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PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF INTRODUCING A LEVEL TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT M. KOZYBAEV NORTH KAZAKHSTAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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Absract

The level teaching of foreign languages at North Kazakhstan State University is considered by the author as one of the effective methods with a point - rating system. The author of the article analyzes the pros and cons of teaching in multilevel groups, and also gives a description of the range of implementation of teaching foreign languages in two versions, according to the State Educational Standard, depending on the initial level of students' foreign communicative competence with a detailed description of the monitoring process. The author makes an attempt to determine both positive and negative aspects of the distribution of students into groups with the same level of knowledge of foreign language competencies when entering a university. The article urgently raises the question of using level authentic teaching and methodological complexes in the classroom when organizing work on a foreign language. The author presents the results of a survey among 1st year students of non-linguistic specialties on the question of the level of teaching a foreign language in order to clearly understand what problems students are facing. In addition, practice shows that at the moment it is not possible to completely switch to level learning of foreign languages due to many of the reasons mentioned, in teaching foreign languages at non-linguistic universities on a parity basis, there is both level and blended learning.

Key words: foreign language, level learning, point-rating system, multilevel group, foreign-language communicative competence, authentic educational-methodical complexes.

М. ҚОЗЫБАЕВ АТЫНДАҒЫ СОЛТҮСТІК ҚАЗАҚСТАН МЕМЛЕКЕТТІК УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕТІНДЕ ШЕТ ТІЛІН ДЕҢГЕЙЛЛІК ОҚЫТУДЫ ЕНГІЗУ МӘСЕЛЕЛЕРІ МЕН КЕЛЕШЕГІ

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Аңдатпа

Солтүстік Қазақстан мемлекеттік университетінде шетел тілдерін деңгейлеп оқыту автор ұпай-рейтингтік жүйесінде тиімді әдістердің бірі ретінде қарастырылады. Мақала авторы әртүрлі деңгейлі топтарда оқытудың артықшылықтары мен кемшіліктерін талдайды, сондай-ақ МЖМБС сәйкес, студенттердің шет тілді коммуникативтік құзыреттілігінің бастапқы деңгейіне байланысты, мониторинг процесін толық сипаттай отырып, шетел тілдерін оқытудың екі нұсқасында жүзеге асыру ауқымына сипаттама береді. Автор студенттерді ЖОО-на түсу кезінде шет тілдік құзыреттілікті бірдей деңгейде меңгеретін топтар бойынша бөлудің оң және теріс жақтарын анықтауға талпыныс жасайды. Мақалада шетел тілін ұйымдастыру кезінде деңгейлік түпнұсқалық оқу-әдістемелік кешендерді сабақта пайдалану мәселесі өткір тұр. Автор тілдік емес мамандықтардың 1 курс студенттері арасындағы сауалнама нәтижелерін шет тілін деңгейлеп оқыту сұрағына келтіреді. Сонымен қатар, тәжірибе көрсетіп отырғандай, қазіргі уақытта шет тілдерін деңгейлік оқытуға толық көшу көптеген аталған себептерге байланысты мүмкін емес, тілдік емес жоғары оқу орындарында тілдік емес негізде шет тілдерін оқытуда деңгейлік те аралас та оқыту бар.

Түйінді сөздер: шет тілі, деңгейлік оқыту, ұпай-рейтингтік жүйесі, әртүрлі деңгейлі топ, шет тілінің коммуникативті құзыреттілігі, шынайы оқу-әдістемелік кешендер.

ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ ВНЕДРЕНИЯ УРОВНЕВОГО ОБУЧЕНИЯ ИНОСТРАННОМУ ЯЗЫКУ В СЕВЕРО-КАЗАХСТАНСКОМ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОМ УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕ ИМ. М. КОЗЫБАЕВА

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Аннотация

Уровневое обучение иностранным языкам в Северо-Казахстанском государственном университете рассматривается автором как один из эффективных методов при балльно – рейтинговой системе. Автор статьи анализирует плюсы и минусы обучения в разноуровневых группах, а также дает характеристику диапазона реализации обучения иностранным языкам в двух вариантах, согласно ГОСО, в зависимости от исходного уровня иноязычной коммуникативной компетенции студентов с подробным описанием процесса мониторинга. Автор делает попытки определить как положительные, так и отрицательные стороны распределения студентов по группам с одинаковым уровнем владения иноязычными компетенциями при поступлении в вуз. В статье остро встает вопрос использования на занятиях уровневых аутентичных учебно-методических комплексов при организации работы над иностранным языком. Автор приводит результаты анкетирования среди студентов 1 курса неязыковых специальностей на вопрос уровнего обучения иностранному языку, чтобы ясно осознать, с какими проблемами сталкиваются обучающиеся. Кроме того, практика показывает, что в настоящий момент полностью перейти на уровневое обучение иностранным языкам не представляется возможным в силу многих упомянутых причин, в обучении иностранным языкам в неязыковых вузах на паритетных началах существует как уровневое, так и смешанное обучение.

Ключевые слова: иностранный язык, уровневое обучение, балльно – рейтинговая система, разноуровневая группа, иноязычная коммуникативная компетенция, аутентичные учебно-методические комплексы.

Introduction

In connection with the introduction of multilingual education in universities of Kazakhstan, a revision of the teaching of foreign languages has arisen and significant changes have already taken place. The main factors of these changes are related to the competency-based approach to teaching foreign languages, with the emphasis on independent study of a foreign language by students, with a point-rating system for assessing students' academic achievements and the use of level learning at all stages of mastering a foreign language.

Level teaching of foreign languages has appeared in our Kazakhstani methodology and practice of teaching foreign languages relatively recently. In the traditional version of teaching foreign languages, university teachers in the learning process are guided to a large extent by the average student, while the group is formed without taking into account their language skills and at the beginning of the educational process, students of a multilevel group come to classes in a foreign language. For the teacher who is faced with this problem, difficult conditions begin to prepare for the lesson. Students with good and excellent language knowledge, who are able to quickly learn material in the classroom, lose their motivation, while less capable and prepared students try to learn the material they have learned. On the other hand, those with low knowledge experience significant difficulties, do not have time to learn a difficult program for them, and they also lose their motivation, which further aggravate their position [1].

What are the pros and cons of learning in multi-level groups. In mixed groups, students have no illusions about their language level of proficiency, their rating in the group, and if a student wants to improve his rating, he has someone to follow. He hears good and excellent answers in the lessons and with the individual approach of the teacher and his own will can

achieve success. It can be considered the first and serious advantage of training in multilevel groups.

Today, the process of modernization of educational systems is subordinated to one common idea - the idea of creating a single educational space. In the countries of the European Union, a lot of effort has been and is being done to create such a space, which has led to the creation of an international standard, which is presented in the form of pan-European competencies in foreign language proficiency. The international standard, which was officially adopted by the Council of Europe in 2001 and, being comprehensive and consistent, opens up new opportunities for those who teach foreign languages and those who study them. The core of the international standard is level education, which is described in detail in the pan-European competencies [2].

SCES of language education in the Republic of Kazakhstan on the development of English as a language of business communication and a means of integration into the global world economy in the education system says that it is advisable:

– introduce a unified national standardization in terms of level structure and subject content;

– project the steps of the national education system on the 6 levels of training and knowledge developed and presented in the Concept for the Development of Foreign Language Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, based on optimization taking into account the national conditions of the “Common European Standards of Language Competencies”. For the basis of the ranking of language training and assessment of level learning in languages, take the well-known level model of pan-European language competencies, integrated with the model of professionally-oriented teaching of foreign languages VOLL. Due to the fact that two other versions of language programs are particularly relevant in vocational training, namely LAP, LSP, an integrated model of 2 European standards should be used, where the second level standard is the VOLL professional language program, which also represents a 6-level model as follows:

– for non-linguistic universities - levels B1, B2 and the LSP course (professional program);

– for language universities - mastering levels B2, C1, C2.

Depending on the initial level of students' foreign language communicative competence, there is the possibility of realizing teaching foreign languages in two versions:

Option A - in the range of levels: B1-B2;

Option B - in the range of levels: A1-C2 [3].

Research methods

According to the results of the intra-university commission, it was revealed that the training of foreign language at M. Kozybaev NKSU occurs according to option B, guided by the State Standard of the Republic of Kazakhstan on 6.08.085-2010.

At M. Kozybaev NKSU level education is implemented as follows. At the beginning of the academic year, at the first classes, undergraduate students undergo entrance monitoring. They are offered level tests and an interview to determine the language level (A1, A2, B1, etc.). As practice shows, there are mainly students with A1-A2 levels, fewer - B1. Unfortunately, the contingent, as well as the number of hours offered by the program and curricula, do not make it possible to transfer a larger percentage of students to a fairly high level, for example, B1. The reasons for the deficit of a high level of foreign language proficiency at the initial stage of study at a university are associated more with school education:

1. lack of interest in this subject at school, since when choosing a university a foreign language is considered as non-core;
2. a personality factor, expressed in the student's lack of motivation to learn a foreign language;
3. pedagogical defects that led to the lack of education among future students of a holistic concept of considering the subject «Foreign Language».

At the end of the academic year, students are invited to undergo final monitoring to analyze the positive dynamics in teaching a foreign language. Here at this stage, in our opinion, a revision of the SES is necessary regarding the discipline «Foreign Language» as the base. After the final monitoring and interview, as well as taking into account the positive dynamics, it will be advisable to transfer students to a higher level for further indication in the diploma.

The distribution of students into groups with the same knowledge level of foreign language competencies when entering a university has both positive and negative sides. Such training helps to effectively build process in the classroom, attracting all students to group, pair work, to mobilize them to activity, since basically the level of their knowledge, skills and abilities is the same. A similar approach to the formation of groups creates the prerequisites for enhancing the activity of each student. The student himself sees his place in the group, sets goals and objectives for mastering foreign language competencies.

A great deal of attention when organizing work on a foreign language in a non-linguistic university should be given to the use of authentic level educational and methodical complexes (McMillan, The Heinemann, Oxford, Cambridge, etc.). Such complexes create good conditions for immersion in the environment of intercultural communication to improve listening skills of foreign language speech, and allow us to diversify the forms of work in the group. The complex includes audio and video materials, which are an important source for the formation of auditory competence, as they use the speech of native speakers [4, p. 82]. In addition, in authentic educational complexes, some of the material for independent study is provided, which is also an important factor in the organization of the educational process at the university.

The teacher's task is to create a development situation that provides students with freedom and responsibility in choosing and making decisions, autonomy, independence of actions, combined with the adoption of responsibility for the result [5, p. 176] rating system [6; 174-178]. But, unfortunately, with such a variety of authentic textbooks, there is not a single multilevel or educational complex in sufficient quantity, since, as noted earlier, the greater student body is at the A1-A2 level at our university.

Along with authentic textbooks that create the basis for dialogue in the intercultural communicative space, in the classroom at M. Kozybaev NKSU for undergraduate students can effectively use specialized textbooks for universities, as well as textbooks, electronic textbooks created by teachers of the department and based on popular science texts for bachelors, followed by discussion in a group, with the complexity of the subject and the use of scientific texts for abstracting and annotation in the magistracy. Preservation of professional communication seems to us a prerequisite for maintaining the student's motivation for the further development of their own foreign language competencies.

We conducted a survey among the students of the 1st year of non-linguistic specialties at NKSU, whose goal is to improve the methodology for introducing level-based teaching of foreign languages at a university.

The objectives of the study are to ensure the study of this process in teaching foreign languages, to find out the students' attitude to foreign language textbooks and level learning in general, to identify the positive and negative aspects of this training.

The research methods used by the authors include an analysis of the results of the survey, a generalization of the information received and its methodological and pedagogical interpretation. For European students, tiered learning is a fact that is not in doubt and does not need to be investigated. This is a new phenomenon in our country, which determines the novelty of our study, during which not only the positive, but also the negative, from the students' point of view, sides of the application of the level of teaching foreign languages are revealed.

Research results

Let's move on to a direct examination of the test results. 86 full-time first-year students of non-linguistic undergraduate specialties were interviewed.

To the question Do you like the distribution of students into groups according to the knowledge level of a foreign language?" 84 students (97%) answered in the affirmative; 2 students (3%) found it difficult to answer the question, 0 (0%) did not like the tiered approach to teaching foreign languages; 0 (0%) are related to teaching foreign languages (Figure 1). We can conclude that almost all students like the level distribution by language proficiency groups.

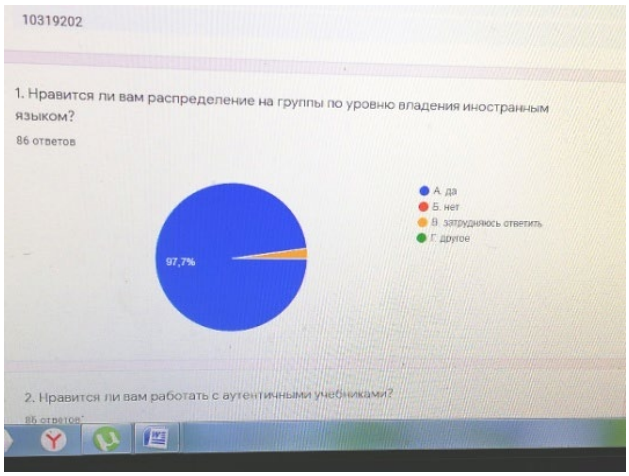

Figure 1 The results of students` survey about their distribution among different language levels of groups

When students were asked about authentic textbooks, 66 students (77%) expressed a positive attitude towards them; 17 respondents (16.3%) found it difficult to answer; three (5.8%) do not like authentic textbooks (Figure 2).

Since the majority of students answered this question positively, we can conclude that most students approve of authentic educational complexes, which are always level.

Figure 2 The results of students` survey on the use of authentic educational complexes

Answering the third question of the questionnaire, almost all students were able to indicate their level of knowledge of a foreign language. The greatest number of students, in their opinion, have A1 level - 43 (50%), A2 - 29 (33.7%), B1 - 13 (15.1%). Only 1 student (1.2%) highly(B2) rated himself (Figure 3).

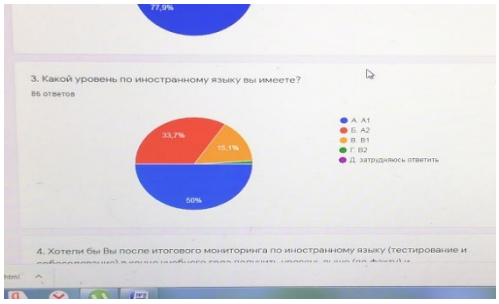

Figure 3 English Proficiency Levels

In the forth question 61 students (70.9%) answered positively after the final monitoring in a foreign language (testing and interviewing), at the end of the academic year, they wanted to get a higher level (in fact) and continue consolidating it in the next semester, indicating the level in the appendix to the diploma. We consider it an important point in identifying students' motivation. 12 students (14%) did not agree, and 13 students (15.1%) found it difficult to answer this question (Figure 4).

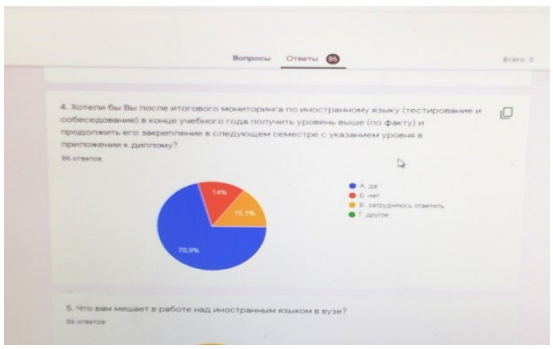

Figure 4 The results of students` survey about the desire to improve their level of English

Answering a questionnaire about learning difficulties, students tried to identify factors that prevent them from mastering foreign languages more successfully. Such difficulties for most students are actually personal factors. This answer was given by 61 students (70.9%). 16 respondents (18.6%) mentioned other factors preventing them from mastering a foreign language. Among these, poor training in foreign languages at school, a low level of teaching at school, and others can be distinguished. 6 respondents (7%) noted the insufficient technical base used at the university as a factor that impedes learning. 3 students (3.5.%) expressed the opinion that the choice of a textbook in a foreign language was insufficiently considered (Figure 5).

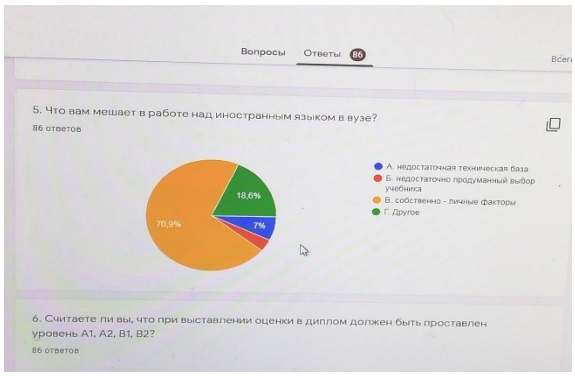

Figure 5 The results of students` survey about the difficulties of English learning

It follows that students self-critically come to the conclusion that with a large expenditure of time and effort, their level can increase.

When answering the sixth question of the questionnaire, the majority of students, 45 (52.3%) spoke in favor of indicating the level of foreign language proficiency in the diploma; 25 students (29.1%) would not want to see their level; 16 respondents (18.6%) found it difficult to answer this question (Figure 6).

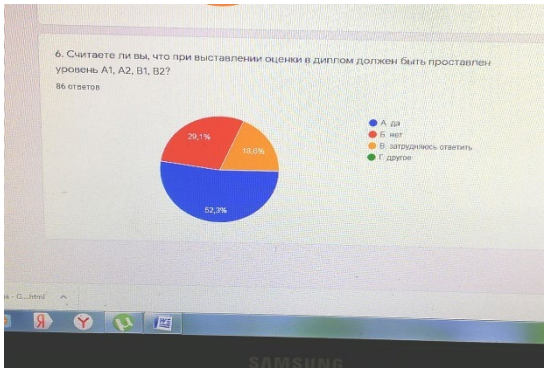

Figure 6 The results of students` survey on the consent of indicating the language level in the diploma

Analysis of the questionnaire results led the authors of the article to the following conclusions:

1. Most students approve of level learning, the distribution of students in groups of knowledge of a foreign language. A certain proportion of negative answers is an incentive to consider the deficits of the use of level learning.

2. Most students favor authentic textbooks; their negative grades increase the requirements for choosing a textbook. The textbook should correspond to the curriculum, thematic content, lexical content, which in turn increases the teacher's responsibility for a competently selected textbook, or in the absence of one, puts the ability to link different textbooks to the forefront, or this motivates the teacher to create his own methodological manual (course) using some particularly successful topics and texts from an authentic textbook.

3. Most students have A1-A2 levels, a minority - B1. It should be noted that promoting a student in terms of language proficiency is more effective to start with the beginning of the winter session at the initial stage. Control tasks should be carefully selected to avoid randomness in the selection for groups and to carry out the correction in time.

4. Answers to the question about the desire to improve the language level, taking into account the additional semester, provide favorable conditions for raising motivation among students in the study of an already professionally oriented foreign language. At this stage, it is already possible to predict students' interest in working on foreign language texts in their specialty, in writing and defending a diploma and master's theses in a foreign language, in participating in scientific events, etc.

5. Analyzing the difficulties in teaching a foreign language, emphasis should be placed on the accessibility of using various mobile applications in the form of dictionaries, translators and elementary tips, a modern student begins to ignore the need for his own independent work on the language, ignores the necessary vocabulary, and grammar skills. This approach to learning a foreign language distinguishes, first of all, students with low levels of A1, A2, who were still not sufficiently motivated to do serious work at school, and are unacceptable in mastering a foreign language, where there should be constant independent and autonomous work on the language. The above comments speak specifically about personality factors that impede a student’s progress in mastering foreign language communication skills. Therefore, we see that not all students have a need to work on the language independently and autonomously; most students with levels A1, A2 do not have an interest in mastering language skills. The task of a teacher of foreign languages in accordance with the challenges of the time is not only the formation of foreign language communicative competence of students, but also the education in them of a self-developing linguistic personality who is ready for constant self-education in the field of foreign language throughout life and is responsible for the acquired competencies [7].

6. Regarding the indication of the level of foreign language proficiency in the diploma, most students gave a positive answer. These are students whose level of knowledge is A2 and B1. Students with a lower level do not want their reflection in the diploma. Therefore, they either spoke out negatively or found it difficult to answer. In our opinion, it is completely justified to put up a well-deserved level in a diploma, as it will be better to motivate students to study foreign languages and correspond to their real level of knowledge [8].

Conclusion

Thus, the following conditions can be called positive features of the introduction of level education in a university:

1. the uniformity of the presented language material;

2. a great opportunity for organizing independent and autonomous work on a foreign language;

3. the authenticity of the studied educational material and active work on mastering foreign language competencies;

4. a favorable atmosphere in the classroom to increase the motivation for mastering foreign competence of students at the same level.

The negative factors of the introduction of level learning include:

1. an insufficient experience of teachers and methodologists in level education;

2. a lack of continuity of teaching foreign languages in undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programs;

3. thematic limitations of level textbooks;

4. the continuity of the growth of competencies and, consequently, the increase in the level of language proficiency are designed for a sufficiently long period and do not correspond to the number of hours in the university programs;

5. a lack of a level of knowledge of a foreign language in the graduation documents of the university.

In addition, practice shows that at the moment it is not possible to completely switch to level learning of foreign languages due to many of the reasons mentioned, in teaching foreign languages at non-linguistic universities on a parity basis, there is both level and blended learning.

These deficiencies in level learning of foreign languages require further consideration by teachers and university management. Only when discussing with colleagues can we come to an agreement, find the right approaches to solving problems of level education and teaching foreign languages at a university.

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