

Innovative Approaches to Teaching Communicative Competence in Foreign Languages

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the problem of developing communicative competence in a foreign language of university students by using innovative methods and interactive task formats. The authors believe that the emphasis should be placed on developing cognitive skills of learners, their autonomy and teamwork skills, as well as their digital competence. While teaching and assessing students' communicative competence, the teacher should provide communicative situations which are based on solving a problem, developing critical thinking, analyzing data and using modern technologies to collaborate with other learners. The authors aim to explore how modern British novels can be used in order to increase students' academic motivation, actively involve them in learning and effectively develop all components of their communicative competence (i.e. linguistic, discourse, sociocultural, cognitive and strategic competences). Results of the research presented in the article offer proof that the new approach to creating tasks has a positive effect on the acquisition of a foreign language and the development of students' abilities and skills of different nature.


1 INTRODUCTION


Nowadays digital competence has become essential for the specialists working in the humanitarian field. NMSTU is a participant in the federal project "Human Resources for the Digital Economy" that aims to train highly qualified personnel with digital competencies and skills to personalize the educational process. One of the conditions for the successful integration of information and communication technologies into the educational process is competent methodological support of educational activities. We see the solution to this problem not only in updating the programs of academic disciplines in terms of integrating digital skills into all their components, but it is also necessary to introduce innovative, interactive teaching methods into the traditional form of education, new assignment formats aimed at developing students' skills to independently extract


knowledge, critically interpret the received information, develop the cognitive and educational autonomy of students and their ability to work in a team, as well as to develop students' digital skills and abilities. The competence-based model of education uses such new educational technologies as problem-based learning technology, game technologies, project-based learning technologies, and interactive technologies. It is necessary to use technologies that would make it possible to mobilize students, to activate their communicative and cognitive activity, otherwise it is impossible to form internal motivation that ensures successful mastering of a foreign language. Thus, the main motives should be communicative and cognitive ones, and training should be based on the active forms of work. When conducting training sessions, it is necessary to ensure the development of students' skills in teamwork, interpersonal communication, decision-making, etc. The development of all these skills allows to

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implement new educational technologies. All of the above determines the relevance of the chosen topic.

The article aims to describe the system of work to develop foreign language communicative competence of linguistic students using modern technologies and new assignment formats.

In accordance with the goal, the following research objectives were set:

- to determine the factors that activate the educational and cognitive activity of students, taking into account the specifics of teaching foreign languages at the university;
- to elaborate a methodology for the development of foreign language communicative competence of students using active forms of work based on the material of modern British novels;
- to conduct experimental training in order to determine the effectiveness of the elaborated methodology for the development of foreign language communicative competence of students.

2 MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION

The material of the research is the actual problems of the professional training of modern specialists in the field of linguistics, in particular, the development of their foreign language communicative competence, educational and cognitive autonomy and digital literacy.

In our article we rely on the following research methods: theoretical analysis of the literature on the research problem; study of teaching experience in domestic and foreign practice; linguistic and cultural analysis of the texts of modern British novels; pedagogical experiment (teaching) and methods of statistical processing of experimental data.

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, we focus on the technology of problem-based reading teaching based on the material of modern British novels. The technology of problem-based learning is focused on posing problem questions, solving problem situations in the process of developing students' foreign language communicative competence. At the beginning of the study, it is necessary to consider the main factors that activate the educational and cognitive activity of

students in a foreign language lesson. The following factors can be identified:

- approach to the process of mastering a foreign language as a process of acquiring knowledge;
- functional orientation of the process of teaching a foreign language, which means that language means are acquired immediately in the activity;
- reliance on group forms of education, when optimal conditions are created for the self-realization of each student, stimulating speech creativity and developing the ability to self-esteem;
- -the learning process becomes more effective if students understand what they are learning, are aware of the purpose of their work, realize the cognitive and communicative value of the material being studied, and interact equally with the teacher and with other students;
- organization and implementation of active forms of education, as well as active forms of the lesson (Galskova, 2017).

The study explores these factors in the light that corresponds to the specifics of teaching foreign languages at university. As examples, we cite some tasks that were developed by us taking into account the above factors based on modern British novels. Participation of NMSTU in the Russian-British project "Contemporary British Literature in the Educational Process in Russian Universities" allows us to build practical classes in the study of English on the material of modern original works of fiction by British authors selected by experts in the field of literature from the University of Oxford.

The approach to the process of mastering a foreign language as to the process of acquiring knowledge implies that students are active agents of their educational and cognitive activities. Language teaching is teaching students to solve certain communicative tasks of a cognitive, behavioral, problematic nature. For training to be a cognitive process, educational material should present to the student's personal significance. Another important point is setting the problem to the student in the form of insufficient initial data, choosing one of several options, or overcoming obstacles on the way to solving a communicative task.

In this study we will consider how the teacher can implement these tasks in home reading classes based on the novel by Julia Darling "The Taxi Driver's Daughter" (Darling, 2004), which tells about the crisis in the family of a driver named Mac, his wife Louise and their two teenage daughters Karis and Stella.

Communicative competence is an integrative quality of a person. Setting foreign language communicative competence as a goal of foreign language teaching emphasizes the focus of the learning process on communication and cognition. Foreign language communicative competence includes speech competence, linguistic, social and cultural, educational and cognitive, and compensatory (Galskova, 2017). Next, we will consider how the teacher can effectively develop these competencies in the process of teaching university students reading skills in the framework of the problem approach.

Let us start with speech competence, which involves the development of communication skills in four types of speech activity, namely speaking, reading, listening and writing. Although in this study we focus on teaching reading, it should be clarified that, since foreign language communicative competence is integrative in nature, we consider it is necessary to simultaneously develop not only reading skills, but also speaking and, if possible, writing. When elaborating tasks for the speech competence development, we relied on the following methodological principles, reflecting the features of teaching reading as a type of speech activity.

First, teaching reading should be teaching speech activity aimed at solving certain communicative cognitive problems (Pulekha, 2016; Solovova, 2014). Speech activity is known to be realized in the form of specific acts of verbal communication, the result of which is the solution of this problem. Reading should provide verbal communication.

Second, teaching reading should take place as an active learning process. Cognitive activity of students is stimulated by completing the problem-search assignments. Being focused on obtaining information, reading is a cognitive activity, which also determines the educational and upbringing function.

Third, teaching reading should become the basis for the development of skills that integrate speech skills at the level of reception and production in both oral and written speech. While reading the perception of the material should lead to the productive activity of students, the expression of value judgments and their own thoughts about what they have read.

In the search for adequate forms of work during practical classes we proceeded from the fact that teaching reading is built as a system of problem-search communication tasks that develop universal, general cultural (Konopatskaya and Fakhrutdinova, 2015) and professional competencies of students and

form internal cognitive motives of educational activity necessary for successful learning.

We believe that one of the most important types of work on a work read is the discussion of various issues of a problematic nature. The use of content questions leads to the literal reading of fragments of the text and does not contribute much to the formation of a mechanism for the independent construction of a statement. Problem questions allow not only to check the content of what has been read, but also to discuss the motives of the behavior of the characters, their actions. For example, working on *The Taxi Driver's Daughter* allows us to discuss issues such as *A Typical Family*, *Parents and Children*, *Difficult Teenagers*, *School Bullying*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Truancy*, etc.

In our opinion, it is important to base problem tasks on the examination of the same events from different points of view. Conflict situations should be chosen as a basis, for example, a father's visit to school due to absenteeism and poor performance of his daughter. Students read letters from the main characters (father and two daughters), which they sent to the editorial office. The student's task is to write the answers, taking into account three different points of view. Let's give an example of this task:

Read the letters which Mac, Caris and Stella sent to the *Agony Aunt Column*. Write a reply to the letters taking into account the feelings of all the members of the family.

"Dear editor! I'm writing to ask you for advice.

A letter from Caris: "My mother stole a shoe from the shop and assaulted a policeman. My mother is a thief! She said she didn't know what she was doing. I sometimes wonder if any of the birthday presents my mother gave me were stolen. I know my mom talked about the crime to my sister behind my back. I have questions no one will answer. There is no one I can confide in."

A letter from Mac: "My wife is in prison for shoplifting. She hit a police officer with the stolen shoe. I'm ashamed of my wife. I'm afraid of the future. I have driven taxis for 18 years. I earn my living by hard graft! Now it seems to me other taxi drivers laugh at me. I'm trying to think positive and I'm trying to understand! ... My mother-in-law has moved in. But she is no help. She's a bad influence on my younger daughter. She lets her stay off school."

A letter from Stella: "...I feel abandoned. My mother is in prison. It's a short sentence... The trouble is that my younger sister won't listen to me or our dad. Now that my mother is in prison I feel there is no one I can confide in."

Tasks of this kind solve the upbringing issues, teach students to understand the state of mind of the characters in the text and empathize with them, enrich their sensual experience.

Another type of tasks that we use in our home reading classes is to comment on the text. For comments students are given a number of statements in the direct speech of the characters (or the words of the author) and the question about how these words characterize them. Students should evaluate the statements based on their ideas about the world, compare different points of view. Students can also be given a task to expand or refute this idea. Example:

- What do teachers know? Look at me – I left school with nothing. She’s probably too clever for them?
- Mac wishes that children were like Ikea furniture... he could pack them into a box and keep them under bed.
- He sometimes feels as if his interior is unlit, or not charged like other people’s.

Another task that gives students the opportunity to learn how to respond to the content of the text, to correlate the author's position with their own point of view is the task "Ask the writer a question". The form of this task can be individual tasks that stimulate communication activities in English in real communication with the writer and his environment through the use of modern information and communication technologies. Most modern writers have their own websites on the Internet, or there are pages created by fans of the writer. In this case, you can use the site <http://juliadarling.co.uk>, where friends and readers of Julia Darling communicate, since the writer herself died in 2005. Students can leave their comments on the web page, expressing their understanding of the work. Also, as a task, students can ask questions to other readers or people who knew the writer intimately. In addition to the fact that such tasks have a high communicative value and provide real communication practice with readers from around the world, they also contribute to the development of students' digital competencies.

The dramatization of the passage, prepared by the students themselves, is also characterized by a fairly high level of problem solving. The method of dramatization allows students to create such conditions under which they must somehow act in relation to the speech material, think through the script, use their imagination, create their own speech product, working in a team. The method of dramatization relies on the personal experience of students, thereby giving a personal meaning to the educational work, helps the student to open up,

relying on their sense of empathy towards the actors in the scenario and the situation being played. The method of dramatization includes the external side: the problem situation and the search for its solution, and the internal side: personal experience, emotions, planning. Dramatization can have both a reproductive-productive and a productive (creative) character.

Here is an example of productive dramatization.

With a partner, plan a reporter’s interview with one of the book characters. Think of things you would like to know about the character that were not in the book. Think of questions and brainstorm answers. Write the interview in the form of questions and answers and act it out for the class.

Let's turn to the consideration of the possibilities of developing language competence within the framework of the problem approach. Language competence means proficiency in language tools in accordance with the topics and situations of communication, knowledge of the linguistic phenomena of a foreign language and different ways of expressing thoughts in the native and foreign languages. We believe that in home reading classes, the emphasis should be placed as much as possible on the productive activities of students, so if possible, we should give a communicative character to lexical exercises. Here is an example of such an exercise:

Find expressions which describe the way Mac drives a taxi and the way he feels about it (e.g. to drive like a man in a pot of treacle, to shake one’s head, to long for trips to the airport, to half listen to the radio, to answer quiz questions out loud, to crave acceleration, to roar out of the airport, to swerve in the slow lane, to drive recklessly). What is his attitude towards taxi-driving? Which words and expressions show that he was weary of driving a taxi?

It should be noted that the language of the book "Taxi Driver's Daughter", on the one hand, is quite simple and clear, and on the other hand, the author uses many original metaphors, epithets, comparisons, allusions and symbols. These stylistic characteristics of the text make it possible to develop the ability to evaluate not only the content of the text, but also its language features, form, and, in general, the skill of its execution (Solovova, 2014). As they read, students are asked to identify the stylistic techniques used by the author, explain how they help to understand the inner state of the characters, their attitude to what is happening, and analyze the effectiveness of their use. Examples of such expressions include the following: in a dutiful navy jacket; Stella takes off her practical school shoes, ties the straps and throws them up; a huge suitcase covered with boastful stickers from all

over the world; friendliness has been squeezed out of it; house looks unloved, and many others.

The process of forming social and cultural competence based on the material of modern British novels passes through all levels of the structure of the secondary language personality, each of which corresponds to its own content-knowledge, practical skills and skills of intercultural communication (Millrood and Maximova, 2016; Vetrinskaya and Dmitrenko, 2017; Pesina et al., 2020). First, as our analysis of the modern novels texts shows, such linguistic units of the verbal-semantic level as non-equivalent and background vocabulary, nominative units, as well as grammatical means are the reflection of the specifics of widely represented cultural values.

To form the linguistic and cognitive level of the language personality, it is necessary for the student to have mastered the sum of knowledge about the picture of the world. Units of this level can be represented in the form of idioms, proverbs and sayings, which are found in large numbers in the texts of novels. In addition, students at the linguistic and cognitive level form subject-specific knowledge about the national peculiarities of everyday life, the natural and climatic conditions of the country of the language being studied, etc., as well as knowledge of behavior scenarios in social situations and means of expressing speech etiquette in typical situations of everyday communication (Nasarova and Pesina, 2016). Based on the material of novels, we can introduce cultural concepts of a cognitive nature and teach students to see their manifestations in the cultural picture of the world (the concepts of "home", "common sense", "challenge", "good will", "friend", "friendship", "privacy", etc.).

The units of the pragmatic level represent the communicative needs determined by the entire paradigm of the social behavior of the individual. The modern novel is not only a special way of mastering reality, but also in terms of displaying reality is a way of expressing the national mentality. At the pragmatic level, students can form a knowledge of cultural values and the forms of their manifestation in the models of behavior and speech of heroes (Pavlova, Baryshnikova and Artamonova, 2019; Solonchak and Pesina, 2015) knowledge about the ways of manifestation of cultural values in the structure of speech acts (Byram and Michael, 2020; Karamalak and Pesina, 2017); knowledge of the concepts of psychological-behavioral and moral-evaluative character and their manifestations in the cultural picture of the world (the concepts of "success", "politeness", "wealth", "individualism", etc.); the idea of the English national character; the idea of the

national features of English humor, as well as the ability to identify the manifestations of cultural values in the speech and non-speech behavior of the characters; the ability to build verbal behavior in accordance with the norms of English culture, etc. (Baryshnikova, Yemets and Vtorushina, 2018).

The foreign language picture of the world is boundless and changeable in its essence, which makes it impossible to create a complete list of cultural knowledge of a verbal and non-verbal nature, sufficient for its mastery (Pesina, Kiva-Khamzina and Rubanova, 2019). In this regard, it is important for students to learn to independently master the language means and cultural concepts. For this purpose they need to have a way of mastering this knowledge, which can serve as reflection (Pavlova et al., 2014). In accordance with this, students need to develop practical skills and reflection skills that are part of the socio-cultural competence. Within the framework of this study, we consider relevant the following skills: the ability to enter a reflexive position in the process of carrying out any activity; the ability to recognize gaps in knowledge for their further filling; the ability to understand the reflected situation to find ideas about such situations in their own experience; the ability to understand the reasons and motives for actions carried out in the reflected situation; the ability to bring the reflected situation under different categories, to consider it from different positions.

The forming process of reflection affects not only the cognitive, but also the emotional level of the secondary language personality, as it leads to the development of empathy, tolerance, the ability to understand the feelings and motives of a representative of a foreign language culture, ensuring the emotional readiness of the student to conduct an intercultural dialogue (Makhmutova, Andreeva and Dmitrenko, 2016). The novels reflect not just the reality, but also the attitude to it, because there is always a hidden assessment and emotiveness in it. Discussing such important concepts based on the text of novels can not only form students' understanding of the national and cultural content of these concepts, but also their attitude to them. Therefore, the use of modern novels allows us to create moments of emotional involvement in the activity, when intellectual activity is experienced emotionally. This helps students not only to be aware of their own emotions and feelings, but also to learn how to manage them and, ultimately, to form the empathy that is necessary for effective cross-cultural communication.

Let's turn to the consideration of educational and cognitive competencies as components of communicative competence. Educational and cognitive competence is understood as the ability to independently master a foreign language using modern technologies. This competence is based on the following components: ability to use rational methods of cognitive activity, awareness of oneself as a subject of this activity, readiness to solve problem-cognitive tasks, development of such a quality of personality as independence.

Consider these components:

- preparation for the learning process and active participation in it (take notes, use a dictionary, make a response plan);
- use of methods of active learning (active reading) and, accordingly, the activation of cognitive processes (analysis, comparison, generalization, search);
- self-orientation in the task, the organization of their communicative and cognitive activities (planning statements, formulating thoughts using a certain set of language tools);
- organization of their communication and cognitive activities (work in pairs, groups, individually, check, assess and correct their work).

Independence is based on the skills and abilities of cognitive activity. Independence is a dynamic category and develops gradually in the process of mastering students' conscious methods of action for the accumulation, combination, generalization and use of foreign-language educational material in educational and cognitive activities.

Considering educational and cognitive competence as the ability to master a foreign language independently, it is impossible not to touch on such an aspect as the use of modern technologies in this process. Performing the tasks developed by us, students carry out independent search, analysis, selection, processing, critical comprehension, subsequent use of information or its transfer in accordance with the communicative situation and personal significance.

The forming process of compensatory competence is integrated with the forming process of educational and cognitive competence and involves the formation of skills to use linguistic and contextual guesswork, skills of paraphrasing and clarification, the use of words-descriptions of abstract concepts, the use of explanations, as well as the use of facial expressions and gestures in the case of a lack of language means to express communicative intent.

4 RESULTS

We will analyze the results of experimental training on the development of foreign language communicative competence of third-year students majoring "Linguistics", the profile "Translation and Translation Studies" in the "Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University" during the 2020-2021 academic year. Two experimental groups (EG-1 and EG-2) and two control groups (CG-1 and CG-2) participated in the experimental training, in which the training was conducted according to the developed methodology.

The assessment of the development level of the components of foreign language communicative competence was carried out according to the following criteria:

- the ability to use lexical and grammatical material constructing an utterance in English;
- the ability to extract information about the culture of the country of the target language from the linguistic units of the text of a modern novel;
- the ability to choose language forms in connection with the factors of the communicative situation;
- the ability to build a dialogue in accordance with the norms of English-speaking culture;
- the ability to extract from the text of a modern British novel background information about the culture of the country of the language being studied;
- the ability to independently search, analyze and apply information to solve communicative and cognitive problems using digital technologies.

The results of the experimental teaching showed that all the students of the experimental groups had a significant increase in the level of formation of the skills that are part of the foreign language communicative competence practically according to all the identified criteria. On average, this increase was 41.2%. At the same time, the students of the control groups, on average, improved their results by only 9% compared to the initial assessment test.

We believe that, in general, the results of experimental training have shown the effectiveness of the methodology we have developed for the development of foreign language communicative competence based on modern British novels.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Completing the consideration of this problem, we come to the following conclusions:

- Modern educational technologies used in the process of foreign language education at the university should be innovative and mobilize students, activate their communicative and cognitive activity and internal motivation, ensuring the successful mastering of foreign language communicative competence. When conducting training sessions, it is necessary to develop students' skills of teamwork, interpersonal communication, decision-making, etc. For this, the teacher should provide factors that activate the educational and cognitive activity of students, taking into account the specifics of teaching foreign languages at the university.
- The conducted educational experiment confirmed the effectiveness of the system of work elaborated by the authors to develop the foreign language communicative competence of linguistic students using modern technologies and new formats of assignments based on the material of modern British novels.

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