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TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN AN ABILITY-GROUPED CLASS

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Abstract: The article deals with the domestic and foreign experience of teaching a foreign language in ability - grouped class. The reasons for the emergence of heterogeneous groups common to different countries are revealed and the inevitability of their appearance is substantiated. The main content of the study is the recommendations of methodologists and practitioners of teaching foreign languages, who have developed many ways to solve problems associated with the different levels of students. The author's special attention is directed to the methodology of work in an ability grouped class of students studying a foreign language at a university.

Keywords: foreign language, ability-grouped class, learning process.

INTRODUCTION

Most of the technologies used in education are focused on a group way of learning with uniform requirements, time costs, the amount of material studied without taking into account the characteristics of the individual psychological development of each student, which does not bring significant results in learning.

We believe that the success of the learning process depends on many factors, among which education plays an important role in accordance with the abilities and capabilities of the child, i.e. ability grouped education.

Ability-grouped education is such an organization of the educational process in which each student has the opportunity to master the educational material in the subjects of the school curriculum at a different level, but not lower than the basic one, depending on his abilities and individual characteristics.

Differentiation is carried out not due to the fact that some students are given a smaller amount of material, while others are given more, but due to the fact that, by offering students the same amount of it, the teacher orients them to different levels of requirements for its assimilation. When dividing students into groups, the teacher should rely on the following:

- the general level of development of the student;
- features of mental development;
- individual characteristics of the student;
- rate of mastering the subject;
- student's interest in the subject.

The problem of teaching a foreign language in a group of different levels has been repeatedly raised by theoretical and practical teachers in the context of national education. In Russia today, predominantly private language schools have a real opportunity to group students according to their level of foreign language proficiency. In state higher educational institutions, according to the historical tradition, students are grouped according to the profile of the faculty and the year of study, and not according to the achieved level of competence in a foreign language. Thus, both those who passed the USE in a foreign language and those who begin to learn this language from scratch can be in the same group.

DISCUSSIONS

Undoubtedly, the best solution to this problem would be to divide students into groups according to their level of proficiency in the language being studied based on the results of the entrance test. However, division into subgroups often seems impossible due to routine scheduling problems, lack of classrooms, teachers, funding, or small group sizes. In such cases, the question often arises of the principle of effective learning in the current conditions, although recently in the academic professional environment there are methodological developments on the use of the so-called technology of mixed ability learning, which provides for the mastery of the material in one group at different levels (not lower than basic) [1].

The disadvantages of this technology today include the lack of thoroughly developed methods and forms of mixed ability training, methods and principles for constructing a lesson, a system of tasks and forms of control [1]. Therefore, studying the experience of working in mixed ability groups in our country and abroad is very relevant. Upon closer examination, it turns out that such a problem often occurs (and is solved!) in many countries, since, according to the British professor Penny Ur, each class consisting of more than one person is already considered heterogeneous [2].

Practice shows that even for each individual student, the level of proficiency in different types of speech activity (reading, speaking, listening and writing) can vary significantly. In addition, it should be taken into account that all students have different types of information perception, background knowledge, interests and needs in language learning.

The purpose of this study is to develop a technology for mixed ability teaching of a foreign language, especially in relation to university students. The objectives of the study include the collection, development and systematization of methods and forms of diagnosing the initial level of students, building and conducting classes in an ability grouped class, differentiation in the preparation of tasks and assessment of the achievements of students with initially different levels of foreign language proficiency.

The use of ability-grouped teaching helps the teacher to achieve the following goals:

For weak students:

Arouse interest in the subject through the use of basic level tasks that allow them to work according to their individual abilities.

Close gaps in knowledge and skills.

To form the ability to carry out independent activities according to the model.

For students of average ability:

- Develop a sustained interest in the subject.

- Consolidate and repeat existing knowledge and methods of action.
- Update existing knowledge for the successful study of new material.
- To formulate the ability to independently work on a task, project.

For strong students:

- Develop a sustained interest in the subject.
- To form new ways of action, the ability to perform tasks of increased complexity.
- To develop imagination, associative thinking, to reveal creative possibilities, to improve the language skills of students.

When working with an ability group, you can resort to the following methods in work:

- Group students in different ways and alternate types of work in groups;
- Set different goals for students depending on the level;
- Adapt textbook assignments.
- Group work

One way to solve the problem is to vary the types of work in the lesson: individually, in pairs, in groups.

You can form pairs according to the following principle: strong + strong and weak + weak, or strong + weak. Everything will depend on the task. However, in supervised practice tasks, it is recommended to group the weak with the strong together, since the strong student will support the weak one and even help with the rule if necessary.

Different purposes

Another way to solve the problem of mixed levels in the lesson is to set different goals in tasks for stronger and weaker students. For example,

In writing assignments, ask students to write a different number of paragraphs;

Memorize a different number of new words when learning new vocabulary;

Different "passing" score when performing tests at the end of the topic;

Adapting tasks to exercises

Everyone is familiar with the "Grade the task, not the text" rule. The essence of the reception is that for different levels the teacher creates different tasks for the exercises. Assignments can be adapted to work with all skills.

The task of the teacher is to overcome uniformity, shift the focus from the group of students to the personality of each of them with its individual capabilities and interests, create conditions for the development of cognitive activity and independence.

To maintain the unity of an ability grouped class, it is recommended to start and end the lesson in a frontal format, and the main part of the lesson - in the format of group work, dividing trainees into different subgroups to perform individualized tasks. An approximate plan for a typical lesson might look like this [4]:

1. The introductory part of the lesson (message of the topic and objectives of the lesson, warm-up) is common for the whole group.

To increase the motivation of students at the introductory stage, it is necessary to identify what they already know on this topic and what they would like to learn more.

Those who have previously studied this topic can, for example, write a thematic basic vocabulary on the board, after which beginners are tasked with making sentences or a coherent text with it. At this time, the teacher can expand the vocabulary of continuing students, introducing them to new words, phraseological units and proverbs.

2. The main part of the lesson is individual tasks for different groups of students.

- Dividing into one type of groups (for example, pairs) with an independent task and simultaneous work of the teacher with another part of the group.
- Dividing into another type of groups (for example, 3-4 people each) and independent work of students with materials prepared by the teacher.

For example, during the main part of the lesson on the topic "Family", beginners can be invited to draw their family tree and prepare a simple story about their family according to the model from the elementary level textbook, and then practice talking and asking about families in pairs, changing partners. Those who continue,

meanwhile, can be given an article on the types of families, family problems, etc., offering to discuss it or express their opinion in writing.

3. The end of the lesson - a common task or game, joint summing up, homework.

A well-chosen game ensures repetition of the material being studied, relieves stress after the lesson by involving beginners and giving them the opportunity to win “by chance” or participating in a mixed team. In a role-playing game, everyone can use the language at their own level.

Another way to end the lesson is to watch a video, for which beginners can write a summary of what they have watched as homework, while continuing students can write an essay about the issues raised or a review.

Careful lesson planning is especially important when working with different levels of audience to avoid chaos and fragmentation. Like a well-written essay, a lesson should have a clear purpose, a bright beginning and a memorable end, a unique style, a logical structure with smooth transitions, valuable content and an exciting spirit [5]. Teaching in an ability grouped class can be compared to the work of a conductor who simultaneously leads each part of the singers in a choir or a group of instruments in an orchestra, allowing the soloists to shine and not forgetting the integrity and overall impression of the work.

CONCLUSIONS

The method of leveled teaching can be used by the teacher at different stages of the lesson (learning new educational material, consolidating knowledge, applying it creatively), in lessons of various types, for independent work of students in the lesson.

There are no absolutely weak students. Everyone has strengths. If the student knows his individual characteristics, he will be able to realize his strengths with maximum benefit for himself. Creating favorable conditions for the manifestation of the abilities of weak students, namely the absence of a rigid framework in educational

activities in the lesson, the possibility of choosing an exercise, varying the pace of the lesson contribute to the realization of the positive expectations of the student.

In addition to lesson activities, mixed ability training, which we also use in extracurricular work in a foreign language, in unity with the compulsory course, creates conditions for a more complete implementation of practical, educational and developmental learning goals. Thanks to mixed ability training, the activity and working capacity of students increase, motivation to study the subject increases, and the quality of knowledge. Assessment in a multi-level group should, according to the authors, be not only differentiated and motivating, but also capable of objectively reflecting the achieved level of language proficiency according to generally accepted world standards. In this regard, it would be advisable to indicate this level in educational documents. The potential result of applying ability grouped approach in the context of teaching a foreign language in higher education should be an increase in the level of each student in a psychologically comfortable and creatively close-knit academic environment.

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