COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE PRACTICAL CLASSES AT A NONLINGUISTIC HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract
The article deals with the humanistic approach, which in contrast to the traditional approach is based on the subject-subject relations between teachers and students, the emphasis is on the individual work of students in small groups, where a weak learner can ask stronger learners if something is not clear. In such groups students learn together and help each other.

Cooperative learning in small groups is presented in the article.

The basic principles of pedagogics on which the technologies of cooperation are based are given.

The article highlights different variants for cooperative learning, i.e. Student Team Learning, Student-Teams-Achievement Divisions, Teams-Games-Tournament, Team Assisted Individualization, Jigsaw, Learning Together, etc.

The article gives examples of teaching a foreign language at a university on the basis of the cooperative learning method and gives its different variants of an active usage.

Cooperative learning and continuous interaction with a teacher and the teamwork with the students in teaching a foreign language, which occurs mainly in small groups, brings positive results, allows students to express their opinions, develops oral communication skills in the language that is learning, increases the activity of students.

Keywords: a humanistic approach, subject-subject relations, a cooperation, an interaction, a communication, cooperative learning.

1 INTRODUCTION
It is essential to use new ways of looking at the state and development of the teaching and education process in educational institutions at the current stage of the Russian society development that involves democratization, accumulation of new knowledge in different areas of science and technology, production processes' improvement, impetuous informatization of society in all spheres of social life [1]. The feature of the present stage of the economic, social and political development of our country is, above all, the new social requirements for the development of each person and training of a highly qualified specialist. Nowadays it is especially important to discuss the problems of training, upbringing, development and interactions of an active person who can think and act outside the box by themselves and creatively, who has their own judgment and is able to take initiative and responsibility. That is why the universal attention of the pedagogical community to improving the integral pedagogical process and related social institutions is consequential.

The importance of education at the current stage of the Russian development is defined by the objectives of its transition to a democratic and law-based state, market economy, the necessity to overcome the threats of falling behind the global trends of economic and social development. It means that the main objective of the Russian educational policy is providing the modern quality education based on preservation of its fundamental nature and meeting the current and prospective requirements of a person, society and state. It is important for a highly qualified specialist not only to gain certain knowledge in a university but also to develop their personality, cognitive and creative skills, independence, to master key competencies that can be useful for the professional activity.

Due to the modernization of the individual development process in the current context teachers and students' cooperation is highly influential and can be regarded as a special form of democratization and humanization of their relations and organization of the teaching and learning process, which requires activity and cooperation of both parties and also ascertainment of the activity degree. Cooperation always concerns the position of a teacher in connection with their student, which is
usually defined as partnership, fellowship in the integral pedagogical process. Therefore cooperation implies the increased importance of interaction in the educational process and establishment of business relations based on trust, mutual help and support [2].

The humanistic approach is based rather on subject-subject relations (a teacher and a student are subjects) than on object-object relations (a teacher is a subject, a student is an object) as opposed to a traditional approach (where every student is concerned only with their own studies). The humanistic approach revolves around independent work of a student in small groups that provides with the help those who need it for their studies. Students in such groups learn together and help each other.

2 METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the scientific sources shows that, at present, in university teachers’ practical activities, targeted pedagogical attitudes, the meaning of which is to form a competence developed creative personality of future specialists, become integrative in nature and contribute to the effective and economical use of pedagogical tools in achieving their objectives.

When organizing the integral pedagogical process at a higher education institution (students’ training and upbringing) on the basis of cooperation and interaction, we relied on a set of the following methodological approaches: humanistic, cultural, axiological, competency-based, communicative, person-centered, system-activity, professional, integrative. The main principles of the research are humanization, creativity, unity of theory and practice, integration, continuity.

The main research methods are: a retrospective analysis and literature review, an observation, a questioning, an interviewing, designing, modeling, monitoring, an experiment.

3 RESULTS

Cooperative learning, learning in small groups was used in pedagogics quite a long time ago. That is an essential part of a pragmatic approach to education in philosophy of D. Dewey (1970) and his project method. Learning in small groups was used in West Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Australia, Israel, Japan. But the main ideology of cooperative learning was developed by three groups of American teacher - from John Hopkins University (R. Slavin), from University of Minnesota (Roger Johnson and David Johnson) and from California (J. Arnson).

Needless to say since then the ideas of cooperative learning have developed with the help of a number of teachers from many countries as the idea of cooperative learning is inherently humanistic and thus pedagogically correct in spite of its differences in various countries. In our country the ideas of cooperation and interaction found its place in humanistic pedagogical area, also known as pedagogics of cooperation.

The main principles of cooperative techniques, as G.K. Selevko regards them, are:

- students’ groups are formed by a teacher before the class starts in accordance with psychological compatibility. There should be above-average, average and below-average students (in case there are only three student in the group), girls and boys;
- there is only one task for the whole group but the responsibilities should be split among all students (which is usually done by the students themselves, however in some cases the teacher can give recommendations);
- the results of the group are to be measured (the whole group gets a mark); sometimes it is important to take into account not only the group’s knowledge but also the students’ efforts (they all have their own limits);
- the teacher decides which student would present the results of the group work. In some cases it can be the below-average student. If this student is able to present those results, answer questions of other groups then it means that the goal was achieved and the task was successfully completed since the goal of any task is not formal implementation (correct or incorrect solution) but mastering the subject by every student of the group [3, pg. 402].

E.S. Polat distinguished different versions of cooperative learning [4]. The first one is the Student Team Learning method which pays a lot of attention to team goals and team success that can be achieved only through independent work of every member of the group (team) with constant
interactions with other members of the group while working on the topic / problem / matter in question. Thus, the object of every student is not only to do something together but to learn something together and to master the required knowledge and skills while also letting the team know about everyone’s success. The whole group is interested in every member learning educational information since the success of the group is dependent on every student’s effort and cooperation in finding solution to the problem in question.

Student Team Learning has three main principles:

- **team rewards** – teams (groups) get an aggregate grade, a certificate, an insignia, a praise or any other assessment of their mutual activity. To get it they need to complete one group task. All the groups do not compete with each other since they have their own limits and time required to complete the task;

- **individual (personal) responsibility** of every student means that success or failure of the group depends on the actions of every member. It stimulates every student to keep track of everyone’s success and to help all the members in learning the subject in a way that makes everyone feel like an expert in the matter;

- **equal opportunities for achieving success** mean that every student gets points for the group by improving personal results. Their own results from the past are compared with the results from the present other than the results of other members of the groups. It gives above-average, average and below-average student equal opportunities of acquiring points for their groups since the last efforts in getting better results for a quiz, credit, exam bring an equal number of points for their group which gives them the opportunity to feel that they are a competent member of the team and stimulates the aspiration to step up their personal limits.

Some of the versions of cooperative learning are Student-Teams - Achievement Divisions – STAD and Teams-Games-Tournament – TGT). The first one requires students to be split into groups of four (with different levels of training, girls and boys). A teacher explains the new information and after that offers students in groups to try and sort it out, learn all the details. That means that the teacher forms an estimated base of actions (for every student). Each group is given a certain task and required support. The tasks are carried out either in parts (every student completes their own part) or in a sequence (the next task is assigned to the next student, starting from the above-average or below-average student). Every student explains their own task which is controlled by the whole group. When each group is done the teacher hands out a test to check whether the students understand the new information. The students complete the test on their own, not in groups. And the teacher differentiates the complexity of the tests for the students with different levels of training. The marks for tests are to be summed up and revealed to the group. It doesn’t make the above-average and below-average students compete, but the students carrying out their own tasks compete with themselves and their previous results. Thus, both kinds of students can get the same amount of points for their group. This activity can be used for many subjects from mathematics to language courses. It is efficient for every student to learn new information.

One of the STAD versions is Team Assisted Individualization – TAI. Students are given their personal tasks with accordance to the previous tests and learn at their own pace. Teams can also work on different projects. The members of the team help each other out with their personal tasks and make an entry with every member’s success in a special journal. The students take their personal final tests outside the group and certain members of the group grade the tests. Every week the teacher registers the number of topics, program and lesson plan tasks completed by each group, the degree of success in a class and at home (homework) highlighting the best results of the groups. Since the students themselves control new information learning by every member the teacher gets more time to give individual recommendations and help the groups or a student in need.

One type of this kind of organizing group activity is Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT). As in the previous example a teacher explains new information, organizes group activity in order to give directions but instead of tests he offers weekly tournaments for teams. There should be “tournament tables” with three students of the same level for each table. The tasks are also of different difficulty levels. The winner of each table gets the same amount of points for the teams regardless of the difficulty level. It allows below-average students compete with each other with the same opportunities to bring success to their team. The team with the highest points is called the winner of the tournament with a fitting reward.
Another approach to Cooperative Learning was designed by professor Elliot Aronson in 1978 and was called Jigsaw. In the practice of pedagogics this approach is known as just “Saw”. Students are split into groups of 4-6 people to work with the information given in fragments (logical or notional units). For instance the topic “Biography of an outstanding scientist” can be divided into – early life; first achievements; later years; contribution to history.

Every member of the group finds the information on their unit. Then the students from different groups and studying the same topic hold a meeting and exchange the information they found as the experts of the matter. That is called “the experts’ meeting”. After that they return to their groups and share the new information they have learnt with their group mates. They in their turn do the same with their units (like “teeth of the saw”). Since the only way to learn the information of every unit and the biography of the scientist is to carefully listen to members of the team and to take notes, the teacher isn’t required to do any more additional efforts. The students are interested in good preparations of their partners as it affects their final mark. The results may be presented either by every student or by the whole group. At the final stage the teacher can ask any student any question on the topic.

In 1986 R. Slavin developed a modification of the method – Jigsaw-2 which required students to be the groups of 4-5 people. Instead of dividing topic into fragments for certain students the whole team worked on the topic together (for example read the whole biography). But every member of the group was assigned with a part of the topic to be thoroughly studied, so the student became an expert of that part. “The experts meetings” were still to be held. At the end of the cycle the students were tested and graded. The results were summed up. The team with more points was rewarded.

There is also one more kind of cooperative learning – Learning Together designed by David Johnson and Roger Johnson from University of Minnesota in 1987. Students are supposed to be divided into the groups of the same levels with 3-5 people. Every group gets a task that is a part of a broad topic which the rest of the class studies too. Cooperation within the groups and among all groups overall helps the students to learn the topic. The main principles are rewards for the whole group, an individual approach, equal opportunities.

The group rewards depend on the success of every member. The developers of the method think that a teacher should pay a lot of attention to forming groups (in accordance with the individual and psychological features of every member) and giving objectives to a certain member of the group. Within the group members themselves assign tasks to each other in order to:

- complete the main task (every member then has a subtask);
- track the completion;
- monitor the activity of every member of the group in achieving main objective and communication culture within the group.

Thus, from the outset, the group has, as it were, a dual task: on the one hand, the academic one is the achievement of some cognitive, creative goal, and on the other, social or socio-psychological (the implementation of a specific culture of communication during the performance of the task). Both are equally important. The teacher also necessarily monitors not only the success of the academic assignment by groups of students, but also the way they communicate with each other, the way they provide the necessary help to each other [6].

We think that teaching a foreign language will be more effective when using cooperative learning in foreign language practical classes at a nonlinguistic high school. The method of “learning in cooperation” and its various options can be actively used. A teacher may vary this method depending on the purpose of the lesson. Let us consider an example of an English class at the faculty of computer science at Ryazan state radio engineering university named after V.F. Utkin. The theme was devoted to computer mice “Computer Mice”. The students were divided into micro groups, and each micro group received homework – to prepare reports on the proposed topic, for example, about the first person who started using a computer mouse (“Bill English”), about the evolution of a computer mouse (“Operating a Mechanical Mouse”, “Optical Mouse”, “Laser Mouse”), about accessories, for example, about a mouse pad for a computer mouse (“Mouse pad”), etc. Also, the groups were given the task to prepare presentations on the proposed topic in Microsoft Office PowerPoint or create videos and voice them in English. The students prepared their reports and presentations independently, brought different types of computer mice. At the lesson they presented their reports, presentations, video materials, demonstrated computer mice. Then the students got the text to read and translate “Who Invented the Computer Mouse?” (“Who Invented the Computer Mouse?”). Then it was proposed to answer questions, find out the correctness or falsity of the proposed answer options.
During the lesson, the students learned a lot of new reports from their fellow students from other groups, actively asked questions and accordingly received more points at the end of the lesson [7].

Working with dialogues in English also requires the cooperation of not only the partners in the dialogue, but also the teacher who checks the learning material, and the students who listen attentively to their colleagues, appreciate the listened dialogues. The work on the dialogues shows not only interaction, but also respect for their group mates, the ability to listen to their fellow students, to find and correct a mistake, if there is one.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In the article we discussed the main topic, such as cooperative learning in small groups. The article highlights different variants for cooperative learning, i.e. Student Team Learning, Student-Teams-Achievement Divisions, Teams-Games-Tournament, Team Assisted Individualization, Jigsaw, Learning Together, etc.

The article gives examples of teaching a foreign language at a nonlinguistic university on the basis of the cooperative learning method and gives its different variants of an active usage.

Currently, when teaching a foreign language at a higher educational institution, the teaching method in cooperation and its various options can be actively used. A teacher may vary this method depending on the purpose of the lesson.

Thus, in our opinion, learning in cooperation and constant interaction with a teacher and teamwork with their colleagues in teaching a foreign language, which occurs mainly in small groups, brings positive results, allows students to express their opinions, develops oral communication skills in the studied language, increases the activity of students. Hence, the main idea of learning in cooperation is to study together, and not just do something together - relevant in modern conditions when learning a foreign language.

REFERENCES


