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APPROACHES TO SESSION DESIGN IN NEW METHODOLOGY CURRICULUM

Having become an independent country in 1991, Ukraine proclaimed its orientation onto the human values which coincide with the European ones. Ukraine's intention to acquire all the features of a European country is reflected in many documents signed with other European states in different spheres of life including education. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine started the implementation of new syllabus for foreign language learning with new approaches and content. Previous orientation towards language knowledge has been replaced by the development of language skills, their practical application, strengthening of educational motivation [3].

Obviously, the change can be implemented only if the teachers of English are trained differently. To meet new requirements to foreign language teacher training the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and British Council Ukraine started the New Generation School Teacher Project (2013). Within the framework of the project the new Methodology Curriculum was designed and has been piloting in 10 pedagogical universities. Being focused on introducing the new approaches to teaching and learning, the curriculum requires new approaches to session design.

The key principals underlying session design are the following:

- student-centredness
- integration of theory and practice
- appropriate balance and variety of learning and teaching modes
- dominance of challenging and feasible tasks and activities
- ample use of reflection: in/on action, on learning
- experience (both at school and University)

- use of data from school-based practice [1, p.5].

Analyzing the suggested principles, we can identify the key words: reflection, experience, practice. These are the key notions that are taken into account when designing sessions in new Methodology curriculum. In this perspective Kolb's experiential learning cycle is considered to be the key approach to session design in new Methodology curriculum. The cycle is shown in Figure1.

Figure 1 Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle
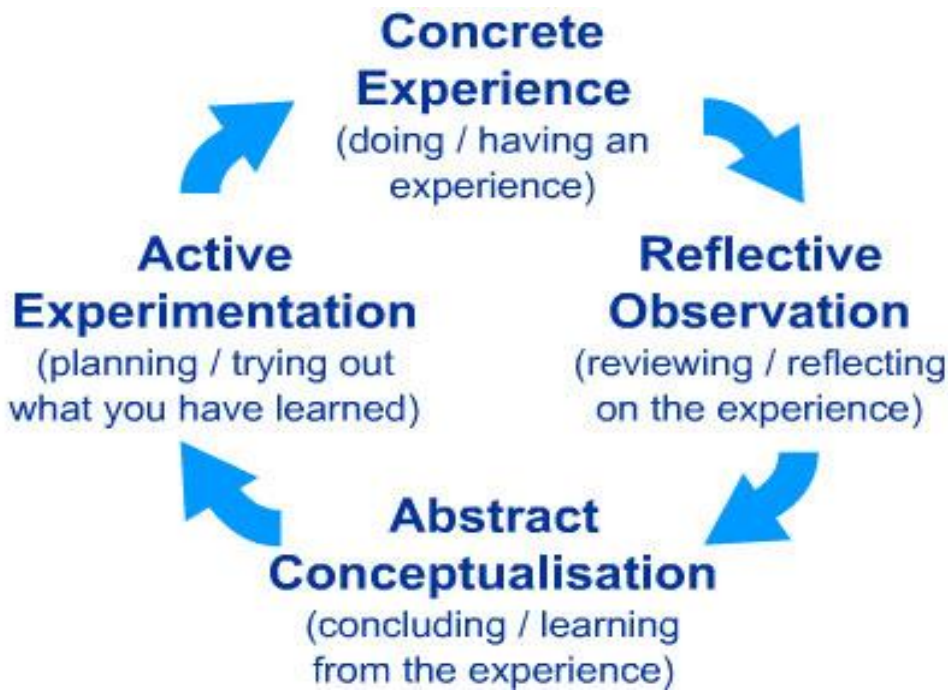
As it is seen, the learning cycle basically involves four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. So, Kolb views learning as an integrated process with each stage being mutually supportive of and feeding into the next. Generally it is recommended to start with concrete experience, though it is possible to enter the cycle at any stage and follow it through its logical sequence. Table 1 summarizes these stages and suggests some implications for teaching.

Table 1 Stages of Kolb's learning cycle and their implications for teaching

Stage1: Experience	Life is full of experiences we can learn from. Whether at home or at work or out and about, there are countless

(Kolb's "Concrete Experience")	opportunities for us to 'kick-start' the learning cycle. The teacher's job is to set a shared task relevant to the topic
Stage 2: Reflect (Kolb's "Reflective Observation")	Reflection involves thinking about what we have done and experienced. What is needed here is to prepare questions to guide the reflection on the experience
Stage 3: Conseptualise (Kolb's "Abstract conceptualization")	When we pass from thinking about our experiences to interpreting them we enter into the next stage termed as 'conceptualization'. To conceptualize is to generate a hypothesis about the meaning of our experiences. To reinforce students' awareness of the concept a teacher gives the input e.g. in the form of mini-lecture, jig-saw reading, video, etc.
Stage 4: Plan (Kolb's "Active experimentation")	In the active experimentation stage of the learning cycle we effectively 'test' the hypotheses we have adopted. Our new experiences will either support or challenge these hypotheses. The teacher can either assign some further reading or some practical task, thus creating some new experiences.

The sample of Session 4: "Techniques for presenting vocabulary" from Unit 2.3. Teaching Vocabulary in Context" (Module 2. Preparing to Teach 1) demonstrates how Kolb's learning cycle can be realized in session planning [2, pp. 80-90].

Module	2 Preparing to Teach 1
Unit	2.3 Teaching Vocabulary in Context
Session	4
Topic	Techniques for presenting vocabulary
Objectives	By the end of the session, students will be: • aware of different techniques for presenting vocabulary • able to choose appropriate techniques for presenting vocabulary.
Time	80 mins
Materials and equipment	Handout 1, 2, 3, 4.1, 4.2, 5, 6; video, board; computer + data projector

Procedure	Purpose	Time

Activity 1: Experience of learning vocabulary • Invite students to reflect on the way they were taught vocabulary at school/University. • Distribute Handout 1 and ask students to fill in the tables individually. • Encourage students to share their experience of learning vocabulary and add information to the tables. Answer the questions.	to get students to reflect on their experience of learning vocabulary	10 mins

Activity 2: Vocabulary activities • Distribute Handout 2 with a list of techniques for presenting vocabulary. • Invite students to watch a video and ask them to identify techniques which the teachers use to convey the meaning of vocabulary items. (Video is available here http://ngschoolteacher.wix.com/ngscht#!guidelines-and-supplements/cwbl) • Check results in plenary. • Ask students to relate their own vocabulary learning experiences to those shown in the video. • Ask them which techniques they personally prefer as a learner and why.	to explore various techniques for presenting vocabulary	20 mins

Activity 3: Teaching vocabulary techniques • Split students into two groups and distribute Handouts 3.1 and 3.2. • Ask students to read the articles on teaching vocabulary and to find three more techniques for teaching vocabulary, which were not mentioned in the video. • Get feedback from groups. • Elicit answers to the following questions: What techniques are particularly appropriate for the presentation of certain types of words, e.g. abstract/concrete nouns, parts of speech, phrasal verbs? Why? What techniques are likely to be more, or less appropriate for particular learners, e.g. young/	to further explore techniques for presenting vocabulary	15 mins

adult, beginner/advanced)? • Mention that there is often more than one way to convey the meaning of any given word. It's the teacher's job to choose the most effective method for each word.		

Activity 4: Getting the meaning across • Split the students into 2 or 3 groups. • Distribute Handout 4. • Ask to choose the best technique for each word and fill in the table below • Check the answer with the key • Discuss the controversial points if any	to practise choosing the appropriate technique for presenting vocabulary	10 mins

Activity 5: Vocabulary teaching techniques in use • Split students into four groups. • Give each group three vocabulary items to present in class, using an appropriate technique to convey the meaning and specifying age and level of learners (Handout 5). • Ask the rest of the group to guess the item and identify the technique. • Summarise the activity.	to practise vocabulary teaching techniques in class	20 mins

Summary and round-up • Ask students to point out three things about vocabulary teaching that they have learnt during in this session. • Ask students to name vocabulary activities which they particularly liked. • Ask students to name vocabulary techniques they would like to experiment with.	to summarise the session	5 mins

Thus, taking into account Kolb's experiential learning cycle, the following guidelines on session design can be recommended:

- start with experience (where your students are)
- raise awareness when needed
- reflect (describe, analyse)

- work from practice towards principles (theorise)
- give time for ideas to settle and for students to make sense of the concepts and principles
- apply to action (planning).

References

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