WUT2018
IX International Conference "Word, Utterance, Text: Cognitive, Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects"

MODERN APPROACHES TO HIGHER FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Anna Zelenovskaya (a)*
*Corresponding author

(a)   Senior teacher, Chelyabinsk State University, Chelyabinsk, Russia, zelenovskaya_ann@mail.ru, 89127771284

Abstract

The article is dedicated to modern approaches to higher foreign education. The main aim of teaching a foreign language at the university is creation of conditions that stimulate students for the independent creative search, which requires the active use of innovative teaching approaches. The traditional approach is replaced by competence, learner-centred, problematic and project approaches. The forms of organization of the educational process, the content of education are changed. To solve all these problems, a modern teacher should use modern approaches to foreign language education. The approach to learning is a basic category in the methodology. Each approach is considered in details, the definition, principles and main aspects are given. We described how new approaches are reflected in normative documents of education. The main features of the modular approach and the project method are outlined. They have great personal potential, take into account the interests and individual characteristics of students. All this is reflected in the normative documents on education, but, unfortunately, in practice is not always used. We mentioned the advantages and disadvantages of modern approaches to foreign language education. These approaches are aimed at the harmonious development of the individual, capable to solve problematic situations, to apply the acquired knowledge in practice. However, despite all the obvious advantages of these approaches they have some drawbacks.

1. Introduction

Nowadays teachers have to revise their approaches to teaching in order to create relevant educational environment particularly in foreign language classes in response to the demands of modern society. The traditional approach to higher foreign education is replaced by competence, learner-centred, problematic and project approaches. As we can see today education should not only fill the learners with knowledge, but according to the state federal educational standard of higher education a modern lesson of foreign languages should evoke interest in the subject, develop problematic thinking, independence, individuality of students. At the same time the forms of organization of the educational process, the content of education are changed. That is why a modern teacher should know how to use different approaches to foreign language education.

The approach to learning is a basic category in the methodology. A. Anthony, an English Methodist, first introduced this term to indicate the basic statements that are necessary for understanding the nature of language and ways of learning it. Thus, the approach to teaching foreign languages gives an idea of the language itself; it allows you to choose the method of learning. Russian scientists give such definition of this term "The approach to teaching is the realization of the leading, dominant idea of teaching in practice as a specific strategy and with particular methods of teaching"(Kolesnikova & Dolgina, 2001).

2. Problem Statement

According to such normative documents as the Federal Law of Education, the priority direction in education is the development of different competencies among learners. In the federal state educational standard of higher education it is written that at the end of a bachelor's program, the graduate should have general cultural, general professional and professional competence. In particular, the student should have the following competence: to demonstrate the ability to communicate in oral and written forms in Russian and foreign languages for solving problems of interpersonal and intercultural interaction (OK-5) (Federal State Standard of Higher Education, 2016).

The State Program of the Russian Federation "Development of Education" for 2013-2020, affirmed by the Decree of the Government, May 15, 2013 №792 (in a new edition), also notes the importance of the competence approach to teaching a foreign language. In one of the statements, it is said "due to qualitative changes in educational activity of universities, real conditions and opportunities for the formation of language competence will be formed. This will lead to a qualitatively new level and development of international academic exchanges, which for our country as participants of the Bologna process is important» (The State Program of the Russian Federation, 2013).

Thus, we can see that a competence approach to the aims and results of teaching is one of the basic concepts in Russian and foreign pedagogy. It implies the creation of an individual educational trajectory, active self-learning and self-organization.

The modern teaching process focuses on the development of interests and abilities of every single student, strengthening the ability for learning, independently gaining the necessary knowledge. A learner-centred approach helps to solve these problems as it takes into account the interests of students, their individual characteristics. This approach becomes the leading strategic direction of the development of higher education in Russia.

The learner-centred education as the approach of teaching foreign languages allows setting and solving multiple aims. In the process of communication, reflection in a foreign language, the learner has an opportunity to

formulate his own ideas, find solutions to problems; besides students get experience of developing strategies for action in various situations.

The main aim of higher foreign language education is the formation of the capacity for creative activity. So teachers can use the activity approach in teaching foreign languages. At the same time, the role of knowledge is not diminished, as it helps to develop personality of students. The learner becomes the subject of activity, the main person. The main task of a teacher is to create situations that will motivate students for research of creative solutions to the problem.

Analysis of normative documents also shows that nowadays there is a trend for individualization, the intensity of higher education, the provision of independence for students. Students should have a real choice of disciplines and courses. A modular approach to teaching foreign languages answers all these requests because with a modular approach, students can independently work with their curriculum.

Furthermore, for the organization of the educational process at the university, the method of projects is the most appropriate for modern requirements of society, and it is closely related to all mentioned above approaches to teaching a foreign language. The project method involves the use of a problem approach to learning, based on students' practically meaningful results.

3. Research Questions

This study sought to describe the correct application of modern approaches to higher foreign language education. As they have great personal potential and consult interests and individual characteristics of students. In addition this study aims to analyse main advantages and disadvantages of each approach. The main questions driven this research are:

• What modern approaches to higher foreign language education can teacher use? What are their pluses and minuses?

• How can we help teachers and students to adapt to new requirements?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to highlight the necessity for usage of modern approaches to higher foreign language education

5. Research Methods

As research methods we use a large number of theoretical studies from which we tried to find out the advantages and disadvantages of modern approaches to higher foreign language education. These approaches are focused on the harmonious development of the personality, capable to find independently a way out of problem situations and put learning into practice. Also we have studied the normative documents of higher education, how they advise to teach students and what results of learning should be at the end of the foreign language course.

6. Findings

Over the last decade, all pedagogical systems in the world havesignificant revisions and transformations. In the Russian universities the main priority is given to the formation of general cultural and professional competences, effective implementation of educational activities. The content-related side of process of learning gets new characteristics, thus the role of a teacher in the formation of students' competences, forms and methods used in the learning process prevail. Nowadays students should form not only knowledge and skills, but also competences related to them. So we can speak about the competence approach in the system of higher education.

6.1. A competence approach to higher foreign language education

The term "competence" comes from the Latin word "compete", which means to fit. In general, it means to be in compliance with the requirements, the established criteria and standards in certain areas of activity, the possession of the necessary knowledge, the ability to achieve results in problematic situations. The competence approach includes two concepts: competence and competency. It is necessary to distinguish between these concepts. Competence is a set of interrelated qualities of the individual (knowledge, skills, methods of activity), assigned to a certain range of subjects and processes. Competency is the possession of a person with the appropriate competence, including his personal attitude to it and the subject of the activity. While the term "educational competence", is understood as "a set of semantic orientations, knowledge, skills and experience of the student in relation to a certain range of objects of reality, necessary for the implementation of personal and socially significant productive activities(Novozhenina, 2009).

In general, the main idea of a competence approach can be considered as the formation of professional competence of a specialist, such as the creation of problem situations in lessons that will provide students with the skills to achieve their aims in real life. The introduction of a competence approach into the normative and practical component of modern education will solve the problem when graduates have a lot of theoretical knowledge but can't use their knowledge in problem situations in reality.

6.2. A learner-centred approach to higher foreign language education

University teachers have a lot ofaims: to give students the necessary knowledge, skills, to teach them to use new information technologies, to be ready for cooperation, to try to avoid and overcome conflicts. These tasks cannot be solved without a learner-centred approach to the education which takes into account all the needs and opportunities of students. Moiseyeva L.V. in her article "About a learner-centred approach to teaching a foreign language" indicates that "a number of attempts are made to develop a model of learner-centred education. Thus, A.A. Piling suggests that a learner-centred model significantly differs from other existing pedagogical systems. First of all, it gives freedom of choice to the student in the process of learning. In this approach students don't conform to the teaching style of a teacher. However a teacher, who has more diverse technological tools, conforms and coordinates his techniques and methods of work with the cognitive style of the student. In prior years, the process of teaching didn't take into account student's personal characteristics: goals, motivation, self-confidence and self-strength, the development of ways of thinking, existing strategies of cognition, cognitive preferences and experience. I. S. Yakimanskaya believes that a learner-centred education is a teaching where the personality of a student, his identity, self-worth, personal experience is first revealed and then coordinated with the content of education. If in traditional philosophy of education social

and pedagogical models of development of the personality were described in the form of externally set samples, standards of cognition, a learner-centred teaching is based on the recognition of the unique experience of the learner as an important source of individual life activity and knowledge(Moiseeva, 2016).

With a learner-centred approach, students have an opportunity to select the forms of educational material, because of individual educational trajectories that simulate research thinking. It is possible to distinguish the following main points of a learner-centred approach:

1.The main task is the formation, education of a student as an independent person who knows how to cooperate and communicate.

2.The student moves from the position of the object of study to the subject, so now there are two subjects in the learning process - a student and a teacher.

3.The teacher organizes learning in such situations where interpersonal relations are carried out, and new personal formations (motivational, emotional-evaluative and intellectual) take place.

The basic principles of a learner-centred approach are as follows:

referring to the student:

• cognitive-communicative activity;

• internal motivation;

• personal importance of the subject;

• comfortable learning;

• process of self-monitoring;

• absence of feelings of invincibility.

referring to the teacher:

• profession-oriented and personal correspondence of activities;

• humanism;

• readiness for cooperation;

• democracy.

In order to use a learner-centred approach in practice, it is necessary to build the teaching process in a different way. Therefore, the teacher is recommended to use the following approaches to the lesson:

1.The educational material should help to identify the personal experience of students.

2.The training material is presented so that it not only increases the amount of knowledge, but also helps to apply the personal experience of a student.

3.During the lessons, the personal experience of students should be consistent with the scientific content of knowledge.

4.It is necessary to stimulate students to independent activity.

5.A student must have freedom to choose while completing the tasks.

6.A teacher should estimate not only the results of learning, students' skills but also the students' actions during the learning.

7.It is necessary to use different forms of individual work in the lesson (Theoretical and practical questions of the leaner-centered approach in teaching a foreign language, 2017).

A learner-centred approach allows setting and solving multiple goals. In the process of communication, reflection in a foreign language, a learner has the opportunity to formulate his own ideas, find solutions to problems; he gets experience to develop strategies for action in different situations.

6.3. A modular approach to higher foreign language education

The teaching of a student-researcher is a process that opens up a wide space for the development of a creative personality who can conduct an independent search, make its own discoveries, solve problems and make decisions. So knowledge and skills are obtained only in the search, in the course of independent research. Modular approach also can help to reach these aims. As modular education is characterized by the creative assimilation of knowledge and skills and stimulates the speech-activity of students. The study allows a student to study in the zone of his nearest development. Such education is based on the thinking processes that have been already developed, and those that are in the process of maturation. Thus, the use of modular approach in foreign language classes allows forming a stable internal motivation of students to study a foreign language. A modular approach changes the nature of the relationship between a teacher and a student. The role of self-organization in self-study increases. A teacher doesn't only to develop courses, but also stimulates students to self-analysis, self-assessment, to be responsible for the results of their own activities.

It should be noted that the modular teaching of a foreign language has a number of advantages in comparison with the traditional approach to teaching a foreign language in the university:

1. Almost all students work independently.
2. Students achieve a specific goal of educational activities-consolidate knowledge on a certain topic.
3. While working maximum time on their own, students learn self-organization, self-control and self-assessment, it gives them the opportunity to realize themselves in the activities, to determine the level of their knowledge, to see the gaps in their knowledge and skills and correct these gaps,
4. Students develop such qualities as independence and collectivism (Suvorova, 2014).

Modular approach also has some disadvantages. One of the main problems is the unwillingness of students to learn independently, because modular education requires self-sufficiency, freedom of choice and responsibility at all stages of the educational process. Regular control positively influences the result of learning, but it is difficult to develop criteria for evaluating the results.

6.4 The project method

The main aim of teaching a foreign language at a university is creation of conditions that stimulate students for the independent creative search, which requires the active use of innovative teaching methods. The project method allows solving didactic tasks. A foreign language lessons are given in the form of discussions, studies, in which interesting for students problems are solved. However for solving these problems students need not only language skills, but also knowledge of the interdisciplinary relationships. In addition, students should be able to work with information and texts, make generalizations, analysis, conclusions, generate ideas and find several solutions to the problem. Students should know the rules of discussion, how to express their thoughts correctly. The traditional teaching of the language cliché and simple transmission of information in a foreign language has given place to the

implementation of problematic tasks. For this purpose, difficult problematic situations are created, to overcome which students should make an intellectual effort and acquire new knowledge.

Thus, we see that in all normative documents the ability to self-organization and self-education of students is noted. It is also planned to update the educational programs, technologies and content of the educational process at all levels of professional education by the introduction of new variative educational programs based on the individualization of educational trajectories that will take into account personality, interests and needs of students, and also the usage of project method. It should be noted that the project method with the usage of forecasting, analysis and synthesis, aimed at the implementation of a learner-centred approach is not a traditional approach to teaching foreign languages in Russia.

7. Conclusion

The traditional approach to teaching foreign languages gives way to modern ones such as competence, learner-centred, problematic approaches. These approaches are aimed at the harmonious development of the individual, capable to solve problematic situations, to apply the acquired knowledge in practice. However, despite all the obvious advantages of these approaches they have some drawbacks. It is impossible to determine the content of education, based only on the interests of students, because this leads to a decrease in the academic level of education, the acquisition of knowledge takes a second place. It is also worth noting the insufficient level of language of first-year students, the lack of hours to study a particular topic, a large amount of time to achieve teaching aims, besides, for some teachers it is difficult to adapt to new requirements.

Summing up, we can say that modern approaches to higher foreign language education have great personal development potential, imply flexibility in setting goals, they also takes into account the interests and individual characteristics of students. All this is reflected in the normative documents on education, but, unfortunately, in practice is not always used

References

Federal State Standard of Higher Education. (2016, January 12). Retrieved from http://fgosvo.ru/uploadfiles/fgosvob/380302.pdf

Kolesnikova, I.L., Dolgina O.A. (2001). *A handbook of English – Russian terminology for language teaching*. Retrieved from https://www.twirpx.com/file/517832

Moiseeva, L.V. (2016). *Person-oriented approach to language teaching*. Retrieved from https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=27339306

Theoretical and practical questions of the learner-centered approach in teaching a foreign language. (2017). Retrieved from http://privetstudent.com/diplomnyye/pedagogika/900-teoreticheskie-i-prakticheskie-voprosy-lichnostno-orientirovannogo-podhoda-pri-obuchenii-inostrannomu-yazyku.html

The State Program of the Russian Federation. (2013, May 15). Development of Education for 2013-2020. Retrieved from https://xn--80abucjiibhv9a.xn--p1ai/%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%8B/3409/%D1%84%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB/2228/13.05.15-%D0%93%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%BC%D0%B0-%D0%A0%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B5_%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8F_2013-2020.pdf

Novozhenina, E.V. (2009). *Implementation of the competence approach in teaching foreign languages.* Retrieved from https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=12947074

Suvorova, A. V. (2014, May 19). *On the issue of modular teaching of a foreign language in high school.* Retrieved from https://moluch.ru/archive/66/11033/.