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STRUCTURING EFL CLASSES FOR CIVIL PROTECTION STUDENTS

According to article 50 of the Law of Ukraine “On Education”, the main kinds of learning activity in higher educational institutions are lectures; laboratory, practical, seminar, individual classes; consultations [1]. A class is a form of study, during which a teacher/professor organizes for students an analysis of certain theoretical provisions of the discipline and develops skills and abilities of their practical application through the individual performance of properly formulated tasks. The main didactic objective of a class is to form professional skills essential for specialists to perform functional duties and develop professional and business qualities, which are provided by the educational and qualification characteristics of a graduate of a certain educational level [2].

Unfortunately, the specialist program in technical higher educational establishments of Ukraine has posed a problem of a deficit of academic hours for language learning. Despite this fact, there is a requirement on providing students with the skills and competencies which correspond to the B2 level. Taking into consideration that learners usually have A2 and quite rarely B1 when entering a university and have one class of foreign language in a fortnight, it is expedient to synthesize their knowledge and skills and work at their interaction in speech. For this reason, teaching strategies should be focused on forming a language base, consolidating it with a set of exercises as well as during communication within the framework of one class. The complexity of planning foreign language classes lies in the fact that each unit of speech recourses should pass through four types of speech activity: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Such integrity is a key to the interconnection and interrelation of all types of speech activity while working in turn on each of them.

While planning, it should be borne in mind that a class is just an element of the educational process and a foreign language for technical specialties is a means of developing professional competencies. Thus, the contents of the subject must correspond to the requirements of the future occupation of the learners. Hence, one of the necessary conditions of forming professionally-oriented foreign language competence is the implementation of the principle of interdisciplinary integration. “The learning process should be formed under the plans of technical specialties, and the subject-content component of the foreign language curricula should be approved both by both the profession-oriented and language departments” [4].

Methodologists agree that there are several requirements that any class must meet. Among them, the most important are the communicative orientation of the learning process, content, educational and developmental value. The other influential and inseparable aspects are favorable psychological atmosphere, correct distribution of time between stages of the class, a combination of different forms of work (individual, pair, group, frontal), providing systematic learning control of knowledge, organization of intensive independent work, a differentiated approach according to the initial level of knowledge, maintaining optimal pace, changing activities, etc [3].

Structuring classes to arrive at the needed result – satisfying the needs of the learners and simultaneously getting them sincerely involved in work – is the target instructors are striving for. Realizing the importance of every stage and stating the goal at each step means organizing and

managing the class the best way. Thus, deliberate preplanning helps to achieve short and long-term learning goals.

Hence, the structure of the class is a set of different options for interactions between the elements, arising in the learning process and ensuring its purposeful effectiveness [5].

Before structuring a class, it is crucial to clarify the goals: what is to be studied and why students need it, and, of course, how you can assess if you achieved the goal, i.e. whether the class was productive and if the skills obtained may be used further in real life.

One of the most responsible steps is to decide how the class will flow and which learning recourses and experiences will be the best to support the intention of learning. Timing, activities, and aims for each stage of the class should be considered beforehand.

The introduction is the hook that must thrill and warm-up students. As they say, a good beginning makes a good end. The warm-up stage may not be necessarily connected with the main topic. The idea is to get learners interested and open to learning. It can be compared to waking up early in the morning when one needs an additional minute in bed to pandiculate and get oneself together.

A warmer or ice-breaker should be no longer than 5 to 10 minutes and get all the students involved in the activity and engaged in speaking the target language. A warm-up is attempted firstly at creating a friendly relaxed atmosphere in class. The topic should be simple and interesting. Apparently it is a good idea to use this time to revise previously studied vocabulary or grammar. Although, sometimes it can be some fun time, time to entertain.

There are different activities to be used for warming-up. The one I practice rather often is using a ball so that a student says some professional or related terms and pass it further to one of the mates. Another idea is to ask one of them to say any word and ask others to clap their hands or stand up as soon as they hear professional vocabulary.

The next step is finding out about the difficulties students faced when doing homework. The focus should be on the mistakes of the learned material without explaining mistakes on the topics which have not been studied or do not hinder general comprehension.

Effective goal setting, i.e. conveying the goals of the class, helps students understand its practical significance. The goals must be closely connected with the real needs of learners. If we consider the syllabus on the Foreign Language for training future Civil Protection Service of Ukraine personnel, it is obvious that it should embrace the most significant professional topics. Hence, the learning goals need to be well-articulated so that the students can immediately notice the interdisciplinary interconnection: to study vocabulary on “Types of firefighting tactics”, to present and practice grammar “Modal verbs” to be able to give pieces of advice, permit or prohibit doing something, to discuss the text “Firefighting tactics”.

The ongoing lead-in stage helps to introduce the new topic, that’s why it should be thoroughly preplanned. In terms of the topics studied by the future Civil Protection Service personnel, some news in brief connected with firefighting or managing with accidents, natural or environmental disasters can be discussed. It is possible also to show some photos of the recent accidents or disasters to discuss the equipment or tactics that can be applied to manage them or the first help that could have been given to the victims.

The next two stages – introduction and production – are the heart of the class as they provide students with the needed skills. The goal of the introduction (learning) stage is to obtain the knowledge needed for communication. The aim of the production is to use grammar and vocabulary in the communicative situation.

The learning stage can be of two kinds: skill-focused and system-focused.

The skill-focused stage is aimed at practicing reading and listening. Before it, students should be pre-taught new words and collocations that can hinder general comprehension of the text or recording.

The system-focused stage focuses on getting students acquainted with new grammar structures through the context. Scaffolding is of high importance: a professor must use the context (a text or some excerpts from the read text) to direct learners' attention to the new structure. Asking questions is the best way to help them understand the meaning of the structure. Afterwards, its elements and formation and the changes it undergoes are discussed. Having studied new grammar thoroughly, students do some grammar exercises to train accuracy in using the structure, for example, open brackets and chose the needed form of the word, or write a notice to a colleague and ask for help using modal verbs.

The stage that follows is the summary of the theoretical part of the class aimed at using the knowledge and skills obtained for communication (writing, dialogue, or monologue). This stage is a kind of freer practice because students can practice knowledge of the language in real communication. Future Civil Protection Service employees may be given the following tasks:

1. Role-play the situation:

- a) You are a fire safety inspector. Tell schoolchildren how to behave in case of fire (Fire Safety Rules vocabulary and the Imperative Mood practice);

- b) You are at the fire station. Tell schoolchildren on the excursion about the personal protective equipment firefighters wear at work (Firefighters' Gear vocabulary and the Passive Voice practice);

2. Talk about the fire protection equipment used in emergencies (Fire Protection Equipment vocabulary and the Passive/ Active Voice practice:

- a) types of firefighting vehicles;

- b) their specifications;

- c) firefighting appliances (hoses, nozzles, etc.);

3. Answer the questions:

- a) What are the duties of the fire safety inspector?

- b) What is the difference between the direct and indirect fire attack?

- c) What is the size-up?

- d) What are the rules of triage?

The closing stage usually called a cool-down is a time for several important activities. Firstly, the most frequent mistakes should be discussed, better in a form of a multiple-choice test, when students choose the right option, as in "The face shield is/are used to protect your face", or "The gloves can/must/may protect hands of a firefighter". While assessing their work, it is necessary to tell their strong sides and praise them for what they have already achieved.

Secondly, feedback on the lesson can help to understand if the goals declared were achieved. So, it is possible to ask students to tell what they studied during the class and how they can use these skills in their professional activities, for example, "We have learned how to give commands to the crew" (the Imperative Mood); "We can describe causes of fire" (Fire Safety vocabulary), etc. The idea is to let students realize what they have studied and how they can apply this knowledge out of the classroom.

Finally, it is time to give homework and explain some exercises which can pose difficulties and declare the topic of the next class.

To sum up, a language class must have a frame: start with a warm-up or lead-in and end in a cool-down. The inner structure of the class must include three elements: presentation, practice, and production of the stuff learned. These elements should be interconnected and flow one from another to help students obtain knowledge and develop needed skills. If some of the elements are ignored or omitted, it can destroy the general framework of the class and de-motivate learners. Preplanning and detailed preparation for the class, i.e. structuring resources in a way that all the aspects of a foreign language are covered and focused on, will provide for giving profound knowledge. Furthermore, well-organized material will lead to the development of skills that can be further used in the real communicative activity, thus evoking the interest and motivation of learners.

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