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THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONS ON TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION COMPETENCE

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This paper gives an overview of the international research on emotions in learning and teaching. It addresses some theoretical and practical aspects. It reviews the results of the research examining the impact of emotions on teaching listening comprehension competence, as well as on the relation between emotions and instructional quality. In general, this article emphasizes the relevance of emotions for foreign language instruction, especially for teaching non-linguistic students.

Until recently, emotions have not been sufficiently attended to in education and instructional quality and its relation to students' emotions have been largely neglected up to now. Hence, there is a need of differentiated research concerning learning and achievement emotions in various instructional settings. What matters the most is teachers' contribution to supply students with help essential in putting their knowledge into practice. Integrating cognitive and emotional intelligence into the teaching process will enable students to perform the tasks more efficiently.

Teachers' role in education requires many various abilities. One of such fundamental capacities in the contemporary world is emotional intelligence. Emotional aspects in the teaching process influence overall student performance, which has been proved in many studies [1, 2, 3, 4].

In the past a clear distinction between emotion and cognition was made: emotions were believed to be separated from the brain. Such a long-held notion has undergone a serious revolution and "the brain is now viewed as playing a critical role in emotional processing" [5, p. 95].

Learning itself is an intrinsically emotional business. It follows that if you are responsible for assisting others to learn, then you need to recognise this emotional component of the teaching-learning exchange and to be able to work with it; in short, teachers need to use emotional intelligence. In the 1990s the first psychologists who dealt with scientific research and introduced the primary formal definition of emotional intelligence were Jack Mayer and Peter Salovey. They defined emotional intelligence as "the capacity to reason about emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to assess and generate emotions to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" [6, p.5].

Being more often in the limelight, emotional intelligence could not have escaped pedagogical concerns for learners, teachers, and educators because a significant number of researchers perceive emotional intelligence as a significant indicator of educational and occupational criteria. The ability to take advantage of emotional intelligence is a valuable skill which may lead to notable benefits. "Emotions are intimately involved in virtually every aspect of the teaching and learning processes, therefore, an understanding of the nature of emotions within the school context is essential" wrote Schutz and Lanehart [7, p. 67] in a special issue on emotions in education in *Educational Psychologist*. The interaction between emotions, motivation and cognition in human life, especially in school and classroom contexts, is very complex. Yet this fact does not seem to be reflected enough in research.

The term "academic emotions" was proposed by Pekrun, Götz, Titz and Perry [8] as a term for emotions within instructional context, covering emotions that are directly tied to students' learning, classroom instruction and achievement. Students experience a variety of emotions in academic settings that influence their perceptions and behavior. Academic emotions are significantly related to students' motivation, learning strategies, cognitive resources, self-regulation, academic self-concept and academic achievement. Emotions have an impact on students' achievement as well as their interest, engagement and personality development in addition to affecting the social climate in classrooms and educational institutions [9]. Emotions which are directly related to achievement activities or achievement outcome are defined as academic or achievement emotions [10].

Another notion of "integral emotion" is referred to those induced by emotionally arousing tasks or materials that a learner is processing. Integral emotion may focus attention towards task-relevant information and this could improve performance. This concept of integral emotion evokes directly the idea that instructions themselves (their structure, clarity, etc.) could elicit students' emotions. There is evidence that emotion can either enhance or impair cognitive performance, depending on the type of emotion examined, the features of the task or the interaction between the reasoning style and the requirements of the task.

Our research shows how great the impact of emotional approach in teaching non-linguistic students is. Aiming to check the efficiency of emotional component use in teaching listening comprehension two groups of

non-language majors were selected to participate in the research – an experimental and a control group consisting of 10 and 8 students correspondingly. They were first-year students of Information Technologies Department of Polotsk State University. The representatives of the two groups had similar levels of the English language proficiency.

The preparatory test revealed students' initial listening comprehension competence on several indicators. There were several aspects considered. Psychological aspect included the effectiveness of memorizing and the anticipation strategy indicators. Meaningful aspect was comprised of general and detailed understanding indicators. Further oral speech analysis was also taken into consideration.

The initial results on the indicators mentioned demonstrated mostly medium or low figures with both groups. In the course of postlistening activities oral speech statements were logically constructed, included new language material, but were quite reproductive in their nature, based mostly on audiotext material lacking personal additional information, moreover, intonation patterns were quite poor or neutral. Students rarely took advantage of kinesthetic means of communication such as gestures, facial expressions, which commonly serve as indicators of external display of feelings and emotions. Thus, on observation most students were quite passive in their oral speech statements, which indicates that their motivation to speaking was low and, therefore, improper.

Further on the representatives of the control group continued their training with the traditional approach while the students of the experimental group were taught listening comprehension competence using emotional component. The contents of the texts and prelistening and postlistening tasks contained emotional appeal in them eliciting both positive and negative emotions. To carry out the experimental part a number of didactic materials integrating emotional component were worked out.

To complete the experimental part the final test was conducted to expose the differences between the experimental and control group students' results. The tasks of the postexperimental test were identical with those of the initial one.

The outcome of the study demonstrated an evident correlation between the use of emotional component while teaching listening comprehension competence and students' progress. Language instruction using both traditional and emotional approach resulted in a more efficient and skillful way of acquiring listening comprehension competence while learning a foreign language, in gaining strategies of a foreign language use in oral speech. However, it was the emotional appeal that provided cognitive processes intensity and potency, allowed to naturally encourage students' intrinsic motivation to learning.

It should be noted that the main differences of outcome results were observed in the features of oral speech statement, its qualitative characteristics that could not be measured, but were apparent in the course of observation. Most students of the experimental group on working with emotive texts displayed much more freedom while commenting on the contents of the text contributing personal knowledge to interpreting the situation. Free discussion and expression of thoughts and feelings took place during classes. By means of a foreign language they tried to persuade, to explain, to prove, to complete the communicative purpose. It was not uncommon that their communicative behavior was rich in gestures and intonation patterns, which was a sign of them being deeply interested in what they were talking about. In case of a humorous text the students under experiment demonstrated their own sense of humour providing jokes on the topic. There often occurred grammatical and lexical mistakes, however, they didn't prevent from understanding students' point of view. The crucial thing was that due to the emotional element incorporated most students could overcome the barrier that previously had made them keep silent or give curt answers. Integrating emotional component with teaching listening comprehension reduced the burden of understanding by improving classroom climate, establishing student-teacher rapport, increasing motivation to learning a language, thus, facilitating learning.

In conclusion the research showed that emotional approach can be beneficial to teaching listening comprehension competence and language learning in general, promoting confidence, holding the atmosphere of the class, creating a positive attitude toward the subject matter, reducing anxiety. As stated earlier, it is the teacher who influences students to a great extent. Incorporating emotional component into a language setting proves its efficiency and appropriateness for the purpose of teaching non-language majors in particular.

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