

Yu.V.Astafyeva, E.F.Gerfanova

*Sh.Ualikhanov Kokshetau State University
(E-mail: yuliya.astafyeva@mail.ru)*

Dialogic and cooperative learning in teaching English

The article dwells upon the importance of the dialogic and cooperative learning in teaching students the English language at the university. The theoretical material used as a basis for writing the article was taken from materials which were studied during the training courses for teachers within the Program of additional professional education of graduate students at higher educational institutions. The article presents the results of using active methods of teaching English during the practical training session at the Chair of the English language and methods of teaching at Shokan Ualikhanov Kokshetau State University.

Key words: dialogic and cooperative learning, investigative conversation, objectives of the lesson, group work, listening and speaking skills, teaching and learning, questions of high and low order, dialogue, mental map.

Nowadays new ways of teaching are becoming more and more popular. This fact should not be surprising for new ways of teaching are more effective and creative than traditional ones. The roles of teachers and students in class have also been revised.

A great many teachers considered the importance of dialogue in class. For example, Mercer and Littleton (2007) in their work showed that the use of dialogue contributes to the intellectual development of students. Integrated discussion allows students to express their opinion, teaches them to accept points of view of other people, develops the ability to speak in favor of their ideas, allows teachers to understand at what stage students are in their understanding of the topic [1; 126]. The development of these skills is a key factor of such children becoming successful learners. We agree with Alexander (2004), who claims that a conversation is not a one-way process, but a mutual one, which implies an exchange of views. In this process there is no best or worst, each participant of the conversation is equal [1; 126].

The aim of the series of consecutive lessons was identified as follows «What is the peculiarity and originality of Englishmen's lives?» To help students to answer this question in detail, we tried to engage them in conversation, asking and answering questions, they not only showed their awareness on the subject, but could logically build their own statements, argue their points of view, could listen to and accept the view of another student. This goal was realized step by step at each lesson, choosing a particular method of learning, from simple to complex. Thus, we wanted to give students the ability to ask questions first, of a low order, and then questions of high order, and their ability to participate first, in a dialogue and then to participate in an investigative conversation. And since our students study English, dialogic learning promotes the development of their speaking and listening skills.

As the objective of the first lesson on the theme sounded this way «Why is London the capital of Great Britain?» the students were not only to answer this question, but they were as well asked to support their points of view by different facts. During this lesson four students worked in pairs, i.e. in two groups. Relying on their knowledge about London, on the basis of texts which have been read and different videos which have been viewed beforehand, they had to make up dialogues on the theme «Tell a tourist from Kazakhstan about London». The students coped with the set task: two pairs presented their dialogues for up to 1 minute long in front of the whole group. All four students spoke English. The way the students presented the results of their cooperative work should be analyzed. As a matter of fact, their dialogues were short with a number of grammar and pronunciation mistakes; one group read the dialogue from the sheet of paper, whereas the other group managed to present the dialogue without any visual support; and a lot of interesting information about London was not mentioned by the groups.

The theme of the second lesson was «How do the English spend their weekdays and weekends?» After looking through the texts the students had read before, the students working again in two groups prepared poster presentations on the theme «How do the English spend their weekdays?» and «How do the British spend their weekends?». The presentations were followed by questions which the other group was to answer. If to consider the question whether dialogue learning was used in this type of class activity, the answer is positive. It was used because the students asked questions and gave full answers.

The third lesson on the theme «What is the most common topic for conversation among the English and how does it characterize them?» was organized completely in the form of conversation. At the beginning of the class, the students read the text prepared by the teacher on the following topic «Weather in England is changeable». Thus, in addition to the information available in the textbook, the students learned more information to be able to choose the most interesting fact and tell their group mates about it. Later the students were informed about the algorithm and rules for conducting «an investigative conversation». One of the students was to act as an expert: the student watched the discussion and participation of each student in it. Overall, students mastered this approach: each student took an active part in the conversation, each was given time to speak, and they could talk about any fact of the English weather, then classmates in turns asked each other the questions prepared, the participants asked and explained what was said, and everyone's ideas were valuable for the whole group. At the end of the lesson the students were able to come to an agreement and easily answer the question of the lesson [2; 238]. Thus, the goal was achieved.

Analyzing the investigative conversation, whether it was successful or not, we believe that we should consider the efficiency of applied pedagogical approaches. So, at the first lesson, four students took part in a dialogue: two pairs presented their dialogue on the theme «Tell a tourist from Kazakhstan about London» before the whole group. At the second lesson students were divided into two groups, and upon completing their presentations «How do the British spend their weekdays and weekends?» the students in each group asked each other questions about their speeches. At the third lesson the students were involved in the research conversation.

What was the purpose of the students making up dialogues? First, we wanted to focus on developing speaking and listening skills. This was achieved because the students both talked and listened to each other. Secondly, we wanted to check whether the students have mastered the topic. This was also achieved, because an oral performance of the students gives us a good opportunity to understand how well the students have understood the topic. However, the dialogues were short and not complete; the students did not mention any interesting facts about London in their dialogues. We think that this is due to the fact that the students acted out the dialogue in front of the group and felt embarrassed and constrained.

What was the purpose of the students of each group asking each other questions concerning their topics? First, the development of speaking and listening skills. Secondly, before asking a question, every student was required to listen to the other group's presentation and to focus on some fact that he/she wanted to clarify or to get more information on the topic. Third, the ability to ask questions and wait for a response teaches students to be tolerant to each other and to accept the point of view of another person.

Why should we use an investigative conversation in class? We would like to clarify the fact that we did not just mean to organize this investigative conversation. What is more valuable to us as teachers was that the result of the investigative conversation was to help the students understand the topic more deeply. At first, when the first student spoke on the topic chosen, and it was time for questions and clarifications, there was an awkward silence in class. Then we realized that we need provide support to students and thereby motivate other students to participate in the investigative conversation. We acted as moderators. This helped students to move in the right direction without shifting their focus. As this type of the conversation is unnatural for students, and we used it in class for the first time, we believe that we succeeded in showing our students the value of working together: students not only talked throughout the lesson, they demonstrated their knowledge of new information, but also listened to each other, asked questions, asked for details, justified. Also it should be noted that the students did not feel embarrassed during the conversation because due to the joint efforts a comfortable collaborative environment was achieved.

Having analyzed the introduction of dialogic learning in educational process, we realized that this is difficult because often students can't ask questions of a high order due to the lack of experience and awareness in one area or another; moreover, they are not used to ask questions of this kind; and what is more – they don't have enough vocabulary to do this. So we should pay attention to these facts in our further work with students. It should also be noted that the dialogue increases students' self-esteem, provides them with possibility of learning something new from each other.

Group work is an effective form of work when it is planned and organized in the right way. But to get a positive result, classes with group work require more preparation from teachers while planning class activities.

Group work shows us what is good and also what should be corrected in class. The aim of using group work in class was to teach students to cooperate, to choose the necessary information, analyze it and be able to present it.

It is worth noting that the lesson that is organized with the use of group work method, runs at a fast pace; the focus is shifted from teaching to learning; the lesson turns out to be interesting, because it is not based on single type of activity, but on a number of them [3; 147].

The objectives' realization was carried out from lesson to lesson. So, at the lesson on the theme «Why is London the capital of great Britain?» after reading the text and watching the video, the students were asked to work in pairs and prepare dialogues on the topics «Tell a tourist from Kazakhstan about London»; one pair prepared a mental map «Why is London the capital of Great Britain?» We would like to note that the development of the mental maps and its presentation by the students was more successful and creative than the dialogue presentation. The students who made up the dialogues, were not entirely responsible, although they could show that they are well aware of the vocabulary of the lesson and know information about country-studying in the proper amount. At this lesson the realization of learning objectives was partially achieved by the students: cooperation took place, although not all the students were able to analyze information and choose necessary information for their dialogues.

The lesson on the topic «How do the English spend their weekdays and weekends?» involved the activities that were carried out in 2 groups. After revising the texts, the students of these groups prepared presentations on the theme «How do the English their weekdays?» and «How do the English spend their weekends?» Besides, the students prepared questions for the students from the other group. We were pleased to notice that the groups did not only limit themselves to information on the subject they knew, but they also used new information. Disappointing was the fact that during the presentation of the group work, there were students who simply remained silent and did not help their group mates to present the poster. Was the goal achieved? It was achieved but partly. Cooperation was achieved by the students at the preparatory stage of the presentation, however, was not fully realized at the stage of poster presentation.

At the lesson on the theme «What impact do the English traditions and holidays have on their lives?» the students first worked independently, studied additional material, then worked using the method «each student teaches another one». Each student was to tell another student what he/she had learned during the preparatory stage. Then the students worked in two groups where they had to analyze all the information, choose and display it on the poster «What impact do the English traditions and holidays have on their lives?» Analysis of the previous classes showed that there are students who participate in the group work, but in the process of the presentation they are silent, gave us the idea to give them the role of speakers. It is worth noting that students were able to protect and present the work of their group adequately. Analysis of the information by the students is not effective, because they are aware of the necessary information, but can not use it in the right way.

Every lesson showed that the students' activity interest and level of acquired knowledge in class increased. Changing the members of the groups does not affect the quality of their work. In their reflective journals, students noted that group work helped them to understand and apply the knowledge on the topic. Analysis of the lessons has allowed us to see that group work is necessary to be used in class. However, we should consider what strategies we can use to help students analyze information, because they do not know this information and cannot use it.

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Ю.В.Астафьева, Э.Ф.Герфанова

АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛІНЕ ДИАЛОГТЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ТОПТЫҚ ОҚЫТУ

Мақалада жоо-дағы ағылшын тілін оқытудағы топтық және диалогтық оқытудың маңыздылығы баяндалған. Қолданылған теориялық материал жоо-дағы студенттерге қосымша білім беру бағдарламасы бойынша педагогтарды дайындаудағы тренерлердің біліктілігін арттыру курсынағы материалдардан іріктеліп алынған. Ш.Уәлиханов атындағы Көкшетау мемлекеттік университетіндегі ағылшын тілі және оқу-әдістемелік кафедрасындағы жоо-да іс-тәжірибе жинақтау кезінде қолданылған ағылшын тілін оқытудағы белсенді әдістердің апробациясының нәтижелері көрсетілген.

Ю.В.Астафьева, Э.Ф.Герфанова

Диалогическое и групповое обучения английскому языку

В статье рассмотрена важность диалогического и группового обучения английскому языку студентов в высшем учебном заведении. Теоретический материал, взятый за основу, был отобран из материалов при прохождении курсов обучения тренеров по Программе дополнительного профессионального образования студентов выпускных курсов высших учебных заведений, осуществляющих подготовку педагогических кадров. Приведены результаты апробации активных методов обучения английскому языку во время периода практики в вузе, которая проходила на кафедре английского языка и методики преподавания в Кокшетауском государственном университете имени Ш.Уалиханова.

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