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THE DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE OF SYSTEM AND CONSISTENCY IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPEAKING

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The article reveals the concept of the didactic principle of system and consistency in pedagogy in general and teaching foreign languages. It offers a way of organizing the process of teaching foreign language speaking which fully reflects the principle under consideration.

The concept "didactic principle" is one of the basic notions in pedagogy. Didactic principles are defined as basic guiding regulations related to educational process in general, i.e. to aims, content, forms and methods of teaching as well as interaction between a teacher and a student. Didactic principles are formulated on the basis of laws and mechanisms of teaching and learning and are realized in rules.

The universal classification of didactic principles is still not worked out in modern pedagogy: the available classifications differ in number and wording of the principles. Nowadays the majority of educational specialists acknowledge the following principles as the basic ones: the principle of objectivity; scientific character of teaching; connection between theory and practice; the principle of system and consistency; simplicity with the reasonable level of challenge; use of visual methods; students' learning activity, soundness of acquired knowledge and skills combined with creative experience.

The principle of system and consistency is based on the following really significant scientific thesis: a man has genuine and efficient knowledge only if his mind contains a clear picture of the surrounding world as a system of interconnected concepts. As for the consistency in teaching as far back as academician I. Pavlov considered gradualism and practice important physiological mechanism in pedagogy. Psychologists also stated that logical links make academic materials easier to understand and learn in larger amounts and in a proper way, which agrees with the law of teaching: the effectiveness of every level depends on the results achieved at the previous one and the way teaching is organized.

The statements above are the basis for the following ideas:
– teaching material should represent a system;
– there should be a system in teacher – student interaction and students' learning activity.

Thus, the principle of system and consistency is related to the contents and the process of teaching. It means that material should be planned, divided into sections, modules, steps, every topic should have basic centers, concepts; other parts of lessons and lections should be submitted to them. An important role in providing the realization of this principle belongs to diagrams, outlines, schemes and charts which reveal and illustrate structural and logical relationships between concepts, hierarchy of ideas, system of knowledge. System and consistency should accompany students' work as well. It is important to develop students' skills and habits of efficient planning of their learning activity, making well-composed outlines of their oral reports and essays. It is necessary to accustom students to regular working with materials, observation, extending knowledge in an organized and consistent way. Check and assessment of academic results are also very important, as they stimulate students to study regularly, be more attentive and make less mistakes.

In a teacher's work the principle of system and consistency is realized in the process of long-term planning of subject matter, when a teacher outlines the order of sections, topics and questions to study, selects materials, sets the system of lessons and other forms of teaching, plans learning, practicing, revision, feedback and checking. While planning lessons a teacher arranges the subject matter so that basic concepts are taught first, exercises follow theoretical information.

All the mentioned above regulations and recommendations play a significant role in teaching speaking a foreign language as well.

Unfortunately we have to admit that nowadays it can hardly be called effective both in secondary and high schools. Students know a sufficient amount of vocabulary and grammar material within academic communication but still experience difficulties when they have to speak a foreign language, the prospects of speaking outside a classroom scare them, they are not ready to speak on the spot. But just all these should be the aim and the result of teaching a foreign language. The realization of the principle of system and consistency at all the stages of foreign language teaching aims at raising intensity, linguistic independence and production of

speaking, contributing to improving linguistic skills thus making it possible for students to meet communicative challenges of all levels of complexity.

The realization of the principle of system and consistency plays an important role in teaching foreign language speaking, because it is a complex language skill based on a number of psychophysiological mechanisms and characterized by a variety of linguistic and psychological parameters. The need to understand the fundamentals of psychophysiology is explained by the fact that they serve as basis for teaching a foreign language. In many respects they determine types, number and succession of exercises as the main means of teaching thus allowing to arrange the process of teaching in accordance with the natural way of gaining knowledge, skills and abilities. Having a clear idea of linguistic side of speaking makes it possible to select linguistic material for exercises that will make students' speech more authentic, accurate and clear.

Psychophysiological mechanisms underlying speaking include: the mechanism of reproduction (total or partial reproduction of linguistic structures or utterances); the mechanism of choice (of words, linguistic structures); the mechanism of combining (making word combinations, sentences, phrases using familiar linguistic means in new conditions); the mechanism of constructing (making an utterance using rules); the mechanism of forestalling (from the point of view of structure and sense); the mechanism of discourse (the control of the speaking process allowing to correlate the situation with the aim , to interpret the feedback signals from the interlocutor and make further decisions while speaking). Some of these mechanisms work on the analogy of speaking a native language; the others have to be developed with the help of exercises.

Speaking is realized in three stages: 1) motivation, stimulus; 2) analysis, conceptualization; 3) control, performance. The specific characteristics of speaking include motive and aim; activity; connection with personality and intellectual activity; novelty; independence; connection with the situation. Taking into account all these features when working out a system of exercises we should include in it exercises with the directions which serve as a stimulus interesting for a student and provoking active thinking.

The commonly accepted forms of speaking are monologue, dialogue and polylogue. Although such a division is often criticized we have to admit that all the mentioned above forms have their psychological and linguistic peculiarities. Thus, monologue speech is detailed, directed to audience, it has order, inner logic and consistency which involves the use of sentences various in structure, compound and complex sentences with complicated syntax, words and rhetorical questions to address and draw the attention of the audience, cliché, linking words to make speech consistent. The characteristic features of a dialogue are ellipticity, the importance of a situation and reaction, which entails the use of simplified syntactic constructions, speech cliché, modal words, interjections and other expressive means, different forms of addressing. Paralinguistics is also important in a dialogue.

But an utterance of any level (no matter if it is a long speech or just a remark) should be structured, logical, informative, expressive and valuable from the point of view of communication. The principle of system and consistency aims at not losing any of the described above characteristics, at practicing every element and mechanism of foreign language speaking.

As it follows from the information above speaking a foreign language is a complex activity and one kind of exercise can not form all the aspects of this ability. To do this a teacher should make use of various kinds of exercises which can provide all conditions in the aggregate, i.e. the system of exercises worked out according to the structure of the ability and the way it develops. The importance of a system of exercises is that it provides the organization of the process of gaining knowledge and skills and the process of teaching.

But there is discord in the way the concept "system of exercises" is used in teaching foreign languages. For example, in different books on teaching foreign languages one can come across the terms "the system of exercises for teaching grammar', 'the system of exercises for learning adjectives", "the system of exercises to study propaedeutics", "the system of exercises to prevent mistakes" etc. The use of the term 'the system of exercises' this way leads to confusion in terminology and to the impossibility to solve practical questions for example to determine the criteria for systems of different levels.

In the context of the communicative approach to teaching foreign languages the specialists described and grounded the ways of systematization of exercises and stated the criteria for systems of different levels. Within this approach they use the following concepts:

1) The complex of exercises – a set of exercises aimed at mastering particular operations or performing particular tasks. For example, we can single out complexes of exercises for mastering some structure, the use of some lexical units, some sound; for working with a text; for developing fluent speaking.

2) The subsystem of exercises – a set of exercises for mastering one side of the language skill. For example, in teaching speaking we can single out three subsystems of exercises: for mastering vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Every subsystem consists of complexes of exercises.

3) The specific system of exercises – a set of exercises for mastering one aspect of communication– speaking, listening, writing or reading. Every specific system of exercises consists of subsystems, for example, the specific system of exercises for teaching speaking includes the three subsystems mentioned in p. 2.

4) The general system of exercises – a set of exercises aimed at developing communication in general. The general system consists of the specific subsystems but it doesn't mean that all of them are included in it. The structure of the general system of exercises depends on the aim of teaching and it is realized on the level of foreign language courses.

Teaching foreign language speaking is realized on the level of a specific system of exercises. The specific system of exercises should meet the following requirements:

a) a cyclic way of organizing teaching and learning so that with every next cycle speaking skills advance;

b) the maintenance of the three steps of mastering material: the stage of skills formation (precommunicative exercises are used), the stage of skills development (precommunicative and communicative exercises); the stage of developing the ability to communicate (communicative exercises) within every cycle and their ratio.

c) a reasonable combination of speaking, listening, reading and writing within each cycle;

d) the interconnection between cycles;

e) regular check-ups within the system of exercises.

Any specific system (for mastering speaking, reading, listening or writing) should be based on the scheme "skills – ability". As is well known, means of developing skills are precommunicative exercises, and means of developing communication abilities are communicative exercises.

The unit of the educational process and the implementation of a specific system of exercises is a cycle of lessons devoted to mastering the dose of speech material. For speaking this material is any phonetic phenomenon, a certain amount of new words and any grammatical form or structure.

To be learned speech material passes through three stages: skills formation, skills development and communication ability development. Speaking training scheme is as follows (Fig.).
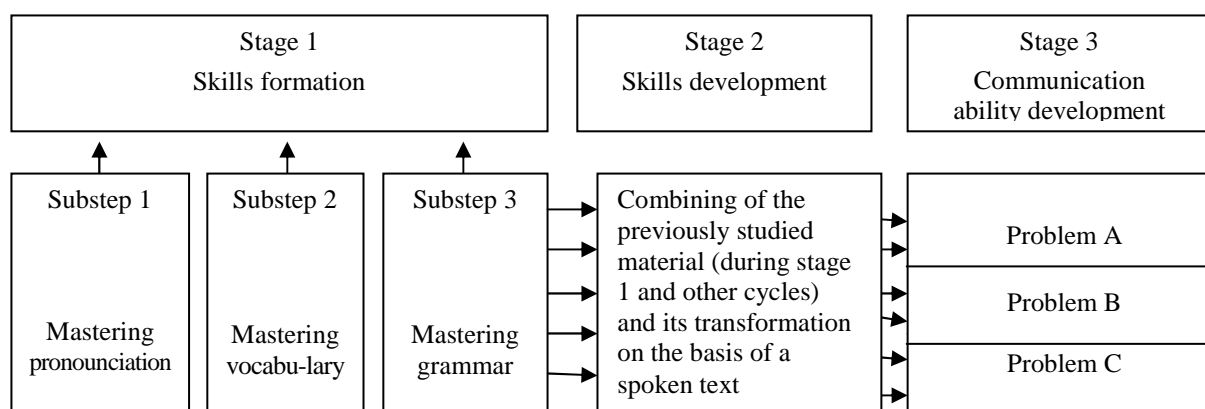
Fig. A cycle on one problem

The first stage usually comprises not three but two substeps. Substep 1 usually takes place only at the initial stages of learning a foreign language when students start practicing articulatory aspect of speaking; later it just improves. At the advanced level, when all grammatical phenomena have been mastered there may be no need in the third substep. There also may be cycles without a vocabulary substep. There may be cycles without two substeps, and even the entire stage 1, as well as any sequence of steps: it all depends on the speech material and objectives of the cycle.

The work at the first stage consists of oral activities without exercises with the text. The new material is "removed" from the text which will be studied at the second stage, and is mastered at the corresponding substep without a text. All the exercises are done orally but there are visual and auditive sources to refer to (microtexts to read or listen, pieces of video to watch), tasks to stimulate motor activities (writing micro texts, phrases, drawing schemes). At this stage the precommunicative exercises are used.

The work at the second stage is based on working with a spoken text. A spoken text is fundamentally different from the texts for teaching reading and writing. It is a fixed oral statement. In a spoken there is no material that have not been studied at the first stage. A spoken text serves as a stimulus for students' statements

from the point of view of ideas and information it contains. Students comment on the ideas contained in the text, combine and use its contents. All the skills develop thanks to combining, constant visual support and synchronic work of all analyzers. The work at the first stage consists of oral activities without exercises with the text. The new material is "removed" from the text which will be studied at the second stage, and is mastered at the corresponding substep without a text. All the exercises are done orally but there are visual and auditive sources (microtexts to read or listen, pieces of video to watch), tasks to stimulate motor activities (writing micro texts, phrases, drawing schemes). At this stage the precommunicative exercises are used.

The work at the second stage is based on working with a spoken text. A spoken text is fundamentally different from texts for teaching reading and writing. It is a fixed oral statement. In a spoken text there is no material that have not been studied at the first stage. A spoken text serves as a stimulus for students' statements from the point of view of ideas and information it contains. Students comment on the ideas contained in the text, combine and use its contents. All the skills develop thanks to combining, constant visual support and synchronic work of all analyzers. Communicative exercises are used. Working at this stage results in students' speech or dialogue (free or standard one) on the problem.

The third stage is characterized by the fact that the speech material is used in completely new situations to solve new problems which are more complicated from psychological and linguistic points of view. As a rule there are no verbal sources of information to rely on. There may be provided some visual stimuli to provoke thinking and suggest some ideas to speak about. Within the last step nothing is used as a source of information. At the third stage the problems discussed are combined with the problems from the previous cycles. Communicative exercises are performed. To increase students' activity and motivation a teacher may use appropriate games, role-plays, discussions, debates which develop creativity and initiative of students.

It should also be noted that teaching speaking is accompanied by various visual aids Their use is also a way to implement the principle of system and consistency, as they not only sum up material (charts, tables, texts), but also help to structure students' future speech (outlines, logical schemes, a series of drawings).

An essential element of a special system of exercises is check-up. Assessing skills and abilities a teacher pays attention to the quantitative and qualitative parameters. The former include the tempo of speech, fluency (pauses) and the length of speaking. Quality indicators are the relevance to the subject and situation of communication, linguistic correctness, logical order of the statement, expressiveness, and if it is a dialogue – genre and register correspondence, semantic and functional completeness, structural diversity of utterances. Current and final check-ups are carried out when students perform oral speaking tasks.

The cycles created by the author of the article for teaching speaking in the ninth grade of the local gymnasium have proved effective during experimental teaching, which proves the theoretical assumptions about the importance of taking into account the didactic principle of system and consistency in teaching foreign language speaking. The scheme of teaching speaking proposed above provides fully implements this principle, which makes it an optimal way of teaching speaking.

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INDIVIDUALIZATION IN EDUCATION AS A FACTOR
OF INFORMATION COMPETENCE FORMATION OF STUDENTS

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The article deals with the methods of individualization in education applied to develop information competence of students. The adherence to a certain algorithm of work on information together with different forms of individualization will improve information competence of students.