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## Communicative Approach as a Means of Learning a Foreign Language in Higher Education

### Summary

The article substantiates the importance of using a communicative approach in foreign language teaching. The term “communication” is interpreted by scientists as a totality, meaningful generalisation of theoretical and practical knowledge presented in the form of concepts, principles, provisions that promote mutual understanding, and situations necessary for successful interactions. The purpose of teaching a foreign language in a higher education institution is the possession of future teachers of communicative competencies that allow them to implement their knowledge, skills and abilities to solve creative problems.

The principles of communicative learning are determined: the principle of speech and mental activity, individualisation, functionality, and novelty. The main factors of effective application of the communicative approach important for teaching a foreign language are highlighted: communicative orientation of all kinds of training; the main link in learning by their interests, abilities, and needs; teaching materials are presented on a thematic or functional basis.

Communicative teaching methods are identified, which are based on a humanistic approach and aimed at the development and self-improvement of the individual, the disclosure of its reserve capabilities and creative potential, create conditions for effective improvement of education in higher education.

The scientific novelty of forming students’ communicative skills in higher education institutions is determined by changes in the education system, focusing on the formation of communicative competence of future professionals.

The use of pedagogical tasks in foreign language classes allows students to form a communicative culture, skills and abilities of foreign language communication; contributes to the real, personal preparation of students for future professional activities; makes foreign language classes more interesting and meaningful. Orientation of foreign language classes on the development of professionally necessary communicative skills and communicative culture ensures the implementation of the principles of the contextual approach of learning, increases students’ motivation for learning and the success of foreign language learning.

**Keywords:** creative methods, speech activity, future teacher, English language, learning motivation

### 1. Introduction

The globalisation of modern society, the rapid development of modern information technologies, and the deepening of Ukraine’s ties with other countries intensified the interest in learning foreign languages. Intensifying and optimising ways of improving foreign language by specialists in any field are becoming more and more topical. Great changes are taking place in education. As a result of these processes, a search is being made for new approaches, special educational techniques and methods of teaching foreign languages in higher education institutions. The

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new tasks include changes in the requirements for the level of language proficiency, the definition of new approaches to the selection of content and the organisation of the material. In order to achieve a high level of foreign language, it is important for the teacher to use the latest teaching methods and to be able to choose one or another method according to the level of knowledge, needs and interests of students.

The organisation of education in foreign languages at the present stage involves the improvement of foreign language communicative competence in different kinds of speech activities. The need to improve knowledge of a foreign language is constantly growing. As many enterprises are created, there is a need for direct contact with foreign partners and the prospect of professional growth in the presence of a foreign language. The social and economic changes started in Ukraine have contributed to the growing importance of stimulating student creativity and initiative, which requires the application of new progressive concepts, modern educational technologies, and scientific and methodological achievements in the education system. Learning a language creates conditions for free communication and opens access to human experience and new information technologies.

In the practice of higher education, there are contradictions between the creative nature of the cognitive activity and the reproductive nature of learning, the growth of educational information to be assimilated, the complexity of the professional function of modern teachers and the underdeveloped ability of future teachers to perform creatively. Resolving these contradictions involves finding new approaches to the organisation of higher education. Therefore, the urgency of the problem of the formation of communicative skills of students in higher education institutions is due to changes in the education system, focusing on the formation of communicative competence of future professionals.

**The article aims** to determine the key characteristics of the communicative method as the optimal means of learning foreign languages; analyse the features of its practical application.

**The main tasks of the research:**

- introduction with the basic concepts of research;
- definition of the main components of the theory of modern foreign learning language and the

basics to teach students to use theoretical knowledge for solving practical problems;

- development of communicative competence of students;
- forming professional and methodological skills during practical classes.

## 2. Analysis of Recent Research and Publications

Practical importance for our work are the results of research in the field of philosophy, pedagogy, psychology, communicative linguistics, methods of teaching a foreign language, in particular: the formation of a general culture of personality (I. Vasylenko, V. Davidovich); regularities of personality development (Yu. Babansky, L. Bozhovych, O. Leontiev, G. Shevchenko); pedagogical interaction in the development of professionalism of future specialist (B. Ananiev, T. Vichynska, V. Kan-Kalik, A. Petrovsky); linguistic and psycholinguistic features of communication (T. Ryabov); basics of communication theory (T. Nadiina); specially organised activity of the individual and its development in the process of activity (L. Vygotsky); the role of play in learning a foreign language (N. Baryshnikova, A. Verbytsky, Y. Druz, S. Melnyk); game forms of development of foreign language communication (P. Baranov, N. Gez, I. Gorelov, E. Shubin); communicative approach to teaching foreign languages (I. Zymnya, E. Passov, G. Kitaygorodskaya, I. Bim).

A significant place in the development of the communicative approach in foreign language teaching is occupied by the works of S. Savignon, M. Berns, P. Corder, Teun A. Van Dijk, D. Hymes, C. Faerch, M.A.K. Halliday, G. Kasper, H. Stern, D. Nunan, E. Bialystok, J. Rubin, and I. Thompson.

Zimnyaya (2001) defines speech activity as a process of active, purposeful and due to situation of communication, reception and message delivery in the interaction of people with each other.

According to Passov (2001, p. 41), communicativeness presupposes the speech orientation of education, the essence of which is not so much to achieve a practical speech goal but that the path to this goal is a practical mastery of language. Practical speech orientation is not only a goal but also a means. The communicative method is aimed at learning to speak,

so it is a type of speech activity and a means of communication that involves five principles: the principle of speech and mental activity, the principle of individualisation in the leading role of the personal aspect, the principle of functionality. All these principles fully reflect the laws of communicative learning of speech activity.

According to Korol (2012, p. 133), the essence of the communicative approach is to impart to students not knowledge of the language as a system but to give them speech skills and abilities for practical application in any foreign language situation. Therefore, the communicatively oriented method of teaching foreign languages is designed to bring those who study a foreign language closer to the real communication conditions.

Thus, scholars interpret communicative competence as a totality, meaningful generalisation of theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of communication, presented in the form of concepts, principles, and provisions that promote mutual understanding and situations necessary for successful language interaction. In this context, we can consider the structure of communicative competence, which includes the following components: motivational, cognitive, personal and activity.

### **3. Communicative Language Learning as a Teaching Method**

The problem of reorientating education to teaching students the skills of independent acquisition and transformation is relevant for higher education institutions. It is necessary to consider the innovative nature of educational institutions, integrative organisation of educational content, growth of spirituality in the structure of personal characteristics of the future specialist, and focus on the formation of future teachers of creative thinking and communication culture.

Today, the term “communicative language learning” is used both to study the whole direction in which the development of methods of teaching a foreign language in recent years and to define specific principles and methods. Communicative is understood as the focus on the speaker, the optimal learning in terms of the effectiveness of influencing others. This approach is aimed at building a dialogue, and its implementation is also in a modern methodology

called “communicative activity” (Halskova, 2000, p. 115). It promotes the formation of learning a structured set of knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and attitudes that will enable a young professional to identify and solve any problems that arise in a particular area of his professional activity. Competences contain intellectual, emotional and moral components that are personal formations, thus contributing to the solution of not only professional but also individual and social needs of the individual.

Representative of the communicative method of teaching, E. Passov (2001, p. 36), believed that communicativeness is that our learning should be organised so that its basic qualities and features are similar to communication. Practical language orientation is not only a goal but also a means, where both are directly mutually conditioned.

### **4. Communicative Learning as an Activity**

The main purpose of this communicative technique is to teach students to speak and think fluently. To do this, you need to recreate the different situations in which the student can think. Communicative exercises are most often used. By communicative exercises, we mean exercises that encourage students to casual verbal communication. Passov (2001) emphasises that “exercises should be speaking ones when the speaker has the certain language task and when he performs a certain language influence on the speaker”.

There are the following basic communicative exercises:

- responsive exercises (questions, answers, replica exercises, conditional conversation);
- situational exercises (situations to supplement, problem and role situations);
- reproductive exercises (translation, staging);
- descriptive exercises (descriptive of elementary images, plots, real objects);
- discussion exercises and others.

The main tasks implemented through the communicative exercises:

- development of communicative competence of students;
- productive assimilation of educational material and development of its practical use;

- increase cognitive activity and motivation of students;
- formation of critical thinking;
- enrichment of social and communicative experience;
- education of individuals as citizens of democratic society (Sclirenko, 1999, pp. 3–8).

Communicative learning of foreign languages is an activity, as language communication is carried out through “language activities”, which solve the problems of productive human activity in terms of “social interaction” of people communicating with each other. Participants try to solve real and imaginary problems with the help of a foreign language (Zimnyaya, 2001).

According to Zimnyaya (2001, p. 93), “speech activity is a process of active, purposeful, language-mediated and conditioned by the situation of communication, interaction between people”. Nikolaeva also defines the essence of the communicative method, saying that language learning has an activity nature: setting and solving specific learning tasks by students. The scientists offer means of implementation: role-playing games, problem situations, and free communication. There are also requirements for the organisation of education: communicative behaviour of the teacher in class, extensive use of communication situations, parallel learning of grammatical form and its function in speech, taking into account the individual characteristics of the student, especially his personal sphere. Nikolaeva (2008, p. 42) names activity organisation forms: collective, interactive, and the teacher’s cooperation with students.

The modern state of foreign language teaching methods shows that the leading technology is communicative, which is based on the following provisions:

- the purpose of training is the formation of communicative competence, which involves the development of skills to use a foreign language as a means of communication in various spheres of life;
- the organisation of language material is focused on its functioning in speech;
- lexical and grammatical correctness of foreign language speech is secondary compared to thought, the main criterion for success is the transmission or perception of the required information;

- communicatively oriented learning has an activity character and is carried out through certain actions in game, imitation forms in the conditions of real communication in pairs and groups;
- learning of speech activities is integrated;
- in the communicatively oriented learning model, all the characteristic features of natural human communication are information deficit, feedback, choice and authenticity of materials (Panova, 2010, pp. 53–54).

The communicative method aims to simultaneously develop basic speech skills (oral and written speech, grammar, reading and listening) in lively and relaxed communication. Teaching a student to communicate in a foreign language is a primary task of the teacher. Vocabulary and grammatical structures are presented in the context of a real emotional situation, contributing to the rapid and stable memorisation of educational material. Applying such a system requires a highly qualified teacher teaching a foreign language.

We highlight the following principles of the communicative method of teaching foreign languages:

- activity nature of communicative learning, as speech communication occurs through speech activity. Mastering the language should take place in the course of creative activities that stimulate students’ cognitive activity;
- the focus of students’ learning is not on acquiring language skills but on grammatical, lexical, phonetic, and speech skills that provide the opportunity to carry out foreign language speech activities during communication, the implementation of the language in acts of communication;
- humanistic approach to learning: students get the opportunity to freely express their thoughts and feelings, self-expression becomes more important than the demonstration of language skills, participants feel safe from criticism and punishment for mistakes, and the norm is individual violations of language rules and mistakes. The focus is on the student’s personality (learner-centred approach);
- students’ interest in learning by their interests, abilities and needs (the whole person approach). The language course should be focused on me-

eting the speech needs of a certain category of learners.

In learning by communicative method, students acquire communicative competence, the ability to use language depending on the specific situation. Accordingly, all exercises and tasks should be communicatively justified by information deficit, choice and reaction (information gap, choice, feedback).

Communicative competence may include the following aspects:

- knowledge of how to use languages for different purposes and functions;
- knowledge of how language changes depending on one or another communicative situation and the participants of this situation (for example, knowledge of differences between formal language from informal, oral from written);
- the ability to create, read and understand texts of different types and characters (for example, stories, interviews, dialogues, reports);
- ability to maintain conversations with limited lexical and grammatical bases (Rahmanina, 1998, p. 130).

Therefore, it is important to use the latest teaching methods that combine communicative and cognitive goals to achieve communicative competence based on language knowledge, skills and abilities. Innovating methods of teaching foreign languages, based on a humanistic approach, are aimed at the development and self-improvement of the individual, the disclosure of its reserve capabilities and creative potential. These methods create the preconditions for the effective improvement of education in higher education institutions.

## 5. Conclusions

Thus, the use of pedagogical tasks in foreign language classes allows students to form a communicative culture, skills and abilities of foreign language communication; develops the habit of mutual control; contributes to the real, personal preparation of students for future professional activities; makes foreign language classes more interesting and meaningful; gives students the opportunity to more often express their thoughts, feelings, assessments, use a foreign language for professional purposes.

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