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CREATIVE APPROACHES AND METHODS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A PRACTICAL VIEW

The experience of all members of the Chair of Foreign Languages of Berdyansk University of Management and Business is summarized in this article. The author focuses her attention on the implementation of new approaches and methods in the process of learning English as a foreign language.

Key words: interactive methods of learning, communication, ways of language learning.

The importance of the research. Enlarged Europe has led to radical changes in education. The creation of the European Higher Educational Area has set challenging tasks in terms of greater mobility for students, more effective international communication, better access to information and deeper mutual understanding. Ukraine does not stand aside of these challenges and is searching for ways of developing students' language competence. This is one of the most burning issues in the field of education.

In this context the chair of foreign languages of Berdyansk University of Management and Business organizes seminars for teachers of higher educational establishments, of secondary schools and students every year. The last one was devoted to creative approaches and methods in English language teaching, it included several sections and combined both practical and theoretical issues.

The aim of our research is to summarize and analyze seminar participants' experience of creativity in teaching foreign languages.

The analysis of the latest research. Recently, most teachers pose a question which approach in teaching a foreign language would be the best. They should select the communicative approach because its main focus is on training during interactive cooperation of all participants of the learning process. This approach is developed as a result of scientific advances in the understanding of linguistics, particularly communicative linguistics, psychology and activity theory, which is reflected in the works on psychology and language teaching methodology (O. Leontyev, I. Zymnya, Yu. Passov, S. Shatilov, G. Rogova and others). The communicative approach is very effective but it requires further study of means of its implementation into the learning process.

The main part of the article. It is generally accepted that nowadays teachers are exploring pedagogical means for «real-life» communication in the classroom. So the aim of our seminar was to create an atmosphere of real communication which can have a beneficial effect on the morale, motivation, and self-image of its participants; and thus significantly affect their learning by developing in them a positive attitude to the language being learned, to the learning process, and themselves as pupils. Modern teachers are trying to equip their students with tools for generating unrehearsed language performance. Thus, it was a splendid opportunity to exchange practical experience among participants [1; 2].

The first session «Alternative Teaching Activities for the Classroom» was focused on organizing junior students' activities.

For warm-up activities the following exercises may be used:

– A short presentation of themselves and some activities: names of participants and snowball names (each participant says her or his name and the name of all participants before her/him; snowball food/drink names (each participant thinks of a food or drink that starts with the same first letter of their name, then says their name along with the names of fruits/drinks of all the participants before her or him).

– Round Table/Categories (participants are split into groups of four and given one sheet of paper. A category is written on the board, and groups have 3 minutes to write as many words as they know in the category. The paper must be passed around the group, each member writing one word, then passing the paper on). This activity can also be done with a dictionary.

– 20 Questions (a learner thinks of a word, writes it on a piece of paper, but does not tell anyone what the word is. Participants have 20 questions to guess what the word is. They may only ask questions that have a «yes» or «no» answer.

– Snowball Story (teacher begins a story: «Once upon a time there was a girl who loved to swim»). Each student must add one sentence to the story).

For vocabulary activities:

– Around the World (one student stands next to the chair of another student. The teacher holds up a dictionary picture, and the student who says the correct word first moves to the next chair. The teacher should see how many chairs the students can progress and prevent other students from calling out the answer.

– Slap! Split participants into four groups. Give groups a collection of either pictures or words. The teacher calls out a word and students must «slap» the correct picture or word. When finished, ask students to present what words/pictures they collected. Then, switch cards among groups.

– Pictionary. Split class into 2 teams. Students come to the board one at a time and choose a folded dictionary word. One student must draw a picture of the word and the team must guess the word in 1 or 2 minutes.

For practice activities:

– Bingo with colours, numbers and vocabulary. Give each student a 5 x 5 grid sheet. Give each student a handful of «markers» – in this case, beans, but you can use scraps of paper or anything movable you have at hand. The teacher calls out a number (or colour, or word) and students place a marker on their square if they have the corresponding number. When a student has 5 in a row – horizontally, vertically or diagonally – he/she shouts «Bingo», and then read off their squares to make sure they were correct. The winning student may call the next round, get a prize or simply a round of applause.

For reading activities:

– Jigsaw. After learning new vocabulary and reading a text with students, ask them to close their books. Divide them into groups, pairs (whatever you prefer) and give each group a photocopy of the text, but cut into pieces. Tell students to put the story back in order. When they are finished, ask the students to read the text out loud to see if they were correct. If students are really struggling, you may ask them to open their books for maybe 1 minute, then close again.

For review:

– Jeopardy. Students read the text, discuss unknown words, and maybe do exercises with sentences. When you feel that students have a fairly good grasp of the material, you can use this as a sort of «quiz» review. Split students into groups of about 4. Give each group a team name, and create a scoreboard on the board. Also on the board there will be the categories relating to the text. In each category there are various points, ranging from 100 to 500. Each amount of points is a question, and if students can answer the question correctly, they earn the points. If students cannot answer the question or get it wrong, the next team gets a chance to answer (this progresses to each team until all have unsuccessfully tried, then the teacher gives the answer).

– Tic-Tac-Toe. Draw a 3 x 3 grid on the board and write a number in each square (1-9). Split students into 2 teams and assign one the marker of «x» and the other the marker of «o». Each team takes turns choosing a square, then they must answer the question you have assigned to the square. The goal is to get 3 markers in a row while preventing the other team from doing the same. If a team gets a question wrong, then the other team gets a chance to answer. This is a very quick activity, and you may let students use their books or not.

The second session called «Accelerated Learning» states that an educator is responsible for creating conditions under which the learning process will be possible and productive.

Teachers should create an atmosphere for optimal learning. They don't simply deliver the information and their students absorb it. Teachers understand the learning process and are able to adapt to the learning style of the students. By teaching, you will touch the future because children are the future of every society. Teaching is complex, fast-paced, multidimensional, sometimes unpredictable, and it involves a diverse mosaic of students. Teaching is an art and a science. When you are teaching, challenge yourself to awaken the curiosity of young minds. It is no small thing in life to enjoy the sun, live in the spring, think, feel, and teach. Good teachers care for their students and are dedicated to helping them learn [3].

The role of a teacher in the classroom must be adapted as technologies are integrated in the classroom. Some of our participants introduced technologies for teaching English. Emphasis has been placed on the teacher as accepting a facilitative role in guiding students through information access and processing, problem-solving, and creative learning projects on the computer in a student-centered classroom rather than the traditional teacher's image as the presenter in front of the class. It has also been suggested that teacher-student interaction can be more electronic.

It was shown that technology resources such as audio (through the use of: cassette player, CD player, speakers and an MP3 or iPod); video (use of laptop: showing TV or movie clips to a small group of students; showing pictures to describe a place); visuals (through the use of a projector and screen: Power Point Presentations); Internet (Web discussions through Skype online, interactive Internet learning sites for activities, student research projects, web quests, keypad, blogs) have a lot of advantages. First of all technology can facilitate practice of the four main language skills – listening, reading, speaking and writing. It can also provide opportunities for authentic tasks and materials. In addition, geographical distance is no longer an issue, students could connect with students from the other side of the globe within minutes, they expand their outlook. Lastly, they give possibilities for students to share their research through the Internet with others at school.

The theoretical session «Student Governance» came to the conclusion that classrooms need to be managed effectively to maximize students' learning. The contemporary trend in managing classrooms is shifting from controlling students towards supportive, nurturing relationships and opportunities for self-regulation. Good teaching strategies for beginning the school year are to be used to establish expectations for behaviour and resolve student uncertainties. In managing your classroom keep the focus on instruction and a positive classroom environment. Use a cooperative strategy rather than authoritarian or permissive strategies. Establish rules but make sure they are necessary, reasonable, clear, and consistent with instructional and learning goals. No matter how well you have planned and created a positive environment, behaviour problems will emerge. Be a good communicator with students by developing effective speaking and listening skills. Work with students to help them become better speakers and listeners [4; 5].

Participants of the section «Interactive Methods of English Teaching» were offered different alternatives of interactive activities:

– **Problem Solving Exercises.** At the start of a training program, split people in teams. Give them a problem connected with the learning material. Ask them to use any resource they can imagine inside and outside the classroom for solving it.

– **Collaborative Pre-Test.** Give people the «final exam» at the start of a programme. Ask them to collaborate with each other to see how much they already know or can figure out using the available reference material.

– **Scavenger Hunt.** Split people in teams. Give each team the same list of 10 or 20 items of information to collect in a set amount of time using resources both inside and outside of the classroom.

– **Articulation.** Stop a presentation periodically and ask partners to talk with each other about what was just presented, what it means to them and how they can apply it in their life and work.

– **Peer Teaching and Review.** When teaching with computers or in a hands-on process, put people in pairs, one partner being «A» and the other – «B». Ask «A» to perform a process just learned for «B», as if «B» has never heard of it before. «A» has to talk out loud in great detail about every step of the process while doing it.

– **Peer Testing.** Before a presentation, divide people in pairs. Ask everyone to prepare a 20-question oral (or written) examination for their partners based on what they are about to hear. At the end of the presentation, ask partners to exchange their tests.

– **Question/Answer Exercise.** After or during a presentation, ask each person to write down three or more questions they have about what was just covered. Then ask them to get up, wander around the room, and ask each other their questions until they find the answers. Then debrief.

– **Hangman.** Give each partnership a deck of cards with questions on one side and answers on the other. Then ask them to take turns in answering the question as they play hangman.

– **Manipulatives.** Ask students in partners or small teams to reconstruct a model of a system or process while talking out loud about what they are doing, why and how everything works. (A facilitator could keep asking questions to draw them out while this is going on). Components of the system could be magnetic-backed on a whiteboard, Velcro-backed on fabric, flat on a tabletop or floor, or 3-dimensional on a table top.

– **Acting out a System.** Assign people roles to play in a system or process and ask them to act the whole process out. This can be useful for teaching people skills and concepts, like computers and use of equipment and all manner of work problems.

– **Art Contest.** Have partners or teams create works of art to review learning materials: colorful pictogram murals, 3-dimensional displays, skits, whatever.

– **Materials Creation.** Divide learners into teams to create learning materials for each other. This could include job aids, review games, learning exercises, cam-corded infomercials, models to manipulate, research projects, problem solving exercises, and so forth.

– **Guided Imagery.** Read a text while playing soft (Baroque) music in the background and ask participants to close their eyes and visualize what is happening, write down key facts about what they are hearing, ask them to use mind-mapping to capture the information they are hearing.

– **Alternate Presentation Methods.** Cast a presentation into the form of a talk show, a news program, a press conference (with learners “planted” with a question), a story hour, a Bingo game (with learners having to complete information on Bingo cards as new learning material is presented), a demonstration with people as props (taking the roles of components of a system or process), or a one-person skit with the presenter dressed like (and taking the role of) a system or process and describing herself/himself in the first person.

In conclusion, the seminar offered methods and activities that can be good tools in teachers’ hands. They encourage thinking and creativity, let students develop and practice language skills in a relatively non-threatening environment.

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В статье представлен опыт преподавания членов кафедры иностранных языков Бердянского университета менеджмента и бизнеса. Автор фокусирует свое внимание на имплементации новых подходов и методов в процессе изучения английского языка как иностранного.

Ключевые слова: интерактивные методы обучения, общение, приемы обучения языку.

У статті висвітлено досвід викладання членів кафедри іноземних мов Бердянського університету менеджменту та бізнесу. Автор фокусує увагу на імплементації нових підходів і методів у процесі вивчення англійської мови як іноземної.

Ключові слова: інтерактивні методи навчання, спілкування, прийоми навчання мови.

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