

RESEARCH NOTES

Innovative Approaches to Teaching Foreign Languages at the University

Enfoques innovadores para la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras en la universidad

Natalia Germanovna Shchebunyaeva 

Military University of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, Russia.
ORCID: 0000-0002-0382-3542

Natalia Valentinovna Guseva 

Military University of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, Russia.
ORCID: 0000-0003-2422-1951

Galina Ivanovna Polyanskaya 

Military University of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, Russia.
ORCID: 0000-0003-1250-1315

Elena Yurievna Fedorova 

Military University of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, Russia.
ORCID: 0000-0001-6874-1946

Olga Pavlovna Burlakova 

Military University of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, Russia.
ORCID: 0000-0001-4457-3180

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*Correspondencia

Email: ngs55@mail.ru

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Summary

The article is concerned with the substantiation of innovative approaches to teaching foreign languages at the university. It is established that during the professional training of specialists at the university, the special emphasis should be given to the application of innovative forms and methods of training aimed at qualitative mastering of knowledge, abilities, and skills, developing students' mental activities, identifying skills of critical addressing the problems, gaining experience of independent learning of training materials, conducting exploration work, and gaining qualities that will be useful in professional activities and later in life. It is proved that the effectiveness of teaching foreign languages at the university will depend on the desire and ability of teachers to take advantage of successful practices in the humanistic approach to teaching, understanding the need to abandon authoritarian and scholastic teaching methods.

Keywords: innovation, training, foreign language, professional training, abilities, skills, university.

Resumen

El artículo se ocupa de la sustanciación de enfoques innovadores para la enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros en la universidad. Se establece que durante la formación profesional de los especialistas en la universidad, se debe dar especial énfasis a la aplicación de formas y métodos innovadores de formación orientados al dominio cualitativo de conocimientos, habilidades y destrezas, desarrollando las actividades mentales de los estudiantes, identificando habilidades. de abordar críticamente los problemas, adquirir experiencia de aprendizaje independiente de los materiales de capacitación, realizar trabajos de exploración y adquirir cualidades que serán útiles en actividades profesionales y más adelante en la vida. Está comprobado que la efectividad de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras en la universidad dependerá del deseo y capacidad de los docentes de aprovechar prácticas exitosas en el enfoque humanista de la enseñanza, entendiendo la necesidad de abandonar los métodos de enseñanza autoritarios y escolares.

Palabras clave: innovación, formación, lengua extranjera, formación profesional, habilidades, competencias, universidad.

Introduction

In the system of innovative changes taking place in society, one of the first places is occupied by updating the content of higher education to train competent and competitive graduates, who due to high-quality foreign language training, will be able to implement their social and language mobility in intercultural communication and cooperation. Consequently, in these circumstances, effective learning of foreign languages through the use of innovative forms and methods of teaching in the educational process is particularly important.

In this case, it is especially important to employ innovative forms and methods of teaching in the educational process along with the traditional ones, because they stimulate students' creative activity, teach them to think, help them overcome diffidence, promote self-affirmation, make the learning process exciting and interesting, and most importantly, encourage students to engage in dialogue in a foreign language of professional communication.

The study of innovative approaches in teaching foreign languages at the university is reflected in the works of E.V. Volodina (2018), V.V. Vonog (2018), E.V. Ignatova (2015), A.O. Klimenko (2017), V.V. Kotenko (2020), L.P. Khalyapina (2012), and others.

However, the study of scientific works shows that there are major contradictions between the need and expediency of perfect learning of foreign languages at the university and the insufficient actualization of this problem in the educational space, as well as between the presence of innovative forms and methods of mastering a foreign language and the insufficient level of their application in higher education practice.

Methods

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research includes the abstract-logical method, methods of induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis, and systematization, used to justify innovative approaches to teaching foreign languages, as well as graphic method employed to study the level and trends of the parameters reflecting the development of the foreign languages teaching system under present-day conditions.

The information base of the article includes statistical data of state bodies, legislative and regulatory documents governing the implementation of innovative methods of teaching foreign languages, approaches to regulating the system of interaction between the main participants in the educational process, as well as the results of scientific research (Agamirova et al., 2017; Lukiyanchuk et al., 2020; Zavalko et al., 2017).

In the course of the research, it is planned to identify and characterize innovative forms and methods of professional training of students in foreign language classes and identify their impact on the effectiveness of foreign language training in the current context.

Results

The practice has shown that to express students' own views and beliefs, compare them with the attitudes of opponents, defend their opinions in the educational process, it is important to use the educational discussion method which is used for group discussion of the problem, creating a situation of the cognitive dispute to achieve the truth by comparing different opinions. This method teaches students to think independently, develops their skills of practical analysis and careful argumentation of propositions, as well as teaches them how to maintain their own point of view.

Note that an important condition for the effectiveness of educational discussion in the course of learning a foreign language is a preliminary program and language training which consists in accumulating the necessary knowledge on the topic of discussion. In this case, when studying a foreign language at the university, it is necessary to attach great importance to the use of the Pro and Contra Debates method which provides competition between two teams.

Therefore, one can identify the main prerequisites for conducting debates: the presence of two opposite attitudes on the problem highlighted by the teacher; each team must carefully prepare their arguments: each speech must be supported by evidence, speakers must be prepared for the questions and arguments of opponents; participants in the debates speak consistently. The victory is awarded to the team that proved their standpoint and refuted the opposite viewpoints more effectively and argumentatively.

During the professional training of students in foreign language classes, it is important to use the method of creating problem situations, which is based on an example of a real-life situation. Note that training using this method can take place in groups of 4-6 people, and is

focused on the development of students' mental strength, independence, activity, and creative thinking.

Research shows that an important prerequisite for using the method of creating problem situations in the educational process is the independent problem formulation by students based on the issues of concern and cognitive tasks, the search for ways to solve them through hypothesizing, problem-solving, and verification of the results.

Besides, the method of creating problem situations involves the following steps:

At the first initial stage, students get acquainted with the problem situation, establish the prerequisites for its occurrence, formulate key tasks, and search for possible ways to solve it by forming various hypotheses.

The second informative stage is focused on the independent formation by students of the source base. The criteria for selecting information are the key tasks identified in the first stage.

At the third stage of the panel discussion, students determine all alternative ways to solve the set problem and analyze various possible options and ways to solve it.

The fourth resolution stage consists in determining by students the priority ways to solve the problem put forward, based on all the identified arguments.

At the fifth debate stage, each group of students presents the research results and puts forward the greatest number of arguments regarding the truthfulness of their ideas put forward. Other groups carefully check the validity and consistency of their claims. At this stage, the positive feature is the opportunity for students to get acquainted with various viewpoints regarding the solution of the proposed problem and the logic of its solution.

At the final stage of comparative generalization, the results of the study of each group are compared with those already existing in real life, the most likely ways to overcome the problem put forward are identified, and the work done by students is summed up.

The practice has shown that the use of the method of creating issues of concern in the educational process ensures strong assimilation of knowledge by students, makes educational activities exciting because it teaches them to overcome difficulties independently.

The research materials show that no less effective in the professional training of students in foreign language classes are business games, which contribute to the creation of an emotionally elevated atmosphere, assimilation of educational material through an emotionally rich form of its reproduction.

Research shows that business games play important role in the educational process since they model life and work situations, professional relationships among people, the interaction of things, phenomena, help students overcome uncertainty, promote self-affirmation, and the most complete identification of their strengths and capabilities. They can serve as auxiliary methods in the educational process when learning a foreign language.

At that, the enriching effect is achieved through improvisation and the natural manifestation of free creative powers of students. Therefore, the use of information and communication technologies is important in foreign language classes. The difficulty of mastering foreign languages is due to the lack of experience and practice of communicating

with native speakers, and limited opportunities to listen and comprehend a foreign language speaker. It is through the Internet that students have the opportunity to listen and watch videos online, communicate with native speakers, and understand the culture of the country whose language they are learning.

The practice has shown that the state needs highly qualified specialists proficient in foreign language, professionals, who are able to learn everything new and progressive, ready to generate and implement original ideas, as well as to participate profitably in international cooperation, and form a new approach to the world.

The demands of the time and the new radical reform of the education system orient teachers to abandon the authoritarian style of teaching in favor of using methods that promote the development of the creative abilities of the individual, taking into account the individual characteristics of participants in the educational process and communication. In this case, language is the main means of human communication, and even several languages – in a multilingual space. This is why learning a foreign language is getting currently a special status.

Besides, the current state of international relations of the Russian Federation in various life spheres, its entry into the world space, new political, socio-economic, and cultural realities require certain transformations in education as an important state institution, including that in teaching foreign languages.

Today, as never before, the status of a foreign language tends to grow steadily. Among the world community, foreign language is increasingly becoming a means of intercultural communication. This predetermines the definition of the main strategic directions for improving the goals, content, methods, techniques and means of teaching a foreign language.

In this case, the main areas of updating the content of higher education are the personality-oriented education system, priority of universal and national values, as well as ensured quality of education based on the latest achievements of science, culture, and social practice. This results in the formation of a characteristic tendency to strengthen the communicative orientation of the educational process, its approach to the real communication process. Therefore, the methodological content of contemporary foreign language teaching should take into account the competence-based approach (Fig. 1).

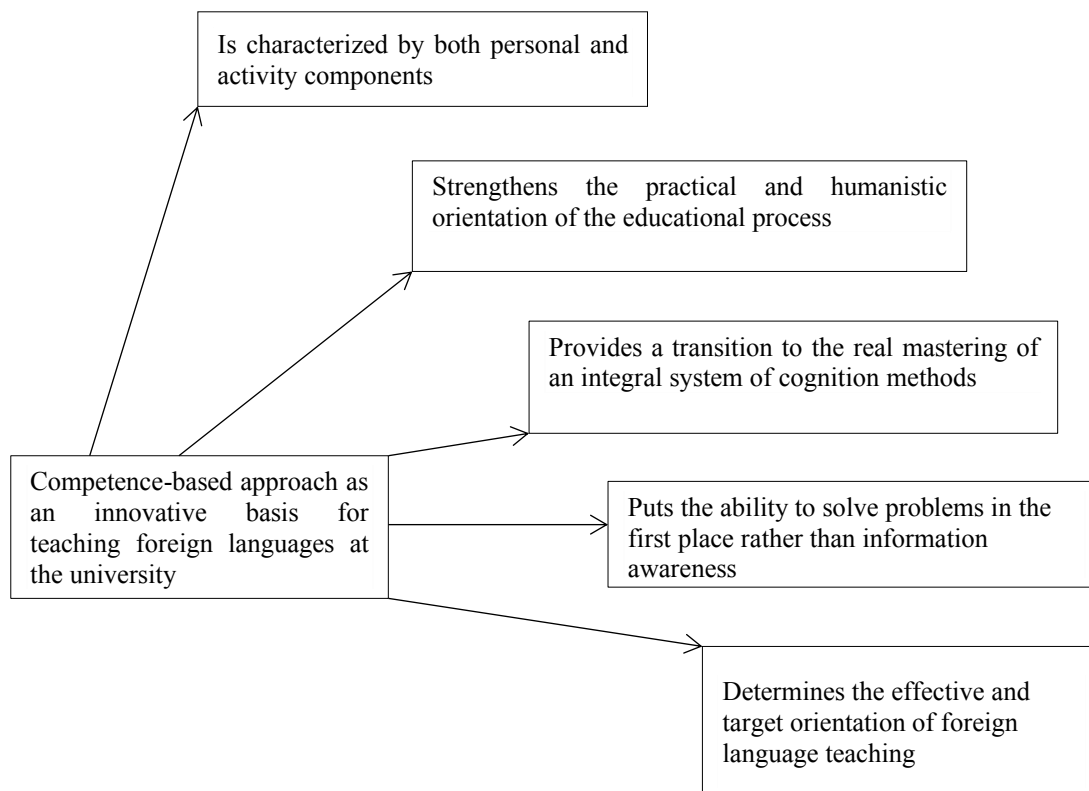


Figure 1. Competence-based approach as an innovative basis for teaching foreign languages at the university

The practice has shown that in the course of learning based on the communicative method, students acquire communicative competence, i.e. the ability to use the language depending on the specific situation. They learn to communicate in a very communication process. Accordingly, all exercises and tasks should be communicatively justified by the deficiency of information, choice, and reaction. Therefore, the most important characteristic of the communicative approach is the use of authentic materials, that is, those that are used by native speakers. At that, the communicative approach implies the use of communicative competence, which includes speech, language, and sociocultural competence (Fig. 2).

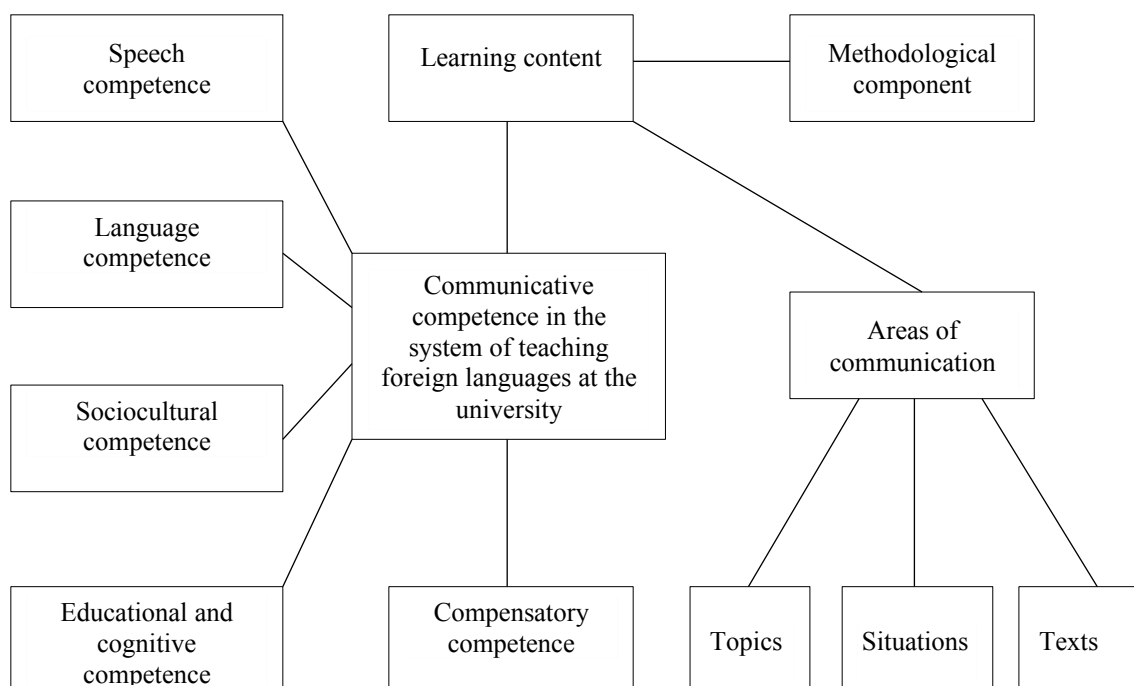


Figure 2. Digitalization development strategy in education in the current context

In this case, the item subject to evaluation is not only the correctness but also the speed of speech and reading. At the same time, a foreign language teacher uses the latest teaching methods that combine communicative and cognitive goals to achieve communicative competence, i.e. communication skills formed based on language knowledge, skills, and abilities. Innovative methods of teaching foreign languages, based on a humanistic approach, are aimed at the development and self-improvement of the individual, the uncovering of an individual's hidden capabilities and creative potential. They create prerequisites for the effective improvement of the educational process at the university.

Research shows that the main principles of contemporary methods are transition from the whole to the individual, the fixation of classes on the students, purposefulness, and meaningfulness of classes, their focus on achieving social interaction if the teacher is confident in the success of learners, integration of language and its assimilation through the knowledge from other fields of science.

At the same time, the interactive method provides an opportunity to solve communicative and cognitive tasks through foreign language communication. The category of interactive learning can be defined as follows: a) interaction between the teacher and the student in the course of communication; and b) training aimed at solving linguistic and communicative problems. In this case, interactive activities include the organization and development of interactive speech which is aimed at mutual understanding, interaction, and solving problems that are important for each of the participants in the educational process.

At that, the authors highlight the main principles of the cooperation methodology in the interactive learning system, namely, positive interdependence – the group succeeds provided that each student performs tasks well; individual responsibility – working in a group, each student performs a task different from others; equal participation – each student is given the same amount of time to conduct a conversation or complete a task; and simultaneous interaction – when all students are involved in the work.

Discussion

The reliability of the presented approaches is confirmed by the fact that interactive learning forms are effective if the problem is discussed previously in the classroom, and students have certain experiences and opinions gained earlier in the learning process (Kuznetsova et al., 2020; Ogloblina et al., 2020; Voskovskaya et al., 2020). The teacher should also take into account the fact that the topics for discussion should not be restricted.

Among certain advantages of interactive learning, the following should be highlighted: establishing a friendly atmosphere and relationships among participants in communication; providing students with the opportunity to be more independent and confident; encouraging students to cooperate, bearing them up, making them not afraid to make mistakes; creating the comfortable environment to overcome their fear of the language barrier.

Thus, the latest methods of teaching foreign languages contribute to a one-time solution of problems of a communicative, cognitive, and educational nature, such as developing skills of consciousness, establishing emotional contact with students, teaching them to work in a team, and taking into account the opinions and statements of others. At the same time, the use of these teaching methods relieves students' tension, changes the forms of activity, and draws attention to the main issues.

At the same time, the study and application of innovative methodological approaches in practice provide an opportunity for foreign language teachers to implement and improve new methods of work, increase the efficiency of the educational process, and the level of knowledge of students. Besides, the new vision of education aims to create a motivational environment for students in the course of learning foreign languages. At that, the principle of a functional approach in the course of learning foreign languages is the main one.

Conclusion

Summing up, it can be noted that during the professional training of specialists at the university, the special emphasis should be given to the application of innovative forms and methods of training aimed at qualitative mastering of knowledge, abilities, and skills, developing students' mental activities, identifying skills of critical addressing the problems, gaining experience of independent learning of training materials, conducting exploration work, and gaining qualities that will be useful in professional activities and later in life.

At that, the effectiveness of teaching foreign languages at the university will depend on the desire and ability of teachers to take advantage of successful practices in the humanistic approach to teaching, understanding the need to abandon authoritarian and scholastic teaching methods. Foreign language teaching methods, based on a humanistic approach, help to reveal the creative potential of students and contribute to the development and self-improvement of the communication process.

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