

ENGLISH TEACHING METHODS

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Mastery of the English language involves not only receiving linguistic knowledge, but also the formation of skills of practical application of the language. Ability to use English in everyday life involves communication in English, involvement in oral or written communication.

Development of methods of learning and teaching English at school began in antiquity. There were invented many methods, but none of them is universal. Methods are constantly being developed and updated.

Thus, as a result of the numerous methods of language learning there is a need to differentiate between them. There are a lot of methods for teaching English, some of them being created long time ago, some are relatively new. English teacher in Ukrainian higher school is bound to the educational program and topic to be studied by students during terms, but teachers are free to choose the way they can work with students.

Let's consider some methods being used by English teacher in the whole world.

The communicative method

Communicative language teaching methods, in contrast to the "traditional", are aimed at accelerating teaching of spoken language. The main objective of training is to overcome the "language barrier". "Language barrier" is understood as the inability of students to use the learned material in spontaneous speech. Thus, it makes sense to separate the "lexical barrier" (inability to remember the word "at once"), "grammatical barrier" (the inability to apply the learned grammar in practice) and "conversational barrier" (a general feeling of "being lost", experienced by the learner, when he finds himself in a situation or medium where he should speak English with others).

So we should think where the language barrier comes from and how teacher can overcome it. The language barrier is taken from the practice of (kindergarten\primary) school, when a man is told that language is difficult, that in a speech the main thing is perfection and that it is impossible to achieve this perfection without memorizing lists of words, grammar rules and "model" texts. In the consciousness of the people there is introduced the idea that learning a language is not joy of communication, not an opportunity to learn a lot about the world, but a heavy and thankless task. Repressive atmosphere in schools leads to the fact that people do not perceive language as a communication tool, but as a «difficult», «unloved» item for which you should try your best to receive a positive evaluation. Language in such way is viewed as a kind of torture.

To remove the language barrier, teacher needs to change the attitude to language learning, to change the atmosphere in the classroom. The teacher should forget phrases such as "This is a very complex rule", "It's impossible to get this right from the first time". Of course, language is difficult and serious thing, but reminding it to students means creating new problems.

Where did communicative method origin from?

It all started with the Bulgarian psychologist George Lozanov. In the 60ies of XX century he invented a new way of learning called "suggestopedia". Initially, his project was aimed to explore possibilities of hypnosis in education. But he soon came to the conclusion that hypnosis is actually inapplicable in format group sessions, as different people react differently to the hypnotic state. As a result, the method «suggestion» was born as a set of methods to "intensify" the consciousness and the internal capabilities of students in the waking state. Place of the repressive atmosphere of academic education took more casual and more productive model of interaction between the classes. Lozanov constantly stressed that his method is not related to hypnosis. The basis of suggestopedia is the principle that learning should be very comfortable for the students, so that the new information was for them really interesting, fascinating, and easy. As the UNESCO reports, people who have studied with Lozanov demonstrated abilities that do not manifest in their everyday life:

Hypermnemonica (ability to memorize large amounts of information without much effort), kinesthesia (the ability to associate information with the movements of the body, so that what - phrases that are natural reactions to a particular situation), the ability to easily handle complex abstract schemes (which is useful when learning grammar).

Facts in favor of the effectiveness of the communicative approach:

- UNESCO report (1978, 1980);
- there is the fact that in Europe, where the communicative method has been applied for a long time, language proficiency is much higher than in post-USSR countries and the United States, dominated by "traditional methods";

Lozanovskii's method was brought to the post-USSR countries by two people: Igor Shechter and Galina Kitaygorodska.

"Immersion method" of Igor Schechter.

The method of Schechter is the idea that language is learned quickly and effectively if the people do not have the possibility to communicate using their native language simultaneously solving quite specific "non-linguistic" problems using foreign language. A special role in Schechter's method is played by "language camps" where students go along with teachers "on nature", communicate with each other, and «experience" everyday events with "foreign" language all around. Schechter method is a typical "immersion method", which is somewhat similar to the "direct method" (direct learning), which was used in the U.S. in Armed Forces during World War II. This method has a couple of significant disadvantages: first, it is not suitable for employment in the mode of 2-3 times per week (i.e. corporative or university lessons are simply impossible); second, although people began to speak very quickly, grammar is their weak point. Subsequently Schechter introduced to his method two-week "grammar sessions" where students are engaged exclusively in the study of grammar rules.

Method of Kitaygorodska

The basis of this method is also the language via communication. But Kitaygorodska built it differently: in the form of a game. Lesson in method of Kitaygorodska is a continuous "language game." Students move balls, sing songs, chant complex words, clapping, playing cards, etc. All this allows them to quickly remember clichéd phrases, which they can then use to communicate. In addition, students develop the ability to improvise language. Unlike Schechter, Kitaygorodska gives grammar not "implicitly" but as a significant makeweight to the gaming practice. Game situations in full accordance with the ideas of the lesson by Lozanov create a relaxed, positive atmosphere in which students reveal hidden opportunities. Using method of Kitaygorodska teacher can quite possibly give both conventional and corporate classes. The only drawback to this method is the complexity of the transition from dialogic monologues. This is what is called (on teacher's slang) «Pre-Intermediate threshold». And more crucial disadvantage is that Kitaygorodska's method can be applied only for conducting the initial levels of the language, as pedagogical potential of games is exhausted pretty soon.

"Oxford" and "Cambridge" methods.

In our country, the communicative method is often called the "Oxford" or "Cambridge" - not by name of universities, but because of the title of relevant publishers producing well-known and rather popular books. In these books a very worthy attempt is made for bringing together elements of Lozanovskii suggestopedia («Teacher's books»), audio-lingual and even grammar-translation methods. By themselves, these books are very good. The problem is that using these editions for teaching should also take into view that the books were created and composed for multicultural audience. So some things are not causing difficulties for the Ukrainian-speaking students, but in books they are paid great attention to, and some moments of concern for Ukrainian students are omitted at all. In these books there is fairly specific and original method. Untrained teacher, not knowing the source of this method and the specific function of each exercise, will not be able to effectively teach students.

The material of these books always claims to modernity, based on the actual spoken language. But language changes at cosmic speed. Man, who has no direct contact with the language, cannot adequately evaluate the material of Oxford and Cambridge textbooks. He just does not see that any expression is obsolete or some topics lost relevance, and some things are now expressed quite differently.

So the teacher should think and choose the right method or mix of different approaches to teaching English for gaining the best results.

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