



Teaching Professionally Oriented Oral Communication in German to Future Social Workers

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ABSTRACT

The article understudies deal with teaching professionally-oriented oral communication in German to future social workers. It is proposed that teaching professionally-oriented communication in German should be conducted using Case Study technology. The paper outlines the stages of preparing and implementing a systematic experiment, which compares two variants of methods of teaching professionally, oriented oral speech to future social workers. The article describes the ways experimental and control groups are formed. The experimental method involves the formation of dialogic and monologue speech of future social workers in German. The experiment results are interpreted with the help of the methods of mathematical statistics and prove the hypothesis. The effectiveness of the proposed method and the expediency of using the Case Study technology have been experimentally proven in the article as well.

Keywords: professionally-oriented communication, case method, social workers, German language.

1. Introduction

Considering the new challenges of the present-day information society and the requirements for professionally oriented communication, which any specialist should meet, we may conclude that teaching German in a non-language institution of higher education is not sufficiently investigated. However, much research has been done in this area. Among the factors that prevent achieving the required results in the learning process in higher education institutions, where the language is not a speciality, particular emphasis is laid on the low level of class intensity and rather passive participation of students. The latter problem might be partially solved by increasing students' motivation and introducing new educational materials that would be of great interest to them.

The issue of searching for relevant technologies and adequate exercises is of primary significance in the process of forming the future social workers' skills in professionally oriented oral communication in German. This is why we have proposed a case technology and developed a scientifically based subsystem of exercises for teaching professionally-oriented German-language communication to future social workers, the effectiveness of which was tested during an experimental study.

2. Literature Overview

It is important to point out that teaching speaking today is one of the basic objectives of teaching a foreign language for specific purposes (Kuhn, 2007; Costa, 2013; Priskoszovits 2017; Svet, 2019;). It suggests due regard of students' needs in learning a foreign language and largely depends on the peculiarities of their future occupation (Funk, 2010; Bihych, Bondar, Voloshynova, Maksymenko, Ohui, Okopna, Simkova, 2013).

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Extrapolating the definition of O. Kaniuk and I. Kozubovska within the framework of this research, we refer to professionally-oriented communication of future social workers in German as communication implemented in the form of dialogic and monologue speech, with the aim of establishing and developing contacts in foreign language environment, as well as to solve problems through comparing points of view and searching for possible solutions in problem situations (Kaniuk, Kozubovska 2008).

To successfully develop the skills of professionally-oriented communication in a foreign language, it is necessary to master all components of oral speech, to ensure their integration into the learning process (Solodovnikova 2008), to introduce professionally-oriented terminology (Duzha-Zadorozhna, 2010; Kuhn, 2019) and situations containing a problem element, (Moro, 2007). Since such training aims to reproduce real facts and difficulties characteristic for future professional activities (Prikoszovits, 2017), it might be achieved by engaging various effective learning technologies. Among them is the technology of Case Study, which focuses on specific cases, thus bringing learning closer to professional activity (Kiefer, 2009) and stimulating students' communicative abilities (Levina, 2001; Götzl, Goldenstein, Scheven, 2013). Besides, it promotes the ability of critical thinking that leads to solving problem situations (Richert, 1992; Radin, Vetoshkin, Kashtanova, Pronkina, 2020).

The Case Study technology is regarded as the possibility of arranging active learning (Linthout, 2004; Janíková, 2008), as the learning technique that is usually implemented through role games and simulation (Kashina, 2005; Koeber-Abe, 2019; Prikoszovits, 2017), as well as the electronic means of learning (Bihych 2017). Case Study also stipulates creative approach in foreign language teaching (Kiseleva, 2006; Tikhonov, 2005), enhances students' motivation and independence in the course of learning (Botova, Pivniak, Bondarenko 2011).

Some scientific studies reveal the importance of applying the Case Study technology for teaching German as a second foreign language (Hinkel, 2011; Duff, 2018).

When applying the Case Study technology, scholars distinguish two approaches to modelling the cases: cases modelled by teachers and cases modelled by learners (Kiefer, 2011; Manzano Vázquez, 2014). The latter approach suggests that the learners are provided with the instructions necessary for modelling the cases (Fox, 1973).

Numerous studies prove that the peculiarities of applying Case Study in various aspects of FL professionally oriented teaching have been intensively investigated. Since Case Study has a significant impact on the development of speech and language skills (Jabbarova, 2020), it is effectively used in teaching lexical competence in writing (Chorna, 2017), in developing communicative competence (Solodovnikova, 2009), in intercultural and professional communication (Kovalev, Brattseva, 2015; Stojkovich 2018; Moiseyeva, Smaznoy, 2020), in oral communication (Basturkmen, 2010). Case Study is also used for teaching dialogic speech (Yaroshenko, 2015) and discussion (Simkova, 2010).

The above-analyzed scientific studies regarding the use of the Case Study technology indicate the importance of the issue. In our research, we want to show the effectiveness of applying Case Study in the process of teaching future social workers to professionally-oriented communication in German.

The objective of this paper is the experimental testing of German-speaking professionally-oriented communication teaching to future social workers, with due regard to the Case Study technology.

The tasks of the article are: to analyze the peculiarities of forming experimental and control groups, to describe the stages of experimental research and the system of exercises, to calculate the outcomes of the experiment.

The research hypothesis is based on the assumption that it is possible to reach a high level of professionally-oriented oral communication in German only under conditions of step-by-step performance of tasks and application of the offered system of exercises, which includes the use of the Case Study technology in the course of learners' independent modelling of cases.

3. Methodology

The experiment took place during the academic semester, from September to December 2020, at Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University. It was composed of the following stages: determining the criteria for assessing the future social workers' professionally-oriented oral communication level; preparation of materials for pre-experimental and post-experimental testing; pre-experimental testing; formation of experimental groups; experimental training; post-experimental testing; analysis of the results. The non-variable values of the experiment are the number of students in groups, the initial level of oral communication competence, the tasks of pre-and post-experimental testing, the educational materials, the duration of experimental training, and the assessment criteria. We attributed teaching professionally-oriented oral communication to the variable value of the experiment based on Case Study technology.

a. Materials

The educational materials for the experiment were taken from online sources (Caritas, SWR, <https://www.amalie-mannheim.de/>), conference materials, textbooks for social workers and dictionaries of social work (<https://www.socialnet.de/>). During the experiment, we covered two themes, which in turn were divided into three subtopics: "Addiction" ("Forms of Addiction", "Drug Addiction", "Alcohol Addiction") and "Socia

I Work with Children and Youth" ("Social Work at School", "Mobbing", "Employment Assistance to Teenagers").

All materials reflect the contemporary, relevant vocabulary of the social field and contain examples of dialogic and monologue speech, which German-speaking social workers use in their everyday professional activities.

b. Participants

To form the experimental groups and verify students' level of professionally-oriented oral communication in German, we conducted an experimental test at Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University. A total of 48 second-year students majoring in "Social Work", aged 17 to 19, took part in the experiment.

Testing was performed orally and aimed at determining the level of students' competence in dialogic and monologue speech. The students worked in groups and were asked to deal with some problem situations related to one topic. The main tasks of testing were to analyze the problem situation, suggest how to solve it, and present the solution in the form of a monologue speech. Then, there was a discussion on the proposed ways to solve the problem situation. All situations were related to the topic "Social Work with Children and Youth". Table 1 shows examples of these situations:

Table 1. Situations for Pre-Experimental Testing

Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation 3
Maria is 13. She is a jolly girl and used to have many friends. Maria does sports professionally and succeeds in it. Recently, she has won an international competition and was awarded at school. Right after this, she noticed the change in her classmates' attitude to her. They started manifesting this attitude in many unpleasant ways: they broke Maria's cell phone (as if by accident), spilt juice on her T-shirt and tore her school bag.	Alex is 15. He studied at a secondary school and used to be one of the best students in his class. However, his Dad has been alcohol-addicted over the past three months. Consequently, there are numerous conflicts at home. Alex does not want to go home after classes. He started hanging around with a bad company, drinking alcohol and skipping school.	Ann (15) and Paul (16) were schoolmates. They liked each other and started dating in a while. They wrote private messages to each other, where they described their romantic feelings. Once, Ann decided to share this correspondence with her friends. As a result, the whole school was aware of the love affair, and other students started bullying both Ann and Paul.

To verify the pre-experimental testing results, we used the formula by V. Bepalko (1968): $K = A / N$, where A is the number of points scored for completing the task, N is the maximum possible number of points (Bepalko, 1968). The minimum learning rate is 0.7.

In the course of testing, we separately assessed the skills of dialogic and monologue speech. The following criteria were identified for the evaluation of each of the speech processes: for dialogic speech - professional orientation, argumentation, cliché, reactivity, language correctness, the relevance of the situation; for monologue speech - lexical saturation, coherence, situationality, completeness of expression, language correctness, fluency. The results of pre-experimental testing are presented in Table 2:

Table 2. Results of Pre-Experimental Testing

Group	Dialogic Speech	Monologue Speech
EG1	0,56	0,5
EG 2	0,55	0,54

On the whole, students showed approximately the same level of proficiency in dialogic and monologue speech, i.e. below 0.7. It means that the experiment participants are homogeneous, whereas the learning rate in both groups is low.

4. Experiment Procedure

The pre-experimental testing outcomes have enabled us to distinguish two groups of the experiment participants: the experimental and control groups. Learning in the experimental group was conducted regarding the Case Study technology while learning in the control group was conducted regardless of the Case Study technology.

Here is the developed learning model concerning Case Study technology. The model consisted of three stages: *preparatory*, *basic* and *final*.

The objective of the *preparatory* stage was to activate and improve students' knowledge of professionally oriented vocabulary, grammar and listening. Students were supposed to perform exercises on introduction to the topic and word substitution within the stage to create a Mind Map, watch thematic videos, and complete tasks for them. Here are some examples of the tasks:

Example 1.

Welche Formen von Abhängigkeit sind Ihnen noch bekannt? Arbeiten Sie in Paaren und sammeln Sie die weiteren Ideen und füllen Sie Mind Map.

Abhängigkeit

The objective of the *basic* stage was to develop students' ability to analyze and process information, to build verbal expressions in the form of dialogue and monologue, to develop argumentation skills, to use speech clichés and means of interphrase communication. At the basic stage, students were offered such types of tasks as search and analysis of information, analysis of statistics, exercises on providing speech material to build up speech expressions in the form of dialogic and monologue speech, as well as exercises on forming primary expressions (dialogue and monologue). Here are some examples of the tasks:

Example 2.

Diskutieren Sie in 2 Gruppen und gebrauchen Sie dabei folgende Redemittel:

1. Welche andere Ursache hat Sucht?
2. Welche Auswirkung macht Sucht auf psychische und körperliche Gesundheit des Menschen?

Redemittel

- Ich finde, dass
- Überzeugend hier ist, dass
- Nach meiner Meinung
- Das ist wirklich ein schlagendes Argument
- In Bezug auf würde ich sagen, dass

Example 3.

Lesen Sie folgende Aussagen.

- o Du musst einfach durchhalten, sonst wird es nur noch schlimmer!
- o Ich kann dich sehr gut verstehen, mir würde es genauso gehen.
- o Mach endlich eine Therapie, sonst kommst du nie raus aus deinen Problemen!

Welche Aussagen Ihrer Meinung nach soll ein Sozialarbeiter in seiner Arbeit benutzen? Welche nicht?

Begründen Sie ihre Meinung.

Diese Aussage passt nicht, weil...

The *final* stage was divided into two sub-stages: sub-stage 1 and sub-stage 2. The peculiarity of the final stage lay in students' independent modelling of cases, presentation of case results, discussion. When applying the case method in the process of independent case modelling, scientists lay particular emphasis on the "case discussion" technique. Its essence lies in students' discussing and analyzing the cases, written and demonstrated by other students (Shulman, 1992). During sub-stage 1, in accordance with the topic understudies, students independently proposed problem situations modelled cases in accordance with the envisaged requirements and offered their own solutions. Within this investigation, we regard it as very essential, because in real life, a social worker deals with specific cases in confrontation with life situations, personal relationships and destinies of specific people (Müller, 2012), taking into account the practical significance of theoretical knowledge (Blätte, 2011). Therefore, it is important to bring the educational process as close as possible to the real conditions of professional activities.

The example of the case structure is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Case Structure

Introduction	Presenting the theme
Description of the situation	Describing the problem situation
	Describing the situation context (what caused the situation)
Assistance steps	Substantiating the choice of technology for working with the case
	Describing assistance steps (the way assistance will take place, the sequence of actions)
Assessment	Assessing the results and forecasting further actions
Conclusions	Overall conclusions

The objective of sub-stage 2 was to present the obtained results at the class in the form of monologue expression, to discuss the results of the cases, and to summarize the discussion.

After describing the stages of teaching professionally-oriented oral communication in German on the basis of the Case Study technology, we may admit that learning in the control group was conducted concerning the peculiarities of preparatory and basic stages, without considering case modelling. Instead, the learners were offered a variety of problem-oriented situations. The main task of the above stage was to propose ways of solving a problem.

5. Results

The tasks for post-experimental testing were structurally the same as those for pre-experimental testing. Testing was conducted in an oral form. The testing results were recorded.

The task results were calculated in compliance with the following formula: $K=Q/n$ (where K – learning index, Q – the obtained result, n – the maximum amount of points). In this way, we have received index K . For the evaluation of results, we used the same criteria for conducting pre-experimental testing.

As mentioned before, the verification of the acquired skills was held in an oral form. Students presented different problem situations, offered their own ways to solve them, assessed and predicted further developments. The evaluation of monologue statements was carried out in accordance with the assessment criteria. The evaluation results indicate the average score of the group for each of the criteria and the calculation of the learning rate. Maximum for each criterion, students could get 10 points, which made up 60 points for all criteria.

Table 4. Results of Post-Experimental Testing

Group	Dialogic speech	Monologue Speech
EG 1	0,83	0,82
EG 2	0,72	0,7

The testing results have shown that the learning rate has considerably grown compared to the pre-experimental testing results. Hence, we might conclude that teaching professionally-oriented communication on the basis of Case Study (whereby students create problem situations independently and suggest ways of solving them) is quite effective.

The highest results were scored in such criteria as fluency and completeness of expression, which proves the increase of students' self-confidence in speaking. Besides, students have considerably enriched their vocabulary, the latter being actively used in monologue speech. When preparing the cases, students showed creativity and took a critical approach to solve the problem. Apart from that, it is worth admitting that in the process of producing dialogic speech, the reactivity and professional orientation of dialogues have significantly increased. During the discussion, students reacted quickly to each other's remarks, if necessary, made comments and expressed their own attitude in accordance with the remarks of their partners. Argumentation and counter argumentation were carried out strictly in compliance with speech situations, whereby the level of language correctness increased significantly.

Thus, we can state that using Case Study technology helps achieve our practical and professional goals.

6. Conclusions

Having considered the outcomes of the experiment and numerous scientific works on the issue, we may conclude that teaching professionally-oriented communication in German to future social workers is somewhat effective when applying the Case Study technology. The learning model of future social workers comprised three stages: preparatory, basic and final. The latter, in turn, was divided into two sub-stages: sub-stage 1 and sub-stage 2. The results of the experiment prove that the effectiveness of teaching methods, which we offer in this investigation, depends on a proper sequence of the performed tasks. Besides, particular emphasis should be placed on such indispensable learning components as activation of professionally oriented vocabulary, grammatical and linguistic structures, and professionally oriented problem situations into the learning process. In general, it is worth admitting

that students' independent work on the cases has promoted their interest in learning and increased their participation in extra-curricular activities.

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