Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

Paper in Conference Proceedings

Communicative Training as a Modern Interactive Means of Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Sabina Ravilevna Mardanova[1], Julia Victorovna Ageeva[2], & Lin Mei[3]

[1]Department of Russian as a Foreign Language, Preparatory Faculty for Foreign Students, Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Tatarstan, Russia; *sabina255@yandex.ru*

[2]Department of Russian as a Foreign Language, Faculty of Russian as a Foreign Language, Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Tatarstan, Russia; *jageeva@yandex.ru*

[3]Department of Foreign Language, Faculty of Russian Language, Xi'an International Studies University, Xian, China; *linmeimsk@sina.com*

Abstract

An increase in the number of international students studying Russian and the significance of the development of communication skills in the methodology of teaching foreign languages support the study's relevance. The study's findings provide a means of achieving the State Educational Standard for Russian as a Foreign Language's main objectives. The article presents a model for the development of communication skills in the instruction of Russian as a Foreign Language (levels B1 and B2) based on the theoretically demonstrated benefits of the communicative approach in the practice of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). General scientific methods (including analysis of psychological, educational, and methodological resources), methods of teaching foreign languages, and empirical methods were utilized within the scope of the study. The results of the study revealed that the specificity of the tasks for the development and control of speech skills is dependent on the TOEFL-2 principles to be considered in all levels of EFL and RFL instruction. Specifically, they could be implemented effectively in the development of communication training, a promising tool for the development and control of communication skills in preparation for the TOEFL-2 exam. The study provided a model of communication training that immerses students in an environment that most closely resembles actual communication. The use of communication training and associated assignments in the educational process facilitates the efficient practice of diverse forms of communication. As a result, students can master communication skills in educational, social, industrial, political, and other domains of interpersonal and intercultural interaction.

Keywords: Communicative Skills; English as a Foreign Language; Communicative Approach; Communicative Training; Education.

1. Introduction

The role of foreign languages in human life is changing as a result of the widespread societal transformations that are occurring. Therefore, the system of language education must reconsider previous approaches and guiding principles that emphasize the concept of intercultural dialogue when teaching foreign languages, including Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL). In this context, the communicative abilities of monologuing and dialoguing are especially valuable. The most difficult aspect of teaching RFL is activating the learning content. It involves the development of students' abilities to use their knowledge of the language, its characteristics, structure, and culture of native speakers to achieve communicative interaction goals in all language domains. Due to the lack of development of interactive methods for teaching RFL speaking, the study is relevant in this regard. There are unique aspects to teaching Russian to international students. The emergence of new methods and forms of instruction will facilitate the organization of high-quality, productive learning aimed at fostering students' communication skills and boosting their motivation to learn a foreign language (Mardanova, 2020).

The study presents a new direction of research by generalizing theoretical approaches to teaching RFL. For the first time, communicative assignments of the Speaking section (levels B1 and B2) are analyzed to justify a communicative approach to teaching Russian as a foreign language in accordance with TORFL-1 and TORFL-2 requirements. The purpose of the study is to develop a model for enhancing communication skills in classes of Russian as a foreign language

(B1 and B2 levels) based on the theoretical justification of the communicative approach's benefits in the development of communication skills in RFL (Besley et al., 2015).

2. Literature Review

State Standard for Russian as a Foreign Language notes that the communicative goal of teaching a language is the organization of speech in accordance with communication contexts and the rules of speech culture, thereby fostering the ability to "request and provide information within the context of topics and communicative situations" (Ivanova et al., 1999, p. 14). In other words, the development of communication skills is determined by the fact that the student should have a command of vocabulary, syntactic and morphological features, and collocation principles of the language that differ from those in native speech, form the ability to achieve communication goals through the use of various types of statements, and confidently use monologues and dialogues in speech (Besley et al., 2015).

The second language refers to a language other than the native language that a person learns later in life after mastering their first language. ESL education is also known as Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), or Teaching English to Non-English Speaking Students in English-speaking countries (TESOL). For several years prior to forming their own sentences, children must listen to the words, speeches, and conversations of others in order to acquire the native language. In contrast, learning a second language, which typically occurs after childhood, occurs more quickly, and people can construct sentences in less time. The primary distinction between a first and second language is that a person learns their native language during childhood. In contrast, a second language is acquired concurrently with and after the first. Foreign language study broadens human understanding of other cultures. This strengthens the connection between language and the human condition. Foreign languages broaden a person's worldview, enrich their experiences, and increase their adaptability and tolerance (Samchik, 2019).

3. Methodology

General scientific methods (analysis, synthesis, deduction, and induction); examination of psychological, educational, and methodological sources pertaining to the research topic; methods of teaching foreign languages (analysis of methodological guidelines, compilation of best practices); and empirical research methods (description, analysis of TORFL-1 and TORFL-2 tasks) are employed in this study.

4. Results

A communicative approach is currently regarded as one of the major paradigms for teaching foreign languages. It focuses on the needs and interests of students and emphasizes the use of authentic language in context. As a result of a lengthy historical evolution, the discussed approach in Russian education demonstrates the evolution of its own direction. The category *approach to learning* in the methodology of teaching foreign languages is fundamental. It reflects the diverse perspectives of researchers on language acquisition techniques. Moreover, there is a close relationship between the concepts of an *approach to learning* and a *teaching method*. The distinction lies in the fact that the learning approach is a collection of methods in the broadest sense (Mardanova, 2020).

One of the central ideas of the communicative approach is that communication is one of the fundamental functions of human speech (Yapparova et al., 2018; Mo et al., 2019; Samchik, 2019). However, the development of verbal skills presents significant challenges for international students (Bochina et al., 2014; Varlamova et al., 2016); the principles and provisions of the communicative approach are designed to overcome these obstacles. Although syllabi restrict the use of the communicative approach in teaching speaking, activating classroom and extracurricular work to improve self-control stimulates students' interest in learning the language. Different types of exercises (preparatory, verbal and communicative) can be offered to international students to develop their communicative skills. Preparatory exercises are understood to work with language elements; the development of speech and the ability to communicate in real-world situations are not the objectives. Verbal drills are designed to automate speech. The term "communicative exercises" refers to creative tasks that do not include a sample for guidance.

Currently, the level of Russian language proficiency of international students is typically determined by evaluating their communication skills. The requirements for TORFL B1 and B2 communication tasks are determined by the testing objectives. The B2 exam aims to define the level of language proficiency that is adequate for daily life, learning,

and, to a lesser extent, professional communication. Successful completion of TORFL-II proves that the tested person has reached a level that satisfies their interaction needs in all spheres of life.

According to our assessment, the Speaking section of TORFL-1 and TORFL-2 is comprised entirely of tasks based on the communicative approach. The analysis demonstrates that communication tasks at the B1 level are quite varied. However, they are designed to assess a limited range of communication skills and do not adequately reflect the particulars of Russian speech. In contrast, level B2 encompasses a broader range of testable communication skills. Personal teaching experience and a review of studies and methodological literature revealed that specific tasks for controlling speech skills, among other principles of testing Russian as a Foreign Language, should be considered when teaching all aspects of RFL at all levels. In particular, they could be utilized to develop the communication skills of students through communication training. The RFL communication training created by the article's authors has several advantages over other educational materials.

Communication training is an effective instructional tool for the social and communicative development of its participants (Besley et al., 2015) and preparation for the TORFL B1-B2 examinations. 1. The use of communication training in education must create environments in which students can maximize their social and verbal experience. In addition to fostering social and communicative competence, it contributes to the development of a number of important personal qualities and traits. 2. The use of communication training in education creates an intensive social environment for its participants, thereby fostering the communicative culture of the society and the social group. 3. The communication training compensates for the lack of direct everyday communication and enables the reproduction of a variety of actual communication contexts.

The communication training model was presented within the context of this study (Mardanova, 2020). It includes the following elements: Immersion in a communication situation, ensuring team productivity and motivation, employing existing communication skills actively, content, reflection, and summary. The first section introduces students to the context and presents the primary training topic. At this point, the ultimate objective of the training is determined, its rules are established, and participants are introduced to role-playing games. The organizer of the training may briefly describe the context by describing the training's purpose, objectives, process, and interactional principles. In addition, participants identify themselves by providing their names and other personal data. The procedures of the cluster contribute to the achievement of optimal results by fostering a favorable psychological environment.

The objective of the second section is to ensure the efficiency of the team. The participants in the training discuss their future expectations, doubts, and desires. Within this cluster, the rules of teamwork are outlined. To improve the activity of the team and each participant, a variety of additional exercises are provided, such as concentration and attention span exercises. Although not directly related to the RFL course's material, they are essential to the training's effectiveness. The third section is intended to motivate. Participants in the training reflect on communication issues. Barriers to communication are being eliminated, and motivation for learning RFL is being fostered. Group discussions and role-playing games could be utilized as motivational tools. Participants are given the opportunity to analyze their communication errors and increase their confidence for future success. The omission of this cluster and relocation to direct communication is infeasible, as the training participants must be transferred to the mode of readiness to conduct an independent analysis of the context and potential communication channels before they can be redirected to direct communication.

The fourth section aims to improve existing communication skills. At this stage, group discussions, role-playing games, and a wide variety of communication exercises can be used as training components. The ensuing section is informative. It directly targets the development of RFL communicative competence among training participants. Students acquire the skills and abilities necessary for effective communication. This section of the training can be repeated if multiple types of communication tasks are implemented. The final phase consists of a reflection on the results of the communication training and a summary of those outcomes. It provides a summary of the acquired data, the final results, and an analysis of each participant's and the team's activity. It is determined whether the results of the training correspond to the intended outcome. The primary objective of the training – the development and determination of international students' communicative competence – has been attained. The participants receive feedback and share their perspectives on the training and its outcomes. This phase provides a foundation for establishing preliminary objectives for subsequent activities.

The presented model of communicative training in RFL instruction is quite adaptable and could be implemented in both a single class and a series of training sessions. Depending on the specific objectives and circumstances, certain clusters may be omitted, e.g., to save time in class, among other factors. It should be noted that the key components of the communication training incorporated in each of the highlighted clusters are group discussion (in the form of a seminar, lecture, educational discussion, or round table), role play, and communication exercises. Each of these components addresses various issues with the communication training's material.

5. Discussion

The communicative approach emphasizes student needs and interests. It is focused on communication and could be used effectively to teach speaking a foreign language. This approach considers the particulars of real-world language use, thereby increasing students' motivation to master speech in a foreign language. The development of students' communication skills is facilitated by the functionality of the educational tasks they are solving during training.

This demonstrates the effectiveness of the communicative approach in preparing students to pass the TORFL-1 and TORFL-2 examinations. Communication training can be used as a fundamental teaching tool to introduce students to a context as close as possible to actual communication. Some aspects of the communication training may help international students address their most pressing concerns. Students have the opportunity to learn the characteristics of verbal and nonverbal communication (including intercultural communication) in the language environment in order to use a variety of means of communication when planning and analyzing communication activities and selecting the most effective ones. During the course of the research, a model of communication training was created. It is comprised of six clusters: immersion in context, ensuring team efficiency, motivation, active use of available communication skills, content, reflection, and summarizing the training's results. Each of the highlighted clusters includes communication training components such as group discussion, role play, and other communication exercises.

6. Conclusion

Through communication training and its tasks, the applied aspects of communication are incorporated into the speech of international students. The students are aware of the specifics of communication in various domains of interpersonal and intercultural relationships: educational, social, industrial, political, and others. The communication training improves the content of various information processes in which international students participate. Immersed in the culture of the new language (in this case, Russian), they have the opportunity to successfully develop the principles of intercultural cooperation at the interpersonal and group levels utilizing a variety of means of communication. The application of the presented model of communication training opens the door to further research opportunities. The proposed model could be used both as a complex communicative training and a separate game element of learning, a form of extracurricular and educational activities to develop the speech competence of international students in Russian.

Acknowledgments

Author Contributions

The authors contributed equally to the writing of the article.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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