

Foreign Language Teaching Strategy for Talented Students in a Small Specialized Institute of a University

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Abstract: The problem of talented students training was and remains a relevant one at all times but during the last 10-20 years it has become a particularly acute. This is due to the fact that our society needs more and more highly qualified professionals who may be prepared by training talented children. This is confirmed by the state program “Strategic talent management in RT for 2015-2020 years,” aimed at the deployment of a roadmap for the development of an effective talent management system in the Republic of Tatarstan. There is the problem of training and education of talents for national education. A definite contribution in its solution may be performed by specially selected teaching strategies. The researchers examined the role of some of these strategies in Foreign language teaching for talented students at a small specialized institute of a university as one of the most effective strategies used in the teaching of Foreign languages for talented students in the Small Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication (Small IFIC), the researchers call it the cooperative learning strategy Abdrafikova in 2014. The cooperative learning strategy was implemented in such forms of work with the students in the Small IFIC as interactive lectures, workshops, scientific conferences, individual work with gifted children, aimed at the disclosure of child abilities and his professional orientation. The cooperative learning strategy adapted to the conditions of work with talented students allowed to improve the efficiency of not only academic success of students but also of their intellectual and moral development. The researchers were able to prove that the use of cooperative learning strategy in the teaching of foreign language communication for gifted students is an effective one, it leads to a deeper understanding of specific linguistic phenomena and contributes to maintaining of a stable high motivation at the learning of Foreign languages. The study discusses issues and practices of the studied strategy and offers general recommendations for high schools faculty.

Key words: Gifted students, the strategy of Foreign language teaching, cooperative learning strategy, a small specialized institute, moral development

INTRODUCTION

The priority in Russian education during recent years is the humanistic trend of learning at the center of which is the personality of a student. The learning strategies of talented students provide a special interest for teachers.

Talent is an asset not only for an individual, it is a national treasure. And this property should be used properly. A number of domestic and Foreign researchers demonstrate the successful examples of strategies for the development of talented students (G. Revesh, V. Mede, G. Priorkovsky, N.S. Leites, V.A. Krutetskiy, L.A. Wenger, D.B. Bogoyavlenskaya, I.P. Volkov, L.S. Vygotsky, S. Yager, R.T. Johnson, D.W. Johnson, B. Snider, S. Ziegler, A.M. Matyushkin, E.A. Golubeva, V.S. Jurkiewich, J.K. Terracier, A.V. Hutorskoy, R.R. Yin, E.S. Polat, M.A. Birzheva, R.A. Fahrutdinova, I.E. Yarmakeev, R.R. Fahrutdinov, A.R. Abdrafikova, R.M. Akhmadullina, A.A. Singatullova, etc.).

We share the opinion of Bogoyavlenskaya (2002) and Abdrafikova *et al.* (2014) believe that talented students require different learning strategies that allow you to enter into the study the general issues and themes that require a multidisciplinary approach at their study; to include constantly an in-depth study of the problems which are selected by the students; to pay a special attention to the development of independent work skills; to focus on the development of productive abstract thinking and higher mental processes; to achieve the saturation with open type jobs; to emphasize the development of research skills; to encourage results that give a challenge to existing views and contain new ideas; to encourage the movement to the understanding of ourselves, the recognition of own abilities, similarities and differences from the other ones; to assess the work results based on specific criteria related to a specific area of interest. Such strategies include cooperative learning.

The cooperative learning strategy is used in teaching for a long time. This strategy is an important element of the pragmatic approach to education in the philosophy of Dewey. The cooperative learning is used in West Germany, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Australia, Israel, Japan. However, the very ideology of cooperative learning was developed in detail by a group of American teachers at John Hopkins University and by Slavin R. Johnson and D. Johnson, at the University of Minnesota.

There are three main options for cooperative learning: the student team learning involves the creation of several student groups (3-4 men), who perform different tasks without rival and try to improve the results of the entire group. Every student brings some score for a group and all groups are responsible for the work of each participant. The group activity is awarded not only by the evaluation in points but also by some award tokens, certificates, etc.

Another option is the organization of training in collaboration which is conventionally called Jigsaw. At the stage of language material creative use the students are divided into groups for a creative task performance, each has the students working on similar problems. After the collection of material using own sub-theme the students from different groups responsible for similar types of work are united to exchange information. Then the groups are restored and the participants tell the obtained info to their group. At the final stage of the results presentation, a teacher may ask from any student a report on any section of the task (Golubeva, 1993).

Learning together allows a group of students to perform one task, which is a part of a larger theme, which is operated by an entire class. There are several groups in a class. During the operation, the groups may communicate to each other and thus the material is studied fully (Krutetskiy, 1964).

The abovementioned learning strategies can be used effectively in the teaching of Foreign languages which will increase significantly the period of oral practice for each student and to achieve the material mastering by all participants of the group. During the process of cooperation the need to operate not only with others but also for others is cognized. The understanding of reciprocity and benefits in joint actions by each student leads to the understanding of expanded capabilities in a common case. According to this basis the collective has a mutual trust, respect for each other, affection and friendly relations (Polat, 2002). New time dictates new challenges for the Russian education system:

- What are the philosophy and requirements for educational technologies in respect of talented young people?
- What are the best practices and approaches?

- What is an optimal integration trajectory for talent and success?

In this study, the researchers attempted to answer these modern challenges.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research site: The research site selected for this study was the Small Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication (Small IFIC) of Kazan Federal University, which is a model of the “big” Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication and demonstrates the basic areas of study at the institute. The main objectives of the Small IFIC are:

- To attract talented students for study
- The development of their creative abilities
- The vocational guidance and familiarity with the professions related to the philological, pedagogical, artistic and aesthetic activities
- Initial training for further professional training

Small IFIC is engaged in professional additional education of 7-11 grade students, performs an active work in the pre-university philological, artistic and aesthetic education, organizes the research activities of students.

Participants' backgrounds: In our study, the experimental group consisted of 8-9 grade students (40 men). These are the students of secondary schools at the city of Kazan. About 30 girls and 10 boys among them are from the families of middle and business class. About 38 students study one Foreign language (English), 2 person study two foreign languages: English and German. Students have been studying foreign languages since the second grade. In the Small IFIC students studied during two semesters (Fall semester, 2013 and Spring semester, 2014). Classes were held once a week. The duration of a class made 80 min.

Study instrument and data collection procedures: Taking the cooperative learning strategy, we adapted it to the new conditions of operation with the talented students of Small IFIC.

At the stage of pilot testing the language material was tested which made some challenges for the students of the experimental group and were identified by a diagnostic testing:

- The structures of a complex subject and a complex supplement
- Impersonal forms of a verb
- The structure of an inversion simple and complex sentence

Table 1: Evaluation of progress of grammar issues acquisition

No. of participants	Starting point	Control stage
40	27 (70%)	38 (95%)

Figures in parenthesis refer to percentages and have been rounded up to whole numbers

- Modal verbs and a some others (Appendices A-B for complete proofs)

At this stage, we applied the technology learning together. Students were grouped into 8 groups of 5 people and one common task was given to them with the statement of each student role in joint ventures. Students had to comply with certain conditions when they were responsible for the results of thier part of the work and the work of all group. The group members had the opportunity to perform mutual control and consulting of each other and this, ultimately, led to a better understanding of the language material under study.

At the end of the experimental period , the students were interviewed and tested again. The test results showed a significant improvement in learning of lexical and grammatical material by students (Table 1).

RESULTS

The results revealed that the use of cooperative learning strategy allowed students to improve their knowledge by the linguistic material, which was diagnosed as difficult one for mastering by this group of students.

The quantitative information in Table 1 gives the evidence to the progress of grammar issues acquisition by students at small IFIC.

According to these findings, the authors concluded that the applied learning together strategy allowed to improve:

- The academic performance of students
- The motivation to study the language matter
- The ability to work in a team

DISCUSSION

The researchers in their study were able to confirm experimentally that the use of original strategies at the teaching of Foreign languages meet the requirements that are imposed by talented students. The current study showed that within the conditions of modern society at the operation with talented students the cooperative learning strategy may be the most relevant.

The researchers demonstrated the productivity of cooperative learning strategies using the example of Foreign language learning among talented students in the Small IFIC. As the experiment showed this strategy allows to determine the potential opportunities of each student

effectively as the cooperative learning creates the necessary conditions for the activation of his cognitive and speech activity and provides the opportunity for each of them to cognize a new language material deeper.

The current state of education, characterized by the trend of humanization, involves the establishment of subject-subject relations in which a student is considered as a subject of academic process (Slavin, 1995). The task of a modern teacher is to choose such methods and forms of students learning activity organization that best meet the goal of personality development. The authors are convinced that the strategy of cooperative learning allows to implement a personal approach in Foreign language teaching. The cooperative learning strategy allows to create a psychological environment which is able to maintain and develop the idea of each child uniqueness, the values and significance of his abilities and capabilities. This psychological environment, as opposed to competition, self-assertion at the expense of others, makes it possible to reveal one's potential at full for each student (Vygotsky, 1991; Webb, 1992; Dewey, 2003; Fahrutdinova *et al.*, 2014).

Learning together technology applied by the researchers solves both educational and upbringing objectives. A teacher has an opportunity to solve different educational, upbringing and development tasks:

- To master the material by all participants of the group
- To organize an independent teaching and study activities
- To be an intermediary between a cultural study by a student and a private cultural creative work
- To assist students in the social and psychological adaptation within heterogeneous groups
- To promote the moral development of pupils
- To maintain interest in the subject under study

The digital data presented in Table 1, confirm the above stated conclusions.

CONCLUSION

We may state for sure that the performed pilot study fully confirmed the hypothesis that the use of learning together technology during the education of talented students in Foreign language communication is an effective one and leads to a deeper understanding of a language specific phenomena and contributes to the maintaining a stable high motivation during a Foreign language (English) study. The cooperative learning strategy proves again that the study in cooperation is not only easier but much more interesting (Yager *et al.*, 1986).

The approbation of the described strategy in ESL classes proved itself positively. The researchers note that the use of learning together strategy in ESL classes is possible on the base of regular activities.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Test 1 "The Subjective with the Infinitive Construction" (A Sample)

Fill in the gaps:

Jennie ... aversmart and hard-working girl.

- a) Is said that she is
- b) Said that she to be
- c) Is said to be**

The president ... the countries of Eastern Europe.

- a) Is reported that he is visiting
- b) Is reported to be visiting**
- c) Reported to visit
- d) Reported to be visiting

Choose the right substitute:

Some people suppose that this derelict land was a bustling town in the past.

- a) This derelict land is supposed to have been a bustling town in the past.**
- b) This derelict land supposed to have been a bustling town in the past.
- c) This derelict land has been a bustling town in the past.

Somebody has told me that Jack is in town.

- a) Jack is said to be in town.**
- b) Jack said to be in town.
- c) Jack is said be in town.

It is thought that life on Earth was brought from space.

- a) Life is thought to brought to Earth from space.
- b) Life is thought to have been brought to Earth from space.**
- c) Life is think to have been brought to Earth from space.

Many people think that Stevenson wrote more poems than we know of.

- a) Stevenson is thought to have written more poems than we know of.**
- b) Stevenson is thought writing more poems than we know of.
- c) Stevenson thinks write more poems than we know of.

Everybody believed that somebody had prompted Jack what shares to buy.

- a) Jack believed to have been prompted what shares to buy.
- b) Jack was prompted what shares to buy.
- c) Jack was believed to have been prompted what shares to buy.**

People suppose that crises are a regular display of economics.

- a) Crises is supposed to be a regular display of economics.
- b) Crises are supposed to be a regular display of economics.**
- c) Crises are supposed to display of economics.

It is said that Peter used to be a talented journalist.

- a) Peter said that he is a talented journalist.
- b) Peter was said to be a talented journalist.
- c) Peter is said to have been a talented journalist.**

Translate and choose the right answer:

I was supposed to meet Anna at the station, but I was too late.

- a) I was supposed to meet Ann at the station, but I was late.**
- b) I supposed to meet Ann at the station, but I was late.
- c) I promised to meet Ann at the station, but I didn't come

Appendix B: Test 2 "The Non-finite Forms of the Verb" (A Sample)

Choose the correct variant. Only one variant is correct.

My hobby is ... It's great because ... is good for health.

- a) Dancing/dance
- b) Dance/dance
- c) Dancing/dancing**
- d) To dance/to dance

How long ... he ... in this flat? - He ... in this flat since he found a new job.

- a) Has he lived, 's lived**
- b) Has he lived, lived
- c) Did he live, 's lived
- d) Did he live, lived

Do you see the signboard "NO" What on earth do you do on the sea?

- a) To swim
- b) Swim
- c) In swim
- d) Swimming**

When ... she ... back from Egypt? - She ... back two days ago.

- a) Has she come, has come
- b) Has she come, came
- c) Did she come, came**
- d) Did she come, has come

Is it worth while ... tickets now-one month before a performance-or it's no use ... them in advance?

- a) To buy/ to buy
- b) Buying/buying**
- c) To buy/buying
- d) Buying/to buy

When ... they ... back? - They ... back at 2 o'clock.

- a) Have they come, 've come
- b) Have they come, came
- c) Did they come, 've come
- d) Did they come, came**

Do you mind my (me) ... here till tomorrow?

- a) Stay
- b) To stay
- c) Staying**
- d) Stayed

When ... you ... (see) him last time? - I don't remember. I ... (not see) him for a long time.

- a) Have you seen, haven't seen
- b) Have you seen, didn't see
- c) Did you see, haven't seen**
- d) Did you see, didn't see

After ... in Berlin they made for the door "EXIT".

- a) Arrived
- b) Arriving**
- c) To arrive
- d) In arrive

Are you thinking of ... an actor? - No, my father objects to my (me) ... an actor.

- a) To be/to be
- b) Be/be
- c) Being/to be
- d) Being/being**

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