

DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS BY CREATING AUTHENTIC-PROBLEMATIC SITUATIONS WHEN LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Olga Khalupo

Doctor of Philological Sciences, South Ural State Agrarian University, Russian Federation,
olgakhalupo@list.ru

Abstract

For many years teaching a foreign language in Russian higher educational institutions has been aimed at developing communicative competence. Teachers solve the problem of developing skills and abilities in this type of activity by verbal and non-verbal means and various didactic techniques. Graduates should know the vocabulary of general and terminological fields, be able to conduct dialogues in a professional sphere, translate specialized texts from a foreign language and into a foreign language. Such a comprehensive list of knowledge and skills implies a good knowledge of a foreign language at the initial stage of study, that is, students should enter a university with good knowledge of a foreign language. But as practice shows, those students who were going to enter non-linguistic universities did not pay enough attention to this discipline. Thus, foreign language teachers face a difficult task in accomplishing their mission: they have to manage to develop certain competencies when teaching the students with poor level of language knowledge, to follow the curriculum and implement the content of the discipline. Therefore new approaches are being developed, new methodologies are being tested, a selection of methods is proposed for teaching correct and appropriate interaction of the students. In our opinion, the main components of any interaction are: the subject of communication (the subject of discussion); motivation (a person's interest in communicating); means and methods of communication (those tools by means of which communication is carried out); the product of communication (the final point created as a result of communication). Thus, it is necessary to create such educational environment and such conditions of interaction for the students, in which they will actualize the previous communicative knowledge and skills, apply new ones, transfer them to new situations. And in order to organize such learning environment and such interaction conditions, it is necessary to find, create and implement corresponding authentic-problematic situations that can occur between people with different social statuses, between partners with different mentality and culture, between people from different professional spheres and even between representatives of different generations.

Keywords: Foreign language, teaching methods, learning environment, communication skills, authentic-problem situation.

1. INTRODUCTION

As life experience shows, most people live in a multicultural society and are constantly involved in communication with other people. Nevertheless, they are not always and not everywhere able to make full use of their communicative potential. Everyone knows how to speak, persuade or argue, but not so many people do it properly in various situations of communication. Often there are not enough appropriate skills to

achieve the desired effect.

The communication skills of a person are a necessary condition for your development and help you in the process of communication and interaction throughout your life activity. Communication skills can be interpreted as a person's ability to adequately interact with others. And this means that a person should be able to express the thoughts clearly and correctly interpret the information received from others.

It is easier to communicate at any level with representatives of your own culture, when the rules of communication, means of communication (verbal and non-verbal) are known even at a subconscious level. It is much more difficult to communicate with representatives of a different culture. It is essential to learn, perceive the features of communication, rules, customs, traditions and standards of behavior.

When teaching a foreign language, it is crucial to use all sorts of methods and means in order not only to teach correct grammatical structures, not only to master a certain combination of lexical units, but also to learn to communicate according to those standards that exist in other cultures either implicitly or explicitly.

The purpose of learning foreign languages is to teach free orientation in a foreign language environment and the ability to adequately respond to different situations. To teach people how to communicate properly using a foreign language, you need to create real, authentic-problematic situations that will develop an adequate language behavior of the participants in any interaction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are numerous works, scientific studies, in which the authors try to examine the issue of proper interaction from different points of view in order to find the best methods and means and solve the problem of communication skills development. There is no doubt that as time passes and conditions of life in the modern world change, some approaches to this problem will be also revised. Social interactions occur in geographic and interpersonal spaces. They are characterized by a set of norms and expectations regarding communicative behavior, and, consequently, the development of language competence will be determined by the types of impact of language behavior, the ability to practice the language, as well as the norms and behavior associated with the use of language (Blommaert et al., 2005). In terms of language, the choice of words or language in which a sender encodes a message will influence the quality of communication. Because language is a symbolic representation of thoughts, motivations or intentions, room for interpretation and distortion of the meaning exists (Dixon, O'Hara, 2010, p. 7). Communication is the process of creating shared understanding. There are three levels of understanding: action, information, relationship [Barker, 2006, p. 2]. And it becomes true not only between working employees of one company with the same culture but also during learning how to communicate with someone who speaks a different language.

Communication is a process that involves both speaking and listening; outlines specific competencies and authentic assessment methods for speaking and listening; includes exercises to help create a safe and inclusive classroom, along with tools to identify communication apprehension; and provides specific oral communication exercises (Chaney, Burk, 1998).

In particular, EFL learners often stammer when speaking English. This results from learners' lack of exposure to authentic English language environments that allow them to use English for communication and expression. Furthermore, learners are not exposed to the cultures of the native English speakers (Oradee, 2012). Therefore, the teachers should create such situations at the lessons.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In our opinion, authentic communication should be created in the classroom by discussing topical and interesting issues for students. In this case, the students speak on their own behalf, playing any role inherent to them. As for the teachers, they take on the role of the organizer of communication, or its participants, but refuse their traditional role of leaders and hosts. All participants of communication process are equal; they can talk about everything they want, and about any issue they consider significant. Such acts of communication process are called authentic-problematic situations. This is the only type of communication in which communicants solve really substantial tasks and pursue specific goals. All students try to express their own personal opinions, talk about the problems that seem interesting to them, so they always transfer something new to their partners. This type of communication is characterized by high motivation, arising from the importance of the issues discussed, by originality of opinions and the interest of all participants in finding the right solutions.

Thus, the content of authentic communication can involve any real-life problem. For example, discussion and decision-making on a particular issue (visiting an enterprise, organizing an evening party, meeting foreign

partners, arguing with friends etc.); discussions on moral, ethical, social, political and other topics. For example, job searching, future plans, relationships with parents and friends, attitude to current political and economic events; a "round table", i.e. discussion of an important issue such as environmental protection when all participants are prepared for this event in advance. The teacher organizes debates and concludes some points at the end of the discussion, creates authentic-problematic situations that are to be shared, realized and solved quickly in a peculiar and effective way.

In the process of authentic communication, various life problems are solved, students are revealed in all their versatility, using various language means, they express their thoughts and feelings, express their attitude to something, i.e. form their communicative skills.

We define the concept authentic-problematic situation as a dynamic system of relationships between communicating people, such system generates a personal need for purposeful activity and finding solutions to the tasks set.

For deeper understanding of this problem, it is necessary to clarify the functions of an authentic-problematic situation in training communicative skills:

- It provides the motivation of speech activity;
- It is a way to present speech means;
- It provides the transfer of speech skills;
- It serves as a condition for speech skills development;
- It serves as the basis for the presentation of language means.

We distinguish four types of situations related to authentic-problematic pattern:

- Social relationships;
- Moral relationships;
- Professional relationships;
- Status-role relationships (Khalupo, 2002).

The first type is the situations related to social relationships. The students communicate as representatives of classes (farmer, worker), professional groups (engineer, salesman, chauffeur), public organizations (member of Green Peace society), age groups (student, retired person), territorial communities (neighborhood, compatriot), etc.

When creating situations in the process of learning, social relations can become dominant in the following cases: discussion of the rights and duties of citizens living in different countries, teleconference between representatives of different social groups, meeting with a fellow countryman in another city, talking about traditions and living conditions, household activities, etc. Certain personal characteristics of those who communicate are associated with social relations: positioning, worldview, beliefs, ideals, interests, etc., which are used in creating situations.

The second type is the situation related to moral relationships. Moral relations cover all spheres of human activity. They are of fundamental importance for creating situations, because they manifest themselves in everyday life constantly and regularly serve as a subject of discussion. Each person has his or her own individual attitude towards people, things, subjects of discussion: respectful or contemptuous, courteous or arrogant, cordial or cruel, sympathetic or antipathetic, friendly or hostile, negligent or diligent, formal or interested, biased or fair and so on. In this case, the manifestation of person's psychological characteristics such as feelings and emotions, will, character, temperament, as well as his or her state, is closely connected with moral relations in objective terms.

The third type is the situations related to professional relationships. They arise in specific forms of professional activity depending on the field of activity in which future graduates have to work. Playing out such situations contributes to the development of the ability to exchange information, the acquisition of communicative interaction skills to solve professional problems. During this interaction, personal factors correlated with objective types and forms of activity are the motive, purpose and conditions of joint professional activity.

The fourth type is the situations related to status-role relationships. They are mostly stereotypical,

standardized. In the regulated communication caused by joint activity, students play roles in such contacts as student - student, student - teacher, athlete - coach, consultant - customer, a criticizing person – a criticized person, subordinate - leader, etc. In sports activities, for example, one student may be in the role of a loser or a winner, a player or a judge, a player or a team captain, etc. In informal communication, the roles of “fan”, “fashion-monger”, “skeptic”, “greedy”, “optimist”, “music fan”, etc. are played. Playing such situations can affect the students’ personal qualities. Knowledge and experience, habits, skills, abilities (do something) are related to status-role relationships.

Thus, the situation is a universal form of communication process realization, existing as an integrative dynamic system of social-status, role, active, moral and professional relationships of the subjects taking part in communication process, reflected in their minds and arising from the interaction of situational positions of communicating people.

In non-linguistic universities, students experience certain difficulties in establishing interaction, contact, and sometimes they cannot express their thoughts completely and correctly using a foreign language. Nevertheless, in these educational institutions there are a number of disciplines that have sufficient potential for developing the necessary qualities of future specialists and managers. One of them is a foreign language (Khalupo, 2010). In foreign language classes, it is possible and necessary to practise the most important qualities among students such as the ability to communicate, to express their opinions, to convince, to possess communicative skills. In fact, organizational and communication skills are the most important components of professional activity.

Thus, immersing into a situation, the students do not so much think about how to use more expressions on this topic that the teacher has given, but about expressing their thoughts quickly, accurately and logically with the vocabulary they have, that is using minimal language tools. And the assimilation of the necessary vocabulary can be worked out when doing other special exercises and tasks.

By introducing this active learning method, we can use the following ways to create authentic-problematic situations:

- Encouraging the students to make the conclusion;
- Paying attention to comparison and opposition of the material studied and upcoming to the study;
- Offering the problem statement to students before choosing the right solution from a number of possible solutions known to them;
- giving tasks that require ingenuity and cleverness.

Sometimes the task can be more complicated. For example, when discussing the topic “Protection of the environment”, an authentic-problematic situation is proposed, the elements of the content are:

- The ecology law (public event);
- A person pollutes his (her) yard (an act of personality);
- All people pollute (mass phenomenon);
- You have to pay for everything (controversial judgment);
- Causes of pollution (public fact).

Initially, the primary positions on the problem are expressed, then they are contested and interpreted, and in the end certain conclusions are made, ways to solve it are proposed. Expressing their point of view, motivating agreement or disagreement, the students learn to understand someone else's position, reason the choice, participate in real verbal communication.

4. CONCLUSION

Thus, teaching free orientation in a foreign language environment and the ability to adequately respond to different situations is a priority task of any foreign language teacher. To teach communication using a foreign language, you need to create real, authentic-problematic situations that will develop an adequate behavior of the participants in the interaction. The situations of authentic-problematic pattern contribute to the effectiveness of the educational process. The participants of communication try to solve real problems of joint activities taken from real life; their solving and acting contribute to the development of communicative skills.

REFERENCE LIST

- Barker, A. Improve your communication skills (2006) United Kingdom, USA, Creating Success, 176 p.
- Blommaert, J., Collins, J., & Slembrouck, S. (2005). Spaces of multilingualism. *Language and Communication*, 25(3), pp. 197-216.
- Chaney, A.L.; Burk, T.L. (1998) Teaching Oral Communication in Grades K-8. ISBN: ISBN-0-205-18938-5
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED408637>
- Dixon, N., M. O'Hara, M. (2010) Communication Skills. Northern Ireland, University of Ulster. 71 p.
http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415537902/data/learning/11_Communication%20Skills.pdf
- Khalupo, O.I. (2002) Formation of a communicative culture among students of a technical university when learning foreign languages. Abstract of the dissertation of the candidate of pedagogical sciences / Chelyabinsk State University. Chelyabinsk. 44 p.
- Khalupo, O.I. (2010) Education of language culture in the era of globalization // Competence-activity approach in the system of modern education: materials of the international scientific-practical conference. pp. 265-268.
- Oradee, T. (2012) Developing Speaking Skills Using Three Communicative Activities (Discussion, Problem-Solving, and Role-playing), *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, Vol. 2, No. 6. pp. 533-535.