

## EDUCATION

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### ON THE QUESTION OF FORMATION OF DISCURSIVE COMPETENCE OF STUDENTS AT FOREIGN LANGUAGE LESSONS

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#### **Abstract.**

The article presents such concepts as 'discourse', 'discursive competence', 'problematic situation' and 'case-study method'. The foreign language learning model for students on the basis of the case-study method, as analyzing problematic situations, designing an action mode in these situations and playing out actions under conditions of the proposed situations, is described here. The article includes examples of assignments using a case-study method in German language lessons.

**Keywords:** Case-study method, problem situation, teacher / student blog, podcast, Wiki-technology, "brainstorming" method

#### **Education**

The immediacy of the problem of the discursive competence formation in foreign language lessons is caused by the following circumstances:

1) Discursive competence is one of the criteria for the level of the formation of the personal communicative competence and its motivational and pragmatic aspect.

2) Fluently using various types of discourse in a foreign language at the level of business communication is one of the requirements for a teacher's professional activity. The formation of discursive competence is aimed at mastering the elements of verbal and non-verbal codes of a foreign language to

achieve an adequate understanding in the process of business communication in a foreign language.

Such scientists as N.P. Golovina, N.V. Yelukhina, O.I. Kucherenko, P.V. Sysoyev, N. Boyer, Z. Harris, S. Moirand, M. Swain and others studied the issue of the discursive competence formation and development.

Z. Harris's works, who worked on a project at the University of Pennsylvania, are considered to be origins of the 'discourse' term in modern linguistics. Z. Harris introduced a term of discourse analysis as a method for studying the movement of information in the discourse in the article *Discourse Analysis* in 1952. By 'discourse' the scientist shall mean "a sequence of sentences pronounced (or written) by one (or more) person(-s) in a certain situation" [1].

Following S.K. Gural and Ye.A. Shaturnaya, we consider discourse as "a bi-directional process of encoding and decoding information in accordance with lexical, grammatical, syntactic rules, and also taking into consideration the stylistic, genre, social and cultural, and psychological and emotional factors" [2].

A report, a message, a discussion, questioning, etc. are the most common types of discourses in foreign language lessons.

Ye. Shuman was one of the first people who considered problems of the formation of discursive competence among students in Russian linguistics. From the scholar's point of view, discursive competence is "a student's ability to understand and create by himself/herself logical and connected verbal utterances presented either in oral or in writing form" [3]. Thus, the formation of discursive competence in students is manifested in the "high level of the formation of knowledge and skills in organizing speech and its logical, consistent and convincing alignment in order to solve a specific communicative task and achieve a communicative goal" [4].

It should also be noted a direct relationship between the level of the formation of discursive and communicative competence: "the higher the level of discursive competence, the fuller the choice of communicative means corresponds to its goals that determines the success of communicative activity" [5].

Based on the definition of competence as the ability to apply knowledge, skills and personal qualities for successful activities in a certain field, we believe that the discursive competence of middle secondary school student can be defined as "an ability to create logical and connected texts in a foreign language in accordance with the required functional style, speech norms and a desired goal" [6].

In recent years, the need to optimize the educational process in general and the processes of the discursive competence formation in particular requires innovative ways of organization of teaching process for students. One of the

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processes is a language case-study method, which immediate purpose is to analyze the actual vital or professionally significant problematic situation, which description make actual a certain complex of linguistic knowledge that must be learned when solving this problem, and to develop its practical resolving (the problem itself does not have straightforward decisions). The term 'problematic situation' shall be meant "a set of conditions (verbal and non-verbal) that are necessary for the emergence of a problem and stimulating students to solve the problematic task" [7].

Leading role in the theoretical development of the method and its practical application belongs to American teachers, such as Dr. Copeland, J.A. Erskine, M.R. Leenders, L.A. Mauffette-Leenders and R. Merry.

Today the case-study method has gained a leading position in the foreign practice of business education and is considered to be one of the most effective ways of teaching the skills to solve typical problems in students. Thus, the Harvard Business School allocates almost 90% of the study time for analyzing specific cases, while preserving the priority value of the case-study method in training business.

A case is a kind of tool, using which a part of real life, a practical situation that took place in practice and contains some contradictions, is brought into the classroom. At the same time, a teacher's main task is to give students an opportunity "to discover these contradictions to the extent that a problematic situation should most likely appear in students" [8].

As an intellectual product, the case has its sources. So, the use of fragments from fiction and journalism makes the case to be interesting, relevant and well teachable. Scientific articles and monographs devoted to a particular problem make the cases to be scientific and relevant by in-depth disclosing any question.

Wide opportunities for forming discursive competence and teaching the culture through communication with representatives of different countries and cultures are offered by blogs (users' personal pages in the form of a diary or a journal). Such blogs are one of the most popular social services on the Internet, as they "create conditions for communication between people united by common interests, but separated by space" [9]. There are three types of blogs that can be used in the educational process: teachers' blog, students' personal blogs and training groups' blog.

The teacher's blog is an excellent assistant and a classic model for creating students' own blogs. A teacher can place on his/her page not only a text content, but also photographs, audio and video recordings and links to other Internet resources. The task of students who have familiarized themselves with the content of the site is to respond to the published text or viewed photos by posting their comments on the blog.

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According to P.V. Sysoyev, “using blogs in studying a foreign language contributes to the development of motivation for using a foreign language for communication during extracurricular time, development of reading and writing skills, development of skills to use a foreign language as a means for education and self-education, and more effective discussion of the problem under investigation for the subsequent writing essays or a statement in form of dialogue or monologue” [10].

Most cases in foreign language lessons can be based on the materials of the social service of podcasts, which serve as an excellent basis for creating discourses for students. Social service of podcasts is a kind of the Web 2.0 social service, with the help of which one can listen, view, create and distribute audio and video records. Currently, there are certainly a huge number of training sites offering podcasts for studying a foreign language, but a teacher needs to carefully select the podcast materials taking into consideration a student’s common reference level of a foreign language.

Statistical materials are an integral part of the case. When using statistical materials, the student should answer several following questions. What part do these materials take in characterizing the situation? What within the materials directly characterizes the situation? How are these characteristics calculated or be notable? Statistical materials are placed either in the text of the case itself or in the annex to it.

Wiki-technologies provide great opportunities for the development of discursive competence in foreign language lessons, and using them one can quickly create, view, edit and publish hypertext pages of various formats on the Internet to one person or a group of people, which makes it possible to work with the same document from any part of the world [11]. We consider it important to note the following advantages of using the Wiki service in the process of creating various discourses. First of all, using the Wiki service involves working with information – such as searching, editing, posting, commenting, etc. – that is a key factor in the development of discursive skills. Secondly, using Wiki-technologies allows students to correct and analyze their work, and assess the activity of their groupmates. In addition, Wiki tools allow students to develop their creative and search abilities.

We carry out the work with a case in five stages:

1. *Getting students to know with the text of the case and making its analysis.* A few days before the discussion at the lesson, the students get acquainted themselves with the text of the case. Small cases can be discussed by the students directly at the lesson.

2. *Discussing the case.* The arrangement of discussing the case involves the formulation of questions for students and including them in the discussion. A special place in the arrangement of the discussion during discussing and analyzing problematic situations belongs to the ‘brainstorming’

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method, which results in a creative analysis of ideas to find better solutions to the problem set and their public protection. With such approach, not only a result itself, but also a process of finding solutions become valuable.

3. *Oral presenting the results of the case analysis.* The ability to publicly present an intellectual product, to show its advantages and possible directions for effective use, and also to survive under fire, is a very valuable quality of the modern specialist. Oral presentation refines such personal qualities as independence, creativity, diligence and the desire to express one's own truth, and develops the skills of public communication.

4. *Written analysis of the case.* After oral collective discussion of the problematic situation, a written analysis reasoning with the substantiation of one's own position concerning solving the problem takes place. In process of analysis, we advise you to reflect the situation based on the perception of your colleagues: What would they advise? What would they fall into line with? What would they argue with? What would your own solution of the problem be different? The particularity of judgments in the context of this situation, maximum using text data, the clarity and simplicity of the presentation, the validity of the analysis and the practical nature of the proposed alternate solution to solve the problem are criteria for evaluating such analysis.

5. *Presentation of a group's results of work by a teacher.* Evaluation of the results of students' work with cases is a difficult moment for a teacher. For assessing the case-study method, it is necessary not so much a set of specific knowledge, as the students' ability to analyze a specific situation, to make a decision and to logically think.

As an example, we will provide a few tasks from the case on the topic 'What is drug addiction?' for a series of lessons in German.

Die Aufgabe 1. Der Hirnsturm / brainstorming.

Sample questions for brainstorming:

1. «Warum konsumieren Jugendliche Drogen?»

*Muster:* aus Neugier; das ist modisch; um den Schmerz zu stillen; den Eltern zum Ärger; um in gute Stimmung zu kommen; vor Langweile; ...

2. «Die Alternative des Drogenkonsums»

*Muster:* Sport treiben; Hobbys haben; viel reisen; Musik hören; sich mit den Freunden treffen; Fremdsprachen studieren; ...

3. «Meine inneren Reserven».

Students make a list of reasons for using drugs and possible solutions to the problem. Then there is a discussion of written options [12].

Die Aufgabe 2. Die Erörterung «Sind Drogen eine Gefahr?» / discussion.

Sample questions for discussion:

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1. Wer kann Rauschgiftsüchtige werden?
2. Die Konsumenten der Drogen sind die Menschen mit den eigenartigen Charakterzügen. Stimmt das?
3. Welche Charaktereigenschaften helfen uns gegen schädliche Gewohnheiten (Drogen, Alkohol usw.) zu kämpfen?
4. Können Sie behaupten, dass das Problem der Drogenabhängigkeit Ihnen nicht droht und auch das vorliegende Problem für Sie nicht aktuell ist?
5. Warum beginnen die Menschen, die Drogen anzuwenden?
6. Welche negative Folgen hat der Missbrauch der Drogen?
7. Droht die Rauschgiftsucht der Gesellschaft?
8. Nennen Sie die Vorbeugungsmaßnahmen der Rauschgiftsucht [12].

Die Aufgabe 4. «Provokatorische Thesen».

Der Lehrer bietet den Studenten an, folgende Aussprüche zu besprechen. Die Studenten teilen sich in zwei Gruppen, die erste Gruppe spricht sich «für», die zweite – «gegen» aus.

*Die Aussprüche:*

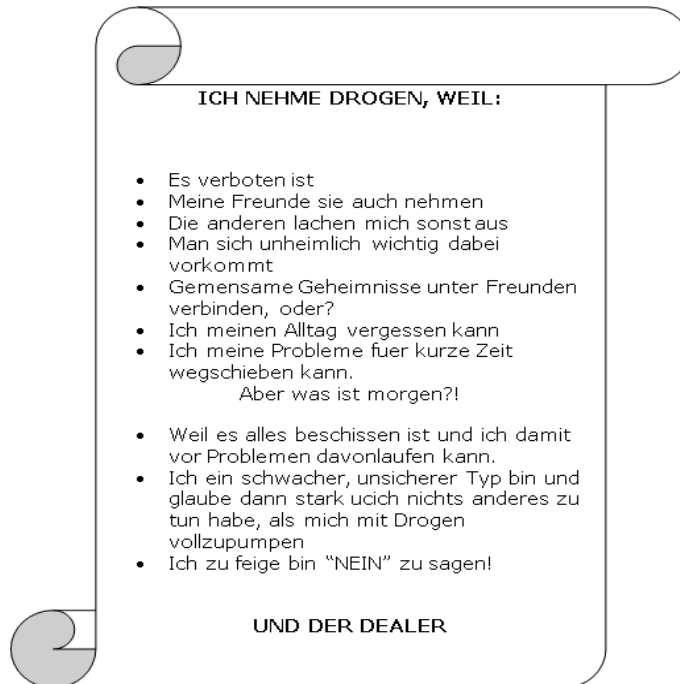
1. Das Problem der Rauschgiftsucht ist nicht zu lösen, weil es keine von den Drogen freie Gesellschaft gibt.
2. Nur die Menschen, die außer der Gesellschaft leben, haben die Probleme mit den Drogen.
3. Die Rauschgiftsucht ist eine unheilbare Krankheit.
4. Die Polizei trifft die scharfen Maßnahmen in Bezug auf die Rauschgiftsüchtigen nicht.
5. Man informiert die Jugend über die Drogen zu wenig.
6. Der Rauschgiftsüchtige ist ein lebender Leichnam [12].

Die Aufgabe 3. Das Rollenspiel / roleplaying game.

Einer von Studenten will versuchen das erste Mal zu harten Stoffen zu greifen. Er äußert seine Meinung, wozu er das machen will. Die anderen Studenten überzeugen ihn, die Drogen loszusagen, weil das Leben auch ohne Drogen interessant und spannend sein kann. Dann hören sie die Meinungen von einem «Arzt» und von einem «Psychologen», die auch Studenten sind. Und dann äußern die Studenten ihre persönlichen Meinungen dazu [13].

**Die Aufgabe 5.** Äußern Sie Ihre Meinung zum Podcast / Blog: Sind Drogen ein großes Problem? Wozu nehmen die Jugendlichen Drogen? Wie kann man interessant ohne Drogen leben? (200-250 Wörter im Aufsatz)

**Die Aufgabe 6.** Übersetzen Sie folgendes Plakat ins Russische. Was ist das Ziel dieses Plakates?



**Die Aufgabe 7.** Nehmen Sie Stellung zum Problem der Drogenabhängigkeit: Ist die Drogenabhängigkeit eine unschuldige Leidenschaft, eine gesundheitsschädliche Gewohnheit oder eine schwere Krankheit? Begründen Sie Ihre Meinung.

**Die Aufgabe 8.** Machen Sie die Präsentation «Was ist Rauschgiftsucht?»

- In der Präsentation sind folgende Momente zu betrachten:
- Der Einfluss der Drogen auf den Organismus des Menschen.
  - Die soziale Gefahr und der Schaden der Rauschgiftsucht.
  - Wie kann man die Vorliebe für Drogen vermeiden?

Summarizing the above, it should be noted that the case application should be methodically, informationally, organizationally and pedagogically reasonable and provided. Without contradiction, the functional field of cases opens wide possibilities for use and supplements classical methods for studying a foreign language.

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