PEDAGOGY

EFFECTIVE MOTIVATIONAL METHODS OF TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN THE FRONTLINE ZONE

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Abstract
The article discusses motivational techniques and strategies for teaching a foreign language in extreme conditions in the example of a university in a front-line city. The participants of the quasi-experiment were 80 students of two faculties of Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, Kharkiv, Ukraine. An overview of the interactive methods used in teaching English is presented, and the most effective methods are highlighted, including the preparation of student projects. The results are analyzed and success rates are presented in several aspects: content, coherence and cohesion, vocabulary richness, grammatical correctness, and phonetical correctness. The assessment of the content criteria demonstrated that the opportunity for respondents to choose the topic got them involved in the learning process very deeply. The results were high enough to prove the hypothesis about the effectiveness of the suggested techniques as one of the motivational tools in emergency conditions. To confirm the correctness and expediency of choosing pedagogical tools for involving students in the educational process in the difficult conditions of war, as well as the level of interest in the selected tasks, after completing the course, an anonymous survey of 50 students was conducted. It included questions about students' assessment of their work and interest in the project. The results of the survey showed that the prevailing majority of students considered the activity captivating and interesting.

The conclusion was made about the effectiveness of the suggested learning strategies which could be explained by the fact that the activities students performed were connected with the sphere of interests of students, activating critical thinking and deep engagement in the learning process. It was concluded that the level of motivation and involvement could lead to high academic results and successful outcomes, which is especially needed in emergency conditions.

Keywords: learning in emergency conditions, effective methods, motivation, learning strategies, teaching a foreign language.

Introduction

The beginning of military aggression by Russia led the education system to new challenges. The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, has had serious consequences for higher education in Ukraine. Higher education institutions suffered human losses: teachers, students, and parents died as a result of hostilities. Hundreds of educational institutions were destroyed or damaged. Millions of young people and thousands of Ukrainian teachers were forced to move within the country or go abroad. Every day, all participants in the educational process are forced to overcome the problems associated with the war: forced breaks during classes, the transition to distance or blended learning, air raid warnings, and power outages. A full-scale war worsened access to education and deepened existing inequalities in education, it negatively affected the quality of the educational process and the performance of education applicants and also affected the psychological and emotional state of students and teachers. Students are a vulnerable group at risk of developing anxiety disorders under normal conditions and in crises, such as pandemics or armed conflicts [1 - 4].

Despite previous experience with distance learning during the pandemic, teaching during the war faced unique challenges. Ukrainian institutions of higher education had a well-organized system of distance learning, but the events on the different frontline territories led to emotional disturbance. Since March 2022, training has been carried out remotely. The forced relocation of many citizens with families, blackouts, and other obstacles became the reasons for distraction and absence of mental involvement in the lessons and ineffective cognitive activity. Students couldn't concentrate on the educational process. In such circumstances, the question arose about the rational choice of methods that are effective for teaching and successfully mastering the material. As might be expected, a combination of a variety of techniques, strategies, and activities under extreme conditions can improve learning outcomes. The choice of method always depends on the topic and objectives of the lesson, the resources available, as well as

the students themselves. But in the conditions of learning in the frontline zone, one should analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each of the methods to convey information in such a way that it is interesting and meaningful for the student. Which of them can be considered effective for training in extreme conditions of military aggression, especially in front-line territories, where the level of anxiety, stress, impossibility, and unwillingness to learn cannot be overestimated?

The research purpose

The research aims to highlight the experience of online teaching and the most effective strategies, techniques, and activities that were used in the work of teaching the English language at the Foreign Language Department during the war; to demonstrate the results of the investigation of students' attitude to learning with the use of the suggested techniques.

Literature review

The forced transition to the form of distance learning has created many challenges for teachers. Many studies have been conducted on the impact of the 2019 / 2022 pandemic and the war in Ukraine on higher education, and there is an ongoing discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of online learning and its effectiveness. The most important benefits of distance (digital) learning for students are the following: the opportunity to study in a convenient place, in a comfortable and familiar environment; the opportunity to combine work and study; development of self-control skills and motivation for self-education and the technical level of the educational process (use of information technology). Aspects that negatively affect the organization of full-fledged distance learning include the following: a large number of tasks; fatigue due to prolonged work in front of a computer; lack of necessary equipment and/or constant (stable) access to the Internet [5].

A lot of studies point to issues such as the need to increase motivation [6], autonomy, and cooperation among students [7]. A strong emotional shock affected the mental state of students [8], which negatively affected the academic performance and efficiency of studying the curriculum materials.

In turn, teachers, first of all, were faced with the problem of finding alternative teaching methods and the use of technology, such as video conferencing and educational applications [6]. Technology analysis showed that the types of technologies used can be divided into two main categories: Internet-based and non-Internet-based, with the majority using Internet-based technologies [9]. Many teachers believe that different techniques and strategies should be used during an English lesson, such as collaboration, classroom control, and motivation [10]. They also emphasize that the four skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening) must be linked for an effective lesson. The most effective methods of learning languages are interactive methods [11].

Problem-based learning could be considered an outcome and successful alternative to the conventional methods. It can develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, communication skills, and lifelong learning [12]. Utilizing this teaching method, complex real-world problems could be used as the vehicle to promote student learning of concepts and principles as opposed to the direct presentation of facts and concepts [13].

Our study describes the main interactive and problem-solving methods and provides examples of their use.

Methods

For conducting the investigation empirical methods such as observation and pedagogical experiments were used. Statistical methods were employed to evaluate the results. The study was conducted during the second semester (17 weeks) in the 2022/2023 academic year at the Bar faculty of Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University and The Faculty of the Prosecutor's Office (Kharkiv, Ukraine). The experimental group included 80 first-year students. The main stages of the research included experimental teaching and a survey.

The survey consisted of 3 questions to investigate the attitude toward using the suggested activities. The questions were dichotomous with two possible responses ("Agree" and "Disagree"). The results were expressed as percentages.

Materials and Procedure

Since the beginning of hostilities, classes have been held in synchronous and asynchronous formats. The asynchronous component was supported and provided through the NEIK internet platform and an information portal with online tests, assignments, and resources in all disciplines of the university for full-time and part-time students, and postgraduate students, including a foreign language course. The synchronous component of distance learning was implemented using Zoom and Teams video conferences. To motivate students, raise the level of interest, and, as a result, success, English teachers used some techniques that were considered effective. Then, the results of certain activities were evaluated and the students were asked about the effectiveness of the chosen strategies from their point of view to increase motivation and increase academic success in war conditions.

Different types of teaching methods are traditionally categorized into teacher-centered methods, Learner-centred methods, Content-focused methods; and Interactive/participative methods. Each of these types includes different strategies and activities. During the covid period, many strategies were used and developed using interactive Internet technologies, but in the first phase of the war, due to the lack of stable communication, it was difficult to use them. Therefore, the focus has shifted to self-study and the use of multimedia at a convenient time for students to develop more reading-writing skills. The goal was more to interest and captivate than to achieve actual statistical success. Starting from September-October 2022 and the beginning of 2023, the educational process was already more or less stable. This allowed more use of media opportunities and strategies for teaching the language. Useful interactive activities were used to work on vocabulary, such as Word mappings, with the help of online digital tools such as Visuwords, Word It Out, VocabGrabber, Visual Thesaurus, Wordart, etc. -Quizzes and word games. They were created using popular Kahoot and

Quizlet to work out the terminology and to engage students. - Multimedia audio and video materials such as BBCLearning English, Study Legal English, and Youtube videos. They increased students' engagement and downsized learning overload and even emotional stress. To promote the development of listening skills authentic materials were used (news, videos, speeches). For enhancing writing skills the teachers used various types of activities, such as writing Emails to international organizations, and websites, and preparing essays. The Facebook platform, which has accumulated different types of materials useful for teaching, was actively used. A wide range of schemes, patterns, links, and tables uploaded to the FB group was helpful and convenient for students [14].

It was clear that using English in a non-traditional way could force the brain to work and increase the brain capacity in this difficult period, therefore instead of trying to figure out what students haven't learned yet, the teachers attempted to create such opportunities for self-exploration where our students could find their answers to the questions they concern about. Thus, group-based projects were proposed for the students to prepare. The topics were supposed to be selected by the students based on their interests and worries.

Students were given time to prepare, in the process of performing the task, students consulted with teachers and received instructions and assistance. It is safe to say that the topics chosen by the students were seriously motivating them to search for information: "Environmental problems caused by military operations on the territory of Ukraine", "Education under threat", and "Violation of humanitarian law. War of Russia against Ukraine" "Violation of the Geneva Convention. Stories and tragedies of cities: Kharkiv. Izyum. Kupyansk. Mariupol. Kherson. Zaporizhzhia". students chose to work in small groups. Despite the difficult conditions, the projects carried away the students, active work could be observed even among those who showed a lack of desire to study in the early periods of the war. They organized themselves, distributed roles, and helped and prompted each other. They reacted brightly with comments and exclamations during the speeches of other participants. All projects were successful, and motivation was considered the dominant characteristic among the factors important for successful performance in such conditions. Figure 1 demonstrates the slide from one of the student projects. Figure 2 is the picture of Zoom Meeting class with students presenting the projects.
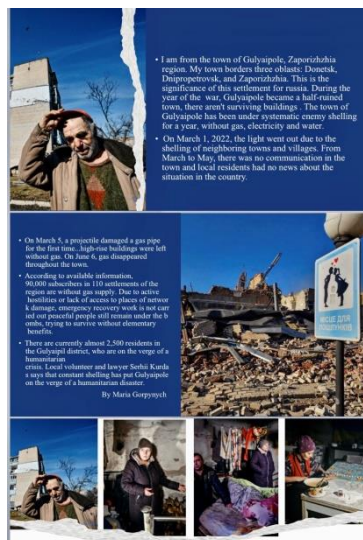

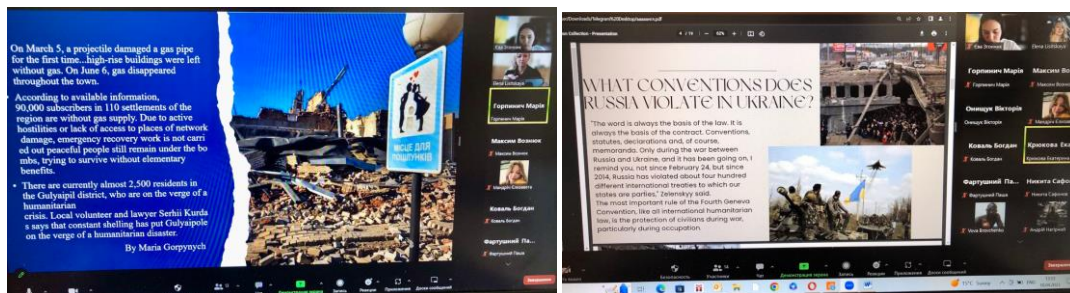*Figure 1. Slide from the project "Violation of the Geneva Convention"*

Figure 2. Pictures of Zoom Meeting class with students presenting the projects.

Findings

The assessment of the project was conducted according to the criteria suggested in previous works [15]: content, coherence and cohesion, vocabulary richness, grammatical correctness, phonetical correctness.

The average results of the performance of students' groups (G1, G2, G3, G4) are given in Table 1.

The average results of the students' performance

Assessment criteria					
Group	Content	Organization and clarity	vocabulary richness	grammatical correctness	phonetical correctness
G1	8,34	8,3	7,25	6,86	6,30
G2	7,9	8,1	7,12	7,1	6,2
G3	8.6	8,43	7,8	7,6	6,72
G4	8,32	7,87	7,91	6,81	5,94
Mean value	8,29	8,17	7,52	7,0	6,26
Maximum points	10	10	10	10	10

The assessment of the content criterion demonstrated that the problem and topic the students chose got them involved very deeply. They had the freedom of choice and this opportunity stimulated them to apply their critical thinking. Despite emergency conditions, some part of the students managed to apply various tools to present their findings impressively: some of them recorded the interview, and use dramatic pictures and music.

The criterion of coherence and cohesion concerned the organization of speeches, logicality, and persuasiveness. The results are given in column 2 in Figure 1. Assessment of the vocabulary richness demonstrates high results, and it can be explained by the fact that the students wanted their reports to be understood by everyone and thus they paraphrase difficult sentences and even accompany difficult and potentially unknown words with the translation. When working out the content of the project and the information they collected the students had to translate and understand it clearly so that they could present it to others. Figure 2 demonstrates a presentation slide showing the new vocabulary with the accompanied translation.

Figure 2. Presentation slides with the text accompanied by the translation of unknown words

The grammatical correctness criterion has less significant results as well as the phonetical correctness criterion. It could be observed that the students who used, compile, and paraphrase existing texts naturally had rather high results in grammar, while the students who presented their own ideas and then translated them, had low scores. Phonetical correctness evaluation shows rather low results, it could be explained by the fact that the reporters had no example to imitate good pronunciation and prepared the speeches on their own.

The data in Table 1 show that the scores of the 5 defined criteria of project assessment are high enough to prove the hypothesis about the effectiveness of the suggested strategy as one of the motivational methods in emergency conditions.

Survey

After completing the course, an anonymous survey of 50 students was conducted. It included 3 questions in order to analyze the level of interest in the activities the students performed. The obtained results (in percentage) are shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

The results of the survey

Survey question	%
1. Did you like the project you prepared? Do you consider it successful?	87
2. Do you agree that this project and other interactive tasks could increase your knowledge and skills in comparison to traditional studies?	66
3. Are you willing you be engaged in the projects / other activities on the topics of your interest in future?	71

The first question related directly to the project, the results showed that the prevailing majority of students considered it successful, interesting, and exciting. This can probably be explained by the fact that they were dealing with issues of concern to them, new events that concern them directly and are related to their specialty. The second question showed students' assessment of a set of methodological tools that were used by teachers for the most effective training in the conditions of military operations. As can be seen from Table 2, this percentage shows the validity of such a pedagogical choice. The third question of the questionnaire showed the degree of interest of students in the work of this format in the future. 71 percent prefer to work with material that will be directly related to the object of their own interests. From the open-ended answers, the investigators could see students' impressions and considerations of the value of the online learning experience. The effectiveness of the suggested learning strategies for the development of language skills, according to their comments, is connected with the circle of interest, interactive character, and the opportunity to get feedback.

Further research involves a comparison of learning outcomes when using the listed strategies and methods in peacetime and wartime, as well as the use of traditional and motivational methods. A second challenge for future studies is investigating the interaction and autonomy of students.

Conclusions

Teaching methodology plays a vital role in providing effective and engaging student learning. Despite the sudden start of military aggression, carrying on the shoulders of volunteers for the implementation of a great volume of material, teachers were able to use various available methodologies for student engagement and choose the most appropriate for the needs of their wards. By staying up to date with the latest teaching methodologies and techniques, educators can provide the best learning experience for their students in the extreme learning environment of the frontline. Utilizing activities that are connected with the sphere of personal interests of students, boosting critical thinking and deep engagement in the learning process, could lead to high academic results and successful outcomes, which is especially needed in the conditions of war and emergencies.

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