

Active foreign language learning in agricultural academy

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INTRODUCTION

At the present moment Higher School in Russia is working under very complicated conditions. The teaching technology is being changed, a lot of attention is being paid to humanitarization of education. More than 40 years ago US scientists proved that technocratic thinking didn't assist the development of a personality; having mastered some vocation an individual remained functionally ignorant and he was not able to become a creative person. The Humanities, however, develop mental abilities, which are the basis for technical training. In the process of humanitarization foreign language learning plays an important role. The great Russian writer and teacher K.D. Ushinskiy wrote that "foreign languages could develop a personality more than any other subjects". On the other hand, with the transition of Russia to market economy it has become very important not only to train highly-qualified specialists, but also to teach them rules of communication with other people, to teach them foreign languages. Moreover, teaching communication in a foreign language helps communicate in a native language, too. New time sets new goals before Foreign Language Teaching (FLT), helps develop practical skills and make foreign language learning active and motivated. Thus, a new intensive method of FLT appeared. In the 90-es of the last century one of the creators of this method G.A. Kitaigorodskaya, a teacher of French, professor of Moscow State University, based her research on the works of the Bulgarian psychiatrist G.K. Lozanov. The latter combined thinking with emotional activity and motivation in the teaching process. It is possible to teach a person a foreign language only when he is in an emotionally pleasant state, relaxed, not frightened, when a psychological barrier of fear before speaking, making mistakes and getting bad results is taken away.

The teaching process is based on motivated communication. Before making a learner communicate it is necessary to show a motive for him to know what he is going to say and why. A learner becomes motivated and interested, his mental activity is challenged.

METHODS

Being followers of G.A. Kitaigorodskaya and active foreign language learning we base our work on five main principles:

personal communication;

role (play) organization of the curriculum and learning process;

group interaction;

poly-functioning exercises;

concentration in organizing the curriculum and learning process.

It is necessary to mention that these principles are used on 2 stages of foreign language active learning:

every-day communication (e.g. "Acquaintance", "At a hotel", "At the airport", "Visit to a friend", "A week-end in the country", etc.);

professional communication.

Let us discuss each principle separately.

1. Personal communication

In communicating the teacher treats the student not as a student, but as an interlocutor, a companion. He expresses his opinion.

– Do you speak French? — Yes, I studied it at school. — Great! I'd like to master this language, too.

– You want to become an artist, don't you? — Yes, it's my dream. — You'll make a great artist, I'm sure. You have a gift for painting. (1 stage).

When forming communication skills the teacher should deliver the words from one student to another, challenging them to express their opinions. Various emotions can be conveyed here (i.e. surprise, delight, regret). The teacher addresses the whole group, each student is expected to give his verbal response. — Listen, what Tony is speaking about! That's a nice idea! — or — Stella likes winter. Why do you think she does? —.And the teacher asks everybody to respond. (1 stage).

2. Role (play) organization of the curriculum and learning process

Each student is given a role, a mask, a legend. On the first stage they are: Russel Brundon, a sociologist from London; Bernard Berg, a philologist, a writer from Bern; Arthur Clark, a psychologist from Great Britain... etc. (T.N. Ignatova "Intensive Course. English for communication", Moscow, Vysshaya Shkola, 2000). Each student has not only his name, profession, legend, but also his character. And the student should bear it in mind when communicating. Role organization of the learning process makes communication motivated, natural, active and the student realizes why he should say this or that.

On the second stage (professional communication) the roles are different depending on the "profession" of the learner from his legend.

3. Group interaction

Education and training are carried out in a group (team) and through a group. The students actively communicate with each other and exchange information. All the members of the group become friends. Everybody's success in com-

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communicating depends on the success of the others. The types of interaction are different:

- work in pairs;
- work in triads (3 students);
- work in micro-groups;
- work in groups; (5-6 people);
- 1 student — the group;
- The teacher—the group.

Let us see how the teaching process is organized in groups. On the second, advanced, stage of foreign language learning, i.e. professional communication, each group of students may be presented as a company producing some goods. The companies compete with each other for consumers. In each company (group of students) there is a director-general, a production manager, a sales manager, a quality control manager, an advertising manager, etc. They try to convince customers that their goods have the advantages, which the goods of other companies fail to have.

Each student being an individuality a group can be opposed to him in FLT (type e). A student gives a presentation of his imaginable company. Or one member of the group has just come from the conference dealing with the problems of the pollution of the Baltic Sea or malnutrition in African countries, etc. The situations may be different. The themes of the imaginable conferences are free, arbitrary. The aim is to make students think and speak, express themselves in English. This kind of work is carried out after the students have mastered the main topic (text).

A more advanced type of group interaction is the interaction of the group with the teacher.

And again we should stress the fact that the atmosphere of the lesson is friendly and pleasant. Competition for better answers, better impression gives way to cooperation. Everybody's success depends on the success of the others. Constant interaction with partners gives the student an opportunity to judge himself correctly and to predict his own response and that of the others.

4. Poly-functioning exercises

This principle reflects the specific features of intensive (active) foreign language learning. For a student each exercise is mono-functional, for a teacher it is poly-functional as it solves several tasks:

- practice in solving some communicative task;
- practice in using some grammar form;
- practice in the topic vocabulary;
- practice in phonetics.

5. Concentration in organizing the curriculum and learning process

The training appliance is a unit, a polylog, i.e. each learner has his words, his role in the unit.

A polylog is a bilingual text which makes the comprehension of the topic easier. The learner doesn't look up each word in the dictionary, each phrase is memorized as a whole unit. The steps in studying every topic (polylog) are:

- introducing a new topic;

The polylog is read by the teacher four times with a different task each time;

- training in communication;

Speech patterns are trained with strict control – certain patterns are trained and repeated. The learner is not allowed to add anything else to the patterns.

- practice in communication;

The strict control is not used any more. A certain situation is given (see principle 3 "group interaction"). The students communicate freely, fluently, using the mastered patterns, expressing their opinions, their vision of the problem. On the second, advanced, stage, i.e. professional communication, it is very interesting for the students to conduct a conference, e.g. representatives of different countries discuss economic development of their countries, or ways to improve ecological situation in the region. As has been mentioned before, this kind of work is carried out after the students have mastered the topic. The previous home-assignment is to think the topic over and prepare interesting questions for discussion. They already know the polite forms of disagreement, argument, protest from the first stage..

The final step "Practice in communication" and the intensive method of FLT on the whole require from the teacher thorough preparation for lessons, great skills in managing the discussion, self-control, patience and always a good, pleasant disposition.

CONCLUSION

Intensive method of FLT meets the requirements of the Russian society set before Higher School. Now in the transition period to market economy Russia needs not only highly-educated specialists, but also professionals with a good command of foreign languages.

This method makes learning active, interesting, natural, motivated, adjusted to professional spheres, it encourages students to speak without fear of mistakes, challenges their mental activity and emotional state. The role of the teacher here is indispensable, invaluable. Though he is in the background, he makes the whole communicative process go, he creates a friendly, pleasant, emotionally coloured atmosphere. Nevertheless, traditional methods of teaching reading, writing, grammar should not be ignored.

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