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ACTIVE LEARNING AND ITS APPLICATION IN TEACHING ENGLISH

This article provides an overview of active learning in the context of language teaching by answering research questions: How is the concept of active learning defined? What are the methods and strategies connected to active learning and what techniques can they be represented with? There are given suggestions how teachers can implement active learning techniques in their practice and what activities have proven effective in building language competence of author's students. It also presents some ideas on the training material development for practitioners in the field of language teaching and course materials for learners, thus contributing to the existing knowledge base about utilizing active learning in the process of English language acquisition.

It has been established that strategies which are based on ideas about how learners effectively acquire foreign language communicative competence assist the participants of educational process in transition into full engagement. Active learning helps students submerge into course material and results in learning, applying, synthesizing, summarizing and evaluating the content. The types of activities, which the teacher implements, are of paramount importance as they determine the level and type of students' learning and are chosen or designed in order to reach lesson objectives. They span from uncomplicated ones to activities of increased complexity and include Concept Mapping, Think / Pair / Share technique, Cooperative Groups in Class, Note Check or Note Comparison, Minute Papers, If You Could Ask One Question, Discussions, etc.

The study also tackles barriers and obstacles which can occur on the path of incorporating active learning strategies in teaching and mastering English as a foreign language as well as recommendations on their overcoming.

Keywords: *active learning; learning methods; techniques; foreign language teaching.*

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АКТИВНЕ НАВЧАННЯ ТА ЙОГО ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ У ВИКЛАДАННІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

Стаття присвячена проблемі застосування методів активного навчання в контексті викладання англійської мови. Розглянуто суть концепції активного навчання та проаналізовано методи і стратегії, пов'язані з активним навчанням, а також навчальні прийоми та завдання, що базуються на принципах активного навчання. Наведено пропозиції, як викладачі можуть впроваджувати методи активного навчання у своїй практиці та описано, які завдання та вправи виявились ефективними та дієвими при формуванні мовної компетентності студентів автора. Також представлено деякі ідеї щодо розробки навчального

матеріалу для спеціалістів у галузі викладання іноземної мови та навчальних матеріалів для студентів, у такий спосіб розширюючи наявну базу знань щодо використання активного навчання для засвоєння англійської мови.

Встановлено, що стратегії, які ґрунтуються на уявленнях про те, як студенти ефективно набувають іншомовної комунікативної компетентності, допомагають учасникам освітнього процесу, забезпечуючи їхню активність та задіяність під час занять. Активне навчання допомагає студентам зануритись у навчальний матеріал і сприяє вивченню, застосуванню, синтезу, узагальненню й оцінці навчального контенту. Види діяльності, на яких зупиняє свій вибір викладач, мають надзвичайно важливе значення, адже вони визначають рівень і тип навчання учнів і обираються чи розробляються для досягнення цілей заняття. Запропоновані прийоми навчання проводяться, починаючи від простих до підвищеної складності, та включають групування концепцій, прийом «Подумайте / поєднайте / поділіться», спільні групи в класі, перевірку чи порівняння ведення записів, мозковий штурм, метод кейсів, «Якщо Ви Можете Задати Одне Запитання», обговорення тощо.

У дослідженні також розглянуто бар'єри та перешкоди, які можуть виникнути на шляху включення стратегій активного навчання у викладання та в процесі оволодіння англійською мовою як іноземною, і наведено рекомендації щодо їх подолання.

Ключові слова: *активне навчання; методи навчання; прийоми; викладання іноземної мови.*

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АКТИВНОЕ ОБУЧЕНИЕ И ЕГО ПРИМЕНЕНИЕ В ПРЕПОДАВАНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Статья посвящена проблеме применения методов активного обучения в контексте преподавания английского языка. Рассмотрена сущность концепции активного обучения и проанализированы методы и стратегии, связанные с активным обучением, а также учебные приемы и задания, основанные на принципах активного обучения. Приведены предложения, как преподаватели могут внедрять методы активного обучения в своей практике и описано, какие задания и упражнения оказались эффективными и действенными при формировании языковой компетентности студентов автора. Также представлены некоторые идеи по разработке учебного материала для специалистов в области преподавания языка и учебных материалов для студентов, таким образом расширяя имеющуюся базу знаний по использованию активного обучения в усвоении английского языка.

Установлено, что стратегии, основанные на представлениях о том, как студенты эффективно приобретают иноязычную коммуникативную компетентность, помогают участникам образовательного процесса принять участие в обучении. Активное обучение дает возможность студентам погрузиться в учебный материал и приводит к изучению, применению, синтезу, обобщению и оценке учебного контента. Виды деятельности, которые осуществляет преподаватель, имеют чрезвычайно важное значение, поскольку они определяют уровень и тип обучения учащихся и избираются или разрабатываются для достижения целей занятия. Они охватывают как несложные, так и задания повышенной сложности и включают группирование концепций, мозговой штурм, метод кейсов, прием «Подумайте / соедините / поделитесь», работу в совместных группах, проверку или сравнение записей, «Если Вы Можете Задать Один Вопрос», обсуждение, ролевые игры и тому подобное.

В исследовании также рассмотрены барьеры и препятствия, которые могут возникнуть на пути включения стратегий активного обучения в преподавание и в процессе овладения английским языком как иностранным, и наведены рекомендации по их преодолению.

Ключевые слова: активное обучение; методы обучения; приемы; преподавание иностранного языка.

Introduction. As a result of globalization English has become a language used worldwide. Good command of English presents countless possibilities to present day specialists. Moreover, a graduate of any academic institution is expected to have a sufficient level of foreign language competence not only within the professional domain but during the study period, he / she must acquire a whole set of skills and abilities that would form the basis for their communicative competence. Realities of life also encourage teachers to introduce effective methods and technologies into the educational process, to creatively develop the acquired practical and theoretical experience of teaching English as a foreign language. Therefore teaching foreign languages needs to be diversified and updated, that is involve strategies, methods and techniques that will ensure acquisition of students' language and communication skills.

Active learning is an umbrella term for learning and teaching methods which put students in charge of their own learning through meaningful activities (Faust & Paulson, 1998). They think about and apply what they are learning, in a deliberate contrast to passive learning. In active learning students are involved in activities that are meaningful and reflect on their efforts (MacKinney, 2009). Student engagement in the educational process and activity are crucial. In addition, it can be a good way of preparing students for future employment since by integrating activities students are given the opportunity to practice skills which are essential for the workplace. It is a process whereby students are actively engaged in building understanding of facts, ideas, and skills through the completion of instructor-directed tasks and activities (Meyers & Jones, 1993; Bell & Kahrhoff, 2006). According to N. Michel, J.J. Cater, and O. Varela (2009),

active learning is «a broadly inclusive term, used to describe several models of instruction that hold learners responsible for their own learning». Sivan et al. (2000) also report that there is no common agreed-upon definition of active learning: «the use of the term active learning relies more on intuitive understanding of educators and the term has been presented in contrast to the use of a teacher-centred approach where students are passive in the learning process». There exist multiple terms used to describe active learning and these include: student-centred learning, collaborative learning (team, peer or group learning), engaged learning, and participatory knowledge acquisition.

Constructivism is a theory underlying active learning. The essence of constructivism is that «people learn by incorporating what they already know to create new understandings... [so] all learning involves transfer that is based on prior experiences and previous knowledge» (Wiley online library, 2018). Therefore a teacher should always try to understand the «prior experiences and previous knowledge» of students, and build on this foundation. Constructivism emphasizes that learners mold or shape their own understanding.

Literature review. The concept of active learning and its implementation in teaching various disciplines is being researched by J.V. Antonetti, A. Crawford, J. Garver, M. Harmin, M. Joel, H. Modell, W. Saul, M. Toth, et al. The scientists explore the concept of active learning, analyze various strategies that engage students, promote active learning and boost achievement. Quite a few educators share their own experience of creating and managing effective teaching presenting their state-of-the-art lesson plans. Among them are D. Austin, M. Beichner, R.J. Bell, C. Bonwell, A. Cameron, J. Eison, E. Galloway J. Kahrhoff. Nevertheless, studies on incorporating active learning methods in foreign language teaching are rather limited as majority of the scholars focus on disciplines in which lecture is the principal tool of instruction, which is not the case with teaching languages.

The article purpose was to provide an overview of active learning in the context of language teaching, with the focus on how the concept of active learning is defined, what methods and strategies are connected to active learning, and what techniques they can be represented with. The objectives underlying aim of the study were: to give suggestions how teachers can implement active learning techniques in their practice; to describe activities which have proven effective in building language competence of author's students; to present some ideas on the training material development for practitioners in the field of language teaching and course materials for learners, thus contributing to the existing knowledge base about utilizing active learning in the process of English language acquisition; to tackle barriers and

obstacles which can occur on the path of incorporating active learning strategies in teaching and mastering English as a foreign language, and provide some recommendations on how to overcome them.

Discussion. Active learning recognizes a vast array of teaching strategies which make students play an active part in in the classroom (Austin & Mescia, 2004). Generally, these strategies entail that learners work in cooperation or collaboration during class, but may also be practised as individual work and / or contemplation. These teaching approaches can vary and be brief, uncomplicated, activities such as keeping logs, group discussions or problem solving, or more extended activities or learning frameworks like team-based learning, case studies or role plays.

Strategies applied in active learning help initiate learners and teachers into efficient means to get all parties of learning process involved in activities founded on ideas about how learners best acquire skills and competences. However, there exists a belief among some teachers that all the learning is inherently active if students are actively involved while they listen to teacher's formal presentation in classroom (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). We strongly disagree since in our opinion students must do more than simply listen: they must read, write, ask questions, argue, collaborate, or be involved in problem solving.

Although there are multiple approaches to the concept of active learning, all of them have some common characteristics. Bonwell and Eison (1991), for instance, point out five characteristics for active learning:

- Learners participate in more than listening;
- More emphasis is put on developing learners skills instead of simply transferring information;
- Learners practise thinking of higher level, which includes analysis, synthesis, and evaluation;
- Learners are involved in activities (e.g., reading, discussing, writing);
- Learners' exploration of their own perceptions, opinions, and beliefs is a priority.

In this context, it is important to employ learning strategies and instruments where students are actively engaged in making things and reflecting in what they are doing. The use of these strategies in classroom is vital to have a positive impact on the quality of the students learning process and outcomes. Creating learner-centered environments is the most important thing faculty can do to optimize student learning (Doyle, 2008; Golkova & Hubackova, 2014). Learner-centered environments, T. Doyle (2008) stresses, are different because they require students to move beyond taking notes and passing tests to embracing new learning roles and responsibilities. When students exert real control over their educational experiences, they make important choices about what and how they will learn. Higher education, emphasizes D.H. Mansson (2013), is experiencing a paradigm shift from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered

instruction. This learner-centered paradigm requires teachers to maximize opportunities for students to learn, while urging them to accept that what is learned in any course will always be their responsibility.

According to M.J. Prince (2004) using active learning activities results in higher-order critical thinking abilities, improved retention and transfer of acquired information, boosted motivation, better communication skills, and less frequent course failure. Bean (2011) outlines the following benefits of active learning:

- Reinforcing important material, concepts, and skills.
- Providing more frequent and immediate feedback to students.
- Providing students with an opportunity to think about, talk about, and process course material.
- Creating personal connections to the material for students, which increases their motivation to learn.
- Allowing students to practice important skills, such as collaboration, through pair and group work.
- Building self-esteem through interactions with other students.
- Creating a sense of community in the classroom through increased student-student and teacher-student interaction.

Some studies (Smirnova, 2017; Sysoieva, 2011; Vorontsova, 2017) point out that students prefer strategies that promote active learning to traditional lessons. Whereas in a «traditional» class it is widespread when not all students participate in asking or answering questions in a class, with successful active learning activities all students in a class practice reflection and are absorbed with course material and carry out activities to learn, apply, synthesize, summarize or evaluate material. With these approaches students bear more responsibility for their learning but teacher's guidance is nevertheless vital. Kudryashova et al, (2016) assert that teachers become «multi-role educators who are able to involve students in the process of gaining knowledge and independent development of skills. The major task of a modern teacher is to create an educational environment where students can obtain first-hand knowledge with appropriate teacher's support and guidance at each cognitive level».

Since interaction is key in active learning methods used are interactive. The linguistic meaning of the word «interactive» interprets the concept of acting upon or influencing each other (Pometun, 2002). According to W. Veen, I. Lam, and R. Taconis (1998), the significance of interactivity is founded on the condition that it ensures an educational dialogue, the flexibility of the presentation of knowledge and the autonomy of educational activity. Interactive learning of foreign languages involves, first and foremost, dialogue training, in which interaction is conducted between subjects of the educational process. The essence of interactive learning of foreign languages lies in the fact that the learning process takes place under

the conditions of constant, active interaction of all participants of the learning process (teachers and students) (Bohdanova, 2011). So we can make a deduction that this is mutual learning (collective, group, learning in collaboration), where the student and the teacher are equal.

Currently, interactive technologies that are aimed at creating favorable active learning environments, in which the student feels successful and intelligent, are of particular interest. Interactive technologies of teaching English are aimed at organization of foreign language communication, which provides, in accordance with the objectives of education, the most rational use of methods, techniques and forms of learning in order to achieve a pre-planned level of foreign language communicative competence (Cavanagh, 2011; Gauthama, 2008; Jones, 2007). An important component of interactive learning technologies is a learning method. The notion of learning method is interpreted as a way to the goal, which means the way to organize the activities of the teacher and the student on the path to the goals of education, that is, a method of interaction between a student and a teacher (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). The interactive method is a method of collective interaction of participants in the pedagogical process through a conversation, dialogue, during which their interaction is conducted in order to achieve mutual understanding, joint accomplishment of educational tasks, development of personal qualities of those who study (Mackey and Gass, 2005).

A. Kochubei (2015) classifies interactive methods as situational and non-situational, considering the communicative approach and situation of educational activity as the main criteria for the formation of foreign-language communicative competence. As situational interactive methods, the scholar outlines such methods as dialogue, interviewing, questionnaire, and student's language portfolio. Situational interactive methods are represented by two groups of methods: gaming and non-gaming methods. Non-gaming methods include situational analysis, ideas auction, debates, forums, discussions, brainstorming. Amongst game situational interactive methods the researcher highlights simulation (role and business games) and non-simulation (simulation games, project games, training, knowledge sharing) methods. T. Koval (2011) divides interactive methods of teaching foreign languages into group (frontal) and collective-cooperative, depending on the way of organization of collective educational and cognitive activity. Group (frontal) methods of learning foreign languages involve one person (mostly a teacher) teaching a group of students. All students at each moment of time work together or individually on one task with subsequent control of the results. Collective-cooperative methods of foreign languages acquisition entail organization of training in small groups, united by a common educational purpose, for example, the method of collaboration in small groups.

Depending on ways of stimulating and motivating, the methods used in the process of interactive learning of foreign languages can be divided into situational-thematic, discussion and research (Felder & Brent, 1996). Situational-thematic methods of teaching foreign languages presuppose the existence of specially created communicative situations that simulate the reality in which students act as active participants. Research methods are presented by the method of projects, or with the usage of Internet – telecommunication projects. From our experience the most effective in terms of language material comprehension and interest of students in the process of learning tend to be project method, brainstorming, business role-playing games and case study method.

The types of activities that the teacher uses are essential in implementing the desired lesson objectives since they determine the level and type of students' learning (Li-Shih, 2018). Before choosing specific activity the teacher needs to know what students should from this activity, what challenges students may have as it relates to this content and what kind of practice students can do that will be instrumental in getting them ready for a test (Jones, 1999). Furthermore, we strongly believe, the learning activities presented by teacher are to be in line with the previous learning experience of students so that it is easy for them to relate the past experience with the new to understand and achieve that the given tasks and totally agree with J. Harmer (2001) and A. Cameron and N. Galloway (2019) who claim that the instructional process has to be less of competition and more of cooperation. The students should help each other to attain the learning objectives. C.C. Bonwell and J.A. Eison (1991) explicitly recognize a number of activities which can be recognized as active learning, that could range from very uncomplicated (e.g., making pauses in teacher's explanation in order to make sure that students understand it, provide some clarifications in case they don't, or have them discuss their ideas with peers) to activities of increased complexity (e.g., incorporating case studies as a centerpiece for decision-making). K. McKinney (2009) suggests the following types of active learning techniques which can be employed in and outside classrooms: mini-research proposals or projects, concept mapping, journals or logs, case studies, role-playing, writing and publishing newsletters, student-generated examination questions, debates, videos, games, student-led review sessions, collaborative learning groups, self-assessment, peer review, think-pair-share, oral presentation.

Over the years of our teaching using strategies promoting active learning quite a few have proven to influence favorably students' attitudes and achievement. In our opinion case study is a very efficient method. It is an active learning activity in which students read a pre-defined data set, scenario or application. The case study is accompanied by a list of questions that asks

students to reflect on the information and formulate a response to it. Based on the real world stories or events, students are tasked with decision making, analysis or conclusion. This is an extremely flexible active learning approach because of the range of possibilities that a case study can take. Good case studies do not have an obvious answer, require students to gather additional information or ask critical questions in order to understand the needs and perspectives of the participants involved in the case.

Among other strategies of active learning we most often use Think / Pair / Share technique, Minute Papers, Concept Mapping, Cooperative Groups in Class, Note Check or Note Comparison, If You Could Ask One Question, Discussions.

Think / Pair / Share is an activity that allows students to formulate an answer to a question posed by a teacher. First students do it on their own, then the student pairs with a partner (or partners); they discuss, and compare their individual answers. After a few minutes of discussion amongst the pairs, the teacher asks groups to report their findings to the rest of the class.

Minute papers are a way to informally evaluate students understanding of difficult concepts by asking them to write an answer to a question about the current topic in 2-3 minutes. The question can simply ask the students to summarize the most important points of the material they've just learnt. By reading these papers, the teacher can judge about the students' comprehension and adjust the instruction.

Concept maps are visual means of showing relationships or connections between concepts. Students are asked to represent the various components of a topic in a concept map that uses lines to connect how various terms relate. It is instrumental for students in organizing and identifying how ideas relate in multiple ways. Students can compare their concept maps to identify the most helpful visualization of the information. The teacher can then assess if students are drawing appropriate connections between the concepts.

Cooperative groups consisting of three to five students work on problems, questions or issues. We've noticed that this strategy works particularly well when groups are given a slightly different problem and they are tasked to become experts concerning their problem. While the groups work, the teacher moves around observing, asking questions and keeping groups on task. Groups appoint a representative and report their findings and solutions on the problem.

In our opinion it is a good idea to ask students to compare their notes with a partner. It allows students to see how other students take notes; it also gives students the quick opportunity to reconsider what was important in the material. Sometimes students discover that they misinterpreted or missed some important information. Students share what discrepancies or similarities they found.

In activity called If You Could Ask One Question students write one question about the material they would like to learn. Then students work in pairs or groups and discuss the questions and formulate possible answers.

Speaking is a very important component of active learning, so it is worthwhile to use opportunities for discussion in every lesson, whether it's sharing with a partner, a group or the whole class. If the teacher wants students to explore an idea, he / she can begin with individual reflections or brainstorms, so everyone has to think and engage before they discuss.

However effective the active learning sounds, some teachers are reluctant to introduce it in their teaching. The most common deterrents for them are that more time is required for planning and preparation, activities on the other hand, get extended in time so instructors cannot cover as much material in one class (Freire, 1975). In addition educational establishments do not provide teachers with means, support, and funding to experiment with novel teaching methods. Also large class sizes make the feasible application of active learning next to impossible. Moreover teachers are simply afraid to lose control, that students will not participate or learn sufficient content (Griffith & Lim, 2010). Each of these challenges can be, however, successfully overcome through thoughtful, careful, and detailed planning. The teacher should select activities he / she feels comfortable with and that would be comfortable for students as well. In J.C. Bean's (2011) opinion low-risk techniques are generally not extended, well organized and thoroughly prepared. Furthermore, the subject matter should not be too theoretical or too dubious, but well known to both the teacher and the learners. It is also very important to build a benevolent and stimulating environment that students are not afraid of taking risks.

Conclusion. Based on everything mentioned above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- active learning occurs whenever there is student involvement and ongoing feedback;
- its strategies and techniques are very effective in language teaching as they ensure a high degree of motivation, individuality of teaching, open opportunities for creativity, self-realization of students but at the same time have student bear the responsibility for his / her learning.

Further research prospects are envisaged in wider-scale studies to create a broader picture of the implementation of active learning approaches in Ukrainian academic institutions, analysis of positive outcomes and challenges educators encounter when applying techniques of active learning in their practice and developing guidelines for teachers on ways to build students language competence using active learning methods.

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