IMPORTANCE OF UNIFIED PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS IN DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE FOR ADOLESCENTS WITH LANGUAGE DISORDERS

Svetlana Usca,
Rezekne Higher Education Institution,
Latvia

Abstract

The importance of unified pedagogical process in development of communicative competence is analysed in this article. Necessity for synergy between learning process and extra-curricular activities is emphasized. The article focuses on adolescents with language disorders whose insufficiently developed language impedes the development of communicative competence and constitutes a menace to socialization in the future. The research data have been analysed and processed by SPSS program and AQUAD 6 software.

Key words: *adolescents with language disorders, communicative competence, unified pedagogical process, extra-curricular activities.*

Introduction

Educated and competent people, who are able to use existent knowledge and are ready for further development, are needed for living in a society of knowledge. It also includes the idea about perfection and progressive changes. Wherewith the role of education increases and the approach based on competence and results is emphasized.

Many competences listed in the European Reference Framework (European Reference Framework, 2007), for example, communication in the native language, digital skills, social and civic skills, are not conceivable without the communicative competence. It was defined by many authors: Chomsky (1987), Canale and Swain (1980), Edeirs (1997), Maslo and Tiļļa (2005), etc. Successful socialization is not conceivable without the communicative competence. Accordingly, special attention should be paid to its development in the pedagogical process.

The article focuses on adolescents with language disorders. Due to language disorders, secondary interferences have arisen in the field of cognition, behaviour and communication (Tūbele, 2006; Корнев, 2001; Игнатьева, 2005). Insufficiently developed language impedes the development of communicative competence and socialization as a whole: these adolescents find it difficult to maintain positive interpersonal relationships (Reed, 2004), because they are unable to adjust their way of communication to the needs of partners, making discussion

and interpretation difficult (Novak, 2002), they are often characterized by a specific bodily behaviour, problems of self-confidence and self-assessment (Kauliņa & Tūbele, 2011; Reed, 2004), they often feel rejected and lonely (Трофимова et al., 2006; Novak, 2002).

Since studying itself is a communicative action, a deliberate, open dialogue, a discussion between teachers and students about goals of learning, a choice of means, nature of cooperation according to individual interests, needs, opportunities (Žogla, 2001), it is important to find a way to develop the communicative competence of adolescents with language disorders (hereinafter – ALD) in the pedagogical process (in a unified training and educational work), considering their age characteristics and individual needs. It is very difficult, almost impossible, to develop all the competencies set in the curriculum during the lessons. That is why it is important to continue it during the extra-curricular activities (Carrol & Purdie, 2007). This is also referable to the development of ALD communicative competence.

The aim of the research is to consider how the unified pedagogical process promotes the development of ALD communicative competence.

Methods: observation of scientific literature, questionnaires and literary creation works; analysis of data using SPSS program and AQUAD 6 software

Theoretical background of the research

Learning is an admission of participation in social situations where everyone is accepted as a participant, knowledge and skills are acquired and the growth process of competencies is observed (Pawlowsky, 2003). It is a cyclical process that results in a basis for further development (Zimmerman, 2002). It is necessary to create conditions in which an adolescent not only learns the academic content, but is also offered a variety of communicative situations and new communicative partners are involved. It should be a co-operation between two subjects (a student and a teacher) where ALD themselves run their own development in diverse ways, but a teacher is a supporter, an assistant, a coach. The process would result not only in acquiring all the subjects, skills and abilities specified in the curricular standards, but also ALD language would be corrected and their communicative competence would be developed. Thus, it is not enough when planning covers only one subject or matter. Aims of teaching, learning and correction will be achieved only if the correction work will be performed continuously throughout the pedagogical process.

Kornetov (1997) categorized the main positions of humanitarian approach in the following way:

- creation of emotionally stimulating environment for learning where student's initiative is in the centre of attention;
- the role of a teacher as an adviser who is always ready to help and provide knowledge;
- creation of real cognitive alternatives according to each student's needs;
- encouragement of self-realization;
- usage of educational programs for maximum development of student's creativity;
- cancellation of grades.

The author considers that the teacher, working with ALD and implementing these approaches, faces the following primary challenges:

- ALD shows "operation – technical" intellectual passivity (Шилова, 2005), when there is indifference to spiritual work, priority is given to the templates, reproductive activity. The primary task appears from this – to create a stimulating environment for mental activity and promote the development of own-initiative on this basis;
- emotional unstableness, exhaustion of mental processes, lack of ambition (Трофимова et al., 2006; Бородулина, 2004) affects students' self-control; ALD cannot cooperate in the long term without supervision. The next task appears from this – to offer flexible

and not dispiriting types of activities that would promote students' self-development and carry out functions of supervision at the same time. It would help teachers to diagnose when and what kind of help student needs.

During the lessons consummation of objectives and targets is based on the principles established by the didactics that focuses on solving specific tasks and problems, and acquiring knowledge in a planned, institutionalized process of teaching and learning (Gudjons, 1998). It persistently improves and makes the pedagogical process more effective for achieving educational, developing and educational aims. The article talks about ALD teaching and learning, which is focused on the development of communicative competence and integrity, representing the essence of pedagogical activity. The approach is based on competence and educational results (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; O'Dwyer, 2006) when:

- the conditions for language usage in multiple, real communication situations are provided;
- the teacher organizes the pedagogical process paying attention to ALD actions and needs, and organizing activities where knowledge and skills are acquired and the attitude is developed;
- the teacher provides support for ALD by giving an option to solve problems by themselves;
- the need is created for ALD to acquire skills of managing their own learning process and active participation in the group work.

From the aspect of communicative competence development, the author prefers the approach of active learning – learning by doing. It expresses as a practical activity where new knowledge and practical skills are based on success and mistakes. Learning is social in its essence. It is an interpersonal activity, characterized by communication and cooperation (Illeris, 1999/2007). Kafki (1998) calls it an amateur activity when students learn by themselves, rather than are taught by a teacher. Representatives of constructivist theory (Piažē, 2002; Выготский, 1999, etc.) recognize that learning is a process of construction that is based on experience and social environment, and development takes place in interaction. A person, who learns, designs and develops new knowledge by upholding and developing it gradually on the knowledge that already exists.

It is the very difficult to achieve development of all the skills set in curriculum. It is important to continue learning in extra-curricular activities (Carrol & Purdue, 2007). Synergy between the learning process during lessons and extra-curricular activities is a topical issue (Mahoney, 2000; Kaufman & Gabler, 2004; Caldwell & Smith, 2005; Moriani et al., 2006; Carrol & Purdue, 2007; Pimapunsri et al., 2010).

Extra-curricular activities promote the transition from formal to informal learning, the importance of which in the personal development is often underestimated (Lieģeniece, 2002). Informal education is focused on the participation of each member, adapted to their needs and interests, directed on problems met in real life, and promotes the independence of persons involved in the educational process (Spronk, 1999). It is in keeping with today's educational tasks, because there are more and more discussions about synergy between learning process during lessons and extra-curricular activities. It is emphasized that pedagogically organized extra-curricular activities are highly structured actions which encourage mastering the needed skills for sustainability (Caldwell & Smith, 2005).

Analysing the importance of extra-curricular activities for personality development, it is emphasized that they promote the rise educational accomplishments and the level of interpersonal competence, contribute to the formation of critical thinking and development of personal and social maturity, socialization, increase motivation for learning, encourage self-development, which also includes self-control, implementing different strategies for identifying

and achieving targets. They also reduce the gap between knowledge acquired at school and real life (Pimapunsri et al., 2010; Carrol & Purdue, 2007; Moriani et al., 2006; Caldwell & Smith, 2005; Kaufman & Gabler, 2004; Mahoney et al., 2003; Mahoney, 2000; Spronk, 1999). Personality features mentioned before are essential for successful communication. This suggests that common requirements and purposeful educational and correctional work through the whole pedagogical process are necessary for the development of ALD communicative competence: skills, acquired during the learning process, are strengthened and improved according to the specificity of extra-curricular activities that increase experience and gradually establish as a competence.

Organization of extra-curricular activities for the development of communicative competence is theoretically based on Jane M. Novak's (Novak, 2002) statement about skills that adolescents with language disorders should improve. They are as follows:

• skills of positive thinking (real examples of others should be used; how people face difficulties and overcome them);

• skills of solving problems (problem identification, searching for possible solutions, consideration of positive and negative facts, decision making, explanation and evaluation of the chosen solution);

• adoption of prospect or role-play (acting like another person, behave accordingly and then discuss why exactly those and not the other movements or expressions were chosen; the development of empathy is promoted in such way);

• expression of emotions (to help understand emotions and talk about them);

• self-observation and monitoring (ALD should be able to look at themselves from the other side and notice when some result is achieved; receiving a false self-assessment, there should be explanation about objections; it will help adolescents make a better self-assessment in the future).

During extra-curricular activities, we should help ALD to believe in themselves. Formation of "I can" awareness should be facilitated because it will prepare them for the adult life by promoting the formation of competence and accountability. It is necessary to offer activities in which ALD, according to their level of language development, could improve and consolidate the skills acquired in curriculum, develop their communicative competence in different situations and realize themselves as communication partners.

Context of the Research

The research was carried out in a special school where students with severe language disorders learn. It was established in the previous researches that the educational process in a special school is organized in a relatively closed environment, so-called microenvironment. The interactions ALD – teacher (in the figure – T), ALD – support staff (in the figure SS), ALD – other ALD (see Figure1) take place according to the aspect of communicative competence development.
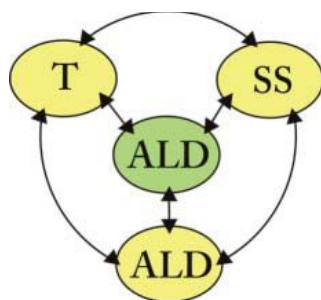

Figure 1. ALD communication during the pedagogical process in a microenvironment

Such cooperation ensures mastering the curriculum, language correction, support to ALD, mutual interaction in the school; however, from the point of development of communicative competence, organization of the pedagogical process holds the development down. Even with the diversification of communicative situations, the same communication partners are involved in them. A model of communicative competence development has been devised and approved for enlargement of ALD contact opportunities, development of communicative competence and getting more experience (see Figure 2). Communication is organized in micro and macro environment.
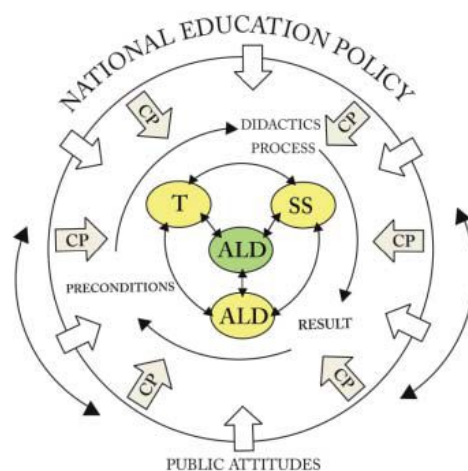

Figure 2. The model of communicative competence development (Ušča et al., 2012)

Attention in organizing the pedagogical process is paid to the development of communicative competence; the synergy between mastering the curriculum during the educational process and extra-curricular activities is ensured. As a result, communicative competence is continually developing; it has a cyclical nature that characterizes the transition to higher levels.

Form 5 (8 students) was selected for the research. The choice was based on the fact that students have just started the primary school, the collective is not homogeneous, and there are differences depending on the entering the school, conclusion of speech therapy, side diagnosis and family status that might affect the development of ALD communicative competence.

Organizing extra-curricular activities, the experience of putting linguistic skills acquired in lessons into practice was gained. That promotes ALD self-awareness as a communication partner. Lessons for creative thinking development using Bono (2009) and Fisher (2005) statements were organized within the research framework. Students learned to create a notice board, were involved in a recitation contest. Language afternoon, excursions to various museums and other places were organized. ALD were involved in workshop activities outside the school, composed theatrical productions that were performed in other schools, old people's home, recreation centre, and were involved in elaboration of various projects related to language development.

Participants of the research

The research was carried out from September 2008 till May 2011, in a special school where students with severe language disorders learn. Both classroom and extra-curricular activities were planned as actions promoting the development of ALD communicative competence. Three measurements were carried out; evaluation criteria of ALD communicative

competence were **awareness of themselves as communication partners** (indicators: cooperation, responsibility, tolerance, empathy) and **the quality of information** (indicators: the ability to express themselves orally and on paper, the ability to use a computer, the ability to get information, the ability to express an opinion). So the base is students' activity after the exchange of information and self-awareness as a communication partner. Activity is the intensity of an action which is characterized by significant signs of activity: negative, passive presence, situational activity, activity in a familiar environment, stable activity. Activity indicates the level of communicative competence – the higher is the intensity of activity, the higher is the level of communicative competence.

Data of the quantitative analysis were obtained through questionnaires. Triangulation was used – obtaining information from three different sources – the respondent's self-evaluation and the assessment of two experts – a teacher of the Latvian language and school's psychologist. Questionnaires took place at the same group of ALD and experts (three times: academic years 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11). The data gained at each stage of the research were coded for processing by SPSS 17.0 program.

ALD creative works were used for the qualitative analysis. Works were coded according to the developed code system and analysed using AQUAD 6 program. Particular correlation between the meta codes and the multiple codes and the frequency of their usage depending on the profile codes was defined on each stage of the research.

Research results and their interpretation

Results of the respondents' questionnaire were processed using SPSS program, using the Wilcoxon test, and indicated the statistically most significant change (p = 0.000) in the evaluation of information exchange and self-awareness as a communication partner and positive dynamics of the development (see Figure 3).
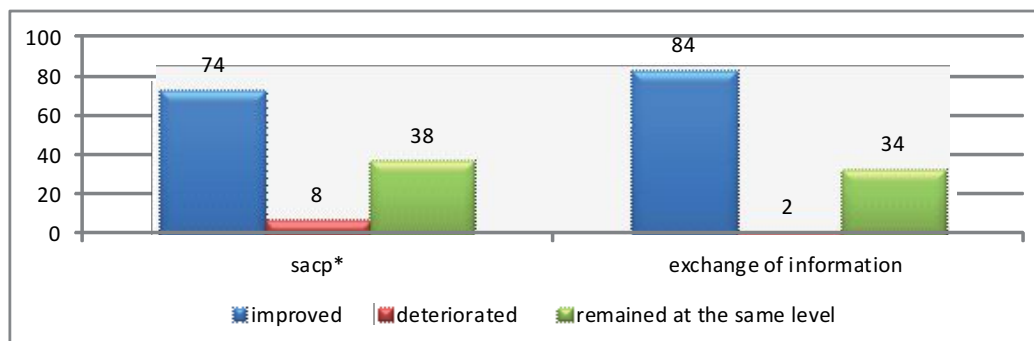
sacp – self-awareness as a communication partner*
n = 120

Figure 3. Changes of information and self-awareness as a communication partner (Wilcoxon test)

In most cases, evaluation of information exchange (n = 84) and self-awareness as a communication partner (n = 74) has improved. The case analysis shows that the reason for deterioration is a severe operation, leading to further ALD health deterioration that left an impact on the development of communicative competence.

Wilcoxon test results show positive changes in the evaluation of communicative competence: a statistically significant change is for the tolerance (p = 0.007) and empathy (p = 0.002), other indicators show the statistically most significant differences (p ≤ 0.001). The case analysis shows that a positive development dominates and only one student has a negative

rank in some parameters which is connected to a severe side diagnosis and general health deterioration. The author considers that even in cases where the ranking remained at the same level, the development dynamics had a positive trend, because the subjectivity was included in the results of questionnaire, thus ALD evaluated themselves or were evaluated by the experts in accordance with the requirements of a higher class.

ALD works, made during participation in various extra-curricular literary creation activities (contests, literary creative club, a newspaper), were analysed using AQUAD 6 program. The analysis of correlation found between the meta code of information exchange ("inform") and the meta code of self-awareness as a communication partner ("sacp") shows that the number of correlation increases with every academic year. Since there were found correlations between self-awareness as a communication partner and exchange of information by AQUAD 6 program – the growing awareness of themselves as communication partners, ALD are paying more attention to information and improving its quality in the end: in the 1st measurement a correlation between "sacp" and "inform" were found in 6 cases, in the 2nd measurement – in 24 cases, in the 3rd measurement – in 31 cases. This suggests that during extra-curricular activities, enriching the personal communicative experience and self-awareness of themselves as communication partners, ALD also strengthen and improve linguistic knowledge acquired during lessons and necessary for the qualitative exchange of information.

For a better understanding of the situation, multiple codes were also analysed by AQUAD 6 program. Comparing the codes' frequency in three measurements (see Figure 4), it is concluded that the frequency of all codes has increased, indicating rise of the communicative competence level. In addition, in the 3rd measurement the code describing skills to obtain information ("sk_obt_inf") appeared (5 times) that was not recorded in the previous measurements.
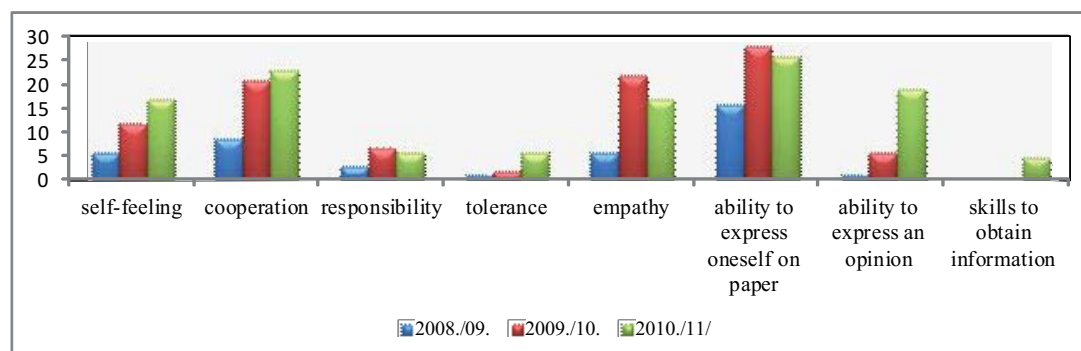

Figure 4. Frequency of multiple codes in ALD creative works

The results of qualitative analysis were processed by SPSS 17.0. program for generalizing them later by AQUAD 6 program. The results of Friedman test showed that there are statistically most significant differences ($p \leq 0.001$) between the meta codes at the beginning and at the end of the research. Statistically significant differences are observed in three values: tolerance ($p = 0.022$), ability to express oneself on paper ($p = 0.019$) and ability to express an opinion ($p = 0.021$).

Conclusions
1. It is impossible to make a successful development of ALD communicative competence just during lessons. Pedagogical process should be continued also in extra-curricular activities.
2. Common requirements and purposeful educational and correctional work through the whole pedagogical process are necessary for the development of ALD communicative

competence because the skills, acquired during the learning process, are strengthened and improved with extra-curricular activities. This increases experience and gradually establishes itself as a competence. This is confirmed by the correlations (found by AQUAD 6 program) between self-awareness as a communication partner and exchange of information – the more the awareness of themselves as communication partners is growing, the more ALD are paying attention to information and its quality is improving in the end: in the 1st measurement a correlation between "sacp" and "inform" was found in 6 cases, in the 2nd measurement – in 24 cases, in the 3rd measurement – in 31 cases.

3. In accordance with the criteria and indicators, the analysis of the questionnaire data suggests the following:

   • there are statistically the most significant differences (p = 0.000) in assessments and a positive dynamics of the criteria is seen – in most cases the evaluation of information exchange (n = 84) and self-awareness as a communication partner (n = 74) has improved;

   • there is a statistically significant change for tolerance (p = 0.007) and empathy (p = 0.002) in the evaluation of communicative competence, other indicators show statistically most significant differences (p ≤ 0.001).

4. Skilfully organized educational process that focuses on the diverse variety of communication situations, promotes the development of ALD communicative competence.

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