

ПЕДАГОГІЧНІ НАУКИ

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PRACTICAL ISSUES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERACTIVE TEACHING METHODS FOR DEVELOPING FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF APPLICANTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Summary. The article presents most important practical issues of implementing interactive teaching methods in higher education institutions. Principal educational approaches underlying interactive methodology (learner-centered and activity-based education, communicative approach and others) are considered. Changes of basic learning environment parameters caused by the application of interactive teaching methods are given thorough analysis. The advantages of interactive learning environment over the traditional (non-interactive) one are pointed out. And a number of practical solutions as for adapting interactive methods to higher education environment are offered. It is stressed that effective use of group interaction is certain to bring about a great increase of student motivation and, consequently, build up a high level of their foreign language communicative competence.

Keywords: interactive method, group interaction, group forming strategies, communicative competence, learning environment.

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ПРАКТИЧНІ АСПЕКТИ ІМПЛЕМЕНТАЦІЇ ІНТЕРАКТИВНИХ МЕТОДІВ НАВЧАННЯ ДЛЯ РОЗВИТКУ ІНШОМОВНОЇ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНЦІЇ ЗДОБУВАЧІВ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ

Анотація. Стаття присвячена проблемам, які виникають у процесі переходу від традиційних методик до інтерактивних при навчанні іншомовному професійному спілкуванню у немовному виші. На підставі проведеного порівняльного аналізу особливостей обох методик показані їхні відмінні риси, а також запропоновано ряд практичних рекомендацій для успішної реалізації інтерактивного підходу на основі багаторічної практики в умовах вищої школи. Стверджується, що головною перевагою інтерактивних технологій, які використовуються для розвитку іншомовної комунікативної компетенції, є створення нового навчального середовища, що моделює найбільш повне реальне спілкування, з властивим йому різноманітним груповою взаємодією. Відповідно, організація навчального процесу вимагає від викладача вирішення комплексного завдання формування мовних навичок і умінь іншомовного спілкування з урахуванням психофізіологічних механізмів, що лежать в основі цього процесу та психологічних закономірностей організації міжособистісних відносин у колективі. У статті розглядаються основні практичні завдання, які повинен вміти вирішувати викладач при використанні інтерактивних методик, а саме: розробка творчих навчальних завдань у межах значущих для здобувачів вищої освіти контекстів на основі автентичних матеріалів; створення сприятливих умов в аудиторії, які стимулюють розумову діяльність і пам'ять студентів; формування у студентів звичок усвідомленого ставлення до навчального процесу, його цілей і результатів за допомогою проведення системної індивідуальної та групової рефлексії; застосування різноманітних способів групоформування, що сприяють накопиченню у студентів багажу міжособистісної взаємодії, придбання гнучкості та адаптивності в ситуаціях іншомовного спілкування; демонстрація позитивної установки викладачем при оцінюванні навчальної діяльності студентів, що є одним з головних факторів підвищення їх самооцінки; кардинальна зміна ролі викладача на занятті, що передбачає перехід від авторитарних до паритетних відносин на користь спільної та творчої взаємодії.

Ключові слова: інтерактивний метод, групова взаємодія, стратегії групоформування, комунікативна компетенція, навчальне середовище.

Introduction. A foreign language communicative competence is considered to be one of the basic competences of a highly-skilled professional nowadays, because it contributes much to a sustainable career growth and personal fulfillment of a professional in the age of economic globalization.

Due to European integration of the Ukraine the demand for specialists who are fluent in foreign languages, especially English, has increased. From 2014 until 2018 British Council Ukraine carried out the English for Universities Project which was aimed at providing higher quality of teaching

English in universities of Ukraine [8]. According to the final report of Professor Simon Borg who did an impact evaluation research, many teachers, participants of this teacher development programme, “adopted more needs-driven, student-centered and interactive approaches to their work” [9, p. 6–8]. It was also stressed that the aim can only be achieved by means of drastic changes in syllabus, teaching materials, methods applied and corresponding teacher professional development.

It is obvious now, that implementation of interactive technologies in the study process can help

solve the problem of effective teaching foreign communication, because it produces a highly motivating and productive learning environment.

However, successful application of interactive methods is only possible if teachers are capable of taking a new look at many of the basic parameters of the learning environment, such as the teacher and student/group roles, group forming strategies, classroom activities, assessment criteria and others.

Analysis of recent investigations and publications. It is important to mention that principal educational approaches – humanism, behaviorism, cognitive approach, constructivism, gestalt style of language acquisition, etc – form the basis of interactive learning [3, p. 6–8].

Principles of interactive teaching foreign language communication have been developed within the framework of the communicative approach to foreign language teaching, whose objective is to approximate as close as possible to real life communication by means of simulating relevant communicative situations in class [3, p. 5–7]. Communicative approach methodology is largely presented in research done by E. Passov, I. Zimnyaya, I. Bim, P. Gurvich, V. Skalkin, V. Kuzovlev, A. Leontiev and others.

Communication as a social and cultural phenomenon is studied by many sciences, e.g. philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, linguistics, cultural studies and others. All of them consider human communication as a matter of prime importance, it being a basic social need of a person (I. Kon, C. Levi-Strauss, M. Bakhtin, I. Zimnyaya, G. Andreeva, etc). Therefore, the need for development of effective methods of teaching communication, building up communicative competence as a basis for all-round development and successful functioning of an individual is postulated [1, p. 19–20].

The character and structure of foreign language communicative competence (FLCC) have been thoroughly investigated by domestic and foreign scholars: V. Safonova, I. Zimnyaya, E. Passov, S. Kozak, O. Pavlenko, I. Gez, I. Vorobyova, S. Savignon, D. Hymes, D. Raven. FLCC is thought to be a complex, multi componential concept; linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic sub competences being among its main ones [5, p. 57–58].

Fundamental principles of pedagogical communication in activity-based and learner-centered approaches to education are described by Sh. Amonoshvili, A. Leontiev, I. Zimnyaya, Ye. Korotaeva, Ye. Meshcheryakova, etc [1, p. 5–7].

Organization of creative interpersonal communication in group work during foreign language learning process was successfully developed in G. Kitaigorodskaya's cooperative method of reserve capacity activation. Problems of teaching cross cultural communication, getting familiar with foreign culture during foreign language acquisition process are much discussed in the publications of E. Passov, V. Safonova, V. Sokolova, C. Ter-Minasov, I. Bim, Ye. Kovalevskaya.

Basic rules of learning process organization, materials selection criteria, syllabus content used in the context of application of interactive technologies in higher school are given detailed description by the prominent Ukrainian scholars: I. Kozak, O. Buhrii, O. Pometun, O. Sichkaruk, O. Komar, I. Yatsyk, O. Pirozhenko, H. Piatakova, L. Yaky-mova and others.

Pointing out issues requiring further investigation. However, many years of practical experience in interactive learning have shown that moving away from traditional to active teaching modes still pose a number of problems for teachers in terms of changes of basic learning process parameters and their professional and mental adaptation to this innovative learning environment.

The objective of the article. The article is aimed at making analysis of most important changes of basic learning environment parameters caused by the application of interactive teaching methods. The conclusions are drawn on the basis of relevant world practice and expertise as well as the author's personal experience of teaching foreign languages in a technical university.

Presentation of the main research material. Depending upon the character and direction of interaction among all participants involved in the study process, i.e. students and the teacher, classroom interaction modes or methods are generally classified into passive, active and interactive ones. Passive methods refer to those treating students as relatively passive objects of teacher's purposeful activity, in other words, students are mere recipients, showing little initiative and not engaged in the process of knowledge generating. Although those methods (often called traditional ones in methodology) are quite comfortable for teachers to use because they are simple enough in organizing and predictable concerning student feedback, they have proved ineffective for development of student foreign language communicative competence. Moreover, such classroom interaction inevitably produces an authoritarian atmosphere in class and, therefore, cannot be recommended as desirable, since it does not comply with the learner centered and humanistic approaches advocated by the contemporary educational philosophy.

An alternative to passive methods is applying active methods, involving students in active interaction with the teacher and their classmates. Thus, the learner becomes a subject of the study process, equal in his or her interactive capacity with the teacher. Such equal interaction is an attribute of the democratic and humanistic educational paradigm. Interactive methods refer to advanced active methods whose interaction can be described as the broadest, when learning mainly goes through students' interaction under the teacher guidance. Since the development of foreign language communicative competence requires building an environment that simulates in some degree real life communication, interactive methods with their various forms of group interaction have proved most effective in this respect [6, p. 66]. Interactive methods that are most described in methodological literature and widely practiced in universities at present are a project method, brain storming, a problem solving method, case study, critical analysis, role playing and others.

Leading experts in methods and psychology of teaching foreign languages point out the following advantages of interactive technologies: high student motivation, syllabus content designed to meet student special needs, extensive use of authentic materials, development of creative potential of every participant involved in the learning

process, student personal growth through raising their self-confidence and self-esteem, development of student communicative skills as well as team work skills, creation of psychologically beneficial classroom environment, fatigue and stress minimization and many others. All of these, eventually, bring about student high foreign language communicative competence.

However, if compared with traditional teaching methods, the use of interactive methods requires more teacher planning and preparation before a lesson, professional flexibility during a lesson, capacity and expertise to manage student interaction under less predictable learning conditions. The teacher has to be able to solve the complex task of teaching foreign language communication, on one hand, taking into account underlying psychological mechanisms peculiar for the process of developing communicative skills and, on the other hand, considering psychology of building effective interpersonal relationships in a student group [7, p. 64].

Let us analyze main organizational peculiarities of the study process that are associated with interactive learning principles. The first and most important attribute of interactive learning is its activity-based character. The teacher sets students a learning task that can only be solved by the group efforts through creative interaction, which is described by L. Kulikova as involvement into unified creativity space [4, p. 10].

Such classroom interaction is characterized by a high degree of cognitive and emotional activity of all participants. Student cognitive activity is stimulated by means of gap tasks that correspond to problem-solving approach in education. When choosing or creating interactive gap tasks, a teacher needs to consider not only an existing level of student foreign language communicative skills but student interests, age range, psychology as well.

In order to achieve a productive group interaction in class, it is also of importance to build such a learning environment that will encourage students to interact with much enthusiasm. In this respect one should mention a small but meaningful stage in the structure of any foreign language lesson (it usually takes approximately ten minutes) – warming-up or lead-in. Warming-up/lead-in tasks are designed to prepare students mentally and emotionally for accomplishing a particular learning objective.

Traditionally, foreign language teachers use warming-up activities at the beginning of a lesson so that students may switch easily to a foreign language communication and get them prepared for performing new communicative tasks. Nevertheless, warming-up might be a good start for any stage of a lesson, used as energizers (an effective means of fatigue relief, both mental and physical), and they may contribute to a successful ending of a lesson, leaving positive impressions afterwards and motivating students in persisting in their learning activity. With the view to saving class time teachers tend to neglect warming-up activities or these might become routine and predictable tools, which eventually may result in the opposite effect: damping learner verbal and cognitive activity.

Since any conscious activity of a person ought to be followed by thorough reflection on actions done, achievements, mistakes made etc, thus forming

the basis for the following positive development of a person, the stage of reflection in an interactive lesson is of critical importance [1, p. 22–23]. It is at this particular stage all participants of classroom interaction, all together and individually, should speak about what facts they have learnt and skills have acquired, positive feelings they experienced or, vice versa, about things they have failed to cope with and why. It is worth emphasizing that students should try to produce mental as well as emotional evaluation of learning goals met and learning process as such.

Positive emotional atmosphere that is associated with the interactive learning is a basic condition as well as the result of an efficient group interaction. Both productive and creative verbal and cognitive activity and a high level of foreign language communicative competence can hardly be achieved without supportive classroom environment. When a learner feels secure, is not afraid of making a mistake or looking inferior, his or her memory works at its best. Psychologists have long proved that emotional memory has a unique capacity of retaining information involuntarily and permanently; as a result, memorizing process is much boosted and there is no need for repeated material exposure. Therefore, a teacher's capacity to build an encouraging classroom environment so that to help all participants of the interactive learning process establish informal, equal and emotionally intensive and positive relationships, which are primarily based on respect, cooperativeness, friendliness, all-round support and interest, becomes a fundamental rule of interpersonal interaction organization in the opinion of G. Kitaigorodskaya [7, p. 5–7].

Another requirement that is vital for successful implementation of interactive learning methods, in the author's point of view, is how students are divided in groups or pairs in class. Basically, there are three main strategies to student group forming in class: groups are formed according to student preferences, the teacher preferences and randomly (using various random techniques). In the traditional learning environment it is the teacher who is to define student group members. Here the teacher takes into consideration, as a rule, students' particular abilities as well as their psychological profiles and compatibility. However, this teacher imperative as to choosing student partners (no matter how much justified it might seem), if used on a regular basis, imposes on students their teacher will and eventually preconditions development of student behavior patterns peculiar to an authoritarian classroom environment. So, in interactive learning classes allowing students to choose their partners for themselves is considered to be sensible at the initial stage of class interaction, when students' relationships are just being formed, which helps minimize possible stress, prevent students from developing an inferiority complex and generally create favorable psychological conditions for efficient classroom interaction. Later on, when students get to know each other, the teacher should encourage them to leave their "comfort zone" by applying a variety of random group forming techniques, as this useful tool trains best for real life communication with its multitude of speech styles and behavioral strategies of participants. Thus, students gradually

collect their own baggage of interpersonal interaction experiences, get flexible in different situations of foreign language communication.

In order to prevent possible conflicts among all participants during a lesson, the teacher ought to declare in the beginning and monitor afterwards the rules of class etiquette that include the following maxims: all participants are equal notwithstanding their age, experience, academic achievements, everyone can hold a different opinion, direct criticism of one's personality is prohibited and others [2, p. 34]. It should be mentioned that class etiquette must be discussed and approved by all participants from the very start of the teacher's association with a student group.

And, finally, it becomes obvious that the implementation of interactive methods in class requires a drastic change of a teacher role. A classic authoritarian type gives way to a less spectacular type – a manager of the study process, a facilitator, a moderator, who has parity with students in respect of class interaction. By means of positive assessment of students' achievements all through their interaction, appreciating each learner as well as group contribution, the teacher does his or her best to foster student self-confidence in acquiring a complex foreign language communicative competence. Such positive predisposition of a teacher must be a key assessment strategy regarding student/group performance [7, p. 61].

In that context, it is worth pointing out how much assessment criteria are to be changed in view of the fact that efficacy of a learner speech activity is measured not only by the correct use of vocabulary and grammar patterns but also by meeting communicative goals within a particular communicative situation requiring that speakers should follow an appropriate speech behavior style. So, these intermingled aspects – language and behavioral – are to be considered in overall assessment. “Besides, any interaction involves a build-in assessment, informal and personal, by their participants ... Participants continuously assess each other's language, not from the point of view of pedantry, but from the aspect of function and meaning” [10, p. 83]. And

they apparently have more possibilities for self-assessment of their learning achievements because they get immediate feedback from their partners in class in the form of reactions, answers, questions, etc. Interaction built on real life situations “links the classroom to life in the world outside, and provides opportunities for observing behavior and language skills which might otherwise not occur in the classroom” [10, p. 119]. That makes the whole process of assessment a vital factor in learner foreign language communicative competence development.

As far as teacher assessment is concerned, the author is confident that the teacher has to act sensibly and flexibly when correcting student errors or mistakes. Teachers are recommended to especially keep track of those mistakes that significantly interfere with communication process, leading to misunderstanding and misinterpretation in the context of a specific communicative situation. Long-term teaching experience has shown that perfectionism in correcting student mistakes when every student error or slip in speech must be corrected (which is typically associated with the traditional, non-interactive approach) causes learner frustration, development of language barrier, decrease of motivation and, eventually, fails to meet the learner-centered criteria of present day educational philosophy.

Conclusion. Summing up what has been said above about changes of basic learning environment parameters originated with the application of interactive methods in teaching foreign language communication, one can say that interactive technologies comply with the main approaches of the modern methodology of foreign language teaching, such as communicative, learner-centered, situational, activity-based, problem-based and other approaches. Interactive technologies provide a far higher level and quality of learner motivation, and, as a result, foster effective building up a learner foreign language competence. At the same time, the implementation of interactive methods poses some challenges for foreign language teachers who have to develop more complex professional as well as individual communicative skills.

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