

Facilitating students' information and communication culture when teaching a foreign language

By

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the problem of the development of students' information and communication culture through foreign language learning. Presently, people tend to deal with technology and multimedia on a daily basis. All spheres of our life have an impact of information and communication technologies. They determine the necessity to gain information from different sources, making use of media devices at any time and from any place of the world. It is reflected in teaching future specialists at universities. Modern education today is focused on training a qualified high-level worker, who will be ready for continuing professional development, applying the skill to use information effectively rather than the subject knowledge he received at university. Thus, it's crucially important for a young specialist to be able to work with information. It involves the skills of his studying the media resources, examining the information, drawing on critical thinking, deciding on the relevant details. The ability to differentiate between the significant facts and secondary ones as well as the ability to determine priority information are the key skills for a university graduate. The article presents a pedagogical experiment concerning the development of students' information and communication culture through foreign language teaching.

Keywords: information and communication culture, university students, foreign language, media education.

Introduction

Actualizing the problem

The idea that information rules the world is not new. Today the ability to work with this information underlies the basic principle of modern education. One of the main tasks of higher education today is to prepare a student for his future professional activity, the key point being not only theoretical knowledge of the subject but the skillfulness to obtain new knowledge through various media resources for the purpose of its further use in the process of his professional communication. In this regard, we are speaking about media education as the requirement of the modern world. It has become essential to develop students' critical thinking skills, while working with information and analyzing it. It is extremely important to teach them the skills of interpreting the information they get. Media education helps to solve this task. Apart from giving the right to freedom of expression and communication, media education gives rise to personal development and increases social interaction. Continuing professional development, post-graduate courses are boosted by media education.

Status of the problem

The analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature on media education, as well as the study of practical foreign language experience at the university revealed the approaches to student's information and communication culture through foreign language teaching in the following studies presented by domestic and foreign specialists: Critical thinking and the impacts of information literacy in research works by Heather R. Kennedy, Anne Marie H. Gruber (2020); A multicultural approach to digital information literacy in research works by Efrat Pieterse, Riki Greenberg, Zahava Santo (2018); Teaching information literacy withing a relational frame in research works by Andrew Whitworth (2009); Information and communication technologies for social communication in research works by Alkan, M., Meinck, S. (2016); Hypermedia and internet communication in the electronic age in research works by Cameron Richards (2000); Language learning with digital video in research works by Zachary Miller, Jeffery Maloney (2016); Social and academic uses of digital technology in research works by Echenique E.G., Molías L.M., Bullen M. (2015); Technology in language teaching and learning in research works by Chun, D., Kern, R., & Smith, B. (2016); Professional communication while rendering articles in research works by Nalimova I, Galiullina E, Gizyatova L. (2020); media resources in teaching foreign language in research works by Khairutdinov, R.R., Sosnovskaya, G.I. (2017); Mobile devices and communication in teaching English in research works by Valeev A.A, Ibatulina L.M, Kondrateva I.G, Abrosimova G. (2020); Interactive technologies in foreign language teaching in research works by Nazarova, M.V., Valeev, A.A. (2017); A virtual educational environment for learning a foreign language in research works by Sysoev P.V., Yevstigneev M.N. (2009).

Hypothesis

Facilitating students' information and communication culture when teaching a foreign language can be successfully performed if the educational process at university involves the following methodological conditions: Students are given the opportunity to analyze and use information from various media resources effectively; Relevant role of intellectual property rights regarding free access to information and its ethical use are determined; Students are provided with the conditions to pick out the essential details from a huge bulk of information; Students are given the opportunity for autonomous work and self-education.

Materials and methods

The task of the research

The tasks of the research are: 1) To justify the educational opportunities of media education for students' information and communication culture development; 2) To summarize the benefits of media literacy training in foreign language teaching; 3) To explore possibilities of information and communication technologies for an increase in learning motivation among university students; 4) To investigate the potential of a foreign language to enhance students' information and communication culture.

Theoretical and empirical methods

The following methods were used at various stages of the investigation: theoretical methods – outlining the problem of the research, analyzing domestic and foreign literature on the subject of the study, theoretical generalization of the results; empirical methods – observation, questioning, comparative analysis of the obtained results, pedagogical experiment.

The stages and the procedure of the experiment

The research was carried out at the Institute of fundamental medicine and biology of Kazan federal university within the framework of teaching first-year students to the subject of “Foreign language”. There were two stages of the research. At the initial stage (September 2019), students formed and practiced their abilities to gain information from foreign language media resources (professionally focused articles in medicine, video podcasts, reference books, presentations of their colleagues, etc.). At the final stage (May 2020), the level of students’ information and communication culture was evaluated and compared with the initial indicators.

The work with media resources for acquiring the information suggested searching for the topic under investigation both in class and independently. Students studied the material from their textbooks, practicing the new lexis, definitions and concepts. At this stage reference books, textbooks, online dictionaries, chat rooms were at students’ disposal. Undergraduates were supplied with the websites related to the material being studied. To consolidate the acquired knowledge of the topic students were provided with the video podcasts from the internet, as well as from the digital educational resource created for these purposes on the platform of Kazan federal university. Special lexical and comprehension exercises were worked out for the development of language and communication skills. In addition to this, to make a full coverage of the research topic students independently looked for professional articles in scientific journals practicing the investigatory skills, studied them, rendered the main idea, formulated the conclusion. In class problem-based learning was organized providing the students with the opportunity to share the information they studied, communicate their ideas and attitudes to the research topics, discuss the relevant issues together. At the final stage of the pedagogical experiment, criteria for evaluating students’ information and communication culture were suggested and developed.

Results

When exploring the professional disciplines and searching for relevant material, students realize that the greater part of professional (in our case, medical) information in the world is presented in a foreign language (English). It covers such authentic materials as the internet, radio and video podcasts, press, television, films and other sources. They suggest extra information for students to grasp and learn. Information is transforming and updating very fast. Thus, students can follow the changing data – either language concepts or professional facts. For example, the words stomatology and stomatologist are no longer found in online English language dictionaries (Oxford, Cambridge). Instead, the word dentistry and dentist are offered by these resources. As well as pronunciation of the language units (words) may be changing. New terms can appear in the language due to modern development of the world, political and economic situations and technological advances. All these are connected with the language communication. On the other hand, professional and scientific information is also changing. New experiments are being made, new equipment and devices appear, new theories develop, practical trials and investigations are conducted. In this regard, our experiment concludes that students’ information and communication culture focuses on the necessity of university undergraduates to learn the skills of 1) Working with information in a flexible way; 2) Scanning and comparing the information from various authentic media critically; 3) Interpreting the information properly; 4) Applying the acquired information for communication purposes effectively; 5) Ranking priority and relevance of information concerning the purpose of the research sensibly; 6) Understanding the value of information due to its free access and open sources; 7) Taking into consideration intellectual property rights; 8) Organizing self-learning

strategy. Based on this, the results of our experiment can be presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The results of students' information and communication culture development through foreign language teaching ("+" means increased percentage in indicators for the period September 2019 – May 2020)

Criteria for evaluating students' information and communication culture while teaching a foreign language	Control group	Experimental group
Increasing critical thinking skills	+5%	+65%
Developing linguistic skills	+10%	+80%
Facilitating communication skills due to increased language competence and being a wise consumer of the media	+7%	+75%
Raising motivation to communicate information in a foreign language	+20%	+90%
Improving media literacy	+15%	+70%
Increasing ability to arrange self-education	+10%	+60%
Expanding students' engagement in the learning process due to media relation to the real life	+15%	+90%
Improving self-expression skills	+10%	+80%

According to the diagnostic results, in the experimental group we observe a stable increase in all parameters in comparison to the control group. Thus, students who took part in the experiment demonstrate much higher indicators of facilitating communication skills taking into account increased language competence and wise consumption of the media. It suggests that the primary task of language education is achieved – communicative approach. Applying media resources in everyday use makes the process of learning a foreign language more related to life. It manifests itself in higher engagement of students in the educational process. All this testifies the idea of students' effective interaction with information from various media resources. More sophisticated critical thinking skills demonstrated by students of the experimental group give us the opportunity to say that the process of interpreting the information and choosing the most relevant facts from authentic media resources has become much easier for them. Owing to students' increased ability to organize self-educational process sensibly and effectively presupposes that they can manage their time fruitfully. In our opinion it entails higher foreign language proficiency, increased motivation for communication. Elevated indicators of students' skills to be wise consumers of media establish their improved awareness of the relevant role of information and intellectual property due to its free open access sources. All of the above advocate that our research confirmed the basic conditions of our hypothesis.

Discussions

Students' information and communication culture development is very closely related to the process of foreign language learning. In fact, it seems to us that they are interconnected. So, on the one hand, the higher students' language proficiency is, the more enhanced is their information and communication culture. On the other hand, the development of students' information and communication culture suggests higher foreign language proficiency. These processes are inseparable from each other. Consequently, if we assume that one of the main tasks of foreign language education today is to teach communication skills, in other words

skills of exchanging information, we need to pay special attention to media education, media literacy. Multimedia technologies enable quick access to information from open sources. In this regard, information and communication technologies are indispensable elements, instruments in modern education. The use of information efficiently for communication purposes makes it possible to achieve excellent results in foreign language learning. In modern world it is no longer important to obtain knowledge at university and use it throughout the working career. It's essential to develop and transform this subject knowledge into new experience and skill. It can be achieved if the person has highly developed information and communication culture, if he can navigate in the unlimited circulation of information, adapting it to his needs. The ability to interpret information and apply, manipulate it in accordance with the individual's requirements has become a crucial personal and vocational quality in everyday life, as well as in professional communication.

Conclusions

The study of facilitating students' information and communication culture in foreign language teaching has shown that these two processes are interconnected. The interaction between them is in direct proportion. It makes it possible to assert that a foreign language is not only the final goal of university education, but a means to develop the necessary and highly demanded professional character, information and communication culture. At the same time, the use of authentic media and technologies is not only the feature which makes our everyday life easier, but also the culprit of students' successful acquisition of foreign language.

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