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ADVANTAGES OF EUROPEAN METHODS OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES FOR UKRAINIAN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract. *The necessity and advantages of European methods of teaching foreign languages in Ukrainian technical universities, in particular the Engage-Study-Activate method (ESA), have been considered in the article. Types of tasks for each of the phases of the class have been analyzed. Examples of tasks for the phase of engagement and activation have been given.*

Key words: *European teaching methods, ESA methodology, engagement, activation, technical universities.*

ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА ЕВРОПЕЙСКИХ МЕТОДИК ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА ДЛЯ ТЕХНИЧЕСКИХ ВУЗОВ УКРАИНЫ

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Аннотация. *Рассмотрены необходимость и целесообразность применения европейских методик преподавания иностранного языка в украинских технических вузах, в частности методики «Engage-Study-Activate» (ESA). Проанализированы типичные виды заданий для каждой из фаз занятия по данной методике. Приведены примеры заданий для фазы вовлечения и активации.*

Ключевые слова: *европейские методики преподавания, методика «ESA», вовлечение, активация, технический вуз.*

ПЕРЕВАГИ ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИХ МЕТОДИК ВИКЛАДАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ ДЛЯ ТЕХНІЧНИХ ВИШІВ УКРАЇНИ

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Анотація. *Розглянуто необхідність і доцільність застосування європейських методик викладання іноземної мови в українських технічних вишах, зокрема методики «Engage-Study-Activate» (ESA). Проаналізовано типові види завдань для кожної з фаз заняття за даною методикою. Наведені приклади завдань для фази залучення й активації.*

Ключові слова: *європейські методики викладання, методика «ESA», залучення, активація, технічний виш.*

Introduction

It is well-known that in all leading technical universities of our country a certain number of academic hours of compulsory program is given to the study of a foreign language. If we take into account that students have been learning English since the first grade and taking into account the school curriculum, one would expect

that by the moment of their graduation the University students will have significantly improved their level of proficiency in a foreign language. However, the knowledge and skills of our masters and bachelors on average correspond to the level of A2-B1, while many of them already had mastered the language at this level before entering the university.

To explain this paradox, several aspects should be considered. First, there is a certain mismatch in the standards. It should be noted that in the process of teaching, the focus is made on developing the ability to work with scientific and technical literature, annotation, referencing and translating. European standards presuppose a personality-oriented approach, which predetermines the formation of communicative competence with the following components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, strategic, discursive and social competencies. Second, as a rule, there is a great time stretch – a foreign language in technical universities is given 2 academic hours a week for several semesters. And, third, the level of motivation among students stays insufficient. Future engineers consider mastering a large number of general technical terms as their main task, and a foreign language is often considered by them as a secondary discipline. Therefore, it is obvious that in modern environment the approach to teaching a foreign language at a university needs to be modified.

Recent Papers Review

Many famous scientists and language teachers in different countries have been involved in the development of new up-to-date methodologies for teaching foreign languages. Their interest in communicative and interactive methods is not accidental, the advantages of these methods are indisputable, they are becoming increasingly important in learning foreign languages as a practical application of communicative method makes it possible to develop individual skills and enhance students' creative potential.

New interactive teaching methods have been studied by the following scientists and methodologists: N. Abozina, I. Abramova, N. Anikeeva, N. Bagramova, N. Borisov, K. Fopel, J. Harmer, L. Petrovsky, V. Platov, V. Rybalko, A. Smolkin, I. Syroyezhyn, S. Shmakov, A. Verbitsky, Yu. Yemelyanova, and others.

Purpose and Problem Description

The purpose of this article is to consider the possibilities and advantages of a partial application of the European teaching methodology, which is called the ESA method, in a Ukrainian technical university. In the framework of this study, we have analyzed the features of this technique and identified the aspects which can be introduced in our technical universities.

European Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages

In the modern world, the process of globalization continues. Many companies extend their borders, new subsidiaries open around the world, trade and cultural relations between countries are developing. Young professionals can be assigned to a higher position in the same company, but in another country, they might have to change their place of residence or to take part in a congress or symposium on the other side of the world. In this regard, the knowledge of at least one foreign language is of crucial importance [3].

To unify the requirements for the knowledge of a foreign language, the European Council has developed a specific standard – Common European Framework. From the description of the requirements to the levels of the Framework (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) it becomes clear that the basic skills for mastering the language at any level are the abilities to understand speech, speak and extract information from text.

It is the development of these skills that the newest European teaching methods are aimed at. Among them, such methods as the formation of a language portfolio [1], the project method and the case method can be distinguished.

Currently, the main methodology for teaching foreign languages abroad is the so-called «ESA» methodology, which was developed and presented by J. Harmer in 1998 [4]. We can say that its nature can be described as “exposure to the language and the ability to apply it in practice”. The essence of this method consists in the presence and combination of three required phases of the class: engaging, studying and activating (engage, study, activate – ESA). The first phase is intended to arouse interest, to attract the learner to the lesson. At the second stage the student's attention should be focused on a particular language item. During this phase, the teacher can use different types of activities: explanation, independent study of the text, exercises, dialogues, etc. At the third stage, students are encouraged to use all the knowledge gained. The sequence of phases can be changed, so we can single out the following types of classes: «Arrow» (engagement-study-activation), «Boomerang» (engagement-activation1-study-activation2), «Patchwork» (free alternation of all phases). The only rule is that the lesson ends

with the activation phase. The main properties of the ESA method are: the structuring of the class, the engagement of students, the work with authentic materials and the «live» language and the creative moment in independent work.

It is easy to see that the methodology used in traditional classes in Ukrainian technical universities has little in common with the «ESA» method. The lesson begins with a homework check, then the teacher explains grammatical rules or introduces new lexical units, then the students perform exercises to recognize the learned items, substitution and transformation exercises, then, as a rule, working with the text. The lesson is usually finished with the answers to questions or dialogues. Training is conducted not only based on a textbook; teachers widely use additional texts from newspapers and journals, audio materials from the Internet, etc. But for a number of reasons that will be given below, such activities often do influence significantly on the effectiveness of learning a language [2].

Let us consider the differences in the structure of the class between the European methodology and a typical foreign language class in a Ukrainian technical university. First of all, it is the presence of a phase of engagement. Despite the fact that the importance of arousing interest in the topic of the lesson is obvious, the teachers in higher educational establishments often begin the lesson with the main material thinking that their sufficiently grown-up audience will probably «cope» with the topic without any engagement stage. However, such a method leads to the opposite result. Students begin to perceive a lesson in the English language as a break for rest between «technical subjects», for example, resistance of materials or descriptive geometry, and do not show any interest in the subject. According to the ESA method, the engagement phase includes discussions (with the participation of the teacher) of drawings, videos, short texts, sound tracks, headlines and even objects brought to the class. Among the activities of this phase are various games like «Snowball», the exchange of information, even the active search of information. The main goal of this phase is to involve all students without exception, before moving to the «basic» material, and the teacher must think of interesting and original assignments in advance.

The second phase of the lesson – the study phase – involves working with new material. In general, the techniques used by teachers in this phase have much in common with the methods used by our language teachers. It is recommended to abandon the dominant role of the teacher and to enable students to independently recognize the introduced language structures. It is also at this phase that you should use as much of the authentic material as possible taking into account the level of your students.

The main difference between the advanced European methodology and the Ukrainian one is the content of the final phase of the class – the activation phase. Classes in technical universities traditionally end with assignments for the use of the material learned. However, already at the stage of the lesson planning, the teacher often assigns only the remaining time to these activities, and in practice they are usually given as the homework. In a technical university, the homework is most often referred to the last stage, and it is to prepare a retelling of the text, a report or presentation, or to write an abstract or a brief summary of the article studied. After that, the lexical material is considered to be learned, and the module is finished. From the point of view of the European methodology, this is absolutely unacceptable. Here the activation phase is considered to be the main stage of the class. It is supposed to be given at least a third of the entire time of the lesson. Another difference is that in our universities, at the stage of language production, the task is given to use the lexical units or grammatical phenomena studied. By the European method, on the contrary, no conditions or restrictions are given (except for the number of words in written assignments), and the studied constructions should appear naturally. In the case of their absence, it is forbidden to reduce the mark. This is the phase where students are encouraged to use all the language units they know as freely as possible and in the process of real communication. Typical activities for the activation phase are role games, debates, discussions, writing stories, letters, etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be noted that the application of the elements of the European teaching methodology is highly advisable in foreign language classes in technical universities, as they arouse interest in the language, promote the development of motivation and raise the effective-

ness of teaching. For the best results, the following recommendations should be considered: when selecting additional material, the teacher should think over which phase of the class it suits best; it is necessary to give each phase of the class a sufficient amount of time; it is preferable to use original, memorable tasks and, where this is justified by the topic of the lesson, to strive to expand the cultural knowledge of students.

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