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Interactive learning technologies at theoretical foreign language classes

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore interactive foreign language learning technologies. In order to achieve this goal, the study used a set of methods relevant to the problem at hand: analysis and synthesis of psychological, pedagogical, scientific, and methodological literature. As a result, use of interactive learning methods while studying the foreign language significantly increases the interest and motivation of students and improves their knowledge in the subject area. As a conclusion, interactive educational technologies help students learn the material through their own experience.

Keywords: Foreign, Language, Interactive, Cooperative, Learning.

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Tecnologías interactivas de aprendizaje en clases teóricas de idiomas extranjeros

Resumen

El propósito de esta investigación es explorar tecnologías interactivas de aprendizaje de idiomas extranjeros. Para lograr este objetivo, el estudio utilizó un conjunto de métodos relevantes para el problema en cuestión: análisis y síntesis de literatura psicológica, pedagógica, científica y metodológica. Como resultado, el uso de métodos de aprendizaje interactivo al estudiar la lengua extranjera aumenta significativamente el interés y la motivación de los estudiantes y mejora su conocimiento en el área temática. Como conclusión, las tecnologías educativas interactivas ayudan a los estudiantes a aprender el material a través de su propia experiencia.

Palabras clave: Extranjero, Lenguaje, Interactivo, Cooperativo, Aprendizaje.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the important pedagogical problems in modern higher education is the use of alternative forms of student training organization, new pedagogical ideas and approaches to professional training, which implies the design of innovative educational technologies (Flagg, 2013; Jin and Bridges, 2014; Kalman, 2016). Scientific and technological progress have offered teachers and students new forms of communication, new solutions to abstract and concrete problems, and has transformed the teacher from an authoritarian broadcaster of ready-made ideas into an inspirer of the

intellectual and creative potential of his or her students (Fui-Theng and Mai, 2014; Marín Juarros et al., 2014; Vera and Gil, 2015). The future belongs to the student-technology-teacher system, wherein the teacher is a methodologist-pedagogue, while the student is an active participant of the learning process.

At the current stage of development, higher educational institutions are characterized by a gradual transition to personality oriented cooperation, where prospective specialists play the role of active subjects of the cognitive activity (Kalman, 2016; Antoniou and Mitsopoulou, 2017). In order to teach them to think and act independently, it is necessary to switch from passive teaching forms to active and individual ones. A prominent place among such forms is held by interactive learning technologies, which are a special form of organization of cognitive activity that has a concrete goal – to create comfortable learning conditions, when each student feels his or her success and intellectual abilities. Interactive teaching ensures continuous and active communication of all students, making both the students and the teacher equal subjects of learning that understand what they know and are capable of (Lundvall, 2010; Vera and Gil, 2015). It has an effective impact on the development of skills and abilities, creation of an atmosphere of cooperation and interaction, and rules out the dominance of a single participant of the learning process over others and the dominance of a single thought over other thoughts (Rudolph et al., 2014; Boud et al., 2014).

Several well-known contemporary researchers have investigated the problems of implementation of interactive technologies in the learning process of higher educational institutions. Their works described innovative approaches to the organization of teaching, showed the essence, peculiarities, and advantages of such technologies, and gave methodological recommendations regarding their successful use in the practical activity.

However, it is worth noting that the specificity of implementation of interactive technologies in the study of theoretical disciplines during the professional training of prospective foreign language teachers has not been covered in a standalone research. Considering the relevance of this problem and its importance for the theory and practice of learning, it is necessary to reveal the potential of various groups of interactive learning technologies in theoretical English language classes (lexicology, stylistics, theoretical grammar, theoretical phonetics, history of the English language, etc.). Thus, the purpose of this research is to explore the main interactive foreign language learning methods.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework of this research included the dialectic-materialistic philosophy of the theory of cognition, the leading role of activity in personal development, and dialectic unity of

theory and practice. A set of complementary research methods was used to achieve the set goal, including:

- Theoretical methods: study and analysis of special philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, scientific, and methodological literature on the subject under consideration; analysis of academic and methodological documents; general theoretical methods of analysis and synthesis;

- General logical methods: generalization of pedagogical experience on the problem under consideration, conceptualization of educational practice.

3. DATA, ANALYSIS, AND RESULTS

When students study the theoretical aspects of the English language in class, it is possible to use virtually all types of interactive technologies: cooperated learning, collective-group learning, and situational modeling. The interactive technologies of cooperative learning imply work in pairs or groups, which the teacher can organize immediately after the presentation of the theoretical material, at the start of a practical class in lieu of a survey or during refreshment and generalization (Shevchenko, 2005). During work in pairs, all students have a rare opportunity to talk and express themselves while having time to think, exchange ideas with their partners, and only then voice their thoughts to the audience. This type of cooperation prevents

students from shying away from performing the task. While working in pairs, students can do exercises that take longer to do with other conditions, for instance:

- Discuss a theoretical problem;

- Interview or figure out the partner's opinion regarding, for instance, this or that classification, definition, etc.;

- Write a summary of a research paper of famous English or American linguists;

- Develop questions to a certain theoretical material;

- Analyze a problem or approach together;

- Answer the teacher's questions.

In order to organize work in pairs, it is necessary to ask students questions to encourage a discussion or analysis of a hypothetical situation, give them one-two minutes to ponder the possible answers and solutions individually. Then it is necessary to group students in pairs, decide who will speak first, and ask them to discuss their ideas with each other. It is best to determine beforehand the time that each student in a pair gets for his or her presentation and the time allotted for the general discussion. This helps accustom students to a strict organization of work in pairs. After the discussion

time expires, each pair of students presents the results of their work, exchanges ideas and arguments with the whole academic group. Another variant of cooperative learning, which is a derivative of the work in pairs, can be called Two – Four – All Together. It is effective in developing the students' skills of teamwork, persuasion, and discussion. The work with students is similar to that in the pair's method, but after working in pairs, the pairs unite into groups of four and discuss the solutions to the set problems (for instance, the definition of a word, effective and ineffective word-formation types, etc.) that were achieved during the previous stage of working in pairs. In this case, reaching a common solution is also mandatory. Depending on the number of students in the general academic group, it is possible to unite the fours and move on to a collective discussion.

Another variant of cooperative learning is the Carousel. It works best when it is necessary to involve all participants in active work with different partners in order to communicate, with a view to discussing the theoretical material. This technology is used:

- To search for information on any subject;

- To check the volume and depth of theoretical knowledge;

- To develop skills of rationalizing one's opinion.

This type of work requires arranging the chairs in two circles. The students that sit in the inner circle sit with their backs to the center,

while those that sit in the outer circle – with their face to the center. Thus, each student sits opposite another student. The inner circle remains static, while the outer circle moves: when the teacher gives the signal, all students in the outer circle move one chair to the right and face a new partner. The goal is to pass the whole circle while performing the set task. In the first variant of such activity, participants in the inner circle advocate one opinion, while those in the outer circle advocate an opposite opinion. First, students exchange opinions in pairs and write them down. Students write down everything that their opponents suggest. When the signal is given, students change partners and the discussion continues, but now the students attempt to choose new counterarguments. By the end of the circle, the students will have generally honed their arguments in the English and gained experience of communicating with different partners.

In the second variant of the Carousel, each student sitting in the outer circle has a piece of paper with concrete questions; during the move, the students gathers as much information, aspects, and opinions on a certain topic as possible. Certain answers are read out to the audience in the end. In this case, the method generalizes the knowledge that the students have, activates it, and transforms it into an acquisition of the entire group. In the third variant of the Carousel, students prepare questions or ideas in advance and write them down in pieces of paper and sign the pieces of paper on the back. During the activity, partners ask each other questions and if the answer is correct, the student receives the card with the question from the author of the

question. After the exercise is over, the students count the number of earned cards and determine the winner.

Various types of collective and group learning technologies can be used to study theoretical disciplines of the English language at any stage of learning. While studying theoretical issues, for instance, phraseology or semasiology, it is possible to use the Microphone technology, which enables each student to say something quickly in turn by answering questions or expressing their thoughts and opinions. This technology develops the students' thinking, skills of listening, perceiving, and understanding other peoples' speech and analyzing the information of others, so as not to repeat themselves when the teacher hands them the microphone, and teaches them to express themselves logically and briefly (Oxford, 1997). This technique is often used in combination with the Unfinished Sentences technology. After choosing the issue, on which the students will express their thoughts and ideas in a circle or using an imaginary microphone, the teacher formulates an unfinished sentence and offers the participants to complete it. Then, each student has to start their answer with the proposed phrase, for instance: The problem of word definition is difficult to solve because…. This technology overcomes stereotypes, allows the students to feel free in regards to the suggested issues, develops their ability to speak briefly, stay on message, correctly pick up where the previous speaker stopped, and rationalize statements in English. Brainstorm is a well-known interactive technology of collective discussion, the goal whereof is to gather as much information about the topic as possible from all students within a limited timeframe.

The learn while teaching method allows students to experience the transfer of their knowledge to others. The teacher prepares cards with a certain material (types of dictionaries, the development of British/American lexicography, the structure of the dictionary) that is related to the subject of the lesson, one card per student, and hands them out. Students have several minutes to read the information on the card, after which they go from student to student and tell them the information. Each student may only talk to one person at a time. The goal is to share one's facts and acquire information from other people. Each student has to communicate with as many other students as possible within the allotted time to acquire as much information as possible. After completing the task, the students recite the material. The teacher analyzes, supplements, and generalizes the information that the students acquired. This technology gives a general idea of the concepts and facts due to be learned during the lesson, raises certain questions, and makes learning the English language more interesting.

4. DISCUSSION

When choosing a methodology, it is worth bearing in mind the size of the academic group. For instance, a large number of students will make it difficult for the teacher to keep track of the process and coordinate the students' work and help them in case of difficulties. Roleplaying games are also regarded as a method of teaching foreign languages. The advantage of this technique is that the learning process

takes place in the form of a game and makes learning more interesting for students.

Nevertheless, the advantage of the methods that were discussed before roleplaying lies in the fact that in roleplaying, participants can act intuitively without fully comprehending the informational component, while the previous methods aim to generalize and consolidate the subject. By discussing the topic of the lesson, each student has the opportunity to not only form his or her own thoughts in a foreign language, but also to listen to the speech of his or her interlocutor. The use of interactive learning methods while studying the foreign language significantly increases the interest and motivation of students and improves their knowledge in the subject area.

5. CONCLUSION

Interactive technologies imply learning through cooperation: both the student and the teacher are its subjects. Being more experienced, the teacher acts as the organizer of the learning process. Such cooperation in theoretical English language classes not only teaches theoretical knowledge and develops skills and abilities, but also intensifies the cognitive activity of students and develops their critical thinking. The learning material is perceived through one's own experience during experiments and checking of one's own sentences, while knowledge manifests itself in the form of answers to one's own inquiries. Such knowledge is deep and solid. The success of this or that

interactive learning method obviously depends on the readiness for and interest of teachers and students in the reorganization of the learning process in general.

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