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PLAYING METHODS IN TEACHING ADALTS ENGLISH

It is well-known that for the last 10–15 years the role of the English language as the language of international communication has been increasing and the methods of teaching English have been developing. A real specialist has to know English as a means of communication as well as a means of professional communication to meet the demands of the present life. This requirement refers to any specialist. One of the reasons why the majority of Russian specialists in almost any sphere do not have the proper knowledge and skills in English is the way they were or have been taught [1].

Most English teachers use traditional methods of teaching English. However these methods and techniques do not correspond to the present social demands. Most sociological surveys have showed that more than half of English teachers do not know how to reform their pedagogical activity. It is quite understandable though, especially if we look at the history of teaching English in our country.

The methodological goal of 1920–30s was to teach students to read authentic texts. It couldn't been achieved without translating foreign words and grammatical forms, without explaining them in Russian. That method gave us grammatical substitution tables. Besides it was concluded that speech development was not connected with thinking development, and thinking had to be developed in a mechanical way. Such method didn't contribute to the development of creative approaches in teaching foreign languages.

From the middle of 1940s there was a transition to comparative method. The main attention was paid to teaching accurate reading. Still the techniques were mechanical. By the end of 1940s I. Rahmanov [2] claimed that creative methods were to be applied. He stated the goal – to stimulate creative verbal activity basing on the material of the studied language. The linguistic material was the only means to stimulate verbal activity.

In general all the applied methods and techniques didn't provide mastering the appropriate level of verbal speech. Such level was maintained only in 1970-80s at some universities where alternative methods were applied. These methods included role-play and business games and contributed to enhancing students' activity and the effectiveness of teaching foreign language. At that time some scientists were researching and analyzing peculiarities of the development of cognitive interests at foreign

language classes and means to strengthen cognitive motivation. E. Passov [3] and others were studying development of thinking at foreign language classes. Some scientists (e.g. S. Kalinina, V. Petlin) were studying educational establishments where creative activities were organized.

At that time many researchers (e.g. Zh. Vitlin) were insisting on combining traditional methods with some elements of alternative and intensive methods, applying playing techniques and the project method suggested by foreign educational specialists (e.g. Goethe Institute). Many scientists (I. Zimnyaya, S. Scherbak) pointed to communicative approach to teaching foreign language as optimal way to enhance students' cognitive and creative activities.

Nevertheless, such methods have not been applied at our universities systematically. There is no unified concept in implementing playing methods. The essence of playing cognitive activity has not been fully discovered. There is no general methodology to stimulate playing cognitive activity. The games have not been systematized yet. The theoretical basis for stimulating cognitive activity has not been developed. There have not been developed teaching aids and books which would correspond to new methodological educating concept. Therefore there is a severe need in projecting, developing and implementing playing methods, techniques, and systems which would encourage students' communication skills.

The problem of stimulating cognitive activity has been studied by sociologists, psychologists, methodologists, educational specialists, and teachers. Still it has not been adequately explored. Many scientists have made a great contribution to solving the problem of intensifying educational process, stimulating cognitive activity, developing the interest in the subject, motivating students, providing favourable psychological atmosphere, etc.

The effectiveness of applying playing methods in teaching English has been proved by many scientists and educational specialists. The outstanding thinker of the twentieth century Josef Heising [4] claimed that the philosophical meaning of a «human» includes not only well-known features «homo sapiens» (an intelligent man) and «homo faber» (a creating man), but also «homo ludens» (a playing man).

Playing education encourages people to reveal such qualities as purposefulness, activity, dynamics and productivity of thinking, memory efficiency, tendency to self-perfection, faith in own powers, etc. It is the game that has combined thought and action.

Playing teaching methods have spread at many European and US universities, both in liberal and engineering education. Playing education has gained the largest popularity in US higher education. Universities of Harvard, California, New York, Stanford, John Hopkins, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and many others implement these methods a lot.

Most researchers believe that the effectiveness of playing education is first of all determined by «motivation explosion», «leap of interest in the subject». According to A. Leontyev, the success of cognitive activity depends not only and not so much on the intensity of motivation, as on the nature of motive [5].

Along with the motivating impact of playing education educational specialists (R. Appatova, T. Oleynik, G. Frolova, A. Derkach and others) distinguish several functions of playing methods:

- Motivation. This is the initial means of stimulating cognitive activity. It includes objectives, rules, duties of the participants, their roles, etc.

- Informative and teaching. It provides the educating essence of playing activities which have to correlate with the studied subject and syllabus.

- Organization and management. Playing activities provide organization of education. This is a non-typical way of organizing and managing students.

- Communicative. Playing methods provide communicative activity. When students participate at such activities they play various social and interpersonal roles by using verbal and non-verbal means (gestures, mimics, eye contact, etc.).

- Control and reflection. It provides elimination of fear and restraint, forms skills of emotional self-regulation, maintains favourable psychological atmosphere. It also includes the analysis of the implemented activities, summing up.

Playing education provides the implementation of main didactical principles and principles of teaching adults:

- Modeling. Playing activities simulate real life situations, professional conditions.

- Activity and independence. Applying these methods encourages active work as the tasks enable students to demonstrate their abilities to persuade, argue, agree, memorize, etc. At the same time students teach to make decisions and to manage their activity independently.

- Dynamics and novelty. This principle provides cognitive interest and intellectual activity among students. Drilling and repetition are to be avoided.

- Competition and effectiveness. Competition stimulates physical and intellectual activity.

- Communication and interaction.

- Role playing. It makes the game fit to life and professional conditions.

The playing methods have playing and teaching components. The playing activities are managed by the teacher; they establish favourable conditions for activating creative qualities, such as initiative, quickness of

wit, resourcefulness while evaluating the situation and making decisions. The playing activity is effective if the following conditions are provided:

- Students want to play.
- They have been taught how to play.
- They are ready to play.
- They get pleasure from playing, since:
 - they speak foreign language;
 - they are aware of techniques, but the content is new and exciting;
 - the process is unexpected and emotional;
 - they manage to solve the problem, etc.

At the same time the teacher:

- maintains favourable psychological atmosphere in the group;
- has a perfect command of the foreign language and good playing skills;
- knows well the syllabus to organize the playing activities respectively;
- has prepared the scenario beforehand;
- has prepared students for the playing activity and explained them goal and objectives of the game;
- has set the date to conduct the game.

Unfortunately a very few teachers apply playing methods in their work. Some take an interest in games but do not dare to start teaching in a new way. The reasons are as follows: inability to implement new methods, absence of a ready-made scenario, inability of preparing a student for a game, absence of means to organize a so-called «playing field», fear of failure, etc. Certainly teachers are aware that they would have to spend more time to prepare for a «playing lesson». Besides not all classrooms are equipped properly to apply there playing techniques. There are very few seminars where teachers could learn these new methods and strategies. That is why «playing lessons» are being replaced by short games, situations, riddles, etc. which does not contribute significantly to developing and improving teaching methods.

We have to admit that such situation is common for any educational sphere. Teachers of other sciences are not eager to implement new methods in teaching their subjects. Most methods are directed at gaining only one or at best two of elements of education: knowledge, skills and abilities. But they do not develop the experience of creative activity and the experience of emotional and evaluative activity. Such neglect of two important educating components decreases the level of motivation and professional efficiency, establishes formal attitude to education, and depreciates the role of education [6].

There is no doubt that this situation is to be changed. According to A. Verbitzky [7], there is need to transfer to system organization of education based on the principles of problem solving, dynamics, etc., there is need to

provide opportunities for creativity, to support the cognitive activity. There have to be implemented active teaching methods, since they stimulate positive feelings: joy of mastering new ways of learning activity, satisfaction by cognitive process and self-esteem, realization of own development and advancement [8].

First teachers have to realize that one of the most important didactical tasks is the search for ways and methods to teach their students to comprehend as well as to develop their creative abilities and independence. Secondly they have to apply and develop new effective methods which would encourage students' creative work to gain knowledge. Applying playing methods and techniques in teaching English will definitely encourage students' cognitive activity and motivation to gain new knowledge.

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