SECTION 23.
PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATION

ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE IN MASTERS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CLASSES

Proficiency in one or more foreign languages (the most common in EU member states) is regarded as an integral attribute of a highly qualified manager. Improving the mechanisms for foreign language training of specialists in the field of public administration and management is seen as an important component of the comprehensive process of adapting the Ukrainian civil service to the standards of the European Union and preparing domestic managers for more active work in a foreign language environment. The quality of training of specialists in this field for foreign language communication depends on a number of factors, namely: regulatory and legal support, the national education system, the impact on the process of career growth of an employee and his/her general motivation for self-development, advanced training in this area.

A foreign language in higher education institutions is not just one of the disciplines of the humanitarian block, which contributes to the acquisition of knowledge in the specialty, but a means of professional realization of a modern personality. Mastery and active use of English, the language of international communication and one of the official languages of the European Union, in the professional sphere is an urgent task, and for future specialists in the field of management and administration it is simply a "must have" of today, a necessary and unconditional requirement of the time.

The concept of English for Specific Purposes, understood as a particular type of foreign language learning, is a practical and goal-oriented approach [4] conceived to meet students' needs for specific language skills. Needs analysis should take into consideration several factors: text genre, context and personal agency [3] or the pedagogical need for authentic engagement [6].

Foreign language learning should lead to a positive result increasing potential for improved performance and further learning in future career. Teaching English for specific purposes to students in Public Administration in a public non-Anglophone university has its own particular characteristics. To have positive effects teaching English for specific purposes should adopt active learning strategies as well as blended learning strategies, case-based learning, effective class discussions and group work adapted to the needs of the modern society.

Most definitions of active learning focus on two key components: “doing” and “reflecting” or “action” and “experience” [7]. These two features of active learning strategies are stressed in many researches (Eison, 1991; Leamnson, 1999; Zull, 2011). As it is underlined in Zull’s research (Zull, 2011) students need to think about what they are doing. The scientist uses the term “metacognition” to describe this process.

Active learning includes any type of instructional activity that engages students in learning, beyond listening, reading, and memorizing [2]. The core elements of active learning are student activity and engagement in the learning process. According to Berry (2008) the following key
elements characterize all active learning approaches: (1) critical thinking, (2) individual responsibility for learning, (3) involvement in open-ended activities, and (4) organization of learning activities by the professor.

Active learning strategies are built upon constructivist theories of learning, which emphasize the importance of building connections between one’s prior knowledge and new experiences and concepts [1].

The main purpose of active learning is to get students engaged in their learning during class time with their instructor [6]. As Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, and Johnson (2005) indicate, engaging students in learning is principally the responsibility of the teacher, who becomes less an imposter of knowledge and more a designer and facilitator of learning experiences and opportunities. Adopting these approaches has enormous pay offs in terms of student learning.

Some examples might include talking to a classmate about a challenging question, responding to an in-class prompt in writing, making a prediction about an experiment, or applying knowledge from a reading to a case study. Active learning suggests both collaboration between students in pairs or larger groups and independent activities that involve reflection or writing-like quick-writes, or real-time polling in lectures [2].

These teaching approaches range from short, hands-on activities like journal writing or brief writing, problem solving tasks and discussion assignments to longer activities or pedagogical frameworks like case studies, role plays, and structured team-based learning [6], [1]. Together, these approaches seek to engage learners’ higher order thinking skills through the production and articulation of knowledge, as opposed to through the passive transmission of facts and ideas.

The technology of active learning in the foreign language training of future specialists in the field of public administration and management involves the use of active learning methods (project method, modelling of professional situations, role-playing and business games, round tables, etc.) focused on the student's personality, active participation in self-development, obtaining quality knowledge, professional skills, creative solution of specific problems [5], [7], [8].

The project method is based on the development of students' cognitive and creative skills and critical thinking, the ability to construct their own knowledge and navigate the information space. The didactic goal is achieved through a detailed study of the problem, which should result in a very real, tangible practical result, presented in one way or another. The project method is based on the idea of interaction and cooperation between Master's students during the learning process.

It creates conditions for the development of various necessary qualities: both autonomous and socially active personality, able to interact in a study group and take responsibility both personally and for the study group. The social roles that students assume and perform in project work (organizer, leader, performer, etc.) get them accustomed and prepared to perform and solve complex problematic professional tasks in situations close to real.

The method of modelling specific situations of professional foreign language communication is a strong motivating factor, as it allows discussing problems related to the future specialty.

Thus, this method ensures the realization of the following objectives:
- application of the knowledge and skills acquired by students in the classroom (in this case, students' language skills are correlated with theoretical knowledge of specialized disciplines and integrated into a holistic system of knowledge, skills and abilities);
- development of personal qualities and communication skills (the ability to communicate in a foreign language, listen to the interlocutor, express one's point of view reasonably and correctly, control emotions during the discussion, etc.)

Business conversations and role-playing games are a method of simulating decision-making in various professional situations. These methods stimulate cognitive interests, increase motivation and contribute to the intensification of the learning process.

The game-like nature of the tasks helps overcome language barriers, create a positive
emotional climate and the nature of interaction. Working on tasks designed as a business/role-playing game, students have the opportunity to practice lexical items and grammatical structures.

A new form of language games is the dilemma solution, which is a solution to problems faced by companies or institutions. Students offer their constructive methods and ways out of situations, identifying themselves with the company's employees and acting on their behalf. After brainstorming and collectively choosing a way to solve the problem, students are asked to familiarize themselves with the way to solve the proposed task.

In addition, students learn how to work in a team, create cooperative situations, acquire discussion skills (logically structure their own statements, listen to the interlocutor, respond tactfully to his or her messages, argue their point of view, correctly provide counterarguments, draw conclusions; and, most importantly, demonstrate a creative approach to solving the problem).

A round-table is one of the organizational forms of students’ cognitive activity which allows them to consolidate their previous knowledge, develop problem-solving skills, strengthen their positions, and learn the culture of discussion.

A characteristic feature of the round-table is the combination of a thematic discussion with a group consultation. Alongside the active exchange of knowledge, students develop professional skills in presenting their thoughts, arguing their opinions, justifying proposed solutions and defending their beliefs.

Thus, active learning methods allow to:
- create a situation of immersion into language and its culture;
- develop students’ creative thinking;
- facilitate students’ involvement in solving problems as close as possible to real professional situations;
- expand and deepen professional knowledge, develop practical skills and abilities;
- intensify students’ learning process, encourage their participation in it and ensure the development and self-development of students’ personalities based on the identification of his or her individual characteristics and abilities; promote the development of the ability to reflect, which helps students find an individual style of professional activity, allows them to achieve adequate professional and personal self-esteem, predict and analyze the results of their activities, and increase the level of self-organization.

The benefits of active learning strategies in teaching English for public administration and management students are numerous.

Firstly, they improve critical thinking skills, increase retention and transfer of new information, increase motivation, improve interpersonal skills, reinforce useful job skills and decrease course failure [6]. Active learning activities help students reflect on their understanding by encouraging them to make connections between their prior knowledge and new concepts. Often, active learning tasks ask students to make their thinking explicit, which also allows instructors to gauge student learning. Active learning may influence students’ persistence and their feelings of social integration. Numerous studies in the field of foreign language teaching have shown that students engaged in active learning classrooms have a lower rate of failure, and perform better on assessments than students in passive learning classrooms [1].

To be productive and effective active learning strategies should encompass many different varieties of classroom activity. While designing active learning tasks, it is important to keep in mind a few core principles:
- active learning tasks should help your students meet their learning objectives;
- active learning tasks should create a low bar for student participation;
- active learning tasks should provide students with feedback on their learning [1]

Above all, active learning tasks should target specific learning objectives. That is, they should help students develop the knowledge and skills that they are expected to acquire in your course. Identifying an argument, using evidence to support a claim, organizing information, and
defining a given problem are all skills that support complex learning objectives, such as writing and problem solving. Active learning tasks should aim to provide students with opportunities to practice and gain proficiency in such skills [1].

When creating an active learning experience, it is important to consider not only participation requirements to students but evaluation standards too. Both summative and formative measures can be used to ensure students have met the learning objectives. Assessing the effectiveness of the active learning strategy will help instructors iterate and refine classroom activities. Soliciting student feedback through reflection on their own learning will give an insight into perceptions of the strategy. Comparing student success in a class that uses active learning strategies and one that does not may prove useful, as well as considering samples of student work before and after an active learning strategy is implemented.

References:
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