



Project Method as a Pedagogical Technology for Stimulating Students' Educational Activity in European Universities

Tetiana Soroka¹

Abstract: The pedagogical technologies that allow organizing and stimulating the search activity of students of European universities include the project method. This method develops the ability to acquire new knowledge in the process of their own educational and cognitive activity. The project method is a set of techniques, actions of students in a certain sequence, aimed at achieving a task or solving a certain problem that is significant for students and designed as a final product. The project method, being an effective pedagogical technology, corresponds to all general didactic principles. The introduction of such projects into the educational process develops students' skills of independent work, their self-organization and responsibility, helps to organize teamwork, teaches social activity, and educates responsibility. This method places high demands not only on the student, but also on the teacher, requires their mutual activity, determination and goal-setting to achieve results. The project method is an objective indicator of the transition in the study of a foreign language from the threshold to the threshold advanced, and then the professional level, when it is possible to state the development of linguistic and sociolinguistic competence. The use of the project method is an indicator of the advanced stage of learning a foreign language at a university. Combined with traditional methods, it meets modern requirements for the formation of foreign language communicative competence of a future specialist in various fields.

Keywords: foreign language; communicative competence; project method; education

1. Problem Statement

In the educational process, modern pedagogical science pays considerable attention to interactive and activity-based methods and forms of work, when the connection of the formed competencies with their practical application is most demonstrated.

¹ Associate Professor, PhD, Izmail State University of Humanities, Ukraine, Address: Repina St, 12, Izmail, Odessa Region, Ukraine, 68601, Tel.: +38 (04841)51388, Corresponding author: magpie3f@mail.ru.

Therefore, the design of pedagogical conditions assumes maximum strengthening of the student's activity as a subject of the pedagogical process, its active participant and co-author (Airasian, 2011, p. 78).

Focusing on the personal characteristics that modern innovative pedagogy strives to develop, the orientation of the formation of foreign language communicative competence of a student of a non-linguistic university and their corresponding approaches, as well as factors stimulating the educational process, taking into account general didactic principles, modern scientists (Ornstein, 2008, p. 87) propose to divide pedagogical conditions into four groups depending on their intended purpose:

- 1) motivational – pedagogical actions aimed at increasing motivation;
- 2) content – forms and methods of formation and consolidation of competencies;
- 3) participatory – active involvement of a student in the pedagogical process;
- 4) activity – creating situations of activity close to the situation of real communication.

2. Critical Overview

Motivational pedagogical conditions are the following:

1. Visibility, which is meant:
 - a) authenticity of texts (for reading, writing, listening, playback) used in classroom classes and for home and independent work;
 - b) the proximity of simulated learning situations to situations of real communication and the ability to appropriate the knowledge gained by testing and forming personal experience of foreign language communication;
 - c) consciousness as awareness of the naturalness and ease of the communication process in a foreign language, intercultural awareness;
 - d) reliance on the native language (Roberts, 2010, p. 234).
2. Accessible complexity, involving the activation of mental and cognitive processes, the expenditure of effort and the achievement of results.
3. The problematic nature expressed in such a statement of the pedagogical task, when there is an opportunity not only to work out lexical and grammatical

phenomena according to a given algorithm, but also to perform additional search tasks. Depending on the stage of training, they can vary from independently compiled proposals, microdialogues and texts to completed projects and creative tasks. It is assumed that the problem element will be included in every lesson in a foreign language.

4. Emotionality, which implies an open, major, positive nature of the teacher's communication with the student and the student group, the teacher's sincere interest in such communication and infection with such a style of interaction of students.

5. A reflexive component of each lesson that allows an individual to establish effective feedback, including evaluative judgments (not necessarily assessments) of the teacher and student, systematic fixation (possibly in the form of a written or oral message) of achievements and successes, analysis of difficulties.

Content pedagogical conditions include the following varieties (Brown, 2015, p. 123):

1. Dynamics, tempo, alternation, interchangeability and logical connection between forms and types of work, types of speech activity, team and individual work.

2. Modular study of sections based on a single basic textbook with the integration of additional material that activates perception.

3. Rejection of excessive theorizing in favour of practical development of knowledge, skills and abilities.

4. Students' independent work organized in order to cover the maximum possible amount of text material that a student is able to process without a teacher' help, but based on previously formed skills, specified algorithms, methodological recommendations for performing a particular type of work with the ability to use both memorization and creative processing of the text material used.

5. Anticipatory exercises containing new grammatical and lexical phenomena, about which a student can independently get the first idea by comparing them with previously studied ones, with each other and identifying their regularity before they are explained by a teacher.

6. Psychological readiness of a student for control measures at each lesson. It is advisable to carry out such control measures in the form of an unprepared written translation containing lexical and grammatical phenomena studied in previous

classes, worked out at home, when sentences for translation are dictated in their native language, and their recording is made in a foreign language.

This form of control seems to be the most effective, since it allows to involve the whole group. It eliminates cheating, is carried out at a high pace, which saves classroom time, establishes a business atmosphere for the further course of the lesson.

It's necessary to list the participative pedagogical conditions.

1. Group (team) work involving an objective distribution of forces and roles of group members, discussion and competition. The role of a teacher in this case: to be an observer, facilitator or moderator.
2. Participation of a teacher in modeling situations as an actor.
3. Dialogical interaction between a teacher and a student, rejection of authoritarian and liberal style of pedagogical communication in favor of business style.
4. The student's independent choice of certain tasks and ways to solve them.

The activity pedagogical conditions include the following.

1. A combination of traditional methods that have proven their effectiveness with technologies aimed at the formation of professionally oriented skills and the ability to adapt in a professional environment and a rapidly changing world.
2. The use of modern information technologies in foreign language classes.
3. Dosed use of authentic, "live" texts for reading and listening in such a way that a student takes the opportunity to get as close as possible to the culture and social reality of the countries of the language being studied.
4. Development and purposeful use of communicative-activity situations in foreign language classes: imitation-role modeling, cases, frames, project methods, etc.
5. Stimulating students' search activity and developing the skills to discuss, synthesize, analyze and interpret information, think critically, and make decisions.

Earlier, we also substantiated organizational and pedagogical conditions, which in this study we integrate as another group into the complex of pedagogical conditions described above.

By organizational and pedagogical conditions, we understand a set of socio-economic and organizational conditions (environment, material base, programs,

personnel, etc.) that determine the external side of the successful integration of a certain educational block of training specialists into the educational system and pedagogical conditions for the development of professionally-significant skills, which include: inclusion of practice-oriented material in the curriculum; the use of active forms and teaching methods that develop practical skills; preparation of methodological recommendations for the formation of practical skills; organization of joint activities of students aimed at developing programmes and activities varieties (Arends, 2005, p. 114).

The basis of the effectiveness of all these pedagogical conditions is that they function in interaction and unity, strengthening and optimizing each other. Their important characteristic is complementarity, opposed to interchangeability.

3. Purpose of Investigation

The aim of the study is to investigate principles of project method as a pedagogical technology for stimulating students' educational activity in European universities.

4. Research Course

The project method is an activity-based teaching method that develops students' ability to act independently, since a student does not receive knowledge in a ready-made form, but obtains it oneself in the process of own educational and cognitive activity.

The project method can be defined as a set of techniques, actions of students in a certain sequence, aimed at achieving a task or solving a certain problem that is significant for students and designed as a final product.

According to the classification of Arends R.I., which is based on the typology of the dominant method in the project, research, creative, role-playing, informational, practice-oriented, mono- and intersubject types of project methods are distinguished (Arends, 2005, p. 187).

The introduction of projects into the educational process is a time-consuming process with a delayed result. The introduction of projects into the educational process is a time-consuming process with a delayed result. It requires a certain level of training for both students and a teacher. For this reason, creative, role-

playing and informational project methods are mainly used in the course of school education and in junior courses at the university.

For the purposes of teaching a foreign language in non-linguistic universities, project methods show the greatest efficiency and effectiveness when applied in senior courses, when students not only mastered basic language tools (lexical, grammatical, phonetic) and basic types of speech activity (reading and translation, speaking, writing, listening), but also acquired professional knowledge on key disciplines. Since the project method is based on a pragmatic focus on results, at this stage it is advisable to organize research and practice-oriented interdisciplinary projects that have personal or social significance.

In the conditions of a limited number of hours allocated to the discipline “Foreign Language”, it is advisable to synergetically apply the method of projects at the intersection of disciplines in order to optimize time costs and bring research closer to real problems, thus implementing a unified interdisciplinary approach to the subjects and objects under study. Thus, when preparing the theoretical part of term papers, foreign scientific resources are required, and in order to obtain real data for the project, it is necessary to use various scientific methods of collecting and interpreting the results.

Tendencies of interdisciplinarity and convergence in higher education contribute to parallel or approximate teaching of professional topics in the course of studying specialized disciplines and a professionally-oriented foreign language. This allows students to correlate the knowledge gained in the process of learning a foreign language with the knowledge already available in the specialty. At the same time, students can enrich their knowledge in the studied areas by means of a foreign language.

It's necessary to name the distinctive characteristics of the project method and the general didactic principles corresponding to them:

- the presence of a significant problem/task (in the creative plan) requiring integrated knowledge, research search for its solution; dominant principles: scientific character, connection of learning with life, consciousness and activity in learning;
- independent (individual, pair, group) activity of students in the classroom or outside of school hours; dominant principles: systematic and consistency, accessibility, consciousness and activity in learning, individual approach;

- practical, theoretical significance of the expected results; dominant principles: the connection of learning with life, visibility;
- structuring the project, the content part (with indication of step-by-step results and distribution of roles); dominant principles: accessibility, visibility, systematic and consistency;
- the use of research methods: the definition of the problem, the research tasks arising from it; the hypothesis of their solution; the discussion of research methods; the design of the final results [37]; the dominant principles: scientific, systematic and consistent, the strength of assimilation of knowledge, skills and abilities;
- focus on students' interests (personal and group); dominant principles: accessibility, consciousness and activity in learning, individual approach;
- focus on the creation of a specific final product of the project; the dominant principle: the connection of learning with life;
- advisory and coordinating function of a teacher; dominant principle: individual approach;
- exact time frames and structural completeness of the project; dominant principles: systematic and consistency, consciousness and activity in learning;
- interdisciplinary nature of projects [38]; the dominant principles: the connection of learning with life, visibility, strength of assimilation of knowledge, skills and abilities.

In addition, each of the above characteristics is guided by the principle of emotionality, which consists in personal acceptance and interest in the project.

For the purposes of teaching a foreign language in a non-linguistic university, we propose to divide the stages of the project into four main blocks (Arends, 2001, p. 343).

The first stage is preparatory. Within the framework of this project, the topic is selected, the goal is defined and the tasks of the project are formulated, working groups are formed and responsibilities are assigned, planning is carried out, as well as the form of presentation of the project and evaluation criteria are determined.

The second stage is research. It involves identifying resources of information, conducting research, collecting and analyzing information.

The third stage – presentation – includes preparation for the defense of the project in a specified form, public defense and discussion of the project.

The fourth stage is devoted to group debriefing (evaluation of project results and reflection).

It is important to note that in the educational process, students and sometimes teachers often do not distinguish between the concepts of “project” and “presentation”.

The presentation can represent any selected information on a given topic. It can be group or individual.

An element of independent research is not required for the presentation. Students are usually limited at best to compiling several resources on a given topic. For the project method, presentation is one of the forms of the final product and project defense.

The choice of the product form of the project activity is certainly an important organizational task.

An alternative form of the final product of an informational, research and practice-oriented interdisciplinary project can be a photo, video report or a film about the project; a report on prepared posters, wall newspaper or mockups with a demonstration of the results; various forms of documentation: abstract, review, expert opinion, publication in the collection of conference materials or posting the results on the Internet; development tours/excursions, etc.

During the traditional learning process, a teacher is called upon to perform three main functions: pedagogical, educational and developmental, while a teacher implementing activity-based project technologies must act as an organizer at the first stage, a facilitator, a consultant-coordinator and a partner in finding and providing additional information and methodological support for project activities at the project development stage, an expert with a control and evaluation function at the final stage.

For an objective assessment of the performance of research, analytical, presentation and communication tasks, final estimates are formed from the sum of points for three indicators: content, language and speech competencies and presentation skills.

When evaluating a project, it is important to remember that not only the final product of the project activity should be evaluated, but the entire project as a whole.

According to the scientific principle, the project method is scientifically-based and practically-tested in modern conditions of teaching a foreign language. It combines the scientific value of the theoretical material that students work with, and the practical value of this material, as well as the final product. The implementation of the project in higher education involves the implementation of interdisciplinary connections and is built in accordance with the professional orientation of training.

According to the principle of the connection of learning with life, professional orientation prevails in the preparation of the project, and real linguistic competencies of students are involved in its presentation.

Based on the principle of consciousness and activity, the motivational and value sphere of an individual is involved in the preparation of the project.

Each of the project participants is involved in active activities. The participatory approach determines the maximum degree of participation and responsibility of everyone involved in the project.

In accordance with the principle of an individual approach, each student performs the part of the work that is on the border of one's capabilities.

According to the principle of visibility, the project is implemented in accordance with a given plan; search work is carried out with relevant material, involving the formation of life and professional experience a priori and a posteriori, comparison, synthesis, analysis, systematization, generalization with the use of existing language and speech knowledge, skills and abilities.

The principle of emotionality in the course of the project involves a student's sensory sphere, which implies one's expressed personal interest in the work, a situation of tension, passion and interest in the result.

The method cannot and should not be introduced in untrained groups. According to the principle of the strength of assimilation of knowledge, the experience acquired by a student during the project is based on the previous one and determines the subsequent one.

Thus, the project method is an effective pedagogical technology, its inclusion in the process of forming foreign language communicative competence of students refers to the pedagogical conditions of the effectiveness of this process.

It complies with all general didactic principles and, combined with traditional methods, meets modern requirements for the formation of foreign language communicative competence of a future specialist.

5. Concluding Remarks

The conducted research allows to formulate the following conclusions. The project method is an objective indicator of the transition in the study of a foreign language from the threshold to the threshold advanced, and then the professional level, when it is possible to state the development of linguistic and sociolinguistic competence. The use of the project method is an indicator of the advanced stage of learning a foreign language at a university. The introduction of such projects into the educational process develops students' skills of independent work, their self-organization and responsibility, helps to organize teamwork, teaches social activity, and educates responsibility. This method places high demands not only on the student, but also on the teacher, requires their mutual activity, determination and goal-setting to achieve results.

6. Further Research

The prospect of research is to investigate pedagogical technologies for stimulating students' educational activity.

References

- Airasian, P.W. (2011). *Classroom assessment*. New York, McGraw-hill, Inc.
- Arends, R.I. (2001). *Classroom instruction and management*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Arends, R.I. (2005). *Learning to teach*. New York: Random House, Inc.
- Brown, D. H. (2015). *Teaching by Principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New Jersey. Prentice Hall Regents.
- Ornstein, Allan C. (2008). *Strategies for Effective Teaching*. Wm. C. Brown Communications, Inc.
- Roberts, J. (2010). *Language Teacher Education*. London, Arnold. Schlechty Ph.C. Schools for the 21-st century. Leader imperatives for educational reform. San Francisco.