

Interactive-Communicative Approach in the Paradigm of Engineering Personnel Training

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Abstract— Interactive-communicative approach to Russian language training of future foreign engineers has been described in the paper. The interactive teaching technologies used by the authors at the Russian language classes of the pre-university foreign students training course aiming at the increase of the students' cognition process effectiveness have been presented. It is also shown that the introduction of the latest interactive computer technologies, such as modern social networks and instant messengers significantly increase the time of communication between a teacher and a trainee, thus, allowing the former to keep in touch with students at extracurricular time. The examples of some language games based on interactive computer technologies are given.

Keywords— interactive-communicative approach, Russian as a foreign language, engineering personnel training, language games

I. INTRODUCTION

The teaching of a foreign language is one of the most important components of the training program for qualified personnel. Language not only allows to communicate with representatives of a different culture, but also opens up opportunities for acquiring new professional knowledge through the analysis of foreign scientific literature.

One of the promising tasks of the modern Russian scientific community is the dissemination of the achievements of Russian science around the world, as well as international cooperation in various scientific fields. Increase in Russian scientific and educational community's activity on the world market has given rise to a number of foreign students in Russian universities and consequently to the emergence of a large number of preparatory departments and faculties designed to help foreigners adapt to a new environment and prepare them for their further training in Russian universities. Therefore, the urgency of teaching Russian to foreign students interested in Russian education and science is more and more growing. To follow this trend at Moscow Technological University a preparatory department for foreign citizens has been created with the purpose of teaching Russian language to foreign future engineering students as well as training them such special subjects as Mathematics, Physics and Computer Science in Russian.

With the increase in the number of foreign students and their involvement in the Russian educational process, there is

a growing need for developing new approaches to the Russian language training of future professionals, which provide foreigners with knowledge, skills and abilities that allow them to get higher education in Russian language in the future and communicate with both Russian students and university teachers.

In this regard, the communicative technology of teaching Russian language as a foreign one is gaining in popularity. It allows a teacher to recreate various communication situations in the context of a training session, teach students specific lexical and grammatical material through communicative exercises [1], [2].

One of the most important teacher's concerns is to acquaint foreign students both with the situations that are typical for Russian culture and peculiarities of speech response to each specific situation [3], [4]. For successful construction of statements in the Russian language a student must learn to understand the situation and evaluate his own reaction from the standpoint of the native speaker. It is important to know that the same content might be represented by various formal means, the choice of which is largely caused by the situation [5, p.54].

To master lexical and grammatical features of the Russian language and norms of speech etiquette successfully for everyday and professional communication it is necessary to use in the teaching process the integrated interactive-communicative approach, which is based on students' involvement in the educational process and their direct and indirect interaction inside and outside the university. [6].

This approach assumes a paradigm for organizing the educational process with the use of game technologies to enhance students' cognitive process effectiveness [7]. Thanks to the interactive organization of the teaching process, students are able to apply the knowledge gained through different kinds of natural communicative situations or the ones simulated. During the educational process a teacher creates the environment in which the dominating role of any participant is excluded. This approach helps create the atmosphere of ease, goodwill and mutual support, that allows students to acquire new material better. In addition, aspiration to cooperate in learning process enhances motivation to cognitive activity [8], [9].

2. METHODS, APPROACHES AND PRINCIPLES

The interactive-communicative approach to teaching the Russian language was used by us in the pre-university course for foreign citizens of the Moscow Technological University with the aim of forming the communicative competence of future engineering personnel.

Here we will demonstrate the principle of the interactive-communicative approach implementation using the example of technologies for teaching the grammar of the Russian language.

Grammar training is normally based on two main principles: —from simple to complex” and —the necessity and sufficiency of particular grammatical constructions in speech”. As noted by T.V. Savchenko, O.V. Sineva, T.A. Shorina, the main task of any stage of education is the development of skills and abilities on strictly limited linguistic (grammar) material. Therefore, the concept of a grammar minimum plays an important role in the Russian as a foreign language methodology [10]. This approach means that during the lesson only the grammar material that is sufficient for communication on a particular lexical topic (family, work, health, appearance, etc.) is studied. One lesson should include no more than one grammar topic. The redundancy of the grammar material in the lesson does not allow the student to master each of the new grammar constructions, but only confuses the learners and weakens their motivation. Excessively large amount of grammar constructions can be a consequence of the teacher's aspiration to explain all the grammar difficulties that might arise during the lesson or free communication. In this case, in order to prevent oversaturation of the lesson with grammar material, the teacher should, whenever possible, avoid grammar constructions that are incomprehensible to students. If new unplanned grammar appears in the teacher's or students' speech, it shouldn't be explained immediately. It is enough to give students the opportunity to memorize a statement or a fragment of it, just as stable combinations.

An interactive communicative approach to teaching grammar presupposes a visual demonstration of the situations where a particular grammar construction can be used, as well as the artificial creation of communication situations in the lesson, in which students will be forced to use the grammar that is being studied. [11], [12], [13], [14]. For example, when studying the prepositional case in the meaning of a place, in the situations created foreign students should answer questions about the location of various subjects. Such situations can be created both by the teacher (in the form of a quiz) and by the students themselves (in the form of an educational dialogue). As A. Akishina and O. Kagan [15] note, a common mistake is the work on language competence without the reliance on communication. Working on grammar, the teacher does not develop three competences (linguistic, verbal, communicative), but usually stops at linguistic or, less often, speech competence, without leading students into communication. This approach leads to the appearance of a large number of mistakes in the students, which the teacher estimates as ignorance of the material. Instead of changing the direction of learning for communication, an inexperienced teacher again begins to explain and train the phenomenon at

the language level, which does not lead to positive results. —Knowledge of a foreign language as a system of words and grammar forms is not enough. This is not the goal of learning, but an intermediate link leading to verbal communication. Speech communication is the ability to perform many speech acts in various types of speech activity” [15, p. 25].

Let us suggest some communication activities for mastering Russian grammar, which we used to teach the students at the pre-university training course.

Grammar topic: It is + N1 and Pron. + N1.

To master this grammar construction, a special question is introduced: —What is it? / Who is it? / Who is he/she?”.

1. For each object in the classroom, a card with the name of the object is stuck. Students ask each other about the names of objects and answer questions, moving around the class and reading what is written on the card.

2. Students learn the names of fruits and vegetables (using a visual method: pictures, photographs, plastic figures of products). Then the group is divided into two teams. The teacher alternately displays cards (photographs) with different kinds of food on them, asking the question —What is this?”. Each team writes a response on a separate paper using the construction «It's + N1». The team with more correct answers wins.

3. Each student brings a photo of his family or friends (there must be at least 4 people in the photo). The students are divided into pairs, then ask each other questions about the people in the photo. To control the correctness of the exercise, the teacher asks each student to describe the partner's photo. This activity is useful after studying the lexical topics "Family" and "Profession".

Grammar topic: Verb conjugation

1. During this activity students watch a small video clip (maybe a fragment from a film or a cartoon film) with several characters. The teacher stops the video every time the action of the characters changes, and asks the question —What is he / she doing?”, —What are they doing?”. Students have to describe the action: —He is writing”, —He is watching TV”, —They are speaking”. At the same time, students do not need to understand the whole content of the video conversations. The teacher needs to draw foreign students' attention only to the action taking place on the screen.

2. Students are asked to describe their own daily activities: —I get up, get dressed, wash, eat breakfast, go to university. Here we learn, talk, write, read, play, listen, and have lunch. Then I go home, study, walk, have dinner, sleep”. To concentrate students on this activity, you can ask them to talk about each other's actions.

3. One student shows different actions, the other students describe these actions: —He is running. He is reading. He is writing. He is standing”.

Grammar topic: The prepositional case (meaning of place)

For the first acquaintance with this grammar point the question —Where?” is implemented.

1. The teacher shows the students a picture with an image of an interior and asks them about the location of different objects (the objects in the classroom can also be described).

2. Students are divided into pairs, each of which makes up a dialogue about the places where students are taking different actions: –Where are you living?"; –Where do you normally sleep?"; –Where are you studying?";

3. Students take turns in guessing each other's location using the question –Where?" / "Where is it?";

Grammar topic: the prepositional case used after preposition "about"

1. Students talk about each other, starting with the phrase –I believe he's thinking about ..., dreaming of ..., writing letters about ..., loves to read about ..., likes to talk / talk about ...". Then the students say, correctly or incorrectly, they were told by other students: –I believe he is thinking about work. - –No, I'm thinking about the family".

2. The teacher invites students to discuss the following questions, using the target construction:

- What do people think little / much about?
- What do students dream about?
- What do children / adults usually read about?
- What do politicians / economists / artists care about?
- What do women / men talk about? etc.

Grammar topic: Verbs of motion with prefixes

1. The teacher asks the students to tell where they were in Moscow and how to get there from the university / hostel / any other place (for example, from some metro stations).

2. Students make up a story based on pictures (finished or drawn in the lesson) using verbs of motion with prefixes.

3. Students are given a map of one of the Moscow's districts. The teacher circles the object and the starting point on the map. Students should describe the shortest and longest routes from the starting point to the object.

4. Students work with the map. One of the students sets the object and explains how to get to it from the starting point. The rest of the students guess the name of the object.

5. Students draw a map of one of the parts of their hometown or any imaginary place, then, in pairs, they make up dialogues, the essence of which is to explain the route on the maps drawn.

6. The teacher goes with the students on an excursion. During the excursion, they comment on their actions using the verbs of motion.

Grammar topic: The comparative adjectives

1. The teacher draws two figures on the blackboard (people, animals, objects). The students in turn refer to the difference of figures. A student who cannot name a difference is out of the game.

2. Students talk about their families by comparing family members to each other: –I have a brother. His name is Tom. He is younger than me. I'm older than he. I'm taller than Tom. Tom is shorter than me. Tom learns better, but I study longer".

3. Students compare the life of the last century with modern life (life in different cities, countries, districts of the city):" Before, life was cheaper, slower, more interesting. Now life is more expensive, faster, more boring".

Grammar topic: Imperative forms

1. Students give advice to each other using the form of the imperative: –John, study more, go to bed early, get up early, do not be late!"

2. The teacher asks one of the students to leave the classroom, then he hides an object and asks the remaining students to make a long route to it. After that the absent student enters the classroom and receives instructions from the students on how to find the object: –Go straight, turn right, go to the board, turn left, go to the desk, sit on the table, bend over, look for the object on the floor".

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interactive-communicative approach is implemented through the use of interactive computer technologies (e-learning programs, distance learning courses, electronic dictionaries of a communicative orientation) [16], [17], [18], [19], as well as the gaming ones, based on recreating artificial communicative environment [20], [21].

The latest interactive computer technologies, such as modern social networks and instant messengers, significantly increase the time of communication and allow the teacher to stay in touch with the students at extra-curricular time. The advantage of such technologies lies in a teacher's ability to control the written conversational speech of students, creating a relaxed communication environment, where each student can interact with the teacher and other students when and where it is convenient for him. At the same time, students have enough time to translate difficult words and phrases, while in oral communication the slowing down of the communication process often leads to a loss of interlocutors' interest in the subject of the conversation and, as a consequence, the emergence of a psychological barrier.

During pre-university training of the future Russian universities' foreign students, we created several interactive virtual groups in the Whatsapp messenger in accordance to the level of Russian language proficiency. The groups were created to solve various organizational issues, but later it turned out that such interactive technologies were an excellent educational platform to increase students' motivation for both verbal and non-verbal interaction. The nature of informal communication allows students to show their own initiative in choosing a different kind of communicative activity. Students have the opportunity to specify the topic of the conversation, exchange educational material (especially multimedia), play linguistic games, etc. The role of the teacher is to maintain a favorable communicative atmosphere and correct mistakes made by students. Moreover, the teacher is also active in creating new topics for conversation or language games.

Here are the examples of some language games we usually play using interactive computer technologies:

- –Playing words". This is one of the easiest ways to activate the vocabulary of students. The essence of

the game is to write a word that begins with a specific letter. This game is effective in groups with elementary level of the language, when compiling a coherent text causes some difficulties. At advanced level, wordplay can be expanded by imposing a thematic or grammar restriction on the vocabulary used.

- “*What do I see?*” This game is aimed at the accusative case of nouns and adjectives training. Students are encouraged to describe the picture or photo using the “*see + N4*” construction.
- “*Let's tell the story*”. The game is designed to train skills of compiling a coherent text. Using voice messages, students alternately exchange statements, jointly composing a story about something. When the story is composed, students write it from memory. The winner is the student who did not make mistakes in his text. The teacher can also invite students to make up a story on a specific topic / using specific words and phrases / certain grammatical constructions.
- “*Guess where I am*”. The game is aimed at activating the vocabulary, training the plural form of nouns and revising the prepositional case. Students describe the objects that are around them, and their positions in space as well. The rest of the participants must guess the location of the student. For example: “*I'm sitting next to the chairs, tables, board. Where am I?*” – “*In the classroom*”.

The survey shows that after the implementation of interactive-communicative approach for training Russian as a foreign language 21 out of 25 students admitted that they had become more confident in constructing sentences using target words and relevant grammar, creating coherent texts and communicating with native speakers. In fact, the interactive-communicative approach helps solve not only psychological problems but also significantly improves the students' grammar potential. The latest grammar test showed that students had made 23% less mistakes than before being involved in the gaming activity which is an integral part of the interactive-communicative approach.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper describes a few examples of the application of the interactive-communicative approach to teaching Russian as a foreign language. In this context the authors may state that the training possibilities of the approach specified are actually unlimited.

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