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IMPLEMENTING OF PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

Анотація. Дана стаття займається оглядом зміту проблемного навчання та основних шляхів його застосування у процесі вивчення англійської мови як другої. Проблемне навчання це індуктивний прийом навчання, що використовує реальну проблему як початкову точку у навчанні. Даний прийом вважається провідним у формуванні компетенції в навчальному процесі, забезпечуючи при цьому основу для розвитку навчальних процесів та необхідних навичок у повсякденному житті. Проблемне навчання, що широко застосовується останнім часом як і в вищих навчальних закладах, так і в початковій та середній школах, вважається одним з найефективніших методів навчання. Зокрема, учні можуть розвивати навички, особливо соціальні, у процесі заохочення спільної роботи студентів. Проблемне навчання це модель навчання, що наголошує на ефективності здобуття знань і ефективному використанні проблемних завдань з метою заохочення студентів до активного та різнодисциплінарного навчання. За допомогою проблемного навчання студенти вивчають шляхи вирішення неструктурованих, відкритих та неоднозначних проблем. Педагогічне значення даного методу полягає в поєднанні внутрішньодисциплінарного навчання, високопсихологічних процесів та ознайомленням студентів з реальними проблемами, незалежним навчанням, груповою роботою та спілкуванням. Проблемне навчання заохочує студентів до реального та дійсного інтелектуального пошуку і дозволяє їм здобувати знання та життєвий досвід з реальних життєвих ситуацій. В даній статті йдеться про шляхи застосування проблемного навчання у процесі вивчення англійської мови як другої іноземної. Також тут висвітлюються питання стосовно ролі вчителя під час проблемного навчання, оцінювання студентів та можливі труднощі, які можуть вплинути на кінцевий результат навчання.

Ключові слова: спільне навчання, проблемне навчання, вирішення проблеми, робота в команді, відкрита проблема, міждисциплінарність, самоорінтоване навчання, критичне мислення.

Annotation. This article provides the overview of problem-based learning and the main ways of implementing PBL in ESL classroom. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is an inductive learning approach that uses a realistic problem as the starting point of learning. It is seen as promising method of establishing competence development in educational courses, thereby providing a comprehensive basis for promoting learning processes and the skills necessary to operate effectively in everyday life. Problem-Based Learning, widely used in higher education as well as in elementary schools and middle schools in recent years, seems to be one of the most effective methods for teaching and it is believed that students can develop kinds of skills especially the social skills by encouraging collaborative work amongst students. Problem-based learning is a curriculum model that emphasizes the effectiveness for knowledge acquisition and the effective use of task-based problems to engage students in active and multidisciplinary learning. Through problem-based learning students learn how to solve problems that are ill-structured, open-ended or ambiguous. The pedagogical significance of the method is that it comprises interdisciplinary learning, higher order thinking skills, as well as exposes students to real world challenges, independent learning, team work and communication. Problem-based learning engages students in intriguing, real and relevant intellectual inquiry and allows them to learn from life situations, implementing their own experience and knowledge. In this article we will discuss how the problem-based

Сучасні інформаційні технології та інноваційні методики навчання в підготовці фахівців:
методологія, теорія, досвід, проблеми

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learning approach can be adapted for the use in the ESL classroom. We will also touch upon some problems concerning the role of a teacher during the PBL process, how to evaluate students, and some challenges that may influence on the outcoming results.

Key words: *cooperative learning, problem-based learning, problem solving, teamwork, open-ended problem, interdisciplinary, selfdirected learning, critical thinking.*

Since the accustomed criticism published almost daily in the media regarding the English language for the last few decades acquaints us with the decline of competence especially among the youths, despite the years they spent learning the language at school, the need to concentrate on new approaches to teaching language in Ukraine has become progressively compelling. This issue has also taken its toll in the working part, where possible employers state that school-leavers fare badly in their communication and writing skills, especially in English and in the private sectors on account of the obligation to coincide with foreign counterparts around the world.

Because of the barrage of learning and activities the students and teachers generally run into each day, there appears to be no room for implementing a new approach in teaching and learning. Nevertheless, we would still stick to the point that one of the first places to address the problem of declining English standards among ESL learners is the language classroom. Preceding trends in teaching the English language, notably to second or foreign language learners, have included grammar-translation method, the audio-lingual approach, communicative language teaching and task-based learning (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Problem-based learning (PBL) purposefully combines cognitive and metacognitive teaching and learning. It is an approach that has been around since the late 1960s and engages language students in learning how to learn while they also learn language and content.

Today, the main aims of education science are to supply students with thorough knowledge and to expand some creative competence, to provide the students with the skills which would help them to manage with divergent complications independently. The reason is that Problem-Based Learning is used extensively in teaching practice. PBL forms student's cognitive activity, support in the development of psychological orientation and helps with the negotiation of different cognitive questions.

One of the biggest problems in pedagogy is student's cognitive work. A. Brushlynskyi, S. Rubinstein, A. Matjushkin, I. Lerner, M. Mahmutov, M. Skatkin, T. Kudryavzev, I. Ilnytska have contributed greatly into the development of the theory of problem-based learning.

The theoretical development of the problem of PBL is quite many-sided. The notion of problem learning itself is referred to various categories by many scientists. They include spacious content in it. Some scientists consider problem learning to be one of the learning methods (A. Brushlynskyi), when others believe that it is one of the instructional methods (T. Kudryavzev). There are scientists who stick to the idea that PBL is the type of

teaching and learning process (M. Mahmutov, V. Maksymova). Some scientists treat problem-based learning as a special approach to learning, which is distinct in transformation of student's cognitive activity (M. Skatkin, I. Ilnytska).

A number of works have described the process of problem-based learning from the perspective of students (e.g., Albion & Gibson, 1998; Boud, 1985; Butler, 2003). There are four main parts in this process:1) being introduced to the problem, 2) exploring what they do and do not know about the problem, 3) generating possible solutions to the problem, and 4) considering the consequences of each solution and selecting the most viable solution.

PBL is a curriculum model that emphasizes the use of task-based problems to engage students in active and multidisciplinary learning. Through problem-based learning, students learn how to solve problems that are illstructured, open-ended or ambiguous. Problem-based learning engages students in intriguing, real and relevant intellectual inquiry and allows them to learn from these life situations (Barell, 2007).The pedagogical value of PBL includes: exposing students to real- world challenges, higher order thinking skills, interdisciplinary learning, independent learning, information mining skills, team work and communication. During this selfdirected learning, students work together, discussing, comparing, reviewing and debating what they have learnt (Wilkerson, 1996).

The following are some theoretical underpinnings of PBL:

1) Students do not start with a clean slate. Prior knowledge, assumptions and experiences are critical in helping students find meaningful entry points into the problem

2) Learning happens in a social context, with meaning negotiated in a collaborative team setting

3) Strategies are consciously applied to deal with unfamiliar information, handling team dynamics and working out feasible and well-thought through solutions

4) Learner centredness is the focus

5) Learning takes place through self-directed discovery & questioning

6) The use of problems acts as a stimulus for learning

7) Critical reflection happens throughout the learning process.

Students taking responsibility for their own learning, learning how to build on prior knowledge and focusing on the process of knowledge acquisition (rather than on the products of such processes) are the main characteristics of the approach. The PBL approach also emphasizes self and peer-assessment, communication and interpersonal skills (Boud, 1985). Biggs (2003)

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Психолого-педагогічні основи впровадження сучасних інформаційних технологій та інноваційних методик навчання і виховання студентів вищих навчальних закладів

observes that PBL encourages deep learning as students learn for understanding and seek meaning, whereas the traditional teacher-centered approach promotes surface learning with little understanding. Harland (2002) believes that students learn new skills and new ways of thinking through PBL. Williams et al (2003) suggest that the active participation in the PBL learning process is appreciated by students. Thus improves their personal growth and they increase their confidence and responsibility as learner. PBL also stimulate collaborative learning among students. Glaser (1991) argues that in small group work, the learner's exposure to alternative points of view is a real challenge to initial understanding. In small group work, students evoke their problem-solving methods and conceptual knowledge. They express their ideas and share responsibility in managing problem situations.

PBL is unique because it addresses challenges and tackles problems using strategies that are encountered in real life experiences and careers. Meanwhile students acquire language and subject matter knowledge, they become proficient in problem solving. Self-directed learning and team participation prepare students to become active practitioners when they enter the workforce. Participants who are experienced in group interaction, multiple solution paths, and thinking beyond recall are at an advantage because they have valuable skills that will complement their capacity to triumph. Through self-directed study, research, and teamwork, English language learning is revitalized and creativity is developed. PBL students step into the role of the stakeholder and strive for a solution to a predetermined problem and set of circumstances as they increase language skills. The course of students' inquiry in PBL is not predetermined; rather it develops directly from students' beliefs and questions. The analysis of one question stimulates additional studies that were initially invisible.

Usually, lecture is challenging for English language learners to follow coherently. They become lost in the dialogue that may be too fast paced for them, and thus have little opportunity for reinforcement of language skills. Krashen [3] advocates the use of a natural approach to strengthen new language acquisition. PBL supports his research and surpasses traditional language acquisition methodologies. Students are required to make connections as group communication is strengthened. Students develop survival skills for the working environment, increase their workforce marketability, and prepare themselves for lifelong learning by applying language skills to the workplace. The PBL model ensures that language skills are strengthened by experience with a broader scope of disciplines at the same time. Collaboration and hands-on learning will lower the affective filters that Krashen cautions will deter students from successful language learning. By combining language with new professional content knowledge using PBL, language skills are reinforced

through group dynamics, workplace reality, and content area knowledge. Language learning and logical thinking are linked to future endeavors and their fields of study.

To teach students about the rationale for and structure of a problem-based approach to language learning is the teacher's first responsibility. For students who are accustomed to more traditional, teacher-centered classrooms, it is critical that they know they will be given direct, follow-up instruction, but that during the problem-solving phase, the teacher's role is to observe and support. There is a need to understand that the student's goal is to work together to solve a problem, but for the activity to benefit their language learning, they must use only English in their groups.

In order to increase language learning outcomes, ESL teachers need to prepare students for the language demands of the problem-solving activity. These may include prereading or prewriting exercises, discussions to link the problem with the students' knowledge and experiences, or preteaching vocabulary and structures that will be useful in finding solutions to the problem.

For teachers, selecting problems for students to work on may be the most difficult part of problem-based learning. Ideally, questions should be related to the students' lives to increase interest and motivation, require students to make decisions and judgments (the problem they work on should be an actual problem, not just an information-gathering task), and include a question or set of questions that are openended and likely to generate diverse opinions. Teachers might survey students for their ideas on problems or conflicts that they face, or have faced, in their daily lives or that they are aware of in their community. Below is a problem that students at the high-beginning or above levels might work on.

If the students are working in their groups – gathering information, discussing it, considering and choosing the best solution for the problem – the teacher has to observe and support. Specifically, teachers should take notes on the language used, language problems encountered, and individual students' participation in the activity.

Students should be grouped by teachers carefully to increase their language learning opportunities in a problem-based activity. In a multilevel class, problem-based learning provides an opportunity to have students of different proficiency levels work together. If possible, teachers should group students from different language backgrounds together to guarantee that students communicate in English.

The main role of teachers is to provide language-appropriate opportunities for students to share the results of their work and follow-up language activities that build on that work. Depending on the proficiency levels of the students, sharing their results could include oral presentations or debates (with intermediate or advanced students), completing simple questionnaires about the process (with intermediate or high beginners),

or creating posters that graphically display the steps taken in finding a solution to the problem (with beginners). Follow-up activities should be based on the teacher's observations and notes taken during the problem-solving process. While students are working to solve the problem, teachers should try to observe whether students are experiencing difficulties with particular grammar points, pronunciation, vocabulary, reading strategies (e.g., skimming for information), or pragmatic structures (e.g., telephone greetings, requesting information, thanking). These difficulties should provide the starting points for supplemental, focused instruction and support. Finally, assessment should be carried out, focusing on two primary areas: teachers can assess students on the basis of their participation in the activity, and the activity itself can be assessed for effectiveness.

A crucial component of the process is ongoing evaluation. However, regular evaluation should not be interpreted as an assessment of the teachers' or students' performances, but rather as a means for checking whether this approach is meeting the students' needs and is fitting well within the program. Administrators might use the following questions to guide their evaluation of problem-based learning in their programs:

1) Are students interacting with each other and sharing information?

2) Are they working together in groups rather than relying on teacher guidance?

3) Are students speaking English?

4) Are all students engaged?

5) Is the teacher carefully observing the process and giving students meaningful feedback after the activities have been completed?

6) Is the teacher incorporating these observations into subsequent language lessons?

While dealing with problem-based learning one can face some challenges. The main challenge is that students who share a common first language may use that language rather than English when working in groups on the assigned problem. This problem can be addressed by placing students of different language backgrounds in the same group. A second concern is that problem-based learning may not be appropriate for beginning- or literacy-level students whose English oral and reading skills are minimal. One way to address this concern is to place students with stronger and weaker language skills in the same group, thus allowing those with weaker skills to hear the language and observe the learning strategies of the stronger students, while giving more proficient students opportunities to engage in interactions and negotiate meaning with their peers. Another way is to preteach challenging vocabulary through reading and discussion. Teachers must carefully consider the problems and activities that students are involved in to ensure that the students with limited language and literacy understand and find solutions to the problems.

PBL is an outstanding model that meets the needs of our global society by enabling English language learners to make positive contributions through a collaborative, multilevel approach to learning that focuses on problem-solving and communication through self-directed learning strategies and teamwork. By focusing on an integration of skills, students become self-motivated and develop the ability to think independently, yet work collaboratively. Instructors enthusiastically seek to develop intrinsic interest in complex and authentic problems, as well as language learning. PBL encourages self-direction in language learning and content area skills by developing independent problem-solving strategies. Coupled with an intrinsic motivation toward language acquisition and a natural approach to language learning, PBL encourages successful life-long learning, language acquisition, and content area knowledge believed to create learning experiences compatible with our expanding global society.

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