



Educative Functions of Students' Scientific Conferences in Foreign Languages

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Abstract

Implementation of students' scientific conferences beyond the grid of training sessions as an extracurricular form of educational work, as the ten years' experience shows, has a great payback relative to social adaptation of students, increases the cohesion of the student collective, fosters individual professional development.

Preparing students to participate in a student scientific and practical conference in foreign language is a complex solution of educational and developmental objectives based on student-centered approach to learning. The students' presentations made according the rules of oral speech are perceived much better, so when the written paper has been fully completed, the teacher can record his own spontaneous statement on this material. Thus, the student gets an example to follow, a sample of the emotional and evaluative elements composing the communicative framework of oral language form: units providing contact, rhetorical questions, introductory and linking words and sentences, expressive language means.

The teacher's function during the papers presentation is to let the young researchers feel the power of ideas, the equality of all participants. One of the main achievements is when the obviously facilitated, factitious communication in a foreign language gets transformed in a real scientific discussion. The second task of modeling oral presentation is to allow students to master the art of public speaking in a foreign language. The third task is handling of the ensuing discussion: participants are involved in analyzing; teachers organize the reflecting of the success/failure and encourage students to practical application of the obtained results.

1. Introduction

Student scientific conference as a part of learning foreign languages for Science, Art and Technologies [10] is, as a general rule, understood as a way of formation of skills of public speaking. The present study provides an insight to linguistic, cultural, social and psychological impact of this form of education. The experience of the organization of annual events permits to classify the tasks of the teachers and the tasks of the students at each stage of the realization of the project.

The interpretation of a youth scientific forum as a conventional play game activity (rules, goal and elements of fun [4]) give us a possibility to study this series of individual activities and interpersonal acts as a special target of education. The interaction teacher–student is understood in the frame of the method of projects [5], still relevant for foreign language learning [6], discussed and criticized [8; 3], interpreted by philosophers [11]. In Russia the method of project has been particularly popular thanks to a famous novel *Two captains* by V.Kaverin (1944), where a whole chapter has been dedicated to such a lesson (Part 3. Ch. 2. The Trial of Eugene Onegin [7: 84-88]). The novel was re-edited more than 100 times. To understand its popularity an example is enough: a Kazakhstan editor in 1990 made 300000 copies. Twice the novel was made into a movie, then transformed in the *Nord Ost* musical and was so popular again that it unfortunately became a target for Chechen terrorists' attack in 2002. The literary fiction analysis (Eugene Onegin is the title and principal character of a Pushkin's novel) and its influence to the life of three main characters impressed in childhood both teachers and students throughout Russia for generations.

To prepare students to participate in a student scientific conference in foreign language, dedicated to their future profession, one need ludology and narratology approaching to the educational and developmental work based on student-centered approach to learning. The other task is affecting the perception of the audience.

There is also a training of the translation of new environmental terms [1; 10], especially when the report gives new data about Russian agrarian and environmental technologies. This work demands ICT skills helping to find and use information and, what is considered very important, to assess the robustness of the retrieved Internet data.

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2. Methods and materials

The Departments of Foreign Languages of the Ecological Faculty and the Agrarian Institute of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia are always responsible for making written and oral reports formally correct according to English, Spanish, German, French norms of writing and speaking.

To well present a report orally according the rules of oral speech students must drastically change the already written paper. Long phrases, well conformed to the requirements for scientific style, are to be divided, their structure must be simplified, making simple sentence with multiple predicate. Intelligent simplifying of a long sentence must make it more redundant and accompanied with much more introductory and linking words. Teachers of the team work on it from the beginning, comparing texts and making exercises of text transformation. The elementary units are introduced at the very first stage of learning (*Engl.: to dwell on; to emphasize; The problem of...is the concern of the text; I'd like to point out; it should be mentioned; French: Tout d'abord, il faut noter que; Par conséquent; Ma recherche visait à combler en partie cette lacune*) in a short list.

Methodologically the team uses the well elaborated system of tasks of pedagogical activity elaborated by E. Musnitskaya, an icon of Russian theory of teaching and learning [9].

At the moment when the report and the PowerPoint presentation are ready, the teachers of foreign language divide the participants in groups in order to help check syntax and style errors (note that the term glossary work is done, term difficulties are discussed beforehand). So the speech is to be pronounced distinctly, correctly and with emphasis. The correct stress is no more a problem thanks to ICT advance: there are many programs that reproduce the written text aloud.

As for components of the emotional and evaluative frame of the statements we propose the following: during the individual consultation the teacher looking in the text and the presentation images speaks spontaneously (the speech is obviously recorded). Thus, the student gets an example to follow, a sample of expressive language means, intensifiers [2; 14], a way to attract attention.

The second task of modeling oral presentation is to allow students to master the art of public speaking in a foreign language: he should be taught to gesture, to emphasize an idea, to care to be perceived better.

The third task is handling of the ensuing discussion: participants are involved in analyzing; teachers organize the reflecting of the success/failure and encourage students to practical application of the obtained results.

3. Results and discussion

The main objective of the thematic student conference is to encourage students to practical application of the received speech skills, to create a situation of communication, including putting and answering questions, practicing to show and handle negative criticism in a foreign language.

In the future, as the thesis defense usually passes in a foreign language, skills of preparing both written (a summary in studied foreign language) and oral presentation, multimedia and hand-outs have already been formed.

Improvement of foreign language communicative competence as a whole contributes to the individualization of the techniques of second language speech perception and production.

Students come to the conclusion that general cultural knowledge is a need for a thoughtful and critical approach to the material gleaned from books, audio clips, videos and Internet material. One of the difficulty of the preparatory stage concerns robustness of retrieved data. Let's show this with an example. One of the authors of the present paper in 2015 was checking a paper dedicated to solid waste incineration. One word attracted her attention: the name of the enterprise "Robins" was written with one "b". She deduced that the data was taken from a book written in Russian (in Cyrillic). The location of the enterprise was not mentioned, it was just said that it is "American". Based on the given data the student (Masters!) was describing the results of the incineration as very positive. The whole paper was promoting this type of waste management as the most sustainable. In this case the teacher of foreign language has a function completely unrelated to linguistic or language learning study. She had to find reliable sources. The truth was that it was not the name of the enterprise, but of the poorest suburb of Chicago, and the incinerator was merely closed in 2000 after three month of work because of great risk for inhabitants health (18 heavy metals and other chemicals emitted in the air) [13]. The student did not believe the sent article saying that such a big boss (the author of the book was the head of Moscow waste Department) cannot be mistaking. The advisor of the student's research insisted on the publication, showing a complete lack of confidence to a non-specialist opinion. As the teacher of English has the casting vote, the article was refuse nevertheless. And for the better: carefully thought and cooled down the master's thesis topic was reversed. This is an exceptional case, but insignificant mistakes are not rare.

Teaching to use elements of emotional semantics when presenting a research in the field of agriculture and ecology is a difficult task, still we take into account cultural layers of French or English culture, or, more generally, European traditions, including sayings, historical or legendary events (*Dans le mille, en plein dans la belle pomme, comme Guillaume Tell*) for example, quoting the Bible or even La Farce de Maître Pathelin (*Revenons à nos moutons !*). We show to students this way to find common points of reference when discussing the new results with the expert community of Europe.

The same communicative target could be achieved using humorous description of the events: «Anatomie du petit-déjeuner idéal» (cf.: [12]). That's why we care about the name of the report, preferring some surprising title. "Application de l'énergie solaire" («Practical application of solar energy») is a usual formula, found in textbooks, so we propose to include the names of new objects entered into use in recent years, for example: «Gadgets solaires ou comment recharger votre iPod à l'énergie solaire» («Solar Gadgets or how to recharge your iPod with solar energy») or an excessively pessimistic title ("We are waiting for the end of the world") making smile.

4. Conclusions

The teacher's function during the papers presentation is to let the young researchers feel the power of ideas, the equality of all participants. They express their attitude to each other's work, about the practical conclusions and they begin to think about the problems of globalization, the creation of a global information space, the means and methods of transmission of information, about finding adequate and equivalent verbal means adapting the report to the audience.

Improvement of foreign language communicative and intercultural competence of students as a whole contributes to the individualization of the search techniques of reading and listening skills, word processing, methods of information delivery.

One of the main achievements is when the obviously facilitated, factitious communication in a foreign language gets transformed in a real scientific discussion.

Implementation of students' scientific conferences beyond the grid of training sessions as an extracurricular form of educational work, as the ten years' experience shows, has a great payback relative to social adaptation of students, increases the cohesion of the student collective, fosters individual professional development.

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