposes. It was observed that translation activity could be used for pedagogical purposes along with other traditional language teaching activities. Reading, grammar exercises, translation – are in fact perceived by learners to be conducive to learning. Translation activity helps learners to acquire, develop and strengthen their knowledge and competence in the English language. Translation integrated into the language learning practice along with generally used learning activities, such as reading, listening, writing, and vocabulary development could be defined as a “pedagogical tool”, considering that its purpose is to teach a language. Translation activities make students communicate both ways: into and from the foreign language. While translating students are incited to notice differences in structure and vocabulary, to strengthen grammatical competence, to shape their own way of thinking and to correct common mistakes that could otherwise remain unnoticed. Students can make the best out of their learning, if they are encouraged to use translation skills properly [5,124]. In that case translation, as an effective way of teaching a foreign language, acts as a means of training the ability to understand the system of both languages better.

Grammar exercises take a good deal of time at the lessons as traditionally it is considered that grammar is the base of correctly constructed speech. Some people believe that while using the communicative method we should not teach grammar at all, it is learnt simply by itself. It is not quite so. According to some methodologists, training grammar should take up to 30 % of time in the process of teaching a language. However grammar phenomena should be introduced as a system, so that students could acquire the logic of the language and raise awareness in using it.

Much attention and time is being given to instruction of how to conduct business correspondence as it is one of important ways of information exchange and an integral part of foreign trade activities. After all, a search for potential partners and new sales markets, an opportunity to develop business contacts greatly depend on correctly written business letters.

Significant attention at the lessons is given to listening. In fact, to become successful in their professional field and business the future economists should be able to listen and understand business speech. While working at every theme students listen to audio records or see videos and do a number of tasks to check up the comprehension and then discuss them in class.

A certain part of classes is given to presentations. Presentations, alongside with conversations, meetings and negotiations, are integral part of business communication. As a rule, the students present the results of their work at their individual research tasks (projects) that was carried out independently as out-of-class work.. While making presentations, the students give a talk using illustrative material (schemes, schedules, tables) and multimedia means. An integral part of each performance is its discussion.

Analysis of concrete situations (case-study technique) is widely applied in the English classroom, especially in groups with the profound studying. In our opinion, this activity not only develops creative thinking, but also stimulates such activities as discussion, listening to various opinions, motivating one's own opinion, search of compromise agreement, work in pairs and groups.

Thus, the combination of various methods of teaching a foreign language and different kinds of activity helps essentially to master the language and to improve the students' knowledge that will make them more competitive on a labour market.

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