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COOPERATIVE LEARNING AS BASIS OF MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

The article deals with cooperative learning as basis of meaningful communication in the foreign language classroom. Cooperative learning has been specified as an educational approach, which aims to provide all necessary conditions for meaningful communication. The article explores several methods that are compatible with the interactive learning. Research indicates that cooperative learning has positive effects on student achievement, multiethnic relationships, self-esteem, and attitudes toward course content. It is proved that such kind of learning, based on positive interdependence, individual accountability, appropriate team formation, group processing, and social skills, can help students to get a considerable achievement in a communicative language learning.

Key words: *cooperative learning, interactive approach, group work, cooperative learning activities, communicative language learning.*

The main goal of educational development nowadays is to ensure contributory conditions for the intellectual, social, moral and physical growth of young members of the society. Education is the fundamental link that provides students with profound knowledge to be able to meet contemporary requirements.

According to modern pedagogical science, the system of learning should be based on the student who is an active participant of the learning process, and the teacher, who is a methodologist and technologist.

In foreign language teaching, the requirement today is the implementation of the pedagogical technologies which provide all necessary means to achieve fluency (the transmitting and receiving of ideas and information); accuracy (using correct grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation); communication (spontaneous interactive language skills). Teaching communication has always been the most challenging task because the teacher has to liberate the students for free and spontaneous speech where speaker and listener interact in a context that does not allow predictable exchanges.

A lot of research and studies conducted by foreign scholars develop the communicative approach to language teaching (Bren, Candlin, Cummins, Moskowitz, Nation, Savignon, Scarcella, Slavin, Widdowson). Representatives of Ukrainian methodology of foreign language teaching (V. Bukhbinder, N. Gez., O. Vyshnevsky, M. Lahovytsky, A. Myroliubov, S. Nikolayeva, N. Skliarenko) have contributed a lot to our knowledge of the aspects of language acquisition.

The aim of the article is to analyze modern technologies of teaching foreign languages, which make the foreign language learning process efficient.

Learning and teaching a foreign language requires interweaving of different approaches, methods, techniques and activities, all working together to form a highly productive integration. Although methods of foreign language teaching may vary, the content of language acquisition remains basically the same. The main purpose for the language learner and the main thing to take into consideration by the teacher is meaningful communication of learners in the process of learning a foreign language in the classroom.

Studies and research of classroom discourse [1; p. 16; 2, p. 4–5; 9, p. 287] have found that basic pattern of communication in the classroom in modern schools is based on recitation – a teaching method when students in a whole class setting are drilled by the teacher using a question-answer format.

The problem is that recitation-based lesson is characterized by teacher's dominance and teacher-student interaction. Moreover, in most classrooms, two-thirds of the talk in the target language is done by the teacher. Recitation relies on teachers talking and asking questions.

We support K. A. Smith, S. D. Sheppard, D. W. Johnson, who state that with changes taking place in modern schools, the teacher's role is no longer to provide students with information. The facts are available in libraries and on the Internet. What students need are the skills to find this information, to use it and to learn to think critically in order to solve the problems of our world [10, p. 88–91].

In other words, the aim of every EFL lesson should be meaningful interaction between student and teacher, student and student, student and the contents of the material studied. Listening, speaking, reading and writing can be integrated successfully provided the methods of their implementation focus on meaning. All four skills can develop naturally in the process of learning when they involve students in meaningful experiences in the new language [4, p. 6].

One of the most efficient strategies in the repertoire of an EFL teacher is implementation of interactive approaches. The latter, in their turn, are based on a special learning strategy – cooperative learning.

The importance of cooperation in the process of learning a foreign language is emphasized by Ashley Montagu who claims that «... without the cooperation of its members, the society cannot survive. The scholar believes that the society of man has survived because the cooperativeness of its members made survival possible. The author states that «... it was not an advantageous individual here and there who did so, but the group. In human societies, the individuals who are most likely to survive, are those who are best enabled to do so by their group» [8, p. 163].

Until today, cooperative learning was largely ignored by educators in this country. Elementary, secondary, and university teaching was dominated by competitive and individualistic learning. Educational techniques, however, have changed. Cooperative learning is now an approved and often the favourite instructional procedure at all levels of education. Nowadays, it is used in primary and secondary schools and in higher educational institutions, no matter what subject area or age student. Collective technologies have different names: collective way of learning, collective learning, collaborative learning, co-operative learning or learning in co-operation.

V. Dyachenko highlights the specific features of collective educational and cognitive activity: the presence of a common goal for all participants of learning process; the division of labor in the process of learning, shared functions and responsibilities, the involvement of the participants in providing control, and management of the activity; established cooperation and social mutual assistance; the realization of socially useful character of each and every student; equality of objective conditions for everybody [1, p. 68].

Implementing cooperative learning in the EFL classroom provides the basis for communicative language learning in the classroom when students work in small learning groups.

Scholars [3, p. 487; 9, p. 167] define a **learning group**, as that members of which are bound together through the common purpose or learning. In a learning group, members (usually six to nine) not only work individually in each other's presence but also make

cooperative efforts combining their work with the purpose of completing a learning task. In a learning group, members strive to achieve the learning aim by learning together in the process of communication.

According to David Johnson and Roger Johnson, there are five basic elements that allow successful small-group learning [10, p. 99]:

- Positive interdependence: Students feel responsible for their own and the group's effort.
- Face-to-face interaction: Students encourage and support one another; the environment encourages discussion and eye contact.
- Individual and group accountability: Each student is responsible for doing their part; the group is accountable for meeting its goal.
- Group behaviors: Group members gain direct instruction in the interpersonal, social, and collaborative skills needed to work with others occurs.
- Group processing: Group members analyze their own and the group's ability to work together.

Marvin Shaw, one of the most important writers about small group theory, defines a human group in terms of interaction producing mutual influence: «persons who are interacting with one another in such a manner that each person influences and is influenced by each other person». Group members have interdependent relationships, and these relationships are the essence of being a group. In other words, if there is no relationship among members, there is no group. Group members are bound together through a common purpose or function. To function effectively as a group, members must learn to communicate with each other [9, p. 89].

It has been found that effective strategies for developing language-rich environment is organizing cooperative / collaborative learning groups and having students work with partners in cooperation. In the classroom where cooperation and collaboration are encouraged students are active participants in the learning process [2, p. 14–15].

Being performed in a learning group, cooperation between students in the class is often called **group work**. Considering group work efficient learning strategy, scholars [3, p. 501; 6, p. 201; 7, p. 212] give the following reasons:

- groups have more resources, including information and methods;
- groups can get more investigative research and other work done;
- groups can think of more suggestions, ideas, and alternatives from which to create or choose a solution;
- group members accept the solution more readily; satisfaction of working together is higher.

The goal of the EFL teacher is to provide students with the variety of meaningful activities that will encourage them to search for communication whenever they cooperate. It is also important for the teachers, to motivate students to learn and develop more positive attitudes about learning. The answer is that teachers have to create a language-rich environment in which students feel free to express themselves and share their ideas and feelings.

Our intention is to share our experience about implementation of cooperative learning activities in the EFL classroom encouraging students to express different points of view on the problem (pluses and minuses of some phenomena). Let us proceed with some sample activity.

The class is divided into groups of six where members are to exchange points of view on the pluses and minuses of different kinds of sports. Two members of the group are assigned to play the roles of «optimists», two others are supposed to adopt the roles of «pessimists». The others are to take down pluses and minuses mentioned and report the results to the class. One student begins by giving a statement, e.g. «– *It's good for you to start doing roller-*

skating. It is an exciting sport and easy to learn. It's fast and fun and keeps you fit because you have to use all your muscles. Another «optimist» suggests e.g. «– It's also cheap. You only need a helmet and a pair of roller blades».

The students who are assigned to play the role of «pessimists» give the other points of view. e.g. «– However, roller-skating can be a dangerous activity as you might lose your balance and hurt yourself. Besides, you have to be sure the sidewalk is really smooth and even, which is always a problem in my town».

The following conversation between «optimists» and «pessimists» shows how the students can use the opportunity to practice recently learned on-topic English subject material: «– If you prefer a gentler sport, golf is relaxing and enjoyable pastime. – But it's a sport for elderly people. – Well, I don't think so. It really requires long training and great skill. – I also think it's a rather expensive sport because the equipment costs a lot of money, and prices at golf courses can be very high».

The above activities are efficient ways to help students develop communication skills because they get them really talk to each other spontaneously. The concept of cooperative learning offers the students the adventure of finding their own answers.

There are complex tasks and may benefit from clear roles and responsibilities assigned to each student within a group. It means that team members should be allowed to pick their own roles. Create team roles that are understandable, clear and decisive. Some sample roles [5, p. 71] are:

Organizer – provides the group with the overall process structure.

Recorder – writes down important information (e.g., directions or group work).

Checker – makes sure that all team members understand the concepts and the team's conclusions.

Questioner – generates questions and involves all students.

Assessor – evaluates the progress of each work session.

Encourager – models and reinforces appropriate social skills.

Summarizer – restates the team's conclusions or answers.

Spokesperson – represents the group and presents group work to rest of the class.

Timekeeper – keeps group on task and on time.

Team facilitator – moderates discussions, keeps the team on schedule, ensures that all complete work, and makes sure that all have the opportunity to participate and learn.

Elaborator – relates the discussion with prior concepts and knowledge.

Research runner – gets needed materials and is the liaison between teams and between their team and the instructor.

As soon as students get used to teamwork, however, it is a great idea to rotate roles within the teams so that students experience a variety of responsibilities. Roles that are senseless, unclear, or too complicated may frustrate one or more team members.

Studying from one another, students easier and faster understand the learning material, improving their own skills and abilities. Collaborative activities bring children together through personal interaction that arises in the process of solving collective learning tasks.

Students learn more deeply and to a greater extent material, spend less time developing skills than individual learning. Through collaborating in small groups they become more motivated and their time and energy is well spent.

A spirit of team work is apparent here because responsibilities are shared, speaking is shared, learning space is shared, experiences are shared and above all learning is shared. Each participant feels free while working in a team, and material mastering takes place at an individual pace. Students increase their responsibility both for their successes and for the results of collective labor.

In addition to this, to prove the effectiveness of cooperative learning, David Johnson, Roger Johnson, and Karl Smith performed an analysis of 168 studies comparing cooperative learning to competitive learning and individualistic learning in college students. They discovered that cooperative learning represented greater academic achievement than both competitive learning and individualistic learning across the studies, exhibiting a mean weighted effect size of 0.54 when comparing cooperation and competition and 0.51 when comparing cooperation and individualistic learning [5, p. 73]. In essence, these results reveal that cooperative learning boosts student academic performance by approximately one-half of a standard deviation.

Cooperative learning is beneficial for the teacher too. In cooperative learning, he is adviser to a network of learners, leader to an orchestra, and coach to a hardworking team. At the present stage, the teacher ceases to be just the competent source of knowledge, or the controlling subject of knowledge. Under the new technologies, the teacher is the organizer, the head of the independent active cognitive activity of the students, the competent consultant and assistant [9, p. 53].

The teacher's professional knowledge is directed not only at the control of knowledge and skills, but also on the diagnostics of student activity, in order to eliminate the difficulties that arise during the educational and cognitive activity in a timely manner by qualified actions. Disciplinary difficulties are reduced (the number of students who do not work in the classroom decreases), students are more pleased with learning, their anxiety is reduced, cognitive activity and creative autonomy are increasing [8, p. 167].

Learning in small groups involves students in various forms of activity such as: cognitive (receiving and transmitting necessary information), transforming (preparation of projects, speeches, reports, staging, issue of newspapers and posters), value-orientation (discussion of the results, the importance of the information received, and the problems that concern the students). It follows that cooperative learning allows to engage all students of the group in the learning process (increasing the time that each student spends in a foreign environment), provides a continuous language interaction of students, which is especially important in the English language lessons in pursuing the communicative purpose.

In conclusion, cooperative learning described above is of special value for the student and for the teacher who both need and search for communication learning strategies in the classroom. Cooperative learning techniques serve as effective classroom management tools for the teacher and interesting and effective learning activity for the student. Through cooperative learning, students learn to work together in an educational setting, which allows them to be better prepared to meet life's obligations and to perform professional.

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ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ГРАМАТИЧНИХ ІГОР У НАВЧАННІ НІМЕЦЬКОЇ МОВИ НА ПОЧАТКОВОМУ ЕТАПІ

У статті проаналізовано ігрові прийоми, як засіб формування іншомовних граматичних навичок в учнів молодшого шкільного віку, важливість їх використання у викладанні німецької мови у початковій школі, а також наведено приклади вправ на основі ігор для формування умінь на навичок учнів.

Ключові слова: *ігровий метод, навчання, іноземна мова, початкова школа.*

Актуальність та важливість використання граматичних ігор та ігрових ситуацій у методиці викладання німецької мови очевидне, оскільки ігрові прийоми є засобом формування граматичних навичок в учнів молодшого шкільного віку при вивченні іноземної мови.

Реалізація поставленої мети передбачає дослідження теоретичних основ навчання граматиці, вивчення ролі ігрових прийомів як засобу формування граматичних навичок в учнів початкових класів, вивчення технології навчання граматиці для учнів початкових класів, розробку вправ на основі ігор для формування граматичних навичок.

Основною метою навчання граматиці є формування в учнів граматичних навичок, як одного з найважливіших компонентів мовленнєвих умінь говоріння, аудіювання, читання та письма. Уміння грамотно поєднувати слова, змінювати словосполучення в залежності від того, що потрібно сказати в даний момент, є одною з найважливіших умов використання мови як засобу спілкування [1, с. 65].

Виходячи зі сказаного, можна дещо уточнити загальні вимоги до оволодіння граматичною стороною мови, а саме:

а) учні повинні бути в змозі граматично правильно оформляти свої висловлювання;

б) вони повинні вміти розпізнавати граматичні явища при читанні і аудіюванні, звертаючи увагу на витяг змістовної інформації. Цій меті повинен відповідати відібраний граматичний мінімум. Критерієм його відбору зазвичай виступають такі показники, як його частотність і вживання у мові, а також його узагальненість, тобто здатність поширюватися на ту, чи іншу кількість граматичних явищ [3, с. 49].

Основним шляхом формування граматичних навичок В.С. Цетлін вважає автоматизацію дискурсивно-граматичних операцій. Процес оволодіння граматичними