The Role Of Modern Educational Technology In The Process Of Teaching Chinese And The Development Of Communicative Competence[*]

Alfiya R. ALIKBEROVA
Kazan Federal State University

Abstract. *The relevance of this work is determined by introducing new standards of teaching foreign languages as well as the severization of requirements to the quality of Chinese language acquisition by the students of higher educational institutions. The goal of this paper is to study modern innovative methods and technologies of teaching and then use them in the teaching and learning activities, as well as to increase the students' motivation to learning Chinese. The leading approach to this problem is the problem-thematic approach. The main material for the study was the following modern educational technologies: the project method, the debate method and the talk show technique. The key findings of the study are the systematization of the main mechanisms and principles of using modern educational technology at the classes of Chinese. The materials of this article may be helpful for school and university teachers of Chinese at the advanced level, as well as for educators and developers of educational materials.*

Keywords: education, language study, educational technology, foreign languages, the Chinese language, communicative competences, innovative methods.

Introduction

In the recent decades there is an obvious upsurge of interest to Chinese culture in general and Chinese language, as its important part, in particular.[1] The number of schoolchildren and university/college students choosing to study Chinese as a foreign language is increasing every year.[2] At the same time it needs to be noted that acquisition of Chinese by Russian learners presents inevitable difficulties, especially at the beginner's level. These are difficulties related to learning the Chinese writing system (non-alphabetic, a large number of characters, the need to memorize the order of writing the lines, etc.) and issues associated with the language's phonetic structure, such as the presence of specific sounds uncharacteristic of Russian phonetics, the syllables having tones as well as some other nuances caused by the specific features of Chinese.[3]

Because of this, of special importance, in our opinion, is the task of introducing unconventional methods and technologies of teaching that would allow for maintaining the learners' interest and motivation, engage them in the process of language communication, stimulate their active unsupervised work with foreign

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[1] R. Moloney, Ling Xu Hui, "Exploring Innovative Pedagogy in the Teaching and Learning of Chinese as a Foreign Language," in *Springer*, CCXXI (2015).

[2] A. Alikberova, "Humanitarian communication in the system of Russian-Chinese relations: results of research work", in *The Turkish Online Journal of Design, Art and Communication. TOJDAC Special Edition*, 2016, p. 2358-2363,

[3] A. Bockareva, "Aktualnye voprosi metodiki prepodavaniya kitayskogo yazyka", *Topical Issues of the Methods of Teaching Chinese. Collection of teaching materials,* Vladivostok. URL: http://confucius.dvfu.ru/files/upfiles/izdaniya/Aktualnie_voprosi_metodiki.pdf., accessed 06. 03. 2017.

language material.[4] Teachers of foreign languages have always used a variety of techniques and technologies the goal of which is to develop the learners' communicative skills. In the recent time relatively new learning technologies are being actively used when studying foreign languages.[5] For instance, the debate technology, the case technology, the active learning methods, etc.[6] They help to make the classes more exciting and saturated as well as to raise the learners' motivation.[7] But the most important thing is that they help the learners to overcome the language barrier. Usually these technologies allow for the involvement of all four communication skills at once (speaking, listening, reading and writing).

Methods

As part of the study we had to solve the following tasks: researching and analyzing the existing innovative technologies of teaching Chinese, each method's possibility of use in the educational process in the conditions that we had, as well as identifying positive and negative nuances of the studied forms of teaching Chinese that influence the development of communicative competences. To solve these tasks we used a complex of different methods mutually reinforcing each other, namely: the descriptive method; the analytical method; the comparative, contrastive and comparative-historical methods that helped us to disclose the content of every method under study and thoroughly analyze it. The main material for the study was the following modern educational technologies: the project method, the debate method and the talk show technique.

Results

This article presents the results of the study and of the introduction of the two forms of innovative teaching into the educational process. And thus, the most promising and efficient methods in terms of solving the current teaching tasks are, in our opinion, the debate method and the talk show technique.

In the course of our research we used one of the relatively recent technologies of teaching Chinese, namely the debate technology. "The debate method is a modern educational technology that basically is a special form of discussion that effectively forms the students' universal acts of learning, because a

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[4] E. Polat, M. Bukharkina, "Sovremennye pedagogicheskiye i informatsionnye tekhnologii v sisteme obrazovaniya", in *Modern Educational and Informational Technology in the System of Education: learning guide for higher educational institutions*, Moscow: 'Academia' publishing house, 2012, p. 368.

[5] H. Foyle, "Interactive Learning in the Higher Education Classroom: Cooperative, Collaborative, and Active Learning Strategies", in *National Education*,CCXXXVII (1995).

[6] O. Litovchenko, "Tekhnologiya "Debaty" kak osnova formirovaniya universalnykh uchebnykh deystviy uchaschikhsya," in *The Debate Technology as the Basis for Forming Universal Learning Activities of Learners,* VIII (2016), p. 118-122.

[7] E. Mordvinova, "Ispolzovaniye tekhnologii debatov v uchebnom protsesse VUZa (Use of the Debate Technology in Teaching and Learning Activities at the University)," in*Lichnost, semya i obschestvo: voprosy pedagogiki i psikhologii (Individual, Family and Society: Problems of Education and Psychology): collection of articles based on the findings of the II research and practice conference.* No 2. Part I, Novosibirsk, SibAK, 2010.

debate is a purposeful, structured and regulated exchange of ideas, statements and opinions" .

In teaching Chinese the debate technology can be used at a more advanced level of language learning, when students already have acquired a sufficient vocabulary and learned the main grammar patterns. This technology facilitates the formation of the learners' key skills needed for public presentations in Chinese. It also helps them to formulate and enunciate their thoughts and ideas in front of other people.

As an example, let us examine the debate conducted with the 4th year students of the Institute of International Relations, History and Oriental Studies of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University as a part of their practical course of Chinese. This debate became the final lesson of the topic "Education System of the People's Republic of China". "As confirmed by our experience, debates are best conducted as final lessons that summarize all the previous learning" .

It should be noted that a debate needs to be preceded by preparatory tasks that help to activate the learners' new vocabulary. The debate technology will be much more effective due to such exercises.

The main stages of preparing and conducting a debate.

Preparatory stage.

1. Selecting the topic and supplementary materials.

In order to make the debate technology more effective, the teacher should pay substantial attention to selecting and wording the topic. The topic needs to be relevant and appealing to epystudents. It should raise the learners' interest.

At first the students that studied the topic "Education System of the People's Republic of China" were offered some basic materials with a detailed description of the Chinese education system. It is known that the issue of education in PRC is a debatable issue. There are vocal opponents of the system currently existing in the country. One of such opponents is writer, blogger and racing car driver Han Han (韩寒).[8] In 2000 Han Han published a book called Triple Door ("三重门") which became a bestseller very soon because it touched upon a very serious problem of the Chinese society, its system of education. In his novel, Han Han criticizes this system very severely. The 4th year students had not read this novel but for the supplementary materials they were offered some articles in which Han Han expresses his opinion on this issue.As these articles caused a heated discussion in the classroom, it became evident that the debate topic had been chosen correctly. The students also watched several scenes from the BBC documentary "Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School" and read the article of the same name which set forward a contrary opinion.[9]

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[8] Han Han, Relationship Leaders in the Post-"May 4th" Era. 后天安门时代的中国态度领袖 URL: // http://m.cn.nytimes.com/china/20160905/han-han-problem-with-me/, accessed 26. 02. 2017.

[9] BBC Channel Special Broadcast: Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School 纪录片：中式教 学 适 合 英 国 学 生 吗 ?URL: //

2. Creation of a summary thesaurus spreadsheet.

After analyzing the basic material students used Google Spreadsheets to create a glossary on the topic "Education System of the People's Republic of China". Every student was given access to a table into which he/she entered all the words and expressions that he/she considered essential for this topic. The basis for creating the summary thesaurus spreadsheet was the material that the students had read. The learners also had an option of adding any other vocabulary on the topic if they saw it as important and relevant. As an example let's take a look at a fragment of such a glossary:

文盲	wénmáng	illiteracy, illiterate
高等教育	gāoděngjiàoyù	higher education
辍学	chuòxué	drop out from school/university

Creation of summary glossaries on one or several topics structures a large volume of vocabulary and helps the learners to memorize the main words. The ability to create such summary glossaries may be useful in the work of an interpreter.

3. Preparation of a preliminary presentation on another country's education system.

Having read about the system of education in PRC, students had to choose any other country and prepare a small presentation on the system of education in that country. The main condition that the teacher put before the learners was to use the vocabulary from the summary glossary as much as possible. This task can be seen not merely as revising the new vocabulary but also as a preparatory exercise for the debate or any other project tasks. Compiling a glossary could also be considered a part of the preparation for the debate.

4. Creating a table of arguments.

Based on the articles they had read, the students created a summary table together with the teacher. Then they entered all advantages and disadvantages of the Chinese education system into the table. Subsequently the table became the basis for the arguments during the debate. Here is a fragment of that table:

中国教育体制的优点 Advantages of the Chinese education system	中国教育体制的缺点 Disadvantages of the Chinese education system
中国的公立教育比较廉价，对于才能突出的学生给予很多优惠. Education cost in China is low, and the most talented students can get fringe benefits.	没有自己的思维，听老师的指令而行事，在学习的过程中，渐渐迷失了自己的本质，以及创新的能力。 Students are never taught to think for themselves, they only do what their teacher tells them to do, so

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http://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/uk/2015/08/150804_uk_chinese_school, accessed 26. 02. 2017.

	gradually the students lose their ability to think creatively.

5. Supplementary home assignment.

As their home assignment students polled some Chinese students on the Chinese and Russian education systems. At the next lesson the students shared the results of their poll. This was also a part of the preparation for the debate. The significance of this assignment was not only in the fact that the learners took hold of some data they could use during the debate, but also in that they used this data in practice.

6. "Final rehearsal".

The very last training task before the debate was the discussion of the education system in Russia. During the class the students had 5 minutes to prepare small presentations on the following topics: advantages of the Russian system of education, disadvantages of the Russian system of education, Soviet and modern educational models and suggestions on improving the Russian education system. These topics became the main themes of the round table discussion that the students had not prepared for, so they had to come up with things to say right away. The surprise effect is very important, because during the debate one has to not only reproduce some prearranged speech but also react to one's opponents as the debate progresses. For such an assignment the teacher chose a subject that every student had a definite attitude to.

Also, as an experiment, we had a few lessons of Chinese in the form of a talk show. This technology facilitates the realization of one's communication skills and the active use of one's vocabulary. The subject of "Food Preferences of the Russian and Chinese People: Common Features and Differences" was selected for the discussion. This talk show became the final lesson of the topic "Chinese Cuisine" for the 3rd year students of the Institute of International Relations, History and Oriental Studies, undergraduate degree program "Asian and African Studies. Languages of Asia and Africa: Chinese". The students were united into groups of 4 and their roles were distributed between them as follows: the talk show host/moderator, a restaurant chef, a housewife, an Asian cuisine aficionado, a foreign student, etc. They were given 40 minutes to prepare for the task, but the discussion itself lasted only 8-10 minutes. This time was sufficient to discuss the traditional dishes, determine the food preferences of the Russian and Chinese people and the differences between the Chinese and Russian cuisines. The subject of the talk was not the most complex, because the main purpose of a talk show is to achieve natural fluency when speaking the language of learning, to show the ability of expressing one's personal opinion, come up with arguments and get into discussion with the other participants of the talk show.

The presentations were assessed both for the students' teamwork ability and for the individual performances. The following criteria were taken into consideration: the content of the presentation, the interaction between the

participants, the strength of the arguments, the vocabulary and grammar and the pronunciation.

This form of lessons was met very favorably by students. They took considerable interest in the lesson and also noted its effectiveness. A talk show is an educational technology aimed at not only increasing the communicative competences but also at improving the learners' personal qualities and maintaining their motivation at a high level.

Discussion

Teachers of many European languages have already mastered the above mentioned technologies and effectively use them in learning.[10] The same is not true about Chinese: because it is much more time-consuming to learn, teachers of Chinese usually don't get a chance to do exercises on developing the communication skills.[11] As a result, all the assignments are reduced to preparing a presentation on a certain subject or to a question and answer type conversation: teacher to student. This, of course, is insufficient. Contrary to European languages, in the academic studies of the methods of teaching Chinese all the techniques and technologies aimed at developing communication skills are either designed badly or not designed at all. Only in the last decade Russian content developers and teachers began paying careful attention to innovative methods of teaching Chinese, which is due to the introduction of the last generation educational standards, as well as due to the modern society's demand in these methods.

Summary

The debate technology motivates the learners to speak, think and formulate their own thoughts. The debates facilitate the students' increased motivation to learning. And that arguably is the main goal of every teacher: to excite the learners' curiosity, to put them in such conditions that will force them to speak, promptly react to their opponents' statements and think in the foreign language.

Recently the debate technology becomes increasingly popular as a method of learning foreign languages. This should not come as a surprise because the benefits and the efficiency of this technique are obvious. The students become highly interested and motivated; they actively work and speak during the classes. This is how the debate technology can be summed up.

Conclusion

Our study has proved that if learners can argue in a foreign language, prove and defend their points and sometimes even admit being wrong, then these learners will never have any serious problems with communication. It is hard to

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[10] E. Papaioannou, "Optimize Your Teaching Competences: New Teaching Methodologies and CLIL Applications, in Foreign Languages: Content and Language Integrated Learning Techniques for Foreign Language Teachers", in *iUniverse*, CCXXXIV (2014).

[11] Zhiqun Xing, *Teaching and Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language: A Pedagogical Grammar*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2006, p. 336.

find a young person who does not like arguing, and a debate is basically an argument with certain rules applied to it. This is why such form of education is enjoyed by almost everyone.

In conclusion we would like to mention that using the project method and the debate technology as an alternative way of conducting lessons of Chinese not only serves as an effective means of improving phonetic and grammar skills as well as vocabulary expansion but also creates the learners' positive attitude to the subject and the country of the language of learning. It also helps students to master the skills of communication and public speaking and makes the process of learning more exciting and more effective.