Project method in language learning: Methodology aspects and humanistic approach

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ABSTRACT

The article canvases the methodology aspects of the project method in language learning. It is justified that project technology is one of actual technology encouraging the usage of the gained knowledge and it also ensures the development of students' cognitive activity, reveals their creative potential and help overcoming communication problems. On the basis of project methodology the system of tasks can be introduced into language learning process and carried out by four stages. Moreover, this method reflects the main principles of humanistic approach in teaching as it transfers from the teacher-centered approach to the student-centered one. The emphasis is made on interaction of participants for goal achievement, taking into account personality needs and peculiarities and experience of students. Some project activities and tasks for language learning are presented.

1. Introduction

New values and orientations of education as well as today achievements of science are determining the choice of teaching methods. Teachers prefer active and interactive pedagogical technologies. Projecting technology encourages the development of creative capabilities of a personality taking into account the individual peculiarities of learning process and communication participants, promotes the search of efficient approaches to foreign language teaching. This technology is problem solving of some problem by a student or a group of students. It demands the usage of various methods, facilities of learning and the integration of knowledge, skills from different branches of science, techniques and creativity.

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2. Analysis of recent research

Today the project methodology is being studied by foreign and country's scholars (I. Bim, I. Zymnya, O. Moisyeyeva, E. Polat, T. Sakharova, I. Chechel, L. Fried-Booth, T. Hutchinson, D. Phillips and others). According to numerous researches it was established that project activity is an important component of efficient teaching system and it is non-standard, non-traditional way of learning process organization via active action means (planning, forecasting, analysis, synthesis) aimed at personality-centered approach fulfillment. As a new pedagogical personality-centered technology the project methodology reflects the main principles of humanistic approach in education (Conole 2005).

3. Statement of research objectives

The objectives of the article are analyzing the theoretical-methodological foundations, practice peculiarities of the project method usage, revealing its humanistic potential and determination of method forms and means in teaching foreign languages.

4. Results

The project method is a system of teaching when pupils gain knowledge and skills during planning and carrying out proper tasks which are getting more difficult gradually. It is a complex of search, research, graphic and other kinds of works carried out for the purpose of practical and theoretical solution of important problem (Podobedova 2004).

This method appeared in the 20s of last century in the USA. It was also called "the method of problems" developing within humanistic direction in philosophy and education, in pedagogical thoughts of John Dewey. His follower William Kilpatrick developed "project system of teaching". But they were too fond of this method, as a result it did a lot of harm to the traditional system of education and teachers were disappointed with this method. Nowadays the method has been reinterpreted and it is having "the revival".

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The main goal of this technology is creating conditions for active joint learning activity of students in different learning situations. There each one is responsible not only for his own work result but for the whole team's work result. The project method allows transferring lessons into a discussion or research club with

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solving interesting and practically significant problems. It can be applied both at lessons and long-term activity. It ensures the development of student's cognitive activity encouraged by problem conflict of the known and unknown (Godovanets 2014). Its aim is the learning and understanding process activization as well as mastering new lexicological units, making learning within all students' capacities due to their participation in different projects.

In its basis there is development of students' cognitive activity, skills of unassisted knowledge constructing and orientation in the information space, critical thinking development. It is always oriented to student's self-directed work (individual, group or pair) during a certain time. This method can be combined with group approach to education. It includes the combination of research, search, problem methods that are creative by definition.

Project technologies have some advantages:

- simultaneous integrating self-directed and group activity, opportunity for fulfillment, team work;
- fulfillment of age needs in independent practical activity;
- result assessment and their social importance;
- opportunity to see the own activity results;
- opportunity to use modern technologies by students and teachers during their project work;
- usage of the world network Internet;
- usage of various interaction forms for fulfillment of the pedagogy of cooperation on practice;
- education globalization process aimed at the certain result;
- opportunity for the real long-term integration;
- new opportunities for informal control over learner's achievement level (Kademia 2013).

E. Polat presented the modern typology of project works according to dominating activity kind: research, creative, role-gaming, informative, practice-oriented projects; according to project coordination character: with open, obvious or hidden coordination; by contact character: internal, regional, international; according to project participant number: personal, pair, group; according to duration: short-term and long-term (Polat).

We have to mention that the project method is considered to be the technology of activity-oriented approach fulfillment. In its basis there is a system of linguistic communicative tasks which comprises the structure of research activity of students' projecting.

Emphasis transfer in teaching from the teacher-centered approach to the student-centered one as well as awareness of the necessity of student efforts' support have led to new challenges for a teacher. Awareness rise concerning the self-managed learning will stimulate students to become more independent in their learning. One of the main reasons of this is that "learning can be more efficient when pupils are active during the learning process taking responsibility for their study and making decisions connected with this" (Podobedova 2004).

In particular, for mixed-ability groups the students' independence encouraging in language learning can ensure meeting different needs, expectations and competence gaining by some individual pupils. The need in language learning independence development could be considered as the impulse for long-life learning where each personality makes sensible decisions on their further study direction (Conole 2005). For example, with the purpose of foreign language curriculum mastering the carrying out the project-modules

"Country study", "Business course" requires from students some skills in searching proper information, making a project with conclusions and their personal opinions on the selected topic. This helps to develop communicative competence, independence and activeness of pupils during language communication.

On the basis of project methodology the system of exercises for foreign language teaching is implemented by four stages and it has the following groups of exercises. Planning stage is for project planning and forming lexical, grammar, intonation skills of speech. Implementation stage is for developing the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking, organizing writing data search, filling in application forms, teaching the interview planning and carrying out, arranging the survey making and teaching the report writing. Presentation stage is for teaching the oral presenting projects and arranging the project presenting. Final stage is for control over the formed language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing and for the project assessment (Godovanets 2014).

The examples of project activity can be leaflets designing for new students including articles on various courses or subjects, accommodation description, advice on problem avoidance as well as proposals on entertainment and relaxation. For writing skills development a diary can be proposed; all students have to write at least 400 words per week then submit to a teacher for checking and provide a reviewed and corrected version of a diary at the end of the term. Students may write about anything they want; the majority writes about everyday life, their thoughts, feelings and problems, but some include their own stories and poems. Another option to a diary is an online blog with less volume but more updates.

While performing projects, such as scientific questionnaires, two or more students can be involved. After choosing the theme they gather information from various sources via personal interviews or forms. It is necessary to present a written or an oral report including the following information:

- Introduction: reasons for questionnaires (surveys), what they expected to learn.
- Procedure: Where, when, how, from whom these data were collected.
- Results: Generalization of the data and information taken from different sources and also questionnaires' results.
- Discussion: results' interpretation and feedback.

These kinds of projects can help students realize their creative abilities and overcome some communication problems. For extra-curricular activity pupils can be proposed a project connected with school TV, website development and Drama clubs. In project methodology student also use illustration means, such drawings, collages, plans, maps, diagrams, grids etc. So the communication skills are supported by a variety of means to transfer one or another kind of information.

As this method encourages the learning process individualization, search of optimal combination of theory and practice, students' knowledge and skills actualization, it applies all the best ideas of traditional and modern methodologies in teaching foreign languages:

- the variety is represented by variety of themes, text and tasks types;
- the range of reference when foreign language is used for performing the tasks characterized by the novelty;
- learning with enjoyment which means providing students with opportunities to speak about things interesting for them;

•   demonstrating their creative approach in designing and presenting a project.

We believe that project technologies can be easily integrated into any learning situation since topics and types can be changed according to age, interests, input data and competence level of students. It does not matter how stimulating and rich the learning environment and different activities are, most students are unlikely to learn all the necessary things to achieve success in a class having time limits.

Conclusions

Thus, project method makes possible to individualize the learning process, demonstrate student's independence in planning, organization and control of his activity. The application of project methodology at lessons ensures the support of permanent interest to foreign language learning, deepen and systemize students' knowledge on studied themes. Teachers have to provide students with more opportunities for their knowledge and skills application while interacting with peers. The emphasis should be made on interaction of participants for goal achievement, taking into account personality needs and peculiarities and experience of students. However, it is important to respect the rights and interests of students as personalities concerning their way of learning. Involving students in project making is one of the ways which will help them gaining some confidence in their ability to manage their own learning and become independent.

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