



Conversation Club as an Enhancing Student's Motivation Method in Foreign Language Learning

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Abstract

Today the research on new ways of language learning motivation for international students is the most important task. Universities in Ukraine do not require knowledge of Ukrainian or Russian language from international applicants. Universities have preparatory departments, where the enrolled students learn language. However senior students who have more considerable knowledge of language lose their interest in improving language skills.

The goal of this research is to explore opportunities of using the Conversation club to enhance and maintain the student's motivation to study a foreign language.

The analysis of several Conversation clubs in Odessa (Ukraine) has been made. Methodology and results of author's experience of Conversation club holding at the Odessa State Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture have been described.

1. Introduction

Currently the research on new ways of language learning motivation for international students is the most important task. The ability of motivation progress and motivation maintenance directly depends on language needs. Universities in Ukraine do not require knowledge of Ukrainian or Russian language from international applicants. Universities have preparatory departments, where the enrolled students learn language. Students who started with zero language knowledge have huge communication difficulties, thus mastering of basic level language skills becomes vitally important. Therefore students of preparatory department and first-year students are the most motivated for education. However senior students who have more considerable knowledge of language lose their interest in improving language skills.

The goal of this research is to explore opportunities of using the Conversation club to enhance and maintain the student's motivation to study a foreign language.

Current methods of educational process organization don't create a sufficient student's interest that is the reason why necessity of unconventional approach for education occurs.

2. International students' motivation aspect during their language studies.

Several researchers have an opinion that the main reason of low motivation and low grade results of international students consists in the fact that they have to face and to overcome specific difficulties when they arrive in a foreign country. They describe these difficulties, analyze and try to classify them. Furnham, A., Bochner, S., [6], Hovey J. [2], Zwingmann C., Gunn A. [7] consider that a level of difficulties directly depends on difference between culture of foreigner and culture of country where he studies. Stress and depression occur mainly due to the lack of social skills to overcome specific social situations. However, scientists note that foreign students have to deal with racial discrimination, domestic and financial problems, misunderstanding and loneliness. The loss of familiar social ties leads, to reducing the academic achievement results. Huang K. [3] proposed his own classification of difficulties that happen to international students during their education: communicative barriers, changing of cultural values, unusual social surroundings, multiple reports (to their family, government, teachers and immigration services). Thereby adaptation to new circumstances comes to the foreground for foreign students and education moves to the background. Level of learning motivation decreases and students are stuck at their problems. It seems that using rearrangement of priorities could be a solution for this condition, notably if the motivation aspect to education will be moved to the foreground, for example, motivation of Russian language learning.

In the common structure of motivation Nanavyan, E. [4] marks out cognitive motive as a main motive that determines education activity and it forms an attitude to it, because constant desire to learn is in its base. Moreover there is a connection between a content side and an organization side of the

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educational activity itself. In order to realize this connection, it is needed to create Conversation clubs, taking into consideration professional student's interests that will give them a possibility to join the process of the professional qualification acquisition faster and in more active way. The researches of Smolkin, A. [5] have discovered that the center of communication education is speech and thinking tasks that are solved through a problem situation in collective activity. It is necessary to involve developing and activating game forms and methods of teaching, such as educational games. Methods and facilities that are traditionally used on Russian language lessons don't make real conditions for practice activity. That's why they don't guarantee building of professional communicative capacity at required level.

2.1 Experience of Conversation clubs conduct in Odessa

There is an obvious need for non-standard approach to training. That is why the Conversation club is proposed as such approach. In our country (in Ukraine) these clubs are organized as independent structures as they are not a part of university's education program. They appear on the basis of various private language schools, with some philological faculties of universities, libraries, as well as a cafe, where they used to attract customers.

In order to get acquainted with this form of education the author has visited English, French, Japanese, Spanish conversation clubs in Odessa (Ukraine). It has been noticed that in those clubs that took place not in educational institutions (language schools, universities) the frequency of club meetings varied from 1 to 6 times. We think that one of the reasons why frequency of meetings was minimum in some cases was a lack of prepared audience in advance. Managers counted on random visitors of café, people with different level of language knowledge and different goals. Some people came just because of curiosity and wish to pass time in an interesting way, and not with an aim to learn language and to improve their communicative skills. Another reason was a lack of advertisement and lack of consecutive club leading program.

There were some clubs that existed longer (4-5 times). The main reason of this consisted in a leader of this club. Mainly a leader of club was an active teacher who worked in a language school and who had decided by his own wish to hold series of lessons on a volunteer base in alternative format in café in order to diversify program lessons in the language school. The students of language school liked this form of lessons, they felt a determinate program that was in base of clubs. It helped holding attention of audience, maintaining students' motivation during lessons in the language school, and moreover to involve new students to this language school, as it became well-known for visitors of this café.

After visiting a conversation club in a language school "American English center" it was found out that this club is different from similar clubs, as it's not volunteer organized, but it's an optional class in advanced level of education and it's a part of a language learning program. When a club was a part of education program, it showed effective results. During the club students who were able to use language in a sufficient level for telling their thoughts and opinion about some subjects in foreign language could develop their communicative skills and overcome their speaking in foreign language barrier.

Hereby the conclusion was made that the best result appears when nonstandard methods (such as Conversation club) exists in some language educational institution.

2.2 Methodology of Conversation clubs in Odessa State Academy of civil engineering and architecture (OGASA)

The author proposed to make experimental Russian language Conversation clubs for foreign students during their education in OGASA in language training center for foreign students. That is why the author developed a Study guide [1] for holding lessons in unusual form of conversation club. It was based on program of university.

The Study guide was made for the discipline "Russian as a foreign language" and based on videos. They were written for development of oral speech skills for foreign students, studying at 3 year at specialization "Construction and architecture". Study guide were divided to lessons. Every lesson contained tasks for videos from the channel "National Geographic": "Humanity heritage. Architecture of Antoni Gaudi", "Super constructions. The most long bridge in the world", "Engineering miracles. The tower", "Engineering miracles. Sky wheel", "Engineering miracles. The airport", "Super constructions. Ice hotel", "Super constructions made from bricks", " Santiago Calatrava. Neo-futuristic architect of the 21 century", "Strange architecture of Friedensreich Hundertwasser". They were on subjects related to



architecture and engineering, because that subject area was the most interesting and close to students with who these lessons were planned to be hold.

It has been decided to test this methodology on one of groups with high grade results, because those groups that have low grades don't have sufficient basic knowledge for lessons in this format. The experimental group has showed that after series of lessons in format of Conversation clubs, the interest for learning language has been increased for those students who attended them the most often, the motivation has been enhanced and as a result the grades results have been improved.

Lessons were made by a system that we would describe step by step. Learning of new vocabulary was the first phase that was directed to perception and understanding of foreign language by ear, and extension of vocabulary knowledge. Then students watched video and answered questions. The next phase was a material deep analyze. Students watched this video second time in order to divide it on semantic parts and make a plan. The last phase consisted in discussion and retelling of studied material that was necessary for formation of listening and communicative skills.

During the next lesson the grammatical tasks were given and tasks to write different writing works as annotation, abstract etc. That was already an ordinary academic way teaching lesson after the lesson that was organized as a club. Thus, it was revealed that after lessons in format of conversation clubs students learn better and with more interest the grammatical material made by videos, comparing with lessons without making this form of studying.

Conversation Club not only involves the use of non-standard methods of language learning, but also an unusual form of training. That is the reason why besides video materials, there were games that were included in the Conversation club program, also there were used interesting materials that weren't related to student's specialization, they were devoted to society, art, entertainment, language, national cuisine, cinema, history, geography etc. in order to develop skills for all possible communicative life situations.

3. Summary

The analysis of objective and subjective factors of education results of experimental student's group has been made. Student's grade results before and after participation in Conversation clubs have been analyzed. A positive dependence between quantity of Conversation clubs attendances and rising of grades results has been detected. That is an objective indicator of educational process improving.

A subjective part of it has been found out by student's questionnaire poll. Comparison of questionnaire at the beginning of speaking club attendance and 3 months later revealed that student's learning language motivation had been increased.

The research showed that preliminary establishment of student needs are very important in Conversational club organization so the educational material helps in implementation of the objectives of each club member. Participation of international students in Conversation club activates their language and communication skills, extends and improves language's knowledge, enhances cultural horizons, erudition, development of creativity, spiritual and moral growth, aesthetic tastes and as a result, increases motivation for learning language and culture of foreign country.

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