PLANNING OF GERMAN LANGUAGE CLASS USING THE BOOMERANG MODEL

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Abstract: This article is devoted to the planning problem of a German language class. It describes the basic models of a lesson planning: a "straight arrows" model, a boomerang model and a "patchwork" model. The above-mentioned models undergo theoretical analysis and all their features are revealed in this article. Recent research in methodology and pedagogy is based on the development of linguistic awareness. Similar to a child that goes through learning and development process, students use new structures before even reflecting and analyzing how they are built. This type of learning model is called "the boomerang model". The article describes an experimental study and presents the results obtained after its completion.

The results of the conducted experiment confirm that the planning of the class using the boomerang model significantly contributes to the usage of didactic methodical principles and autonomous learning of students. Due to "the advanced use", students develop their own sense of language, actively using the new structure intuitively similar to the natural process of language learning. In addition, by autonomously using new grammatical structures without explanations of a teacher, students become more confident, establishing certain analogies, patterns and learning grammatical rules. The results of this experiment confirm the hypothesis that advanced use makes the inductive teaching of grammar efficient. Students are brought to the rule from a concrete real example and its functions. As a result, students gradually learn to reflect this on their own learning process and discover effective strategies of language learning.

Keywords: class planning, leaner-centered class, straight arrows, boomerang model, patchwork

INTRODUCTION

In today's realities of education development, the class remains the main form of organizing of the process of studying. In the conditions of the formation of innovative education based on a competent approach, reinterpretation of the issues concerning construction of a learner-centered German language class should be carried out. In such a class, many perspective pedagogical ideas, including linguistic methodological ones, could be realized. The importance of the realization of this task is confirmed by the theory and practice of teaching German in a modern school.

The analysis of the publications devoted to the solution of the above-mentioned problem affirms that the main features of the modern lesson are described in the scientific works of many scholars (H. Funk, 2010; W. Klafki, 1962; H. Meyer, 2005, 2010; J. Harmer, 2007; G. Zimmermann, 2001).

A modern class is a democratic class. A teacher does not perform a modern standard class where students are passive participants of the learning process, but it requires an active participation of them. This is a lesson in which the democratic style of communication dominates. Students learn to gain knowledge rather than learning an absolute given information, where none of them is afraid to express their opinions and prove their thoughts.

The following features characterize the modern class: the variability and flexibility of the lesson structure; the learner-centered orientation; the optimized types of activities and the modes of interaction at the class; the formation of the most important competencies of students; the cooperation between a teacher and a student.

Each type of lesson organizes and structures the process of learning in agreement with the aims and objectives of the class. The division of the lesson into stages is made in accordance with the didactic principles of teaching, as well as the desire of teachers to provide support for students in the process of learning a foreign language (Ende, 2013, p. 98).

The necessity to divide a lesson into stages or fragments results from psychological particularities of students. Students' attention, after a certain period, becomes unstable and, as a result, the perception and practice of the material worsens. In pedagogy, the notion of rhythmization of a class has an honorable mention. It is stated that the phases of concentration are to be changed by the phases of relaxation to ensure the high level of students' attention and willingness to learn the language (Unruh, 2018).

A German class consists of the following structural elements:

- Engage
- Study
- Activate (Harmer, 2007, p. 84)

Each of the above-mentioned structural elements of a class is characterized by the following activities. At the first stage of a lesson, the teacher introduces the subject of the lesson to the students, motivates them to work and activates the knowledge on the topic. At the next stage of the class, the students practise the learning material offered by the teacher, do exercises and tasks aimed at obtaining and developing a certain skill. At the last stage of the lesson, students produce gained knowledge in simulated situations that are close to reality.

A good class has to contain a judicious blend of coherence and variety. Coherence means that students can see a logical pattern to a lesson (Harmer, 2010, p. 158).

The specific element of a foreign language class is that the construction of a German lesson was for a long period under the influence of the didactic PPP model (Present - Practise - Produce). According to this model, students receive information, practise it and eventually produce the presented and applied in practice information. This model is predictable and can be used in different target groups.

J. Harmer defines three possible models of a foreign language class: "straight arrows", boomerang model, "patchwork" and characterizes each stage of the class in the following way (Harmer, 2007, p. 84). The following types of activities are typical for the first stage: the awakening of interest, the establishment of an emotional attitude to the subject of study, the construction of readiness for learning & activation of prior knowledge. At the second stage, students learn about the form and meaning of a particular language phenomenon; they practise and drill lexical, phonetic and grammatical structures; for example: the construction of perfect tenses, the intonation in the questions, the meaning of specific words, the meaning of specific information in written texts and audio texts. At the last stage, students produce acquired knowledge in real situations, using language and speech structures in individual contexts and according to the content. At this stage, the formal correctness in the usage of a particular phenomenon is not of such importance as the communication or the content of the statements.

The 'straight arrow' model in German class construction is the most common model and has the following structure: engage, study, activate. This model is similar to the PPP model (Eggert, Koch 2003; Plöger 2008; Gonschorek, Schneider 2007).

The framework of such a lesson usually looks like this:

1.   Lead in. At the beginning of the class, the teacher shows a photo in order to attract the attention of the students and arouse their interest. The photo shows the situation that will be discussed at the lesson or in which the speech act will take place.

2.   Presentation. The teacher presents language units or speech structures with the help of a dialogue recording on a CD, a dialogue presented in the textbook or a note on a board or on a hangout.

3.   Systematization and/or semantization. Form or meaning of the structure or statement are worked out and explained. This is done under control of the teacher or students themselves. Students independently discover the meaning of a particular phenomenon, using COS method: Collect, Order & Systematize.

4.   Training. 1. Students reinforce new structures by doing closed reproductive exercises, most of which are exercises for simulation. 2. Students reinforce new structures by doing open tasks that are partially reproductive.

5.   Production. Students apply acquired knowledge in situations that are as close to real life as possible. They individualize the content as if they speak themselves. Consequently, they use structures in their own contexts. These exercises are made to be productive (Ende, 2013, p. 104, Kaufmann, 2014, p. 214).

Recent researches in methodology and pedagogy are based on the development of the linguistic awareness: Like learning and developing of children, students first use the new structures and only later reflect and analyze how these structures are built. This type of class structure corresponds to the boomerang-model: introduction, activation (automation), practice & production. According to this model, the teacher motivates the students at the first stage of the lesson, awakens their interest and sets goals for students, for example writing a letter or performing a role-play. Students with the support of teachers and learning materials practise the language definitions they need to complete their task. Students produce texts or play roles and demonstrate authentic usage of the target language. There is one more stage when students present the results of their work, the stage in which the students focus their attention on linguistic phenomena, in the reproduction of which they encounter difficulties or have things that they could not correctly reproduce (Ende, 2013, p. 106).

The third model of a foreign language class according to J. Harmer is called a "patchwork" model. This model embodies various combinations of the structural

elements of a class. For example, at the beginning of a class, teacher motivates the students, activates the prior knowledge of the students and encourages them to apply this knowledge in conversation, before getting to explanation of new structures. Afterwards, the students practise following linguistic means for their further usage. The next stage of a class is to motivate students to practise the language definitions for a second time.

METHODS

These theoretical methods of research were used for studying and analysis of the pedagogical literature: analysis, synthesis & comparison. In order to study the specifics of German class and effectiveness of different models in a foreign language class planning, we used empirical methods: survey and included observation, as well as methods of mathematical statistics.

Experimental study on usage of the boomerang model when planning a "German as a foreign language class" was conducted in student groups of levels (B1.1 - 21 students and A1.2 - 33 students) from Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University named after Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, as well as auditor groups from the Study Center of German Language (partner of Goethe institute) (level B1.1 - 30 students). In all the groups, German classes were predominantly planned using a "straight arrows" model in which the automation phase follows a preliminary analysis of the grammatical structure.

Based on authors' recommendations of the DLL 6 (Ende, 2013) on "the effectiveness of modeling situations in German language classes that encourage students to first use the structure they must master, and only then analyze how the structure is constructed" (p. 104). An attempt was made to establish how the "the advanced use" of new grammatical structures in the boomerang model class affects the activity and autonomy of the students during its assimilation.

The main tools for obtaining data on the effectiveness and feasibility of introducing "he advanced use" structure were the *observation* of the teacher and the guest teacher as well as student *self-reflection* based on their answers to anonymous questionnaire. An independent teacher was not involved, but noted her own observations in the appropriate form.

The main indicators of the effectiveness in planning of class using the boomerang model, which served as the basis for the targeted observation by the guest teacher, are the following:

1. The communicative task is formulated in such a way that students use the grammatical structure at the beginning of the lesson (during the introductory phase), before they reflect or analyze how the structure is constructed (available for observation);

2. Students use the structure correctly (talking in pairs) without asking the teacher for help (available for observation);

3. During the interaction students are active and interested (available for observation);

4. During the phase of reflection, students formulate their own conclusions actively and in motivated manner (available for observation);

5. The overwhelming part of the students' statements after the phase of systematization is grammatically correct (available for observation);

6. Students evaluate "the advanced use" of new grammatical structure as useful and can explain it (based on a questionnaire).

As a part of a survey at the end of the class, students were asked to answer anonymously such questions on a scale from 1 (to a lesser extent) to 5 (to the greatest extent):

1. Were you able to successfully complete the task at the beginning of the class? (Yes - 5, No - 1);

2. Did you formulate a new grammar rule yourself? (Yes - 5, No - 1);

3. Did you ask the teacher for help or additional explanations when working on the tasks and formulating a new grammar rule? (Yes - 5, No - 1);

4. How do you rate your own activity at the class today compared to the past? (High - 5, Low - 1);

5. Did you feel any difficulty doing the main communicative task in the class?

6. Did training of the new grammar structure at the beginning of the class help you to analyze it later during the class? (Yes - 5, No - 1) Why?;

7. Do you have a feeling that you can now use the new grammatical structure yourself? (Yes - 5, No - 1).

Thus, the involvement of observation and questioning of students allowed establishing the effectiveness and advantage of planning a class using a boomerang model, both from the standpoint of the teacher and from the perspective of those who learn.

The results for the survey of student groups (levels B1.1 - 21 students and A1.2 - 33 students) from Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University named after Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, as well as auditor groups from the Study Center of German Language (level B1.1 - 30 students) are shown in the table. They represent the number of people that graded the boomerang model class using the above criteria in scale from 1 to 5.

Table 1

Student and Auditor Survey Results

Group (number of participants)	B1.1. Students (21)					B1.1. Course Auditors (30)					A1.2 Students (33)				
Grade	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
Successful 'advanced use' of grammatical structures	21	–	–	–	–	24	6	–	–	–	3	15	15	–	–
Self formulation of grammatical rules	9	12	–	–	–	15	9	6	–	–	12	21	–	–	–
Need for help from a teacher	–	–	–	3	18	3	12	12	–	3	3	–	15	15	–
Activity at a class	9	9	3	–	–	9	12	6	3	–	6	21	6	–	–
Difficulties during the main communicative task	–	3	3	6	9	–	3	6	3	18	–	–	–	15	18
Positive grade for 'advanced use' of grammatical structures	18	3	–	–	–	9	9	9	3	–	18	3	9	3	–
Ability to autonomously use new grammatical structures	12	9	–	–	–	21	6	3	–	–	21	12	–	–	–

Source: created by author

Data received from surveys, as well as observations of teachers allow analyzing the success of a class planned using the boomerang model based on the following criteria:

1. *Successful "advanced use" of new grammatical structures.* All students and auditors of level B1.1 at the beginning of the class were already able to use new

grammatical structures during the interaction without preliminary analysis. In the group of level A1.2, 18 people reported the successful use of the new grammatical structures, while 15 students demonstrated a mediocre success.

2. *Self-formulation of grammatical rules.* According to the results of the survey, all students and the vast majority of auditors were able to independently analyze the new grammatical structures and establish appropriate grammatical rules.

3. *Need for help from a teacher.* All students of level B1.1 worked quite autonomously in cooperative social forms, as well as in solving problems and establishing grammatical rules, almost without asking a teacher for help or additional explanations. At the same time, some students of level A1.2 sometimes needed a teacher's support.

4. *Activity at a class*. Most students and auditors have confirmed a higher level of self-actualization in a class planned using boomerang model compared to the experience in a traditional class.

5. *Difficulties during the main communicative task.* Most students and auditors showed relatively minor difficulties during the main communicative task. The observations of teachers also confirmed these data about the overwhelming correctness of statements said by students.

6. *Positive grade for "advanced use" of grammatical structures.* Most students and auditors rated "the advanced use" of grammatical structures as useful and appropriate. In the comments, the students noted that "advanced use" helped them better understand the new structures and learn how the last could be applied in real life.

7. *The ability to autonomously use new grammatical structures.* All students and nearly all auditors noted that they had the ability to independently use the new grammatical structures.

The results of the conducted experiment confirm that planning of a class using the boomerang model contributes significantly to the implementation of didactic-methodical principles and autonomous learning of students. Thanks to "the advanced use", students and auditors develop their own sense of language by using intuitively the new structures similarly to the natural process of language learning. In addition, students become more confident in the independent use of new grammatical structures without explanations of the teacher, establishing certain correspondences, patterns and formulation of grammatical rules.

Consequently, "the advanced use" contributes to the effective inductive teaching of grammar: from a concrete real example and its function, students are brought to the rule. As a result, students gradually learn to reflect on their own learning process and use effective strategies for learning a language.

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted experiment allowed us to formulate some essential conditions for the successful application of the boomerang model in the teaching of German as a foreign language, namely:

- Phases of a class should be carefully planned by a teacher in order to make a successful class using a boomerang model;

- For the introductory phase of "the advanced use" of grammatical structures, the most optimal are cooperative forms of work that facilitate students' interaction (carousel, walking through the class and talking with changing partners, interviews etc.);

- During "the advanced use" it is important to provide students with the necessary language support, formulated in such a way that students can independently determine the meaning and function of new grammatical structures;

- It is equally important that the phase of reflection is properly organized with the provision of auxiliary tables, schemes, rules to students, which will facilitate the formulation of the relevant rules;

- It is advisable to systematically apply the boomerang model, which will help to overcome certain "fear" in students before learning grammar, acquire the skills by independent study of grammatical rules and assimilation of grammatical structures, and so maintain the growth of activity and autonomy in language learning.

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