SIMULATIONS AS A METHOD
OF TEACHING COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

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The article is devoted to the analysis of simulations as specific learning activities in their combination with the other English language teaching techniques at all the stages of an English lesson. Simulations are taken into consideration as alternative to the traditional teaching format. They are described as a form of group work designed for intermediate and advanced learners. It is shown that simulations are a good way of practicing discussions, the language of persuasion. Simulation is viewed asa kind of communicative situation created for developing learner's communicative skills. Simulations have much in common with role-playing exercises. The main features of simulations are defined in their comparison with role plays.It is pointed out that role plays don't require too long preparation. They are often enacted around everyday situations and are based on the use of situational language. It is proved that simulations require more time to prepare and organize. They are more structured and complicated because they consist of several stages as a rule. In the works of modern foreign linguists simulations are viewed as a demanding and challenging activity. Simulations may be called a specific kind of group work as it minimizes competition with winners and losers that can be psychologically destructive and maximizes challenge which is considered to be the most important characteristic of simulations as students feel inspired to do their best.

The set of simulations efficient for the development of communicative skills has been offered. It is proved that simulations of this kind give learners the opportunity to sense the working of language as living communication. Each learner has optimum opportunity for oral practice. It is shown that simulations are usually based on team work in order to maximize ways of making every learner experience success. It is pointed out that simulation has quite a complicated structure consisting of a number of activities. Some of them can be used as warming-up exercises some activities can help students to integrate new knowledge into existing knowledge. The simulations offered in the article may be especially efficient if there is a lot of vocabulary to review. Such activities aimed at developing communicative skills give every learner reason for speaking. They provide a basis for the development of more sophisticated, conceptual and abstract thinking in future.

Key words: communicative skills, creative abilities, role-playing exercises, simulations.

Щербина В.В. Ділові ігри як метод навчання комунікативних умінь. Стаття присвячена аналізу ділових ігор у їх поєднанні з іншими методиками навчання англійської мови на різних етапах уроку іноземної мови. Ділові ігри розглядаються як альтернатива традиційним методам навчання іноземних мов. Розгляд специфіки використання ділових ігор здійснюється у їх зіставленні з рольовими іграми. Показано, що ділові ігри є більш структурованими та складними з точки зору їх організації та проведення. Ділові ігри, спрямовані на розвиток комунікативних навичок, не тільки надають кожному студенту можливість висловлюватися, але й формують у нього відчуття безпосереднього спілкування у реальній комунікативній ситуації.

Запропоновано низку вправ, найбільш ефективних у процесі розвитку комунікативних умінь студентів.

Ключові слова: ділові ігри, комунікативні вміння, рольові вправи, творчі здібності.

Щербина В. В. Деловые игры как метод обучения коммуникативным умениям. Статья посвящена анализу использования деловых игр в сочетании с другими методиками обучения английскому языку на разных стадиях урока иностранного языка. Деловые игры рассматриваются как альтернатива традиционным методам обучения иностранным языкам. Вопрос о специфике использования деловых игр рассматривается в их сопоставлении с ролевыми играми. Показано, что деловые игры являются более структурированными и сложными с точки зрения организации и проведения. Деловые игры, направленные на развитие коммуникативных навыков, не только дают возможность каждому студенту высказываться, но и формирую у него ощущение непосредственного общения в реальной коммуникативной ситуации.

Предложен ряд упражнений, наиболее эффективных для развития коммуникативных навыков студентов.

Ключевые слова: деловые игры, коммуникативные навыки, ролевые игры, творческие способности.

The actuality of the research. We teach and learn English in a non-English speaking setting, that's why words cannot be manipulated in their natural context. The best thing a foreign language teacher might do is to manipulate words in games. We have all experienced the teaching format of the teacher standing in front of the students" audience giving instructions

or explaining a new grammar structure. It makes good teaching sense to use other formats. All sorts of group work may become an alternative to the potentially tedious procedure of telling something. Simulation is a kind of group work that may become an excellent way of practicing the language of persuasion, having discussions and developing communicative skills. There is an old expression that may be powerfully suggestive of what pedagogical science says about how students learn best: "Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand". There is no doubt, students need to be told as well as to be shown but the more students are involved in communicative fluency activities the better they remember and understand.

The degree of scientific research of the issue. Simulations as a method of foreign language teaching have been the object of research in the studies of many both native and foreign linguists. The works by A. Davison are devoted to the question of fostering learner's creativity in order to develop predictive, analytical, critical and problem-solving skills while using role-playing activities and simulations [2]. Giving definitions of role-play and simulations A. Davison points out that they "are forms of games mirroring a slice of reality" [5: 121].

Another British scientist A. Wright considers simulations to be the technique that may help students to achieve the affective and cognitive engagement vital for language acquisition as well as understand language used for natural communication and to use it for effective communication themselves [11]. In his works the linguist offers foreign language teachers practical ways of putting role-play exercises and simulations at the heart of learning communicative skills.

L. Howe and M. Howe take into consideration the function of role plays and simulations as the important element in modern foreign language teaching for specific purposes [3]. The classification proposed in their research is based upon the area of foreign language application.

Emphasizing creativity in teaching and training A. Maley and A. Duff designed the set of simulations, based on dramatizing and aimed at integrating creative thinking into everyday classroom practice [8]. In their works the linguists show the way simulations develop students' imagination and personal judgements.

W.R. Lee considers simulations to be the specific kind of improvised speaking or spontaneous communicative activity, especially vital for

language development and growth [6]. According to the scientist's point of view "simulations give use for flexible and improvised language on a regular basis" [6: 35].

The aim of this article is to define the ways simulations may function at different stages of the English lesson with specific focus on the main features they differ from role-playing exercises, to offer a set of exercises especially efficient in the development of learners' communicative skills.

Language learning is hard work. One must make an effort to understand, to repeat, to adapt and to use newly understood language in conversation and in written composition. Effort is required at every moment of learning and must be maintained over a long period of time. All sorts of games may help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work. Games help the teacher to create contests in which the language is useful and meaningful. As a result the learners may experience language rather than merely study it.

The problem of a communicative situation is considered to be one of the most important in the foreign language teaching process. Every foreign language teacher has his or her unique style of teaching, which is likely to define the kinds of communicative situation a teacher may create and use in everyday classroom work. Simulation can be named one of such communicative situations. As a kind of role playing activity simulation is sure to be aimed at forming students' communicative skills.

F. Klippel points out that "it is not easy to distinguish clearly between role play and simulation" [5: 121]. In his opinion simulations are more highly structured and contain more diverse elements in their content and procedure. A. Davison and P. Gordon give the following definition of simulations: "Simulations are simplified patterns of human interactions or social processes where the players participate in roles" [2: 55]. Most simulations demand that participants are supplied with background information and materials to work from both before and during the simulation. Such activities require special preparation on the part of the teacher. In contrast role plays don't require too long preparation. They are often enacted around everyday situations and are based on the use of situational language. "The material necessary for a simulation should be more varied and complex to suit the multi-layered structure of a simulation", – points out F. Klippel [5: 122]. It doesn`t mean that simulations cannot be adapted to different classes and different learner

needs. These activities can cover a wide spectrum of individual preferences in ways of learning.

Let's have a closer look at simulations which are suitable for all levels of proficiency and can be used at various stages of a lesson.

Simulations and role-plays are usually designed for group work. Class sizes vary considerably and the simulation assumes an average class of 10–15 students. Group work is often associated with a competition but competition against others is not an essential ingredient of simulations or role-plays. Challenge is supposed to be the most important characteristics of these activities. Competition may be stimulating for some students but it can be psychologically destructive making players anxious about their failures. Simulations and role playing activities minimize the competition with winners and losers and maximize challenge. As a result everyone feels inspired to do the best.

As it was mentioned before simulations are quite demanding learning activities in which the players have to use the foreign language correctly and adequately. In his book "Keep Talking" F. Klippel points out that "role plays may improve the students' oral performance generally, and simulations quite often train all four skills" [5: 122].

The simulation "Making a radio programme", offered by F. Klippel in his book "Keep Talking" [5], is a group activity designed for advanced learners. It is aimed at working on a task which produces a result that can be played to others. It takes much time to prepare the necessary material and requires the use of special equipment such as tape recorder and microphone, record player or CD player, sound effects record, cassette and music record. Many simulations require the use of more than one room and the simulation described is not an exception. Students are to prepare collection of magazine or newspaper articles. The end product should be a radio programme 20–30 minutes long, consisting of short interviews, commentaries separated by advertising and music. The simulation consists of four steps. Let's have a look at them in more detailed way.

Step 1: Students start working on different parts of the programme. First they work in pairs and then go on working in groups. A schedule has to be written up with the different tasks clearly specified:

Selecting and recording the music – 2 students

Presenting of the programme – 2 students

Sound effects – 2 students
First interview – 5 students
Second interview – 4 students
Advertisement – 5 students
Commentary – 3 students
Short sketch – 3 students

Step 2: Students look through the articles to find the suitable topics and prepare the interviews and commentary. When they find a story they consider to be interesting, they decide who to interview and write up questions. Students working out the advertisement look through the magazines to find ideas they want to adapt. The teacher's role is to move from group to group to help and correct written material.

Step 3: Before the final recording each group presents its part of the programme. Students analyze and discuss the results of their work. The last alterations and corrections are made. The presenters work out their introductory remarks to each part of the programme. The sequence of the individual interviews is fixed.

Step 4: Final recording.

A radio programme like this can be used for developing listening skills by other classes. Students may come up with new ideas and continue working at the project and making radio programme devoted to other topics students are interested in. Simulation has quite a complicated structure consisting of a number of activities. Some of them can be used as warming-up exercises, some can help students to integrate new knowledge into existing knowledge or get new words transformed into active acquisition. Such simulations, the most difficult and time-consuming to prepare, may be especially efficient if there is a lot of vocabulary to review.

The simulation "Controversy at school" [5] is another group activity, designed both for intermediate and advanced learners. It trains all four skills and runs over several stages. All the students get the texts prepared by the teacher. They are devoted to the problems children may get into at school. The texts are read and language difficulties are cleared up.

Step 1: Students choose the certain situation and discuss it.

Step 2: Students are divided into four groups. Each group gets its own task. One group prepares arguments the parents may put forward in a certain situation. The second group thinks of the point of view of the

pupils concerned. The third group expresses teachers' opinion. The fourth group represents the local press. Each group discusses and analyses the problem.

Step 3: The groups arrange meetings. The parents talk to the headmaster and teachers. The press interview teachers and pupils.

Step 4: The groups hold a panel discussion and look for the solution of the problem. They may produce a leaflet or a poster outlining their position.

Simulations of this kind give learners the opportunity to sense the working of language as living communication. They involve the emotions and the meaning of the language is more vividly expressed as each learner has optimum opportunity for oral practice in using language going beyond what is possible in class work. Simulations are usually based on team work. This fact allows to maximize ways of making every learner experience success as students don't play against each other.

The simulation "The XY society" [5] includes all language elements and is aimed at developing all four skills. It is designed for intermediate and advanced learners and is organized as group work.

Step 1: Students found the society. They choose and discuss the main aims and tasks of the society.

Step 2: Students elect office bearers. They organize elections of chairperson, secretary, treasurer, committee.

Step 3: Students discuss the agenda of a forthcoming meeting, each student expresses his or her suggestions.

Step 4: Student hold the meeting of the society. They discuss the rules, devise and design application form and membership card.

Step 5: Students prepare radio or TV programme about their society.

To sum up, it can be concluded that such an activity gives every learner reason for speaking. It gives students confirmation and confidence resulting from successful use of the language. Students may play with ideas freely and spontaneously. The complexity of simulations, which consist of several stages, prevent the teacher from exactly determining beforehand which structures, words and language skills will be needed by the learners. Simulations involve disciplined thinking, curiosity and attention to details. Moreover they provide a basis for the development of more sophisticated, conceptual and abstract thinking in future. Simulations take time and patience but they give students possibility to practice their communicative skills in order to develop fluency in speech. They make

work non-routine and keep learners being interested and active during the whole class.

Simulations as well as role plays are aimed at developing students' creative skills as they both include components of dramatizing and acting. The **further research** in this area is to be devoted to the analysis of dramatizing activities as a significant component of simulations and role-playing exercises.

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