

INTERACTIVE TEACHING METHODS IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION BY SPORTS STUDENTS

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Interactive techniques in second language acquisition are in the base of all modern educational approaches. The aim is to use such didactical methods which can ensure the efficient interaction between the teacher and the students. Examples of such techniques could be the discourse, discussion, dispute, games, case study, brainstorming, project making, etc. Using interactive methods and techniques helps overcoming of existing or arising difficulties and communication barriers by stimulating the process of thinking, generating and exchange of ideas.

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Second language acquisition is a must in the contemporary global society. The professional attitude today requires speaking at least one foreign language as a major priority among the European educational strategies and curricula (2). Knowing a foreign language gives the possibility for immediate and optimal inclusion in the intercultural information system – effective integration in the globalized world and successful use of the new technologies. Nowadays, **intercultural communication** is a major fundamental need – valuable for every specialist. Information literacy allows one to join not only a certain educational/academic environment, but also one's future professional environment (1). Being an element of **interpersonal communication** it is characterized with diversity and changeability and depends to a great extent on the culture and cultural differences of the participants. Each party has to initiate and facilitate the first steps in this communication and be a responsible agent in the process – to stimulate, to analyze, to reason. There are various needs classifications by many classical psychologists (5, 6, 9) where language is considered to be the first personal need and a premise for achieving an effective interaction when one encounters another culture. Second language acquisition is claimed to be a fundamental inner need, regulated by certain stimuli and goals, which increases one's activity to reach them (3, 7).

Sport is a field where the process of globalization develops quite quickly. Sport today attracts athletes and spectators from all around the world. This means that knowing English on behalf of the managing team, coaches, referees, competitors, and organizers is not only more or less a conscious need but also a vital precondition and factor for a successful and fruitful intercultural communication.

The modern educationist under-

stands that learning is a highly comprehensive task, connected to the learners' culture (8). What is more, "Culture is not only a collection of different activities, it is a way of life" (4). This way of life, in sports context, is a total dedication to the sports discipline chosen. In their endeavour for high achievements the athletes view the second language as a personal need but in order to be fully involved they need special attention and require a special approach.

The current changes in the academic environment challenge lecturers to search for newer and attractive teaching methods to capture their students' attention. One of the ways for improving the process of learning a foreign language is through the use of **interactive teaching methods**.

The aim of the present study is to reveal which interactive methods of teaching English language could be successfully applied in the education with sports students.

The research was held among 309 sports students (213 boys and 96 girls) at the National Sports Academy "Vassil Levski".

In order to achieve the aim of the research the following tasks were set:

1. To develop a number of various interactive methods of teaching English language to sports students.

2. To test the methods in educational environment and observe students' reactions and interest.

The research was held during the first and second semesters of the academic year 2011/2012.

Results

The pedagogical experiment held among the sports students at the NSA "Vassil Levski" was developed on the base of exhaustive analysis of their needs regarding their English studies. The analysis reveals the following trends: 1) The

majority of the students speak English on a basic level; 2) The students want to accumulate knowledge and skills in English in the following areas: a) terminology of the kind of sport they practice and some of the sports in the curriculum of the NSA; b) basic communication skills during competitions; c) use of sports materials and publications in the Internet and specialized sports editions.

Based on the above mentioned trends various teaching procedures and techniques were created. They aimed at fulfilling the conceptual idea of the **interactivity** of the teaching process. The natural pedagogical experiment among the sports students during the academic year 2011/2012 includes the successful application of the following teaching procedures:

1. **"polar opposites"**: the teacher provides the students with two versions of an example. Choosing one of the versions the students have to think the matter over applying their knowledge. This procedure serves for filling in the gaps in grammar and for indirect error correction. (e.g. Compare the two pairs of sentences: United States are playing against Greece. vs. United States play against Greece; United States usually play one on one. vs. United States are usually playing one on one. Which sentence is best used in the given situation?)

2. **"guess the right answer"**: the teacher introduces the new topic by asking a question connected to a sports term. Through brainstorming he/she encourages the participation of each student (e.g. Using your knowledge of football, try to guess the English names of the positions of players on a basketball team.).

3. **"biographic method"**: the teacher sets a written task, connected with the students' life. They have to describe the beginning of their sports career, to

Record of Observation

Interactive method	Reaction	Perseverance	Interest	Total
Polar opposites	2	3	3	8
Guess the answer	3	3	3	9
Biographic method	2	3	3	8
Word of the day	2	2	2	6
Presentation	3	3	3	9
Tournament	2	3	3	8
True or false	3	3	3	9
Questions and answers	3	3	3	9
Definitions	2	2	2	6
Be a coach	3	3	3	9
Be a champion	3	3	3	9

1 – low interest; 2 – average interest; 3 – strong interest

Students' performance in the period 2007-2012

Academic Year	Average Grades I year students	Average Grades III year students
2007/2008	4.41	4.76
2008/2009	4.31	4.55
2009/2010	4.00	4.34
2010/2011	4.76	4.51
2011/2012	4.88	5.13

Average Grades – academic year 2011/2012

Stages	N	Min	Max	M	SD
beginning	122	2	6	3,54	1,315
middle	122	2	6	4,45	1,113
end	122	2	6	4,62	1,145

Comparative analysis between the first and the last survey

Coefficient	End-beginning
Z	-6,814(a)
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,000

share their attitude to the kind of sport they practice, to describe the most thrilling moments during competitions, etc. The use of the “personal” element in the educational process leads to “personification” of education and increases the participation motivation of the students.

4. **“word of the day”**: the teacher chooses a term which appears in all the exercises in the lesson (e.g. exercises for word formation). In groups, the students have to use the same model with another term (e.g. Pay attention to the grammar and lexical forms of the word “defend” in the following sentences,

taken from the texts and exercises we have worked on so far: The *defensive* players did their job perfectly well.; It's hard to play against their *defence*.; Pay attention to their central *defender*! Try to create similar sentences with some of the following words: “*attack*”, “*play*”, “*run*”, “*block*” in the context of the different sports you know.).

5. **“presentation”**: the teacher provides the students with a long text, including information about the rules of a certain sport, the equipment, the positions of the players, etc. The students have to summarize the information in

Table 1

Power Point presentation and show their work to their fellow students. The teacher and the rest of the students ask questions connected with the expose. The method is very successful in groups of students practicing different kinds of sports.

6. **“tournament”**: the class is divided into two groups which compete for a higher score on a few given texts. Each group reads the text and then answers questions. The competitive nature of the sports students focuses their attention on the material and increases their competitive motivation.

7. **“true or false”**: the teacher distributes cards with certain statements. Half of the statements are true, the others are false. The students who think their information is correct go to one part of the room; those with the wrong statements go the other part. The statements then are read aloud and discussed by the whole group. This procedure can be used for revision of the teaching material and provides the teacher with an adequate feedback.

8. **“questions and answers”**: the teacher prepares a card for each student. Half of the cards contain questions and the other half - answers. Each student has to find his/her partner by comparing the questions and answers of his/her fellow-students. The procedure is effective when working on different grammar problems and learning the rules, peculiarities, and terminology of certain kind of sport.

9. **“definitions”**: in groups the students create definitions, associations, and applications of the concepts discussed in class. This can be used at the beginning of the class or later on for solving a practical case on a certain stage of the lecture (e.g. Try to create short definitions of five basketball terms, using the information given in the text.).

10. **“be a coach”**: the teacher chooses an advanced student who leads certain part of the lecture (e.g. Students take the roles of the players on a team. The “coach” asks questions, connected with the specifics in the play of each of them, trying to correct the grammar and lexical errors his fellow-students make.). The procedure places the students in a non-standard situation and provokes their interest. Such a funny and relaxing approach stimulates students' participation in times of tiredness and boredom and

prevents the appearance of disincensive feelings.

11. **"be a champion"**: the teacher prepares a few lists of multiple choice questions connected with the history, the rules, and some facts about famous people, practicing certain kind of sport. The students are divided into groups of three or four. They have ten sec to choose the right option for each question. The group with the highest result is the "champion of the day".

A combination of the above described procedures was used in each lesson plan. The students' reactions, perseverance, participation, and interest towards each procedure were observed. At the end of the academic year the results were analyzed and presented in the form of record of observation (Table 1).

The pedagogical experiment held confirms the need of applying specific methods of teaching English to sports students. The results show the effectiveness of interdisciplinary form of education which led to enriching the students' knowledge in the field of different kinds of sports and at the same time increased their performance in comparison to previous academic years (Table 2). It should be pointed out that two thirds of the students received their final grade on the base of their work and performance during the academic year and did not have to take their fi-

nal exam. This proves that the use of interactive methods increases students' motivation and interest and act as an active mechanism for inner regulation of their behavior.

In confirmation to this is the data received from the statistical analysis of the average grades values (Table 3). An increase of more than one unit can be observed - a serious proof for the efficiency of the pedagogical experiment.

Students' evaluation was done in three stages: at the beginning of the academic 2011/2012; at the end of the first semester, and at the end of the second semester. The comparative analysis of the results from the first and the last stage of the survey (Table 4) show there is a statistically significant difference regarding the students' average grades ($\text{Alfa} = 0,00$).

Conclusion

Interactive teaching methods stimulate learners' participation and performance. They lead to active actions and interactions in class. The various teaching procedures, the group work, and the immediate feedback the students receive from their fellow-students or their teacher increase their participation and competitive motivation and are an affective factor for improving the learning process.

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