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LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO AS A MEANS OF DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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Abstract

In the modern world, personality formation takes place in new socio-economic and political conditions, which changes the approaches to the organization of training and education. In recent years, changes have occurred in the education system that has led to the reassessment of traditional teaching methods and the search for the latest technologies for optimizing the educational process. The main task is to create the conditions for the formation of personal autonomy of students, the conduct of adequate self-monitoring and self-esteem in the process of studying a foreign language. An effective form of the required skills of reflection and assessment of the achievements of cognitive activity is facilitated by the language portfolio, which is used as a means to identify the results of a student in the process of learning a foreign language. Unlike other methods of control and evaluation, the effectiveness of the language portfolio is characterized by the logically sound nature of assessment and self-esteem, which is ensured by the academic achievements and results of creative activity displayed in the language portfolio, as well as assessment criteria and integration of the student's personal experience in the process of learning a foreign language. The language portfolio as a means of self-esteem serves as a vector of increasing motivation among students to learn a foreign language. In this article, we present the language portfolio not as educational technology but as a means of self-control of the student in the process of learning a foreign language.

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Keywords: Communicative competence, language portfolio, personal autonomy



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1. Introduction

In the modern world, the formation of personality takes place in new socio-economic and political conditions, in a different moral and ethical atmosphere, which changes approaches to the organization of training and education. In recent years, the changes have occurred in the education system, they have led to a reassessment of traditional methods and technologies for teaching foreign languages. The use of active teaching methods that contribute to the formation of personal autonomy of students, the development of the ability to analyze, reason, plan, combine, create a new product is becoming a priority in reforming the education system.

2. Problem Statement

The main task in the conditions of communicative teaching of a foreign language is to teach schoolchildren to conduct adequate self-control and self-esteem in order to create personal autonomy in intercultural dialogue. An effective formation of the required skills of reflection and assessment of one's own achievements of cognitive activity is facilitated by the language portfolio, which is used as a means to determine personal, meta-subject and subject results of education (Burlakova, 2010).

3. Research Questions

Unlike other methods of control and assessment used in foreign language lessons, the effectiveness of the language portfolio is characterized by the logically sound nature of assessment and self-esteem, which is ensured by the academic achievements and results of active creative activity displayed in the language portfolio, as well as assessment criteria and integration of the student's personal experience in the process of learning a foreign language.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of our research is to study the language portfolio not as modern technology, but as a tool for optimizing the process of forming communicative competence.

5. Research Methods

The methods of our research are a content analysis of literature on the problem, including supervision of students and teachers of the first three years of work at the school, questionnaires and analysis of the received material, modelling of situations.

6. Findings

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study was the fundamental works: on the theory and methodology of teaching a foreign language (Bim, Galskova, Minyar-Beloruhev, Nikitenko, Passov, Solovova, Tareva).

Galskova (2006) defines communicative competence as mastery of complex communicative skills and abilities, the formation of adequate skills in the new social structures. Also, knowledge of cultural norms and social restrictions in communication, knowledge of customs, traditions and etiquette in the field of communication are developing in parallel, as well as an increase in orientation in communicative means characteristic of the national and class mentality (Galskova, 2006). Following Galskova (2006), by the communicative competence we understand the ability and willingness to carry out interpersonal and intercultural communication with native speakers, which implies the formation of linguistic, verbal, sociocultural, compensatory and educational cognitive, communicative competence.

In the context of the formation of communicative competence with these scientists, three main characteristics of personal qualities necessary for adequate communication were identified:

- the practical possession of a separate resource of verbal and non-verbal means for updating informational, expressive and pragmatic communication functions;
- the ability to diversify the means of communication in the communication process;
- the construction of speech in accordance with the standards (language and speech).

The formation of communicative competence is an integrative goal at all stages of teaching foreign languages (Kabdolova, 2012).

Levitan (2013) revealed the composition of the communicative competence regarding the subject foreign language: language competence; speech competency; thematic competence; sociocultural competence. Later, the component composition was specified and presented in the Federal State Educational Standard: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic, sociocultural.

To identify the degree of formation of communicative competence among students in the process of learning a foreign language, the following are used:

- standard forms of quality control assimilation of knowledge;
- a system of requirements for conducting differential forms of control (starting, diagnostic, current, job, final);
- requirements and criteria for assessing the level of formation of communicative competence by type and speech activity (Passov, 1989).

Control is organized in such a way as to make it possible to judge the level of formation of communication skills, as well as the possession of both linguistic and regional material. In order to check the level of communicative skills, such as reading, speaking, listening comprehension, verification work is carried out.

The technology of the language portfolio (from French *porter – wear + Feuille – sheet*) is a comprehensive set of diverse working materials that reflect the educational results accumulated in the process of teaching and mastering a foreign language. This set of materials provides a wide range of opportunities for both the student and the teacher. The language portfolio includes tasks, projects, reports, written works, showing success in mastering communication skills (Barrett, 2020). Based on the results, the teacher analyzes and evaluates such features as the amount of educational work done and the variety of achievements in the field of learning a foreign language, as well as a practical educational experience in this area (Luca et al., 2003).

We believe that the language portfolio is one of the most effective technologies for teaching a foreign language, which contributes to the formation and development of communicative competence in English lessons and a tool or means for students to self-control and self-evaluates their educational results at the same time. In this article, we present the language portfolio not as educational technology, but as a means of self-control of the student in the process of learning a foreign language.

The goals and forms of working with a language portfolio in foreign language lessons can be different since the language portfolio is a very flexible learning tool that can be adapted to almost any educational situation (Tosh & Werdmuller, 2004). These situations can be different both in terms of goals and methods, means and conditions of study, as well as the age and individual characteristics of students and their level of knowledge of a foreign language.

In foreign language lessons, a wide range of different types of language portfolios can be applied depending on specific goals:

- the language portfolio as a tool with which students are able to independently evaluate their results and progression in the field of learning a foreign language;
- the language portfolio as a tool, thanks to which an offline study of a foreign language is possible (language learning portfolio). In this case, the variants of the language portfolio directly depend on the orientation: the language portfolio for reading, listening, writing or the spoken language portfolio;
- the language portfolio as a tool for demonstrating the results of mastering a foreign language;
- the language portfolio as a feedback tool between a teacher and student;
- the multi-purpose language portfolio, consisting of various types of tasks (Kolesnikova, 2001).

The language portfolio is created in accordance with the age characteristics of the student and the educational program. In it, the student regularly writes down his results, achievements and experience in mastering a foreign language (Koryakovtseva, 2010).

The language portfolio for students is developed following the European concept of the language portfolio. At the same time, both the cognitive and emotional development of each age group of students are taken into account; various technological resources are used in the process of teaching a foreign language so that the student has the opportunity: to assess his level of knowledge of a foreign language; consciously and responsibly approach the process and the results of mastering the language, respond to learning a foreign language; together with the teacher to find the most rational ways to improve their knowledge and skills, as well as be able to organize work on learning a foreign language independently (Kolker, 2012).

The language portfolio for high school students typically includes three sections, which are preceded by an autobiographical reference. Each section implements its function.

Section I, "Languages I Know", performs a *social function*: forms an interest in other languages and cultures. In this section, the student can describe his experience in language learning and the implementation of intercultural communication, as well as determine his level of proficiency in the language being studied.

Section II, called "My Successes", implements a *pedagogical function*: the formation of students' self-esteem of academic performance in the process of learning a foreign language as a means of

intercultural communication. This section presents checklists for self-assessment of the four types of speech activity, as well as a description of communicative tasks

Section III is called "My piggy bank", implements the *information function* of the language portfolio. It is presented in the form of a folder consisting of such works of children as drawings, photographs, creative works, tests, essays. The student independently adds the new material.

The last page of the language portfolio is intended for the teacher. Here the teacher makes notes on the results of learning a foreign language, programs, and also describes the formation of the student's competencies in different types of speech activity.

Working with a language portfolio helps a student: to realize the value of intercultural communication; increase the desire and desire to learn a foreign language; competently organize independent work; give an adequate assessment of their level of knowledge of a foreign language; determine the most rational ways and methods of improving their knowledge and skills.

Teachers work with the language portfolio helps:

- to raise aspirations and desires in the teaching of a foreign language;
- to properly plan its activities, while adhering to specific communication skills that are reflected in the language portfolio;
- assisting each student in building individual trajectory awareness of their ways of learning;
- making required adjustments in the learning process and further planning of teaching activities, on the received information;
- increasing professional and methodological skills.

Gradual, step-by-step work on creating the student's language portfolio contributes to the development of their skills of reflexive and adequate self-assessment (Azimov, 2018).

The main pedagogical value of the language portfolio as a learning tool consists in the formation of specific, well-developed educational strategies necessary for more effective independent work on learning a foreign language.

The research was conducted based on the municipal budget educational institution Odintsovo secondary school No. 17. Two groups of students from Grade 8 A were selected as an experimental group, which were consisted of 26 students in total, 15 of them boys and 11 girls. Two groups of students from Grade 8 B were selected as a control class, which had 27 students in total, 12 of them boys and 15 girls.

The research aimed to identify the influence of the language portfolio on the formation of communicative competence when teaching a foreign language at school. The research was conducted in three stages:

Establishing the experiment was the 1st stage. We had selected and conducted diagnostic methods aimed at identifying the level of formation of students' communicative competence in foreign language lessons;

The 2nd stage was a formative experiment. The work was carried out with students who are applying our language portfolio on the lessons of a foreign language;

The 3rd stage was a control experiment. The diagnostic was repeated to identify the effectiveness of using language portfolio technology as a means of forming communicative competence.

To identify the level of formation of communicative competence into two groups, we carried out diagnostics, which is aimed at identifying the following indicators:

- *Listening*. Students were offered a text for listening. After it, students had to complete tasks based on the text, choosing the correct answer. The highest possible grade: 5 points;
- *Reading* with a full understanding of the text. Students were offered a text to read. After reading the text, the student selected a sentence corresponding to the text. The total score is 6 points;
- *Knowledge of vocabulary*. This task block was included two types of tasks. The first task was to select an extra word from the logical chain. Number of points: 4.

The students had to fill in the gaps in the second task. Number of points: 4 points.

The well-formedness of grammatical skills. This task block was included two types of tasks. The first task: students were offered deformed sentences in which they had to put the words in the correct order. Number of points: 4 points. The second task: choose the correct form of the verb. Number of points: 5 points.

The maximum number of points was 28.

The study results were evaluated according to the following criteria:

- 28–25 points – high level
- 25–15 points – average level
- 14 – or less points – low level

As we can see from diagram 1, at the ascertaining stage, the experimental group revealed a high level in 20 % of students, an average level in 38 %, and a low level in 43 %. In the control group, a high level was detected in 18% of students, an average level of 56 %, and a low level of 26 % (Figure 01).

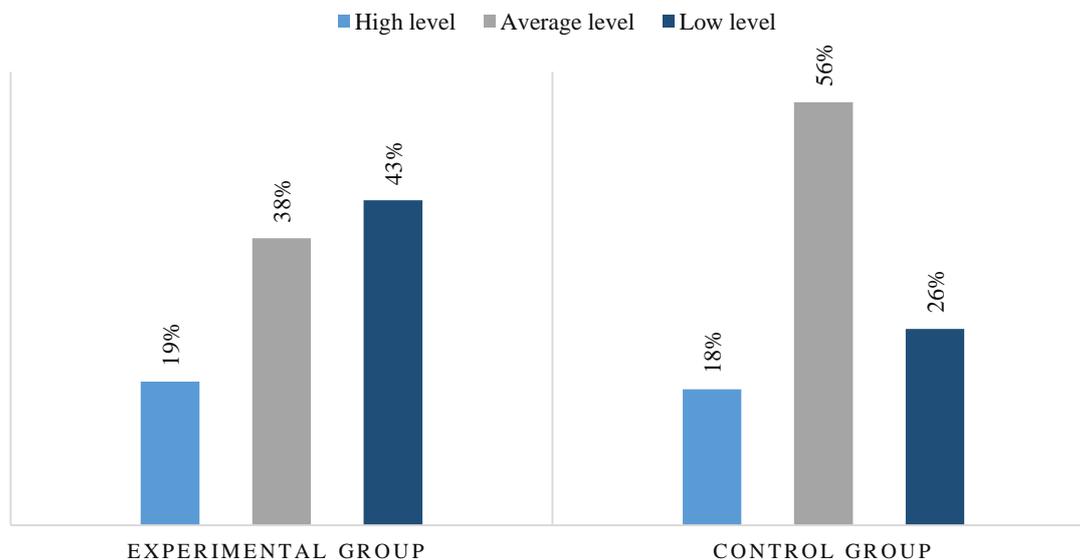


Figure 1. Indicators prior to the introduction of portfolio

The conducted research was revealed that the students of the two groups did not have enough indicators of communicative competence in English lessons, which indicated the need to work with students.

In this article, the language portfolio is a modern technology of teaching English, which provides both the development of productive educational and cognitive activities of the student and his personal growth. The language portfolio is aimed at the formation of communicative competence not only in English lessons but also in the process of independent activity and provides an opportunity to track the dynamics of language acquisition. It contains thematic project work, in which students use the knowledge and skills obtained in English lessons.

The use of the language portfolio is possible both during regular and after-school hours.

The main purpose of using the language portfolio in the experiment is to develop students' skills of self-assessment, self-control, self-analysis and reflection in a complex set of all types of speech activity.

The language portfolio consists of 4 sections: language passport, language biography, dossier, additional materials.

We worked with students of Grade 8 A on English lessons using a language portfolio.

The use of the language portfolio in foreign language lessons is aimed at solving the following tasks:

- mastering the main types of speech activity (perception and understanding of speech by ear, speaking, reading, writing);
- the development of speech mechanisms and the ability to guess the language on the basis of acquired knowledge, skills and abilities;
- adaptation of the individual to a non-native social environment, ensuring its self-control and adequate self-esteem (Mikko & Hanne, 2004).

The essence of using the language portfolio in English lessons is to create a system of work that based on the use of active methods of organizing educational activities of students, as well as reflection techniques that contribute to the development of communicative competence in the process of learning a foreign language.

The content of our language portfolio includes three main sections:

1. The language passport. This section provides an opportunity for students to evaluate their achievements, demonstrating their history and ways of learning the language, supporting their analysis with examples and facts;
2. The language biography. In this section, the student tells about themselves and the people and objects around them, using the knowledge that they have received in the process of learning English.
3. Dossier. This section provides an opportunity to choose and show the most exciting, bright and informative material for the portfolio, demonstrating the student's achievements in the field of language learning.

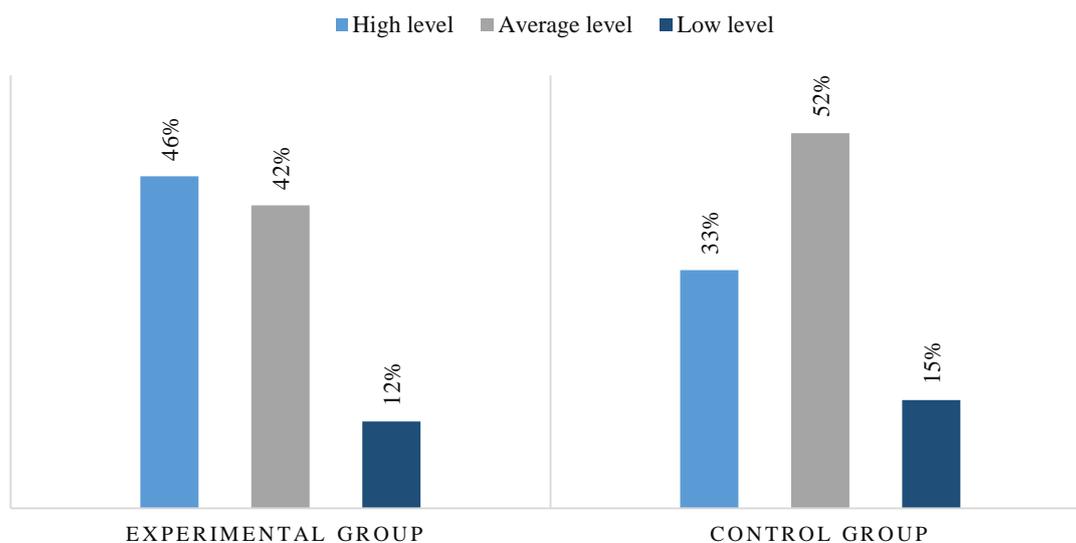


Figure 2. Control stage

As we can see from diagram 2, at the ascertaining stage, the experimental group was revealed a high level in 46 % of students, an average level in 42 %, and a low level in 12 %. In the control group, a high level was detected in 33 % of students, an average level of 52 %, and a low level of 15 % (Figure 02).

The results of the research of the control stage showed that the level of development of communicative competence significantly had been increased in students after the experimental work.

7. Conclusion

Thus, communicative competence is one of the key competencies, the formation of which is an integrative goal at all stages of foreign language training.

Communicative competence is the ability and readiness to communicate with native speakers, which implies the formation of language, speech, socio-cultural, as well as compensatory and educational-cognitive communicative competence.

The "language portfolio" technology contributes to the effective formation of communicative competence. A language portfolio is a tool for documenting and evaluating the language skills of students, which allows improving the organization of the educational process.

In the course of the research, we have proved that the use of the language portfolio as a tool for the formation of communicative competence in the process of teaching a foreign language is an important methodological aspect of achieving personal, meta subject and subject results of foreign language education.

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