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СТРАТЕГІЇ ТА ПРИЙОМИ ВТІЛЕННЯ ІНДИВІДУАЛЬНОГО СТИЛЮ НАВЧАННЯ ВАК В РАМКАХ РОЗВИТКУ АНГЛОМОВНОЇ ЛЕКСИЧНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНЦІЇ УЧНІВ

STRATEGIES OF INTRODUCING THE INDIVIDUAL LEARNING STYLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEXICAL COMPETENCE OF PUPILS

Стаття фокусує увагу на особливостях стилю навчання ВАК як однієї з моделей індивідуально-орієнтованої освіти. Враховуючи потребу застосування нового іноваційного підходу в освітній сфері України, стаття висвітлює переваги втілення індивідуальної моделі ВАК під час аудиторної роботи та надає детальний аналіз трьох типів учнів, що виокремлюються у межах запропонованої моделі – аудіалів, візуалів та кінестетів.

Лексична компетенція розглядається як необхідна запорука успішного оволодіння іноземною мовою, особливо для розвитку таких навичок як письмо та говоріння. Враховуючи важливість розвитку іномовної лексичної компетенції у школах, у статті пропонуються практичні стратегії, техніки та засоби імплементації моделі ВАК у загальноосвітній навчальний процес з метою розвитку лексичних навичок учня. На основі результатів експериментального втілення моделі ВАК у процес навчання, у поданому дослідженні надано практичні рекомендації щодо організації навчального процесу з урахуванням психофізіологічних особливостей кожного типу учнів.

Запропоновані стратегії та техніки ВАК розроблено з урахуванням усіх етапів роботи над лексичним матеріалом. На етапі семантизації нових лексичних одиниць особливу увагу зосереджено на засобах семантизації через переклад та без нього. Окрім цього, пропонуються можливі модифікації технік ВАК з метою залучення до навчального процесу декількох типів учнів одночасно та спрощення загального процесу оволодіння новими лексичними одиницями.

Ключові слова: *індивідуальний стиль навчання, тип учня, канали сенсорного сприйняття, аудіали, візуали, кінестети, лексична компетенція, лексична одиниця.*

The article focuses on the issue of individual learning styles according to the VAK-model within the student-centered approach in education. Considering the necessity of introducing innovative education approaches into Ukrainian educational sphere, the paper highlights the advantages of implementing the VAK-model and deals with a detailed analysis of the learning types distinguished within this model (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic groups of learners).

Lexical competence is seen as one of the fundamental aspects for mastering the foreign language skills, especially in writing and speaking. Taking into account the importance of

developing lexical competence at school, the paper outlines practical strategies and techniques for applying the VAK-model in the learning process at schools for the development of the lexical potential of pupils. Departing from the experimental implementation of the VAK-model into the learning process, the current study provides the reader with practical guidelines, techniques, and strategies for organising the process of vocabulary acquisition and adjusting it to each personality type.

The suggested activities cover all the stages of mastering new vocabulary with a special focus on techniques involving and avoiding translation of lexical units in the stage of semantization of the target vocabulary. Alongside, the possible modifications of the VAK techniques to simultaneously engage several learning types into classroom work and to facilitate the overall process of mastering new vocabulary are considered.

Key words: *individual learning style, learning type, sensory modalities, auditory learners, visual learners, kinesthetic learners, lexical competence, vocabulary.*

Introduction. The European course of modern Ukraine envisages its gradual engagement in the joint educational and scientific space marked by a set of uniform standards throughout Europe. To facilitate democratic changes and reforms in Ukraine, lots of attention should be given to upbringing independent and confident nation that realizes the importance of lifelong learning and constant self-improvement. From the primary educational stage, it is impossible to achieve without applying the student-centered approach in the academic process that would take into account the modes of information gathering and processing 'preferred' by the learners and proved to be effective in each case.

The Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic (VAK) model is a bright example of individualized learning style aimed at developing the learner's personal qualities and emphasizing their strengths in terms of their psychophysiological profile. Taking into account a high popularity of the VAK-model in worldwide and its flexibility, more attention should be given to the matters of organization and implementation of this model into the class work to facilitate individualized language learning.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The concept of "teaching through modality strengths" was proposed by Walter Burke Barbe and his colleagues in 1979. He proved experimentally that if a teacher takes into account learners' modality strengths, the adoption of new information is more efficient and academic progress is more intensive [2, p. 378]. The Barbe's model was further extended to VARK model by Neil Fleming who added the fourth – read/write learning style [6]. Since then, learning styles have been put under consideration in a number of foreign and inland studies. Whereas in 1990 M. Ehrman and R. Oxford cited 9 learning styles, the year 2004 saw an overwhelming report by F. Coffield et al. on already 71 different theories of learning style being in use in the UK. Among these, the idea of learning styles shaped into the VAK theory that comes from the assumption that every learner has a dominating learning style and the auxiliary one(s).

Despite a considerable portion of criticism (see the works of C. Riener and D. Willingham, J. G. Sharp et al., D. Rohrer and H. Pashler, etc.), the learning styles and both VAK and VARK models are actively applied in the academic process which is evidenced by numerous reports that cover the issues of applying VAK/VARK models for learning English language by the students from around the globe (C. Dreyer and R. Oxford, A. P. Gilakjani, M. J. Gohar, M. Peacock, J.M. Reid, C.M. Wang, Ya. Tunkun, etc.), for optimization of academic (S. Roy, N. Othman) and language learning processes (N. B. Jones, O. Koraeva, I. Pavlovskaja, Ya. Tunkun), and assessing achievements in

developing communicative competencies (R. Dunn, I. Erton, M. Khademi et al.). At the same time, the vast majority of scientists and teachers pay special attention to the strategies applied to teaching certain categories of learners (L. Boström, P. Kharb, K. Makeeva, E. L. Marin et al., J. T. E. Richardson, L. Rossi-Le, D. A. Sasi).

Despite a vast number of profound studies on general characteristics of VAK model, little attention so far has been given to the development of certain language competences of English learners through the implementation of this learning style.

Setting the objectives. This article aims at providing practical guidelines and examples of various activities in terms of individual learning style VAK to improve the lexical competence of schoolchildren by giving special consideration to their psychophysiological perceptual modalities, i.e. their psychological types.

Results and discussion. The VAK model departs from the assumption that the learners take in and process the information in different ways and preferentially: some of them willingly read and watch what is shown, the others learn more from that they have heard or from the body experience. The VAK model as a theory of learning styles expands on three sensory modalities: Visual (pictures, schemas, tables, images, etc.), Auditory (sounds, speech, music, tones, rhythm), and Kinesthetic (gestures, touch, positioning, movements).

The simplicity and clarity of the VAK model predetermine its high popularity in the classroom. The advantages of this model include providing the variety of the educational process, actively engaging the learners into study, and easy applying of its techniques in class [12, p. 16]. However, the efficient implementation of the VAK strategies and methods is possible on condition that the teacher carefully studies the perceptual modalities peculiar to auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners.

Auditory learners (around 20–30% of all learners [4, p. 13]) have the most developed aural modality, so they benefit from interactive lectures and seminars, discussions, and oral instructions. However, such learners get easily bored with much seat work or reading to oneself because they need sounding: if there reigns a long silence in class they start humming, tapping with fingers, or producing other sounds that immediately irritate the rest. While working with such type of learners it is highly recommended to organize a group study, to incorporate melodies, songs, and rhythms into curriculum for better information adoption, to arrange discussion among learners and foster activities such as brainstorming or composing tales [10, p. 35] which encourage learners to generate and express their own opinion and thoughts.

The strength of visual learners lies in their highly-efficient visual perception. By perceiving the information through graphic displays such as charts, diagrams, illustrations and handouts, they create the associations with new notions and concepts, thus, memorizing them better [9, p. 8]. In contrast to auditory and kinesthetic learners, visual learners do not like any lively activities or games and prefer to work in a quiet environment. In the work with such type of learners it is highly recommended to use graphical materials to enhance their learning, to draw concepts through images on the frame of mind rather than to write them down, use visual displays such as maps, diagrams, and pictures to offer such activities as word search, matching activities, and puzzles [8, p. 34].

Kinesthetic learners require a hand-on interaction as they are learning best by doing. Their own, preferably bodily, experience is a prerequisite for learning something new. Making up as little as 5% of the overall student population, most tactile learners become bored and are very easily losing interest in anything that requires them to sit still and

remain silent for long periods of time since they think in terms of events rather than words and pictures [7, p. 73]. Experimental work, role play, acting, or any other type of interacting with the surrounding environment are among the core keys to understanding the learning material. Despite the fact that the strategies used at schools lack the ability to approach kinesthetic learners effectively, it is still highly recommended for teachers to illustrate information by means of diagrams, to focus on practical work rather than theory, to arrange physical activities such as dance, athletics, drawing, sculpting and drafting, using card games and board [8, p. 36], to incorporate non-verbal communication and gamification.

Learning a foreign language requires the development of four basic language skills, i.e. listening, reading, speaking, and writing. However, all of them, to a certain degree, require a solid vocabulary. We believe that lexical competence can be greatly improved through appliance of various VAK-techniques and methods that consider the modes of taking in and processing information.

The development of lexical competence, which is “the knowledge of and ability to use the vocabulary of a language” [5, p. 10], envisages the vocabulary enlargement of the learners on its way from passive through controlled active to free active use in communication.

Lexical unit is a semantic language element which represents lexical form and lexical meaning and can be introduced both by words and word-combinations (collocations or chunks) [11, p. 186]. That is why mastering new vocabulary should embrace not only separate words but also typical word-combinations and set expressions, the so-called “language patterns” that contribute to realizing a more natural way of foreign language communication.

In the work on new vocabulary several stages are defined: 1) introduction of the new vocabulary, 2) its semantization, 3) control of understanding the vocabulary, 4) its practicing, 5) assessment of the learners’ vocabulary acquisition degree [1, p. 103].

Introduction of the new vocabulary takes place, normally, within a new lexical topic / subtopic. In this stage, the learners get familiarized with the new lexical units (pronunciation and spelling) and try to deduce their meanings in the context.

The semantization of new vocabulary aims at defining systemic meanings of the lexical units through the techniques involving or avoiding translation.

Semantization techniques avoiding translation engage both visual and auditory sensory modalities and help improve contextual guess and enhance associative learning. This kind of semantization may take the forms of either visual semantization, i.e. through demonstrating objects, pictures, diagrams, pantomime, etc., or verbal semantization. The techniques of the latter incorporate:

1) making judgements based on interpreting the microcontext (e.g. *He’s good at Maths and basketball. He’s a computer **wizard***);

2) lexical matching through antonyms or synonyms (e.g. *curly hair – straight hair*);

3) providing a definition or description by means of the learners’ active vocabulary (e.g. *PE is a lesson in which pupils do physical exercises or sport*);

4) providing a set of lexical units which can be grouped together on semantic principles (e.g. *a guitar, a piano, a synthesizer – kinds of musical instruments*);

5) analyzing morphemic word structure based on previous knowledge (e.g. *fog – foggy, chill – chilly*).

However, sometimes the lack of time in class or insufficient language competency of the learners require the appliance of translation-based semantization techniques.

We agree with P. Newmark who believes that “translation is important as an exercise in accuracy economy and elegance in manipulating a variety of L2 registers in a first degree” [10, p. 62]. Translation-based semantization of the new vocabulary rests on introducing direct or partial L1 equivalents of the L1 units under consideration (e.g. *still life* – *натюрморт*; *Every man to his taste.* – *На колір і смак товариш не всяк. Про смаки не сперечаються*). The procedures may take the form of a game activity with cards when one group of learners gets cards with new vocabulary units and the second one – the cards with their translation. The task of the learners is to match the words written on the cards (visual aspect) with their translations by moving around the class (motoric aspect) and announce the word pair to the rest of the learners (auditory aspect).

The next stage of mastering new vocabulary is control of its understanding. The most appropriate activity in this stage for auditory learners is to revise the target vocabulary by active listening or speaking. An example of such activity would be the “vocabulary unit ↔ definition” interaction. Considering visual learners, the visual representation should be prioritized (e.g. providing a written form or an image). Both these activities are easily combined. For instance, the visual learners identify the lexical units by their images, and the auditory learners comment on their meanings. Kinesthetic learners can contribute to the learning process by pantomiming the vocabulary or by a short role-play (e.g. dramatizing a mini-dialogue with the target vocabulary).

Mind map represents another extremely useful activity for controlling the understanding of new vocabulary. Mind maps are seen as ‘visual, non-linear representations of ideas and their relationships’ [3, p. 72] that help the learners not only collect, interconnect, and label the ideas but also to categorize the surrounding world. On separate sheets of paper, the learners are encouraged to prepare individual or collective associograms in the form of a set of words (concepts) linked to the central word (concept). From the first sight, this activity may seem to be oriented on the visual learners only; however, splitting the class into groups and encouraging an active discussion between them is of great use for auditory learners as well. Kinesthetic learners will be engaged providing that this activity is transformed into a team competition within a set time frame.

Being mostly appropriate for kinesthetic learners in general, team activities foster collaboration and leadership which rank high in the list of personal skills. An example of such an activity in the stage of controlling the understanding of new vocabulary is the game “Vote with your Feet”. The teacher splits the classroom space into two sectors: “right” and “wrong”. On hearing the definition of the lexical unit, the learners decide whether this definition is correct or not by taking place in one of the sectors. Thus, both kinesthetic and auditory learners get engaged in the learning process.

When the learners are already able to recognize the target vocabulary and its meaning, it comes to practising it. This stage is aimed at a complete mastering of the new vocabulary by the learners, its practical application by the learners on the daily basis, and thus, shifting these lexical units to their “active” vocabulary. As a rule, exercises from the textbooks (filling in the gaps, paraphrasing, matching, giving synonyms/antonyms, etc.) are instrumental in this stage. Such techniques assist the learners in memorizing the contexts typical for the target lexical units, whereas the vocabulary recycling effectively stimulates the learners’ long-term memory.

As any other individual learning style, the VAK model should impel learners to rely upon their own experience that would enhance their ability to use the learnt vocabulary freely. Simulation of such a free use of the vocabulary is typically performed through a set of “situational” activities which aim at imitating everyday communication.

Traditional discussion is as a bright example of such an activity. Taking into account the individual learning preferences of different types of learners and aiming at enhancing the learning efficiency, it is recommended to ask one of the learners firstly to read and translate the question by using new vocabulary and then to put this question to a classmate.

Individual discussions can be transformed into the group work when students have to reach an agreement on a defined topic. In comparison to the traditional form of discussion, the group work is not so time-consuming and it is more easily implemented due to the team work which helps the learners generate more ideas.

However, both discussion and group work do not envisage any motor activity; therefore, it is relevant to apply game activities to engage kinesthetic learners. An example of such a game activity is the game “Alias” when the players are to explain as many words as possible to their team players without using any cognates. Due to the time limit, the learners are expected to recollect the word meanings in the shortest time possible. Since most of them try rather describe the contexts where the words are used than give direct definitions, this type of activity turns into an experience-based one that establishes additional associative links and contributes to memorizing the target vocabulary through addressing different sensory modalities.

The assessment of the learners’ vocabulary acquisition degree is usually performed through various tests that help define strong and weak points in their working knowledge of the target vocabulary.

Conclusions. In terms of the VAK-model, three types of learners are distinguished due to their inborn peculiarities of sensory perception. This premise is to be taken into consideration when developing the lexical competence of the English language learners since it is the key to mastering writing and speaking skills and thus overall communicative competence. The implementation of the VAK-model is especially relevant considering the learners’ necessity to apply their own experience to gain the ability to use the English language fluently on a daily basis.

To introduce the VAK-model into the English language class, the teacher is to get aware of the peculiarities of the three dominant learning types (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learner) and to consider the efficiency and relevance of various activities in every stage of practicing the target vocabulary. All the in-class activities suggested in this paper can both be used individually and modified to the particular learning needs and academic environment.

Thus, the VAK-model is an effective approach to the English language learning since it helps teachers to satisfy the individual needs of the learners and helps the learners define their personal learning preferences and elaborate relevant strategies for lifelong learning.

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Одержано статтю: 11.04.2018

Прийнято до друку: 25.04.2018