Cluster as an Effective Strategy for Teaching German In Higher Education

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Abstract: One of the most important tasks of teaching a foreign language is the formation of communicative competencies in students in the field of professional communication. The article discusses clusters as an effective strategy for teaching the German language, the main points of implementing clusters in higher education.

Keywords: Mind maps, clusters, an effective strategy, technique, professional competency

Introduction:

In connection with the transition to new state standards of higher professional education, the role of independent educational activities of students is increasing. Attention is paid not only to the development of professional competencies, but also to the development of educational and cognitive competence, the effectiveness of self-learning of students. Learning-cognitive competence involves students mastering learning strategies that match their style and type of learning. In the methodology of teaching foreign languages, learning strategies (cognitive strategies, cognitive actions, language acquisition strategies) are understood as students' strategies that serve to determine their own actions to achieve a specific learning goal [1]. In linguodidactics, a number of classifications of teaching strategies are known [2,154], among which there are basic and auxiliary ones. Methodologists include cognitive strategies based on mental processes, compensatory strategies to avoid or minimize inaccuracies, and memory strategies designed to store/memorize necessary information as the main educational strategies. Auxiliary learning strategies include metacognitive, related to the organization of the educational process, emotional-affective, allowing you to control your emotional state, and social strategies, and involving various forms of cooperation. Cognitive strategies include techniques such as underlining or writing key words, visualizing content (graphs, pictures), comparing sounds/words in different languages, taking notes, including while reading or listening to text, grouping, making a plan, predicting events , pre-text activities, etc. Compensatory strategies include the use of synonyms, retelling, native language or facial expressions and gestures instead of unfamiliar foreign words, asking again, guessing about the meaning of new words, using pre-recorded lexical units or grammatical constructions, inventing (new) words, avoiding the use of unfamiliar words or unfamiliar topics. Memorization strategies include methods of learning words in context and creating word cards. From the point of view of methodologists, metacognitive strategies are planning the process of working on a learning task, organizing the place of learning, eliminating possible interference, checking the achievement of educational goals, self-assessment and self-control, determining the reasons for failure [9, 2228]. Emotional-affective strategies are, first, methods of emotional self-control (freeing oneself from feelings of anxiety, self-soothing, self-encouragement), i.e. self-control. Social strategies include cooperation and cooperation with communication partners, taking into account the abilities and sociocultural

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characteristics of the interlocutor. In the educational process of higher education, all of the above educational strategies seem important, however, depending on the type of speech activity being taught, the relevance of the strategies changes. For example, when reading, cognitive and metacognitive strategies become especially relevant; when speaking, memory strategies, compensatory, emotional-affective and social strategies become especially relevant [21]. One of the most striking examples of cognitive strategies, in our opinion, is the creation of clusters (cognitive maps, mental maps, Mind Maps). A cluster (English: "brush", "bundle", "bundle") is described in the methodological literature as a graphic method of systematizing material and is considered a way of organizing the information being studied.

Main part:

The cluster as a technique is most often used to develop critical thinking among university students [8, 1985], the main goal of which is to teach students to independently obtain and structure the acquired knowledge. However, clusters can be successfully used in higher education, including for solving other educational problems. In January 2023, we carried out a small research project as part of our German club "Wie lernt man die Fremdsprache Deutsch?" at our Karshi Engineering and Economic Institute, the main goal of which was to study the effectiveness of using clusters for understanding the content of German texts and summarizing what was read in German. The project was attended by students for whom German is studied as a foreign language, the level of German language proficiency is A2/B1. A survey of students showed that all students use the following cognitive learning strategies to read and retell: making an outline (75%), writing down key words (44%), extracting the main information from each paragraph and restating it (31%). %). However, 54% of respondents have difficulty conveying the main content of texts (of which 27% have difficulty remembering new words and constructions, 27% have difficulty with the order of events). To overcome difficulties, students resort to compensatory strategies (using familiar synonyms for unfamiliar lexical units and grammatical structures - 33%) and memorization strategies (simple memorization - 20%, using associations and consonances when memorizing - 13%). To increase the effectiveness of the learning activity being studied, we suggested that students use a new cognitive strategy - clusters. To study and test the new cognitive technology, they were offered the following work plan: create a cluster for the text they read together with the teacher, develop a cluster for another text in the group and collectively retell it based on the cluster, create a separate cluster for the third text and convey the main content of the text. As always when mastering any new technology, some students had difficulties at the initial stage. These were: highlighting the central node (20%), establishing logical connections (20%), highlighting the important (20%). However, in further work, after gaining some experience, all difficulties were eliminated. At the end of the project, a second survey of students was conducted to determine their attitudes towards the adoption of clusters. 100% of respondents expressed their satisfaction and noted the following advantages of this technology:

 The content of the text is remembered easier and faster (35%);

Contains keywords (82 %);

The text is visually structured (38%).

We believe that the reason for such efficiency of clusters should be sought in the very essence of this technology - it synthesizes many cognitive processes: structuring the text, comprehending its content, visualizing the information contained, establishing semantic connections and, finally, repeating information multiple times; tenses - as lexical units, grammatical constructions and sequence of events ("scrolling in the mind" when determining logical connections between cluster blocks).

In addition, the cluster technique can be successfully used by representatives of different types of learning (primarily visual and kinesthetic), which also contributes to the success of using this technology.

We believe that this is why 78 % of the students who took part in the survey would like to continue working with clusters, and 22 % believe that perhaps they will work with them. The results of the study showed that students positively evaluate the cluster method of understanding and retelling texts in German. The creation of clusters activates many cognitive processes, which significantly facilitate the understanding and memorization of what is read, which leads to more successful performance of such educational activities as a short retelling of the text.

Conclusion:

The use of the cluster method in German classes has practical value in organizing real communication and in developing creative and thinking abilities. The time of speech practice for each student increases significantly, and the material is better absorbed by all participants in the study group. The teacher has additional opportunities to solve various educational and developmental problems, improve the learning process, and develop the communicative competence of students.

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