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The project-based technique for foreign language teaching

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Abstract

Recently, there has been a worldwide orientation towards the humanisation of education. This process finds its expression in the orientation of the learning process towards the development of a student's personality. Among the existing variety of new pedagogical technologies, which are aimed at the realisation of the learner-centred approach, the authors of the article point out the project-based technique for teaching, which is actively applied nowadays. Within the framework of this technique, the learning process is aimed at developing a student's personality, satisfying his/her needs and interests. The relevance of studying the project-based technique is obvious because the issues of improving the quality of education and the level of upbringing of a student's personality remain a priority in the modern technique for foreign language teaching. The article pays attention to the fact that foreign language as an academic subject has great opportunities for creating conditions for cultural and personal formation of students. The authors of the article point out that the social order of society in the field of foreign language teaching has the task of developing a student's personality, enhancing the humanistic content of studying, and contributing to the realisation of the educational and developing potential of a subject with due regard to individuality of each student.

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Keywords

Pedagogical technology, project-based technique, learner-centred approach, foreign language teaching, foreign language.

Introduction

The main goal of foreign language teaching (hereinafter referred to as FLT) at the present stage of the development of education is the personality of a student, being capable and willing to participate in intercultural communication in a studied language and independently make progress in foreign language activity.

Nowadays the project-based technique is studied in detail by both foreign and domestic authors: I.L. Bim, I.A. Zimnyaya, T.E. Sakharova, O.M. Moiseeva, E.S. Polat, I. Chechel, D.L. Fried-Booth, T. Hutchinson, D. Phillips and others.

E.S. Polat proves the application of the project-based technique as a pedagogical technology in the development of modern didactics, believing that this is truly a pedagogical technology, humanistic not only in its philosophical and psychological essence, but in the moral aspect. It provides not only an assimilation of educational material, but also the intellectual and moral development of students, their independence, friendliness to the teacher and each other, sociability and desire to help others [Polat, 2000].

The project-based technique as a new pedagogical learner-centred technology reflects the basic principles of the humanistic approach in education: particular attention is paid to the individuality of a person, his/her personality; a clear orientation towards the conscious development of critical thinking of students [Aisner, Bershadskaya, 2017].

Thus, the project-based technique is an alternative to the traditional approach in education, based mainly on the assimilation of knowledge and its reproduction.

The project-based technique in foreign and domestic systems of education

The problem of student-centred learning has a long history. At the end of the 19th century didactic writings of Western teachers considered the emotional attractiveness of teaching. The ideas of the humanistic direction in philosophy and education were related to the method of projects, which was also called the "method of problems" or the "method of the target act".

The method of projects appeared in the 1920s in agricultural schools of the United States in connection with the idea of the labour school. Project-based teaching was aimed at finding ways of developing active independent thinking in children, teaching them not only to memorise and integrate the knowledge that the school gives, but also to be able to apply it in practice. The general principle, on which the method of projects was based, was to establish a direct connection between the educational material and students' life experience, in their active cognitive and creative joint activity in practical tasks (projects), while solving one common problem.

The method of projects has been successfully developed due to the pedagogical ideas of the American teacher and psychologist J. Dewey, as well as his disciples and followers W.H. Kilpatrick, E.W. Collings.

John Dewey (1859-1952), an American educator, psychologist, idealist philosopher, criticised the dominant school system in the United States for detachment from life, the abstract, scholastic nature of all learning process, based on the acquisition and assimilation of knowledge. J. Dewey offered the reform of school education, according to which knowledge should be taken from the practical initiative and personal experience of a child. He noted that knowledge, mental education, leading to some goal, are given only in the process of close and real participation in the activities of social life [Dewey, Dewey, 1915].

The methods of projects were considered in detail in the works by W.H. Kilpatrick and E. Collings (USA). W.H. Kilpatrick defines the program of school using the project-based technique: "The program is a series of experiments connected in such a way that the information gained from one experience develops and enriches the whole stream of other experiences" [Ravkin, 1993].

The method of projects attracted the attention of Russian educators in the early 20th century. The ideas of project-based teaching appeared in Russia almost simultaneously with the projects of American scientists. Much attention was paid to the method of projects by S.T. Shatsky, V.I. Petrova, N.K. Krupskaya, Professor B.V. Ignatiev, V.N. Shulgin, M.V. Krupenina. Soviet scientists believed that a critically revised method of projects could ensure the development of creative initiative and independence in students and would facilitate a direct connection between knowledge and skills and their application to solve practical problems.

Supporters of the method of projects V.M. Shulgin, M.V. Krupenina, B.V. Ignatiev viewed it as the only way to turn the school of study into a school of life, where the acquisition of knowledge will be carried out on the basis and in connection with the labour of students.

In 1929-1930 the universalisation of the project-based technique and the development of an integrated system of teaching led to drafting and publishing complex project programs. With such educational process, as many scientists approved, students were in different life situations, facing difficulties and overcame them with the help of instincts and habits, as well as the knowledge that is needed to achieve this goal. However, this goal often had no practical use and did not fully contribute to the proper development of a student. As a result of this approach, subjects were denied, systematic learning under the guidance of the teacher in the lesson was replaced by work on the fulfillment of project tasks. The level of general school education fell sharply.

In 1931 N.K. Krupskaya, considering the possibility of using some elements of such methods in the Soviet school, pointed out the "danger of narrow practicality", and the development of such projects in which "...it would be possible to study more" [Krupskaya, 1931]. N.K. Krupskaya considered the deep connection between theory and practice, the "danger of narrow practicality", the need for research work on the development of a student's personality.

At the foundation of modern understanding of the project-based technique, as E.S. Polat notes, there lies "the use of a wide range of problematic, research, and searching methods that are orientated clearly towards the real practical result, relevant to a student, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the development of the problem, taking into account the various factors and conditions for its solution and implementation of results" [Polat, 2000].

"To achieve this result," continues E.S. Polat, "it is necessary to teach children to think independently, find and solve problems, using for this purpose knowledge from different areas, the ability to predict the results and possible consequences of different solutions, the ability to establish cause-effect relationships" [Ibidem].

It is necessary to draw the following conclusion: project-based teaching is always orientated towards independent active cognitive practical activity of students when solving a personally significant problem, in the process of which the main regularities of the scientific theory are discovered and their profound assimilation takes place.

The activity-orientated component as a basis for project-based teaching

Let us turn to the general provision of the theory of activity formulated by A.N. Leontiev, I.A. Zimnyaya. Motivation is viewed as an essential feature of any activity [Zimnyaya, 1991]. According

to the learner-centred activity-orientated approach, speech activity is regarded as the object in FLT, and the language system only acts as a means of realising this activity, then, like any activity, speech activity should be based on the communicative and cognitive needs of students to express their ideas. This need is part of the general system of their motivation. Accordingly, the teacher has a pedagogical and psychological problem related to the initial creation, formation or keeping of a student's need for communication and studying by means of foreign language of a personally significant reality.

The educational project is an important means of forming the motivation for studying a foreign language. The most important factors that contribute to the formation of an internal motive of speech activity in project-based teaching include:

- the connection of the project idea with real life: the idea of any project should be connected with the creation of a specific product or solution of a separate, significant problem for a student, taken from real life in the practical activity;

- the interest of all its participants in the project: in the process of application of the project-based technique it is very important to achieve personal acceptance of the project idea and awakening of a true interest in its implementation, which will make it possible to achieve its successful implementation and the effectiveness of the teaching impact;

- the leading role of the consultative and coordinating function of a teacher is changing from the position of a leader to the position of a consultant and coordinator, which gives students real autonomy and the opportunity to show their own initiative and independence in the process of project implementation, contributes to the self-development of an individual.

Thus, the project-based technique implements a personal approach to students, requiring, first of all, the attitude to a student as a personality with needs, opportunities and desires.

The project-based technique as a pedagogical technology

A technology (from the Greek word *techne* – art, skill) is defined as a set of methods and ways of obtaining and processing of certain products; as a scientific discipline, developing and improving such ways and methods [Chernilevskii, 1999].

A learning technology is a complex integrative system, including an ordered variety of operations and actions that provide pedagogical targeting; informative aspects aimed at the assimilation of knowledge, the acquisition of professional skills and the formation of personal qualities of students, given by the goals of training. As D.V. Chernilevskii emphasises, a teaching technology, suggesting the management of the learning process, includes two interrelated processes: the organisation of students' activities and monitoring of this activity [Ibidem].

Next, we turn to the concept of "project" (from the Latin word *projectus* – thrown forward) [Ibidem]. Projecting, as N.P. Sibirskaya emphasises, is an activity to create a model of the future, the alleged phenomenon. It is one of the aspects of human creativity and is based on planning, forecasting, decision-making, development, scientific research [Sibirskaya, 1999].

Taking into account the concepts of teaching methods and projecting, E.S. Polat views the project-based technique as "a set of search, problematic, creative methods, representing a didactic means of activating cognitive activity, developing creativity and simultaneously forming certain personal qualities of students in the process of creating a specific product" [Polat, 2000].

Thus, the project-based technique is a pedagogical technology, orientated not towards the integration of actual knowledge, but towards its application and acquisition of new ones through self-organisation and self-education of students.

The didactic structure of the modern project-based technique

As it is known, the study of the purpose, content, forms, methods and means of learning in a particular subject is part of methodology as a learning theory. The method is a didactic category as a combination of theory, operations of possessing a certain area of practical or theoretical knowledge of one or another activity. In project-based teaching, the method is considered to be a way of achieving the didactic goal through detailed development of a problem (technology), which should lead to a real, practical result, made out in one way or another [Ibidem]. When using the project-based technique in the educational process, important didactic tasks are solved:

- 1) the lessons are not limited to the acquisition of certain knowledge and skills, but concern the practical activities of the students, affecting their emotional sphere, thereby increasing the motivation of students;
- 2) students have the opportunity to carry out creative work on a given topic, getting the necessary information not only from textbooks, but also from other sources. At the same time, students learn to think independently, find and solve problems, drawing for this purpose knowledge from different areas, predicting the results and possible consequences of different solutions, learn to establish cause-effect relationships;
- 3) a project successfully implements various forms of organisation of learning activities, during which students interact with each other and with a teacher whose role changes: instead of a controller, he becomes an equal partner and a consultant;
- 4) in project work, the whole process is focused on a student: here, first of all, his interests, life experience and individual abilities are taken into account;
- 5) individual and collective responsibility of students for specific work within the framework of a project is increased, as each student, working individually or in a microgroup, should present the results of his/her activities to the whole group;
- 6) within the framework of a project, joint work teaches students to bring everything to the end, they must document the results of their work, write an article or a message for a newspaper, collect and process statistical data, make audio and video recording, make an album, collage, wall newspaper and etc.

Psychological and pedagogical foundations of the technology of using the project-based technique in FLT

Foreign language is an active learning subject that has an educational and developing potential. The main goal of learning a foreign language is to improve all components of the communicative foreign language competence, which is the main factor in the implementation of intercultural communication as a whole. The project-based technique as a modern pedagogical technology ensures the successful formation of all components of the communicative foreign language competence and, consequently, the development of a secondary linguistic personality.

If, within the framework of the traditional approach, students have to face difficulties in carrying out tasks that require associations with knowledge previously learned, then in the project-based technique, students are largely free of such difficulties, as in the process of developing the project, a student's own interest, his/her inner motives, desire to show his/her creative abilities, which force to think actively, to reason over a problem, reveal in his memory the extraordinary speech resources that he/she uses in a new situation.

Thus, at the heart of the creative solution of the problem as the leading component of project-based education, there lies not only the knowledge of a foreign language, but also the possession of a large volume of subject knowledge necessary to solve this problem. The process of integration in project-based teaching helps students understand the role of language knowledge, which becomes the main tool for successful mastering of foreign speech activity, helps get cultural models of thinking, formulate the thought strategies and enter into intercultural communication.

Conclusion

The project-based technique is based on the learner-centred approach, which means the reorientation of the whole learning process towards the setting and solution of cognitive-communicative and research tasks the students themselves. This allows us to consider project-based teaching to be one of the most productive and intensive methods that contributes to the achievement of high learning results and the education of personality.

The main provisions of the project-based technique are based on taking into account the individual characteristics of students; on the connection of the idea of a project with real life; on changes in the basic scheme of interaction between a teacher and students; on a significant increase in the level of students' autonomy in dealing with personally considerable problems in the process of active and cognitive mental activity; on a significant increase in the level of internal motivation of students to master a foreign language.

The fulfillment of project tasks and participation in a project allows students to see the practical benefits of learning a foreign language, which results in increased interest in the subject, research work and their use in various foreign language situations, and therefore contributes to the increase in the communicative competence of students, the development of their linguistic personality, high motivation of students.

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Проектная методика обучения иностранному языку

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Аннотация

В последнее время наблюдается общемировая направленность на гуманизацию образования. Данный процесс находит свое выражение в ориентации процесса обучения на развитие личности учащегося. Среди имеющегося многообразия новых педагогических технологий, которые направлены на реализацию личностно ориентированного подхода, активно применяется проектная методика обучения. При использовании данной методики процесс обучения направлен на развитие потребностей и интересов учащихся. Актуальность изучения проектной методики очевидна, так как вопросы повышения качества обученности и уровня воспитанности личности учащегося были и остаются приоритетными в современной методике преподавания иностранного языка. Иностранный язык как учебный предмет обладает большими возможностями для создания условий культурного и личностного становления обучающихся. Социальный заказ общества в области обучения иностранному языку выдвигает задачи развития личности учащихся, усиления гуманистического содержания обучения, более полной реализации воспитательного, образовательного и развивающего потенциала учебного предмета применительно к индивидуальности каждого ученика.

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Педагогическая технология, проектная методика, личностно-ориентированный подход, обучение иностранным языкам, иностранный язык.

Библиография

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