



Seeking for Effective Methods in Teaching/Learning the Negotiation Language?

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Abstract

The changed educational paradigm from subject-centered to student-centered has changed the role of a student, a teacher and a teaching/learning method. How should we choose a method and make the education process more efficient and future-oriented? A method as an educational tool allows a student to adjust to the teaching material, to socialize in a group, to get to know and assess oneself, to think critically and creatively. The article is based on the case study of the module Negotiation language at the Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania) and it outlines the didactic situation teaching the negotiation language in English. It is a small episode in a complex dynamic negotiation teaching process which analyses four teaching/learning methods: discussion, problem-solving, video clips and oral academic presentations. The methods have been chosen in accordance to the negotiation strategies which require certain skills and competences. They reveal the possibilities and shortcomings in the process of teaching/learning specific English and negotiation. A dual purpose (English+negotiation) of the module requires the reconsideration of every method from the point of the student-centered paradigm, evaluating the diversification of the level of every student's knowledge of English as a second language (A2-C1) and the negotiation theory. The effective methods should help to reevaluate the students' character features in the teaching/learning process and promote the holistic approach towards the development of a personality. The search for such methods reveals the teacher's role as an active and creative mediator. He/she has to highlight students' expectations and predetermine the possibilities to fulfilling them. Every teacher can have his/her set of methods that can make the education process more efficient. The analysis of the four teaching/learning methods (discussion, problem-solving, video clip and oral academic presentation) in the article is based on the scientific literature analysis and students' questionnaire.

1. Introduction

Long years of academic work at the university (or in any other education organization) can create such a teaching/learning environment where everything is safe, stable, and the teaching methods are time verified, the teaching material and methods are reliable. A scientist/educator faces **the problem** – should educators relinquish the old teaching/learning paradigm or continue it; should they use the new methods and refuse the old ones or harmonize the traditional and the new paradigms.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the teaching/learning methods applied in the studies of the negotiation language (English) and to outline the effective methods in developing language and negotiation skills and competences. The empirical part of the article is based on one module case study (Faculty of Humanities, Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania). The module is the semester full course at the university (4 academic hours per week). The evaluation of the applied teaching/learning methods in the module of the negotiation language is based on the observation, tests and 3 questionnaires.

2. Methods of Teaching/Learning the Negotiation Language (English)

The interaction of cultures, spread of information and changes in individual professional competences turned the negotiation into a complex, multi-stage and managed process.

Usually, the negotiation is proceeded when the participating parties want to create something new and change the existing situation into a better one but they cannot do that without each other [5]. So, the negotiation predetermines the principle of interdependence of both parties. One of the traditional negotiation definitions is that it is a discussion between two or more individuals who try to find a



solution to some problem [7]. The number of theories and teachers of negotiation all over the world suggests the active search of effective and efficient methods which could help people in finding the agreement, seeing and clearing up a problem and choosing the most suitable solutions. The teaching/learning methods used in the module *Negotiation language* (English) are not accidental. The task has been to check their effectiveness in the education process and to clear up whether they could be applied optimizing the teaching/learning process. A number of different teaching and learning methods (essay, group and individual work, role-play, free speech, etc.) have been applied in the module but only the discussion, problem solving, video clip analysis/creation and oral academic presentation have been taken for the investigation.

2.1. Discussion

If negotiation is a discussion, then it is the foundation the quality of the negotiation process can depend on [1]. The main point of the discussion is to teach and encourage students' constructive thinking, to express and support ideas logically, to interact with group members. There is one dilemma: could this method be effectively applied in negotiation class only with the students whose language competence is high or very high (corresponds to B2 and C1).

Discussion is a communication process when both parties send a message which must not only be properly encoded but also decoded. It requires to express one's ideas clearly, to listen and to hear, to interact, to be a leader and/or a member of a group, to know cultural differences and to be ready for self-evaluation [2].

2.2. Problem solving method

The negotiation definition outlines one more important task in teaching the negotiation language. It is the identification and solution of the problem at the initial stage of the negotiation process. The method manifests flexible thinking, the application of general knowledge, the analysis of the present situation focusing on the future benefits. A problem is an unpleasant real situation/state which encourages a person to look for ways of getting out of it [8]. This method is applied in the simulation games as well. The use of the simulation method at the tertiary level is widely analyzed and is harmonized with the case study [6].

2.3. Video clip (creation and analysis)

The creation of mini video situations becomes the method which leads a student and a teacher to a deeper negotiation and language case analysis. The main advantage of the method is that the student's creativity and inventiveness are disclosed.

Video clips suggest accessibility of the visual, emotional experience, the language of images and visual symbolic codes. This is a persuasive educational practice because it can be reflected, compared with real life situations, adapted to the personal way of thinking and relevant to the future career building [3]. This method enriches teaching/learning and creates a continuous process. The teacher becomes responsible for creating the favorable environment for every student [4].

2.4. Oral academic presentation

Oral academic presentation as a method creates an act of speaking act helping the student to socialize in the group. The freedom of information selection and systematization allow the student to perform creatively the choice and formalization of the material and its presentation to the class. The situations created in a foreign language are considered to be unusual to non-native English speaking students. They are based on foreign language structures, limited by a specific topic and are restricted in time (the fixed time for presentations).

It could be stated that the discussed methods are not new in the educational process but the contemporary educational situation predetermines their new flexible application.

3. Survey Analysis

The openness of the world and the mobility (long- and short-term migration, international cooperation, etc.) of people preconditioned the new educational turn in the reform of the Lithuanian tertiary level. The continuum in the whole Lithuanian education system is not stable yet. So, the students' knowledge acquired at the lower levels of the education system sometimes mismatch with the requirements at the tertiary level. One of the solutions making this situation manageable is to find the teaching/learning methods that could develop individual skills and competences of a student.



The module *Negotiation language* (Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania) serves as a case study in revealing the teaching/learning methods of the educational process. The case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary situation within its real-life context and where multiple sources of evidence are used. The survey was performed in 2009 (19 students) and 2010 (22 students). The respondents were the 3rd or 4th year students of Bachelor's studies (faculty of Humanities). The majority (95%) of the students did not have the basics in economics and business English. The researched groups were heterogeneous in gender (15 male and 26 female).

The analysis of the case study had 4 formal stages: 1) the test disclosing skills and competences of English; 2) the 1st questionnaire outlining the initial students' expectations in the negotiation teaching/learning; 3) the 2nd questionnaire evaluating the four chosen teaching/learning methods in accordance to the students' selection; 4) the 3rd self-assessment questionnaire. The results of the 2nd questionnaire are considered as the basis for the analysis in this article.

The aim of the questionnaire was to clear up the students' opinion about the four teaching/learning methods (discussion, problem solving, creation and analysis of video clips and oral academic presentation) and evaluate their effectiveness in the particular model. The effectiveness of the four methods is measured by their usefulness in developing individual and group competences. The questionnaire consists of 10 closed and 2 open-ended questions. The evaluation scale of the methods in points has been suggested: 1 – not useful; 2 – half useful; 3 – useful; 4 – very useful.

The analysis of the questionnaire has disclosed that the students consider the video clips creation and analysis to be one of the most useful teaching/learning methods (50% students) in the module. This method consists of the two parts: the analysis of the authentic-online video clips and the creation of the video clips by the students themselves. The online accessible video clips of the different negotiation topics were analyzed in accordance with the certain linguistic and negotiation strategies. The students emphasized that the method gave the possibility to use the theoretical knowledge in analyzing every video situation and to create images. 25% of the students felt awkward in front of the camera (the clips were recorded) and verbal and non-verbal mistakes were noticeable. The theory of methods states that video clips help the students noticing and analyzing their own advantages.

The evaluation of the oral academic presentation pointed up that 46% of the students felt confident in front of the audience. The individual responsibility for the selected information, the well structured presentation and excellent English gave the student the possibility to develop themselves and their competences. Even 20% of the students considered this method not useful as they were stressed in front of the audience.

The efficient discussion requires the participant's preparation in linguistics, psychology and the specific subject area. The students who knew English very well or perfectly and their character features were: communicability, quick reaction, the management of the audience, oratorical capabilities and leadership used this method creatively. If the student did not possess these features, it was difficult for him/her to participate in the discussion efficiently. The discussion did not encourage the development of the group interaction, but revealed the students with the strong leading character features and the lack of the English vocabulary. The situation provoked contradicting evaluations and quarrels, but they were useful for the self- and group- acknowledgement.

The questionnaire outlined that the problem solving method was the least useful (35% of the respondents) teaching/learning method as it required the flexible thinking, argumentation and predicting the possible outcome. The students felt awkward and uncertain in taking up the responsibility for the final decision. They lacked this experience in their real life and preferred the group to individual solutions. 10% of the students found this method useful and encouraging because they considered themselves being the group leaders.

Summing up, it could be stated that the changes in the educational paradigm reveal the shift in the teaching/learning process and the search for the effective methods that could promote that paradigm. The methods, which are considered to be efficient in accordance to the theories, sometimes do not work in the real class. The teachers must acquire some additional educational knowledge that could foster the innovations into the class creatively. The methods outline the personal character features of the students which can modify the teaching/learning process and the priorities of the module.

4. Conclusions

1. The student-centered paradigm predetermines the need for a student's and teacher's flexible cooperation and communication.
2. The teaching/learning of the negotiation language is the harmony of the theoretical and practical skills and competences which could be unfolded through the application of the methods.



3. In order to achieve the efficient teaching/learning result, the method becomes a mediator between a student and a teacher. If the method is appropriate to a teacher, it can be an obstacle in the development of the student's skills and competences.
4. The methods of the discussion, video clip (creation and analysis), oral academic presentation and problem solving are effective if they are applied consistently in accordance with the students' expectations and needs. These methods make the educational process dynamic but not always efficient.

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