THE USE OF EDUTAINMENT TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO FUTURE TEACHERS

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Abstract

Under modern circumstances, the guidelines and targets of teaching foreign languages have changed significantly. The principles of communication and authenticity are in the leading position today. This trend is becoming increasingly popular, it proves its efficiency in various types of educational establishments. For the successful mastering of a foreign language, it is important to realize its functional purpose, to see the language in action. In order to ensure these trends, various teaching technologies are used, some of them can be of an informal nature. One of such technologies, or even a separate linguodidactic direction, is edutainment. The ideas of edutainment, despite its controversy and presence of opposition, are gaining popularity in teaching foreign languages.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the role, functions and the peculiarities of edutainment technology use in teaching English as a second foreign language in the process of vocational training of future teachers. The authors believe that the specific nature of foreign language teaching provides sufficient capabilities for the implementation of technology. However, there have not been any long-term purposefully organized practical studies devoted to the identification of consistent patterns and capabilities of edutainment in teaching English as a second foreign language to future teachers. Within the frame of the article, the essential characteristics of edutainment technology are presented, its possibilities and functions in teaching foreign languages are defined, various viewpoints on the problem are generalized, major and the most effective variants of edutainment technology in language education are enumerated.

To confirm the stated theoretical positions, the experimental research project was conducted. Its purpose was to study the features and capabilities of edutainment technology in teaching English as a second foreign language in the context of vocational training of future teachers. The most widely spread and effective linguodidactic tools of edutainment technology were integrated into the process of teaching English as a second foreign language. The undertaken work showed that the edutainment technology can be effective in teaching different aspects of English as a second foreign language to future teachers, enabled to make the conclusions about the advantages and disadvantages of edutainment as pedagogical innovation, plan further steps of the research development.

Keywords: teaching English as a second language, vocational training of future foreign language teachers, edutainment technology.

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant problems in teaching foreign languages is the choice of effective methods and techniques. Some teachers come to the conclusion that an ordinary, routine lesson can cause a loss of motivation and interest to language learning. It is impossible to interest students, arise their motivation relying only on old linguodidactic toolkit. Due to this reason, the concept of informal language education is developing intensively. Edutainment is considered to be the basis of informal education. Although this technology is gaining increasing popularity, it has a lot of opponents and possesses by controversial features. Edutainment is a complex phenomenon which presupposes the usage of various informal linguodidactic tools. By means of edutainment the teacher may turn the process of teaching foreign languages into original, absorbing and easy. Nevertheless, the teachers who use edutainment should always compare and contrast its advantages and disadvantages with traditional linguodidactic tools. In this case, the use of edutainment will be rational and effective. The peculiarities of edutainment technology and various aspects of its use are presented in the researches of I.G. Khangeldiyeva, A.S. Klabukov, O.O. D’yakonova, T.V. Sapuh, P.A. Stepichev.

Within the framework of this article, we will reflect the results of the study on the implementation of the technology at the two absolutely different age groups and will summarize the obtained results.
2 METHODOLOGY

In the frame of the research we used theoretical analysis of the works devoted to the problem of edutainment, interrogation and observation. Thus, we came to the conclusion, that the word “edutainment” has no single translation in the Russian language. The main generic components of this concept are “education” and “entertainment”. In general, edutainment is considered as an organization of the learning with elements of entertainment. Initially, elements of this technology were used in the process of specialists’ preparation to work in commercial enterprises.

Nowadays, edutainment is increasingly being used in teaching various subjects. The specific nature of the foreign language teaching provides sufficient capabilities for the implementation of the technology. However, there have not been any long-termed purposefully organized practical studies devoted to the identification of consistent patterns and capabilities of edutainment technology in teaching foreign languages.

I.G. Khangeldiyeva associates edutainment with integration processes and regards it as a set of creative technologies, and also considers it an educational concept, a definite educational philosophy. Edutainment is the form that makes the educational process bright, imaginative and rich. The main goal of the implementation of edutainment is its focus on creating an unforgettable, exciting and joyful learning atmosphere that leads to the effective memorization of the material. Edutainment is a complex technology which includes a set of interactive, multimedia and other means [1].

A.S. Klabukov associates edutainment with gaming technology in those areas where educational games are not traditionally used. The edutainment technology allows to focus on modernity, entertainment, and game approach. Edutainment is aimed at the formation of the student's cognitive interest regardless of his age. This technology involves the use of information and communication technologies [2].

O.O. D’yakonova points out that edutainment is characterized by a reflection of the connection between learning and entertainment. In this case, the student focuses on the learning process, while having entertaining goals. Edutainment helps to make the usual learning process easier and more fun [3].

T.V. Sapuh believes that today there is no single interpretation of the concept. The relevance of the use of this educational tool is associated with the preferences of the modern generation of students to assimilate information in a different format than in the past. The most common way of perceiving educational information today is non-linear, i.e. the learner is put in the center of the educational process [4].

Minding the presented points of view, we can conclude that edutainment is, on the one hand, a modern educational concept, on the other - an integrated technology combining various means, including those that are not directly didactic. Edutainment is focused on creating a pedagogically comfortable space where traditional approaches are organically combined with informal ones, and entertainment is positioned as one of the foundations of the learning process. Edutainment tools allow to make a lesson more emotionally colored through presenting difficult topics in an unusual form as well as generating interest in various language aspects.

To date, the following components of technology can be used in teaching a foreign language:

1. gaming technology (various types of linguistic educational games);
2. information and communication tools (interactive posters, multimedia presentations, network resources, computer tutorials, web quests, podcasts, etc.);
3. dramatization;
4. music (musical pieces, chants);
5. audiovisual tools (animated educational videos, video clips).

To confirm and clarify the stated theoretical positions, we have conducted the experimental research project. Its purpose was to study the features and capabilities of edutainment technology in teaching a foreign language in primary school as well as to adults. Two teachers of English, four student interns, ten students of Shadrinsk State Pedagogical University studying English as a second specialty, fifty school pupils of Shadrinsk, Kurgan region, took part in the project.
3 RESULTS

The use of edutainment tools at the primary stage was carried out systematically and intensively in the course of teaching practice in grades 2–4. The following tools were selected for integration into the educational process:

1. linguodidactic games (Phonetic Battle, Offer Designer, Word Hill by PA Stepichev, What am I?)
2. dramatization (dramatization of situational micro-dialogues on the topics studied);
3. audiovisual, information and communication tools (interactive vocabulary posters, network resources, animation tutorials, etc.).

A particular attention should be paid to the Surprise Pedagogy. This scientific field was worked out and presented by P.A. Stepichev. According to the scholar, linguodidactic tools should cause the reaction of surprise and encourage the students to language learning. In the case of surprise a positive motivation reaction arises. Surprise is considered to be one of the major stimuli of successful language acquisition. The teacher may surprise by means of the following sources:

1. surprise by means of the fact,
2. surprise by means of the method,
3. surprise by means of a learning environment [5].

All the tools of edutainment technology were ranked by the studied topics, their depository was compiled. Before the start of the use of the technology, the students undergoing teaching practice organized the included observation, where the most common problems that younger students face at the beginning of learning a foreign language were identified. Next, several groups began to systematically and intensively use the edutainment tools, in others the training was carried out in the traditional way. The experimental research project was carried out within two months. At the end of the study the groups were tested for the knowledge of the studied material.

In the course of the experiment, some definite conclusions were made about efficiency of the edutainment technology in the process of teaching a foreign language to primary schoolchildren. Edutainment tools improve the concentration of students’ attention - they become more focused on what they are interested in. With an efficient integration of tools, the emotional climate of a foreign language lesson is improved, subject-subject relations are established, interest in learning a language is manifested to a greater extent.

The use of such a component of edutainment as gaming technology has a positive effect on the formation of grammatical and lexical skills. The mechanisms of a game allow not only to understand the grammatical phenomenon in its original form, but also to consolidate its use in speech. The games evoked only a positive response from the students. The first experience was somewhat unusual, however, in the future, the schoolchildren took an active part in them. Obviously, playing a game liberates primary schoolchildren, removes possible communication barriers, and allows them to consolidate the studied material.

Dramatization is another effective means of edutainment. At the initial stage of training, it is advisable to stage situational micro-dialogues on the topics studied. Primary schoolchildren practice lexical units, foreign language speech patterns, imitate foreign language communication. If it was possible, we supplied stage props, that allowed to make this activity more memorable and effective.

The implementation of edutainment technology in teaching a foreign language to adults was systematically carried out in 3–4 courses (English as a second specialty). It should be noted that in both cases the experimental research was conducted at the very beginning of learning a foreign language. Despite the fact that students are motivated to study a foreign language, they also make mistakes and face difficulties traditionally encountered at the beginning of mastering a foreign language. At this age stage, we used similar means of education as indicated above. The games on irregular verbs formation, reading rules, some verb tenses were systematically used. In the process of training phonetic skills, song material and chants were used. Authentic podcasts were used to form students’ listening skills. In the second year of study we developed a series of web quests focused on the implementation of the project method. Information and communication technologies were introduced to practice linguistic and sociocultural realities.

The range of educational tools in teaching a foreign language to adults is wider, almost unlimited. Here, it is advisable to use all innovative means of edutainment, while getting the future teachers acquainted
with this methodological toolkit. The integration of the technology into the teaching of a foreign language at this age stage showed an improvement in the results, as compared with traditional education. The experimental research and the analysis of conducted tests showed that the students memorized lexical units and grammatical structures better, moreover, they reproduced them in speech more confidently.

4 CONCLUSIONS

As a general conclusion, we note that the edutainment technology is a productive tool of foreign language teaching at various stages and has undeniable educational merit. When integrating edutainment into the learning environment it is necessary to adhere to the logic of the principles of rationality and consistency. Educational tools should be organically combine with traditional training, otherwise, the effectiveness of training will be lost. In the course of further work, the following directions need to be developed: a system for teaching a foreign language on the basis of the edutainment technology, as well as authorial information and communication set of edutainment tools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study was carried out with the financial support of the intra-university grant of Shadrinsk State Pedagogical University "Theory and practice of organizing innovative educational linguistic associations for students of a school in a university".

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