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Intensifying the foreign language proficiency at the secondary school within the framework of multilingual education

ABSTRACT

The article under consideration dwells upon the comparative analysis of the contemporary foreign languages teaching methods of the modern systems of secondary education of Canada and Ukraine with the emphasis on the multilingual aspect of their development.

Keywords: *multilingual education, methods of teaching, psychological logic, approach.*

The given research focuses on the problem of searching the ways of enhancement of the English language teaching methodology (English being a foreign language) at the contemporary secondary general education establishments of Ukraine in within the framework of multilingual education.

The topicality of the issue concerned is predetermined by a range of factors which include but are not limited to the urgent problem of constant perfection of teaching methods, by the permanent increase of requirements to the system of education as a whole, but also by the fact that they are viewed from other angles under conditions of globalization processes, thus in the light of

the above it goes without saying that the educational programs have to respond to the standards of multilingual and multicultural personality upbringing that in the future will be competitive in European social space.

Therefore, the close attention of contemporary world-class educational circles on a whole, and Ukrainian in particular, not surprisingly, is concentrated on the qualitative changes in the sphere of foreign languages teaching. Not coincidentally, the English language teaching is found in the focus of this attention, as this language is still on the leading positions at Ukrainian schools. It is a well-known fact that English is one of the most widespread and influential languages in the world, one of the six official languages of

the UNITED NATIONS, and therefore, it is the language of international cross-cultural communication. Modern youth, existing in a progressive society that is undergoing rapid social and cultural changes, is committed to self-development, and the English language can perform the function of one of the main tools for obtaining by secondary school pupils the required knowledge in different fields of science and life, as well as being the tool of communication and experience exchange with representatives of various countries, and all this, of course, brings the whole system of secondary education in Ukraine on a qualitatively new level. However, it is not a rare case when the level of knowledge does not meet the standards of the school program. Under these conditions the problem of methodological background of language teaching of pupils of secondary educational institutions still remains up-to-date. Studying and drawing on the educators' experience from other countries seems to be one of the ways to overcome this lacuna.

It seems to be an obvious fact that thanks to the improvement of English teaching methods at secondary schools not only the problem of improving the Ukrainian school pupils' mastery of foreign languages should be solved, but also more global issues – such as development of Ukrainian educational system as a whole, which in the future leads to an increase in the number of highly skilled workers in all fields of science and industry.

Therefore, it is clear that nowadays the problem concerning improvement of English teaching methods may be regarded as urgent one, which is under consideration of the numerous linguists, psychologists and methods specialists. Various language schools and language courses use a huge amount of well-known English teaching methods, including interactive methods of teaching languages, design briefs, other methods that appeared thanks to the synthesis of the known techniques (audio-lingual, intensive, active and affective-semantic techniques) with new methods.

Transition from grammar-translation method and its derivatives to the communicative method of English teaching seems to be one of the most efficient ways of solving the problem of more effective foreign language teaching. The target of communicative method is to teach students communication in live language environment, in contrast to mechanical choice of grammar rules and drilling the words that the student never uses either in the classroom or in day-to-day communication.

Foreign scholars pay great attention to the study and improvement of this technique. Canadian academicians and teachers, including J.Cummins, R.Mirza, A.Biemiller, L.Leopold and others lay emphasis upon this issue [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6]. It is a well-known fact, that Canada is a bilingual country, with a number of students studying English as a

second or foreign language. In addition, the ethnic diversity of the population gives the impetus for the creation of English language courses and schools for the residents of Canada, whose mother-tongue is not English language. Given this, one can find a continuous development and search for new methods of teaching English as a second language in Canada. Therefore, it seems appropriate to do a comparative analysis of the general principles of English teaching methods in Canada and Ukraine, with particular attention to implementation of the most effective ones, used for teaching of English in Canada.

Taking into consideration the target mentioned above it seems quite rational to concentrate on the students' linguistic training which can be seen in Ukraine.

It is widely known that in 2005 Ukraine, as some other countries of Western and Eastern Europe, joined the Bologna process, which has considerably restructured the learning activity of the whole country. Particularly from 2005 till 2013 we have made a long and meaningful breakthrough, dealing with such new (for that period) notions as a credit-unit organization of student's learning activity, principle of student's mobility and so on. Such a swift change in the system of education could not but influence the methods of teaching foreign languages, whose role and importance is difficult to be overestimated under

contemporary conditions of European integration. The communicative approach, which has been predominant for a while, made a real revolution in minds of those who learn and those who teach. It has taught the parties involved in the learning process to transmit information and to learn by transmitting it, thus having put the information into the centre of studying.

However, the source of communicative teaching methods has been exhausted but not abandoned. Contemporary teaching methods have put an "active, creative, independent person" into focus. It is widely known that the issue of learning any language is closely connected with the issue of general level of a person's culture, but not limited to it, as it is also the issue of person's quality of life in general. Thus, a new conception – upbringing of multicultural, multilingual person with creative thinking has become of vital importance within the framework of peaceful coexistence and interpenetration of different cultures in one society or state.

The language is realized by means of sounds or notes of the images and notions from our subconsciousness, and the words perform a function of objectivized action which is stored there. Ideas are components of our world view, and the way they reveal themselves in the physical world seems to be essential. Thus, one cannot deny the fact that ideas, existing in our minds, do create our life. It goes without saying that we are to

some extent offsprings of our society, our culture, consequently our world perception consists of the ideas we absorbed from the social sphere. All in all, it can be said to be the essence of our life. Our world view, personality, principles and convictions are installed in us, like in PC, by means of the language we speak. In the mainly Russian-speaking region we represent it is first of all Ukrainian and Russian, which change the statuses of the mother tongue and native language in every separate family as a social unit and social group. But when coming into contact with other nations and states' realia, which for sure seems to be practically inevitable in our globalized world, and having the knowledge of only one language – a native one, we cannot help feeling a kind of disabled to an extent.

In this sense the issue of learning a foreign language acquires its new meaning both on the scale of the whole country. From now on foreign language knowledge is a pragmatically oriented, intercultural process, which presupposes integrated nature of studying a language and culture and puts the person with their needs, motives, difficulties and peculiarities in the centre.

Learning a foreign language in the Soviet and post-Soviet society is the element of humanitarian component of secondary and higher education. In 1980s (the first Soviet law on compulsory learning of a foreign language is dated to 1930) children, and later

future students, learned only one discipline “Foreign language”, mainly English.

In recent years legislative basis on foreign languages experienced a swift increase. Today the tendency of decreasing the age when children start learning a foreign language is noticed. Thus, children are taken to study English as soon as they are 4 or 5 years old when being still at the kindergarten. Together with this the requirements to learning foreign languages are increased on the part of state. Thus, according to the order of the Ministry of education and science №409 from 3 April 2012, learning of the second language from the 5th grade will be compulsory starting with 2013/2014.

So, ideally, the pupils do not only feel any stress of studying the first and second foreign languages, but they are in the natural communicative atmosphere, starting with the secondary school and going on at the higher educational establishments. However, there are also a number of problems caused, above all, by the lack of motivation or lack of practice leading to the need to intensify cross-cultural communication. Therefore, the necessity to pay attention to the experience of foreign educators seems quite obvious.

In Canadian schools, where English is taught as a foreign language, communicative method of language teaching prevails. It can be said that the general principles, forming the background for the teaching process, are very similar to the Ukrainian ones, though

there are differences, of course. Firstly, in Canada there is a tendency to minimal use of teaching materials and to a maximum volume of communication. However, under our conditions (taking into account the fact that Ukraine is not an English-speaking country), such practice seems to be of little value for several reasons: a) the lack of English-language environment for speaking skills maintaining outside English language classroom; b) due to the lack of adequate linguistic practice and theoretical support, pupils are likely to get lost in the language structure and lose the desire to learn things they do not understand.

Taking into consideration everything mentioned above, one can state that while using communicative methods of English language teaching, one should not run to extremes – not taking in view the grammar structure of the language or vice versa – drilling the lexis and the rules out of communicative context.

More interesting for us and thus efficient tendency in the works of Canadian scholars is the focus on the psychological nature of the educational process. Since the students are in the center of the educational process, it is necessary to do everything possible to make them feel comfortable in the classroom from the psychological point of view, as the mastery of a foreign language is grounded on psychological and mental mechanisms. The connection between teacher and students is

essential to create comfort in the classroom. Thanks to the feedback the teacher is always able to adjust some aspects of the lesson, as well as control the way the students understand the information. They practice the “intercourse in correspondence” with teachers in Canadian schools. This method means students writing their impressions from the lessons, their mood, things they like and dislike on the paper they are given by the teacher after class. Students may also mention the topics or tasks they find difficult and need some additional explanation.

Sample of practical application: The way they do it in Canada – every student signs his/her “letter” with the ideas of the lesson and hands it to the teacher. However, anonymous “correspondence” should not be rejected, as students may express their opinions and write about the things they do not understand. Such correspondence can be done several times (2-3 times) per semester after every topic studied. At the end of the lesson (approximately 20 minutes) ask children to write short answers to three questions, for example: "How do you feel now? What did you enjoy most at our English lessons? What was difficult for you to understand at the lesson? ". Questions may vary depending on the target of the teacher (to find out about the students' psychological state, activities preferred at the lesson or about the problems faced by the students while learning a language). Primary and secondary

school pupils can be given only 1-2 questions about their mood and the things they would prefer doing in the class (playing language games, singing English songs, acting out dialogues, reading, watching and discussing movies).

Besides, pupils should be told that the answers are not to be too extensive and that only teacher will see it, which is unaware of the writer's name. Pupils will not be afraid to ask questions or to say things, which, otherwise, they would not address the teacher with in class. Thus, the teacher will be able to understand exactly the lesson and the material the students would prefer.

One more aspect of the English language lessons in Canada might be of interest, namely – holding classes, taking into account the type of thinking or the type of information perception by the students. The conditional subdivision into audiles (those who better perceive information by sound), visual learners (those who better perceive information by sight – in the form of pictures and images) and kinesthetic learners (those who better perceive information when movements are involved) is used to do this. Students are divided into groups of audiles, visual learners and kinesthetic learners, headed by an assistant teacher, and the information is presented in different ways in those groups, depending on the type of information perception. But if we look closer at this division into personality types, we can

find similarities with Howard Gardner's "theory of multiple intelligences", that differentiates intelligence into specific (primarily sensory) "modalities", rather than seeing intelligence as dominated by a single general ability. According to this theory, individual possesses a unique blend of all the types of intelligences. Types of intelligence for this theory: musical–rhythmic, visual–spatial, verbal–linguistic, logical–mathematical, bodily–kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, existential and moral. It often happens that while thinking a lesson over a teacher subconsciously takes into consideration only his/her own type of intelligence and making lesson full of, for example, vivid images and drawings, while children with a different type of intelligence find it difficult to make use of visual thinking. It is therefore necessary to work out tasks, considering the type of students' intelligence.

Sample of the theory practical application: at the beginning of the year pupils are tested in order to identify the prevailing type of intelligence of every pupil (it may be done by the school psychologist). But if the next step for Canadian schools is the class division into groups, it may not be the case for our schools, as according to this "theory of multiple intelligences", every pupil should develop not only your primary type of intelligence, but also other types. Instead, being aware of the tests results, the teacher

will take them into consideration, and will try to combine different kinds of tasks for each type of intelligence, which in its turn will help pupils develop more than one way of thinking.

Some examples of new information presenting methods and tasks that correspond to the different types of intelligence are given below:

- verbal–linguistic intelligence: students with this type of intelligence are prone to learning languages. They can easily read, write essays, speak. In order to concentrate their attention teacher should use the word games.

- logical-mathematical intelligence: students understand systematically structured material (grammar tables, diagrams). For example, exercise for memorizing words: creating verbal map (word map) in the form of a chart.

- visual-spatial intelligence: the use of video materials for lessons and exercises, more additional materials in the form of images.

- bodily–kinesthetic intelligence: the pupils feel comfortable when they can act out a dialogue scene, i.e. everything stimulating their motion activity.

- musical–rhythmic intelligence: learning the songs, listening, use of videos.

- intrapersonal intelligence: you can use situational tasks for further working out the dialogues between students.

- interpersonal intelligence: the psychological tests, aimed at disclosing the internal world of the learner.

- naturalistic intelligence: conduct various excursions or lessons, where students can prepare their own presentation of the culture or nature of different countries of the world.

- existential intelligence: having read (listened to) some small story, pupils can work out their own endings and explain their choice.

In practice different types of exercises for all types of intelligence should be used in turn. Thus students are likely to better perceive the information and each type of intelligence is better and faster developed in each student. And afterwards, as a final lesson preceding the test, teacher can hold a class where every pupil receives material and tasks done with consideration of their type of intelligence. At this stage teacher can divide the pupils into groups according to the type of intelligence and give the group tasks.

What is more, an integral part of Canadian practice of foreign language teaching is the knowledge about English-speaking countries culture. Unfortunately, the report presentations are the most widely used

method in English classes in the majority of secondary schools in Ukraine. It often results in monotonous information retelling leading to pupils losing interest in culture of English-speaking countries. Canadian scholars offer a more interactive approach, which includes tours and excursions, helping to get to know the cultural background of the countries, and ending in the students' feedback.

Practical application in school: it is quite difficult to do under contemporary conditions, as the tour, excursions and exhibitions presenting the culture of English-speaking countries are rather rare. So instead we should replace the monotonous reports retelling by the bright lessons-"imaginary journey", where pupils can find some interesting information about certain cultural aspect and present it using the pictures, videos or acting out the scenes from life of the inhabitants of the

English-speaking country. The teacher can act as a guide in this imaginary travel.

Therefore, the study of the scope of scientific researches of the Canadian scholars, working out the methodological platform for teaching English as second in Canada, leads to the conclusion that the idea of the practical application of some methods, which have been tested in Canadian schools, does not only seem appropriate, but also can enrich the baggage of our educators and increase the efficiency of the English language mastering.

The problem of psychological nature of the English or any other foreign language teaching process deserves close attention, as it may improve the Ukrainian secondary school students' motivation to a great extent. So, it is the implementation and improvement of ways of the learning process psychological nature realization should be the further scientific and methodological research in this direction.

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