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Foreign language training in small in number groups at medical university

Current changes in education highlight the importance of foreign language competence in the future professional work of medical students. Communicative concepts (communicative, project-based, intensive, activity-based methods, etc.) have been widely used in the development of foreign language methodology. Thus, foreign language education policy are designed to meet the needs for foreign language proficiency both of the society and individual.

The variety of training options, teaching aids, elaborated strategies in relation to real situation has become a new challenge for the teaching staff in the medical university. Teaching English for specific purposes in the context of the variety of specialties offered to medical students, and teaching the groups variable in quantity of students puts forward the priorities for the university teachers in the methodological aspect.

One of these tasks is to find the best methodology to provide development of non-linguistic communicative competence of students of medical university, in particular in small in number quantity groups, and to use methodological approaches developed by small group models.

Training of incomplete groups (according to the number of students per group) is common for some specialties being trained in the medical university. The strategies for them can consider those strategies corresponding to the model of small groups. The student-centered approach and the use of blended learning opportunities, in which the percentage of classroom hours is reduced in favor of independent work and distance (remote, e-learning, online) forms of communication of students with teachers, reporting on the studied material, communication about learning, etc. are also important.

A foreign language teacher in the medical university devotes a great deal of time to methodical and organizational work to ensure that each group's teaching meets the needs of its students and their purpose of study. Teachers work on the design of English courses based on an analysis of students' needs, as well as their target situation, identifying their level of knowledge (problems in English) and taking into account the desire to learn certain language skills and communication competencies (in terminology started by T. Hutchinson, A. Waters: "needs analysis, description of the target situation in terms of necessities, lacks and wants, and target situation" [3]).

For such groups, enrolled a small number of students (a group may consist of three, four, five or six students), it is rational to combine classroom teaching with self-study, student's autonomy, which allows better activity balance for the students in such academic group.

The components of the training content relate to the structure of the foreign language communicative competence, subject to special selection of materials for this group, taking into account specific purpose, topics related to the main specialty and included in the program of profile subjects. It becomes relevant to teach students effective strategies for mastering the foreign language discourse in the special area based on the information supplied by the authentic texts. It motivates students better and supports their interest in the foreign language being taught.

There are various small group strategies for teaching foreign language, such as cooperative, team-based, and casual patterns [1, 2]. For the rational method of teaching foreign language communicative competence in small groups, the principle of cooperation is of particular importance, supported by the pedagogical idea of teaching in small groups or microgroups (J. Dewey, D. Johnson, R. Johnson, R. Slavin, J. Crandall, J. Aronson, F. Boschee and others) [1, 2].

The most significant benefit of collaborative learning when learning a foreign language is that working in a small group produces interactivity: promotes the ability to interact effectively in a group and enhances students' autonomy in speaking.

Mental, psychological independence in communicative interaction, group discussion, conclusions and decisions are the positive sides of this method.

However, the success of cooperative work in small groups depends on the psychological readiness of students and the teacher for this group kind of work, which should be specifically foreseen in the teacher's previous instructions for such work.

It is appropriate for students to cooperate on their own work to find additional information on the topic, to prepare a joint presentation and more. Priority is given to the concept of self-study, the formation of students' basic competences of self-study.

Collaboration combines work both in the classroom with group tasks and through email or social networks (with classmates and with the teacher). The advantages of blended learning are involving of different models of the learning process; increasing the level of motivation due to the diversity of learning elements. Students find new solutions in group work, share their experience and knowledge; and when working with a teacher individually, they get answers to individual questions and clarify problems.

Individual consulting can be considered as an opportunity to apply cooperative types of training, to accomplish the tasks set for the group; discussion of problem issues within the program material; revision and activation of the studied material; verification of understanding of the material; enhancing the knowledge needed to be mastered.

Thus, the principle of a rational combination of classroom training and self-study provides an effective ratio of contact classroom training and self-study, in which classroom training is aimed at mastering basic material, to obtain comments, ideas and assessments from the teacher, and consulting as well. The so-called mini-lectures can be used in these groups. Communicative tasks are performed in the process of independent work. It is important to emphasize that the time for self-study is not limited. The student independently determines how long it takes to achieve this goal. It is clear that for students with a low level of foreign language skills, more time and more exercises and tasks are required.

In accordance with the principle of personality-oriented training, gaining foreign language communicative professional competence must be built taking into consideration the interests, level of language training of students, etc., special for every student.

The cognitive component is connected with the learning autonomy because it is associated with the individually developed learning and cognitive strategies. According to the sources, mental education is important, which includes development of intellectual abilities of the learners: their observation, memory, creative imagination, logical thinking and so on [1-3].

The use of communicative methods in the education at medical university determines the specifics of its organization and forms (group projects; reading of microtexts and checking the reading comprehension in the form of tests; the teacher's comments on the vocabulary and grammar material, etc.).

Due to the e-registers students can monitor their progress and knowledge assessment. Extra materials are widely used (electronic and paper materials, useful links to online resources, working with the electronic database of the department's educational sources repository, etc.).

Educational process design in accordance with the current requirements includes student-centered pattern based on the needs of students and targeted to the final result in accordance with the specific conditions of this training group. Active cognition, self-education and blended learning methods play a significant role in the academic process of the small in number groups in medical university.

References:

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