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O. M. SERNIAK

COOPERATIVE LEARNING AS AN ENVIRONMENT FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The article concentrates on ways of providing opportunities for meaningful interaction in foreign language classroom settings. The investigation deals with the analysis of cooperative learning as an environment for foreign language acquisition at a university level. The article explores several methods and activities that are for most part compatible with an interactional approach. Special techniques of implementation cooperative learning activities in foreign language classroom settings are offered.

Keywords: *cooperative learning, foreign language acquisition, cooperative learning activities, communicative approach, group work.*

O. M. СЕРНЯК

КОЛЕКТИВНА НАВЧАЛЬНО-ПІЗНАВАЛЬНА ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ ЯК ЕФЕКТИВНИЙ ЧИННИК УСПІШНОГО ОПАНУВАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЮ МОВОЮ

Обґрунтовано важливість забезпечення умов для практичної взаємодії на занятті з іноземної мови. Проаналізовано використання колективної навчально-пізнавальної діяльності як важливого чинника успішного опанування іноземною мовою. Висвітлено практичний досвід використання колективних форм роботи, найбільш властивих інтерактивному підходу до вивчення іноземних мов. Запропоновано спеціальні методики впровадження колективної навчально-пізнавальної діяльності у практику навчання іноземної мови у педагогічному вищому навчальному закладі.

Ключові слова: *колективна навчально-пізнавальна діяльність студентів, опанування іноземною мовою, колективні форми роботи, комунікативний підхід, групова* робота**.**

O. M. СЕРНЯК

КОЛЛЕКТИВНАЯ УЧЕБНО-ПОЗНАВАТЕЛЬНАЯ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ КАК ЭФФЕКТИВНЫЙ ФАКТОР УСПЕШНОГО ОВЛАДЕНИЯ ИНОСТРАННЫМ ЯЗЫКОМ

Обоснована значимость обеспечения условий для практического взаимодействия на занятии по иностранному языку. Проанализировано использование коллективной учебно-познавательной деятельности как эффективного фактора успешного овладения иностранным языком. Продемонстрирован практический опыт применения коллективных форм работы, наиболее сочетаемых с интерактивным подходом к изучению иностранных языков. Предложены специальные методики внедрения коллективной учебно-познавательной деятельности в практику преподавания иностранных языков в высшем учебном заведении.

Ключевые слова: *коллективная учебно-познавательная деятельность, овладение иностранным языком, коллективные формы работы, коммуникативный подход, групповая работа.*

Foreign language acquisition has always been very complex. A frequent lament which is still heard among many former foreign language learners across many cultures is that they never really learned the languages they studied even though they spent several years in the classroom.

This common complaint leads to reassessment of the theories and methods popular during the last twenty or thirty years. Several theoretical concepts are currently under consideration by linguists

and methodologists attempting to determine what direction we should take to be effective foreign language teachers.

It should be noted that methods of foreign language teaching have varied for years. A number of different approaches have been suggested by different scholars. There is a solid theoretical foundation for an international approach to foreign language teaching with implications for the classroom. The variety of methods used has included grammar-translation, audiolingualism, and direct method, cognitive, interactive and communicative approaches.

The goal of grammar-translation method is to produce students who can read and write in the target language by teaching them rules and applications with little attempt to communicate orally in the target language.

Audiolingualism, developed to enhance grammar-translation, focused on listening and speaking skills in precedence over reading and writing skills with a lot of attention paid on correct pronunciation but lacking the use of creative language.

Cognitive approach presupposes subskills in listening, speaking, reading and writing needed to be mastered before the student could participate in real communication activities. Creative language is used at higher levels during the practice but a great deal of time is devoted to temporally related but often unmotivated (contextually unjustified) discourse**.**

The direct method known today as «Berlitz» makes an effort to immerse students in the target language through teacher's monologues, formal questions and answers and direct repetition in the input. Although the discourse was often structured temporally and motivated logically, the method fell short of being optimal in that the topic for discussion was often the grammar itself [15, p. 10–12].

Chomsky's basic linguistic model distinguishes two aspects of language: competence (the underlying knowledge of the grammatical system) and performance (the use of that knowledge to communicate). The scholar was concerned that patterned drill, with its endless, often mindless repetition and memorization of dialogue that more often is far removed from anything real, should be replaced by a more natural kind of activity. He claimed that the target language should be allowed to grow and develop within a person when he or she is placed in an appropriate environment [5, p. 36].

Adherents of the communicative approaches claim that the most effective methods will be those that involve the whole learner in the experience of language as a network of relations between people, things and events [4, p. 14].

F. Norman claims that programs that involve the students in real communication about interesting, relevant subject matter in low-anxiety environments appear to be the most effective avenues to acquisition in the classroom [13, p. 3].

B. Kumardivelu characterizes an effective communicative approach as being one in which a shared knowledge is explored and modified as a result. Learning a language involves negotiation between learners and learners and teachers and text [10, p. 33].

D. Wilkins with his notional approach is concerned with helping students meet specific communication needs through the input. Syllabi based on this approach often include such topics as accepting/rejecting invitations, requesting information, and expressing needs or emotions of various kinds [15, p. 15].

Representatives of the Ukrainian methodology of foreign language teaching (V. Buhbinder, N. Gez., O. Vyshnevsky, M. Lahovytsky, A. Myroliubov, S. Nikolayeva, V. Skalkin, N. Skliarenko) have added to our knowledge of the aspects of language acquisition.

A profound analysis of different approaches, methods, techniques and activities proves that a single method by itself does not provide an adequate language acquisition program. There is no one set of ideal teaching materials and no universal teaching method suited to the many contexts of language learning as well. Therefore, developing the methodology for EFL language classrooms involves the synthesis of theory and practice into program that works. It generally means drawing from several methods and approaches in order to create an integrated curriculum that will meet the needs of the students and the situation [1, p. 97].

The goal of this article is to explore methods and activities that are for most part compatible with an interactional approach. Our investigation concentrates on ways of providing opportunities for meaningful interaction in foreign language classroom settings. It examines an important role played by cooperative learning in foreign language acquisition in the classroom.

In spite of the variations of approaches, methods and techniques the content of language teaching has remained basically the same until recently. It is communication in the target language. That's why we support the hypothesis that learning and teaching a foreign language requires interweaving of different approaches, methods, techniques and activities, all working together to form a highly productive integration.

The main purpose for the language learner and the main thing to take into consideration by the teacher is meaningful communication of learners in the process of learning a foreign language in the classroom. In other words, the aim of every EFL lesson should be meaningful interaction between student and teacher, student and student, student and the contents of the material studied. Listening, speaking, reading and writing can be integrated successfully provided the methods of their implementation focus on meaning. All four skills can develop naturally in the process of learning when they involve students in meaningful experiences in the new language [6, p. 196.].

One of the most efficient strategies in the repertoire of an EFL teacher who is always looking for meaningful ways to empower his students in the foreign language is implementation of interactive approaches which, in their turn, are based on a special learning strategy – cooperative learning. Implementing cooperative learning in the EFL classroom provides the basis for communicative language learning in the classroom when students work in small learning groups.

As far as modern approach to training of EFL teachers at University level requires training them to be qualified professionals who will be able to implement the most effective technologies, methods and techniques into the practice of teaching EFL, it's a must for a professional EFL teacher to use cooperative learning strategy as a profound environment for successful foreign language acquisition. This was the purpose of introducing Cooperative Learning course to the syllabus of the Faculty of Foreign Languages in Ternopil National Pedagogical University.

The implementation of Cooperative Learning course into the syllabus of the Faculty of Foreign Languages is obviously essential for the future teachers who by understanding more about this interactive strategy can be in better position to plan classroom experiences that are conductive to foreign language acquisition.

A special attention in the Cooperative learning classroom is paid to the theory of the group. Marvin Shaw, one of the most important writers about small group theory, defines a human group in terms of interaction producing mutual influence as persons who are interacting with one another in such a manner that each person influences and is influenced by each other person. Group members have interdependent relationships, and these relationships are the essence of being a group – no relationships among members, no group. Group members are bound together through a common purpose or function. To function effectively as a group, members must learn to put their thoughts and feelings into signals that other members can interpret and respond to [16, p. 57–58].

The results of studies done on cooperative learning indicate that groups can range in size from very small to very large. Techniques appropriate for groups of from three to seven members may be disastrous if tried in groups of 30 or more. Likewise, communication techniques and procedures appropriate in large meetings may be harmful to the effective functioning of small groups.

Scholars use the term small group to refer to a group in which individual members perceive each other and are aware of each other as individuals when they interact [3, p. 486]. In a small group each member of the group can name or describe every other, say who was and who was not at a meeting without taking formal attendance, and say something about what each contributed to the discussion and meeting.

More practically, small groups usually consist of three to seven members, occasionally more. This seems to be the ideal range, with five as an ideal number if members possess sufficient knowledge and skills to do the job facing the group and have a diversity of perspectives and information relevant to the task. The more members, the more likely there will be inequity and communication overload for some members [7, p. 22].

Scholars F. Norman [14], M. Shaw [16], H. Smith [18] define a learning group, as that members of which are bound together through the common purpose or learning. In a learning group, members (usually six to nine) not only work individually in each other's presence but make cooperative efforts combining their work with the purpose of completing a learning task.

Learning groups are the so called continuing small groups, the members of which meet more or less regularly in face-to-face interaction, who possess a common purpose, and who share a set of standards governing their activity. One-meeting groups in which members have a sense of shared purpose, interact face-to-face, share at least some standards and procedures for governing their interaction, and have a sense of each other as group members also qualify as small groups by our definition.

In a learning group, members strive to achieve the learning aim by learning together in the process of communication. R. Arends claims that communication refers to the perception, interpretation, and response of people to signals produced by other people. The definition states that group members send verbal and nonverbal messages – words, gestures, facial expressions, and so forth. The other group members observe, interpret, and respond to these messages. This implies that members of a group pay attention to each other and coordinate their communication behavior in order to accomplish the group's assignment. It is the members' communication with each other – their perceiving, interpreting, and responding to one another's signals – that creates the interdependence necessary for individuals to be called a group [2, p. 48].

Being performed in a learning group, cooperation between students in the class is often called group work. Considering group work efficient learning strategy, scholars give the following reasons: groups have more resources, including information and methods; groups can get more investigative research and other work done; groups can think of more suggestions, ideas, and alternatives from which to create or choose a solution; group members accept the solution more readily; satisfaction of working together is higher.

The usage of cooperative learning is highly efficient in problem solving (a process that includes defining the problem, identifying or creating possible solutions, and choosing among the solutions and decision making (selecting one or more available options). Members record the ideas, discuss them as a group, and finally reach a decision [8, p. 32].

Thus cooperative learning described above is of special value for the student and for the teacher who both need and search for communication learning strategies in the classroom. Through cooperative efforts, group work enables the students to communicate in learning. Cooperative learning provides more opportunities for use of the new items compared to the opportunities in teacher-led classes.

Cooperative learning techniques serve as effective classroom management tools for the teacher and interesting and effective learning activity for the student. Through cooperative learning, students can become real partners in the learning process. They learn to work together in an educational setting which allows them to be better prepared to meet life's obligations and to perform professional tasks.

Implementing cooperative learning techniques into the practice of EFL teaching the teacher is first and foremost to distinguish between different types of group work: *cooperating arrangement* when learners have equal access to the same material or information and cooperate to do the task; *superior-interior arrangement* when one member of the group has information that all the others need; *combining arrangement* when each learner has a different piece of information that all the others need; *individual arrangement* when each learner has access to the same information but must perform or deal with a different part of it [12, p. 156–157].

These four different types of group work achieve different learning goals, are best suited to different kinds of tasks, require different kinds of seating arrangement, and encourage different kinds of social relationships. Let us now look how each type of group work applies during the class of English.

The *cooperating arrangement* is the most common kind of group work. Its essential feature is that all learners have equal access to the same information and have equal access to each other's view of it. The purpose of this cooperating activity is for learners to share their understanding of the solutions to the task or of the material involved. Here is an example: While discussing international cuisines the group is given a list of questions to answer. As far as the amount of the material to discuss is rather big, each member's input may be useful addition to the discussion especially when some other members' answers may be not sufficient enough to understand the issue. Some students may be more familiar with Polish cuisine, some others – with Italian, the third may be more aware about Chinese cuisine. Discussing the material together students gain more knowledge communicating with each other.

The combining arrangement is the ideal arrangement for group work because it ensures interest and participation and often involves adding an element of combining. The essential feature of the combining arrangement is that each learner has unique, essential information. This means that each learner in a group has a piece of information that the others do not have, and each piece of information is needed to complete the task. Here is an example involving a group of three learners: Each learner has an identification chart for some fruits and vegetables. However, on one learner's chart only some of the fruits are named and the vegetables are not indicated. On the second learner's chart only vegetables are named, the fruits are not indicated and information about biological names is shown. On the third learner's chart some other diversity among plants is indicated. Each learner's chart is therefore incomplete, and each learner has information that the other two do not have. By combining this information each learner can make a complete chart. They do this by describing what is on their chart for the others to draw on theirs.

The combining arrangement can be also applied in the activity called «The microphone». This activity presupposes that every member of the group has some unique information and shares with it as soon as he or she receives «the microphone». The activity we suggest is called «Discussing wedding traditions in different countries» when members of the group take turns sharing their information about the etc. By combining information members of the group enrich their knowledge of the issue.

The *superior-inferior arrangement* in group work is a parallel to traditional class teaching. The essential feature of this arrangement is that one or more learners have all the information that the others in the group need. The example can be peer teaching activity which shows that the superior-inferior arrangement can result in a lot of useful learning, particularly in pair work. Here is an example: One learner has a complete text of the article «Health Hazards of the XXI century». The other learners have some important words from the text. By asking questions using those words as clues, the learners try to reconstruct the text.

In the *individual group-work arrangement* each learner has the same information but must perform individually with a part of that information.

In reviewing these aspects of cooperative learning it must be mentioned that the most complicated thing is to adapt the variety of cooperative learning techniques to the needs of a particular EFL class. Let us proceed with some sample activities offered by F. Klippel [9], O. Pometun, L. Pyrozhenko [1], M. Silberman [17] we successfully use in our cooperative classrooms.

The «Microphone / Interview» is an effective group work classroom activity especially efficient when students become active in information collection. The procedure requires 5–6 students to come in front of the class. One of the students is asked to interview the rest, offering him or her a «microphone» (it can be a pen or a pencil, or a real microphone). The interviewer reads a list of questions asking students to answer the questions passing the «microphone» to the others or to have their own «microphones» in their hands. The students are warned that each of them can speak as long as she/he holds a «microphone». The activity is finished when all questions have been read out and answered. Implementing the activities mentioned above at the classes of EFL proves to be interesting and productive both for students and teachers.

In the «Optimists and Pessimists» technique the group members are to exchange points of view on the pluses and minuses of some problem. Some of them are assigned to play the roles of «optimists», the others are supposed to adopt the role of a «pessimists». They are to take down pluses and minuses mentioned and report the results to the class. One student begins by giving a statement, e.g. «– It's good ...». The student who is assigned to play the role of a «pessimist» gives the other points of view. e.g. «– However... . Besides...».

The conversation between «optimists» and «pessimists» shows how the students can use the opportunity to practice recently learned on-topic English subject material. This kind of activity is an efficient way to help students develop communication skills because they get students really talking to each other, not just one talking and the others listening. Through collaborating in groups they become more motivated and their time and energy is well spent.

The main reason people form groups is to get something done, to accomplish a task. Small group communication is more informal and spontaneous than public communication such as giving a speech. In a public speaking situation, usually the speaker's role (speaking) is clearly differentiated from the audience's role (listening), but in a small group these roles are interchangeable. In addition, a

public speaker usually has planned his or her remarks in advance, whereas a small group member responds relatively spontaneously to the group interaction.

The «Fish-Bowl» technique is an effective classroom activity especially when students become active working together. The procedure presupposes that one of the groups sits in front of the class receiving the task to read the task loudly; to discuss it in the group; and in 3-5 minutes make the conclusion or summarize the discussion. While the group takes their seats in the middle of the class the teacher introduces the task to the class reminding the rules of the discussion in the group. The group in the «fish-bowl» is to do the discussion. The students in the outer group are listening without interrupting the discussion in the fish-bowl. This activity helps students exchange ideas with the partner and express their views in front of the class. It encourages the development of the pupils' communicative skills and critical thinking and helps students to learn to lead the discussion or persuade the partner.

The «Jigsaw» technique is extremely efficient when the teacher aims to encourage all the students to act simultaneously communicating with different partners. In «jigsaw» tasks each participant is equally important, because each holds part of the solution. That's why jigsaw tasks are said to improve cooperation and mutual acceptance within the group. The class is divided into two groups of equal size and the chairs are arranged in two circles / students are asked to stand making two circles. The inner circle is facing outwards; the outer circle is facing inwards, so that two students from opposite groups sit / stand facing each other. All the students sitting in the inner circle receive handout A.

All the students sitting in the outer circle receive handout B. Students in the inner circle remain steady. With the signal of the teacher students in the outer circle move to the chair on their left and continue with the new partner. While moving round the circle every student sitting in the outer circle collects maximum information, points of view on the problem, etc. Participants have to do a lot of talking discussing issues with a lot of different partners before they are able to come out with the summery of everything which was found out and learnt. This activity is used with the purpose of collecting information on any topic, checking each other's knowledge and developing communicative skills.

The aim of the «Round Robin» cooperative learning activity is solving a debatable question or creating a list of new ideas with the purpose of involving all students to the discussion of the problem. This cooperative learning technique is used when all groups have to solve one problem or to do one task which consists of several positions which can be presented by different groups one after another. Group members use their best critical thinking skills when they evaluate information, ideas, and proposals in a group, and they should evaluate information in a thorough and unbiased way. For instance, the learners in a group work with a grid.

Recycling and Environment

	1	2	3
A	Recycling and its benefits	Recycling paper	Recycling plastic
B	Recycling metal	Recycling glass	Recycling and new technologies

Each section of the grid has a different task. The learners take turns to carry out the task in the grid. When all groups are ready to present the information, they have just discussed, each group gives a report only of one aspect of the problem. Coming up to each group in the circle, the teacher interviews all groups until all aspects of the problem have been discussed.

In conclusion, fulfilling the goals mentioned above is a challenge both for the student and for the teacher but is definitely motivating and will clearly move students to a higher level of English proficiency. Through cooperative learning students can become real partners in the learning process. They learn to work together in an educational setting which allows them to get them talking to each other and to develop fluency in the use of language features. Cooperative learning techniques are of special value for the teacher who seeks for using communication learning strategies in the classroom. Implementing cooperative learning activities is demanding and requires creativity, but can be extremely rewarding because of the real-life, immediate application of learning that typically accompanies an EFL program.

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A. J. HUMENCHUK

THE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF READINESS TO PROFESSIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE INTERCOURSE

The content of the notion «readiness to professional foreign language intercourse», which determines the aim and result of professional language training, is considered, and its place in the structure of personality of a future professional is defined. The structure of the notion «readiness to professional foreign language intercourse» is established, the content of its main constituents is disclosed and the criteria of its formation are specified.

Keywords: *readiness to professional foreign language intercourse, structure of readiness to professional foreign language intercourse.*

А. Й. ГУМЕНЧУК

ЗМІСТ І СТРУКТУРА ГОТОВНОСТІ ДО ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО ІНШОМОВНОГО СПІЛКУВАННЯ

Розглянуто зміст поняття «готовність до професійного іншомовного спілкування», що визначає мету і результат професійної іншомовної підготовки, та встановлено її місце в структурі особистості майбутнього спеціаліста. Визначено структуру готовності до професійного іншомовного спілкування, розкрито зміст її компонентів та уточнено критерії сформованості.