Pedagogical Conditions of College Students' Core Competencies Formation in the Process of Foreign Languages Learning

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of the problems stated in the article is conditioned by the fact that with the expansion of international economic relations and the increasing number of joint ventures and companies, there is an urgent need for specialists capable of intercultural communication for the implementation of the business contacts and contracts, the conclusion of economic agreements with foreign partners, cooperating with enterprises of different countries. In this regard, this article is aimed at identifying and studying of the pedagogical conditions of college students' core competencies formation in the process of foreign languages learning. The article clarifies the composition of core competencies in college students' foreign languages learning; identifies a set of criteria for selection of the content of discipline "foreign language;" reveals the effectiveness of pedagogical technologies of college students' core competencies formation in the foreign languages learning; provides quality monitoring technology of college students' core competencies formation in the process of foreign languages learning.

Keywords: Curriculum, Students, Foreign Languages, Core Competences
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Relevance of the Study

Changes in the development of a society determine the necessity of educational system's reforming, including the system of secondary vocational education. One of the tasks in the conditions of Russian education's modernization is its integration into the common European educational environment characterized by harmonization of educational standards, curricula, specialties in different countries, increasing of the mobility and cooperation of teachers and students, the formation of educational services' market (Zaitseva, 2013). The "Concept of Russian education's modernization for the period till 2020" (2012) determines the main objective of vocational education as training of specialists, who are fluent in their profession and core competencies, able to effective

work on a specialty at the level of world standards, ready for continuous professional growth, social and occupational mobility and engaging in professional intercultural communication.

New requirements necessitate the secondary vocational educational system's transition from the traditional approach to competence-based one, designed to meet the needs of modern society, production and the learners.

Educational standards of new generation based on the competence approach necessitate students' acquirement of useful knowledge necessary for successful achievement of goals in real-life conditions, where competence becomes as universal ways of activities, which will allow the student to use existing knowledge, abilities and skills in new academic and extra-curricular

situations. As a consequence, in the modern system of foreign language teaching there is a need of transition from the simple accumulation of knowledge, abilities and skills to the development of core competences. Competence based approach in foreign language's teaching at the college provides for the formation of ten general competencies that include the ability to organize their own activities; to make decisions in standard and non-standard situations and be responsible for them; to search for and use information needed for professional and personal development; to use information and communication technologies in professional activities; to work in a staff and the team, to communicate effectively with colleagues; to take responsibility for the work of the team members and the result of assignments; independently determine tasks of professional personal development, to educate themselves independently.

The main task of a teacher is to inspire students to problem's solving and process's in-depth researching, to stimulate their creative thinking by using of skillfully delivered questions. During the discussion, students learn to defend their point of view on the problem, to listen and hear others, to tolerate another view, to take joint decisions (Kalinina and Chernova, 2014). This form of work develops such personal qualities as initiative, sociability and tolerance. The joint work of teacher and students on actual problems' solving develops the ability to communicate with each other. Therefore, participation in discussions develops students' competencies to work in teams, to communicate effectively, to make decisions in standard and non-standard situations and to take responsibility for them. Project method is one of the most effective methods of active learning in students' independent work. Project work is a creative process. The choice of subjects takes place in the framework of the curriculum's material and taking into account its practical relevance for students.

It is the application of active methods, unlike traditional ones, activates thought processes of students, induces them to constant creative search, teaches students to analyze information, to build a coherent logical statement, teaches to communicate with each other, and the ability to express properly their point of view, to tolerate the opinion of another person. Therefore, active methods are aimed at creating of a favorable motivational and emotional background of a foreign language lesson, leading to the development of sustainable interest in its acquisition.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Methods of the Study
During research the following methods were used: General theoretical methods of scientific cognition (analysis, comparison, contrasting, generalization), general pedagogical methods (the analysis of pedagogical, psychological and philosophical literature on the problem under study, the study of accumulated international and Russian experience of students' core competencies' formation in the process of foreign languages' learning, study and analysis of educational materials, pedagogical supervision of the educational process, the testing of students and teachers), predictive methods (observation, questionnaires, expert evaluation, self-evaluation).

2.2. Experimental Base of the Study
The experimental study was conducted on the basis of Bank of Kama College of engineering-economic Academy and Naberezhnye Chelny teachers College. The experiment involved 170 students.

2.3. Stages of the Study
The study was conducted in three stages: The first stage (2010-2011) was search and theoretical one. At this stage the study of pedagogical experience on the basis of theoretical analysis of psychological and pedagogical, philosophical literature corresponding to the research problem was carries out; the source parameters of the study, subject of study, as well as the structure, methodology and methods were determined; the program and methodology of the experiment was developed.

The second stage (2011-2014) was experimental. In this period the experimental work was carried out, during of which pedagogical conditions of College students' core competencies formation were tested; criteria for selecting of the content of the discipline "foreign language" were developed, focused on the development of core competences, a textbook called "Working in a foreign company" was created for students of vocational college, the secondary vocational school students' and teachers' attitude to this problem was defined.

The third stage (2014-2015) - generalizing one. During the work within the specified period the analysis and processing of research results were carried out, theoretical and experimental data were refined, the main conclusions and practical recommendations and the text of the thesis were presented.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Component Composition of Core Competencies
Component composition of the core competencies is specified in accordance with the specifics of the studied subject. In the field of foreign language teaching the core competencies' composition is as follows:
- Willingness to take responsibility for their work (the ability consciously to set goals of foreign languages' different aspects' mastering, to determine the corresponding end product; the ability to realize activities' goals in foreign language learning; ability to present the final result of foreign language learning activities in full volume);
- The ability to act independently in the face of uncertainty (the ability to work independently with the information: To understand the purpose of text; the ability to use dictionaries, reference books; the ability to separate important information from the secondary; the ability to write annotation, etc.);
- Sustainable striving to self-improvement (self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-regulation and self-development); the desire for creative self-actualization (the ability to identify their needs in foreign language learning and select appropriate ways of learning;
- Possession of independent work's methods on improving of speech skills; the ability to perform self-esteem, self-control

through monitoring of their own speech in their native language and foreign one);

- The ability to system thinking (the ability to use a foreign language in other fields of knowledge; the ability to systematize and generalize the received knowledge in a foreign language);
- The ability independently and effectively to solve problems in the field of professional activities (the ability to define the problem in professional situations; ability to propose problems' ways and solutions options, to assess the expected result; the ability to plan speech behavior in professionally oriented problem situations, to make adjustments);
- Commitment to continuous professional growth, the acquisition of new knowledge (the ability consciously to set goals of foreign language's different aspects' mastering, to determine the corresponding end product; the ability to realize goals in foreign language's learning and using activities; ability to present the final result of foreign language's learning and using activities in full volume);
- A commitment to positive interaction and cooperation in the team (the ability to pose and ask questions; the ability to coordinate their actions with other participants of foreign language communication; the ability to control their behavior, emotions, mood, ability to influence the communication partner, etc.

The reduction of core competencies to aggregation of socio-communicative and professional-communicative abilities allows splitting of the process of core competences' formation in foreign languages' learning into separate successive steps or stages, and also providing of the procedure for evaluation of their formation's levels, since it is not competence itself, but rather its individual components (i.e., knowledge and skills).

Core competences in foreign languages' learning are determined on the basis of a comprehensive qualitative assessment of the communicative behavior of students in professionally oriented situations based on the observation during the foreign languages' teaching.

3.2. Criteria for Evaluating of the Levels of Key Competences Development

As the criteria for evaluating of the levels of core competencies' formation were selected cognitive, axiological, behavioral, motivational and emotional-volitional self-regulation, proposed by Zimnaya and Sakharova (1991) and Tatur (2004). The selected criteria allow us to characterize the high, above average, average, and low levels of their development.

An important source of qualitative analysis of the students' activities in a foreign language's mastering is the "language portfolio." "Language portfolio" as a tool for assessment and self-assessment of students' achievements helps to ensure the development of the ability to self-manage the process of learning and improving of the language learning process, and systematic monitoring of the dynamics in core competencies' formation in different types of communicative behavior, to form students' need in productive learning activities, expressing the personal

responsibility for the results of their work. Along with the technology of language portfolio in the assessment of college students' developed core competencies' level in the process of foreign languages' learning the projects' method can be used. As a means of assessment different questionnaires, application forms, rating scales, tests are used. Students' achievement in projects' implementation may be included as a component part of the portfolio.

3.3. Pedagogical Conditions of College Students Core Competencies Formation in the Process of Foreign Languages Learning

One of the pedagogical conditions for core competencies' effective formation is the content's selection and structuring of the discipline "foreign language." The problem solution of content's selection and structuring of the discipline "foreign language" is based on the theory of educational content, research base of which consists of works by Lednev (1989), Lerner (1985), Kraevsky and Khutorskoy (2003), Masalimova et al. (2014, 2016), Shchukin (2006), Milrud, (2004), Mirolyubov, (1989), Lopatina, (2015), Passov, (1988), Polat, (2000), Rogova et al. (1991), Grigoryeva et al. (2015), Rozhkova (1984), as well as the concept of Vygotsky (1956), within the which the selection of language material is carried out on the functional-communicative approach.

As criteria of a foreign language course's content formation the following ones were allocated: Criteria of relative completeness; integrity; typicality; compliance with the practice's demands (the labor market), the main directions of development of pedagogy and didactics; variability; representativeness and validity of the selected linguistic material (concerning spheres, themes and situations of professional communication), efficiency of means, forms and methods of foreign languages' teaching included in the content and technology.

The most effective technology, contributing to the college students' core competencies' formation by means of a foreign language is a project technology. In project technology in the specific educational objectives' achievement the previously developed educational technologies can find their organic place. The offered foreign language course on project technology is practice-oriented one that meets the requirements of the competence approach in the process of foreign languages' teaching in college.

The whole course of foreign language teaching in design technology is divided into a number of units - modules with defined goals, objectives and levels. Each unit-module is divided into a series of classes that are organized by situational-topic principle. After studying of the learning cycle's topics by the students the mini-projects on the following stages are developed: Introductory, preparatory (or information collecting), independent work on project, project's presentation. All project assignments contain the initial problem, goal's setting, planning of the results' achievement, implementing of the plan, obtaining of the final product and the assessing of the progress. At the end of the unit-module's studying the students are faced the task to combine the mini-projects into one project, reflecting the theme or problem of the whole unit-module.

The theoretical part of project technology for core competences' formation is ensured by the developed textbook for 1st year students of all specialties of the colleges. The educational material provided in this manual complements the colleges' curriculum on foreign language and is selected in accordance with the State educational standard and a model program for the discipline "foreign language."

3.4. Experiments' Course and Results

The aim of experimental study is testing of pedagogical conditions of the discipline "foreign language" for the college students' core competencies' formation, which were identified in the theoretical analysis course. The ascertaining stage of the experiment allowed diagnozing of the low level of core competences' formation, and working out of the methodology of the experiment.

On the forming stage of experimental work the technology of college students' core competencies' formation in the process of foreign languages' learning, built on a project and unit-modular basis was implemented. As it is shown in the experiment, the results of quality diagnosing of core competences' formation related to professional activities (the ability to solve problems in the field of professional activities and readiness to constant professional growth, the acquisition of new knowledge) are far below than those that are formed on the basis of socio-communicative skills. The professionally-oriented situations, created in the process of foreign language teaching, do not give the full picture of the level's development of these core competencies, as their manifestation is possible only in actual professional practice.

As a result of the experimental work there is a clear tendency of increasing in the level of core competences' formation from the first and second levels to the third and fourth in the experimental group in comparison with the control group, where the level of core competences' formation has not changed. The results of the technology's introduction have found evidence in the diagnosis of core competences, as well as in knowledge, skills and abilities of students of the experimental group. At the end of the experiment at the primary level in the students' experimental group with the level of core competencies' formation remained only 12.5%, whereas in the control group at this level of core competencies' formation remained 36.5%. Other students, both from experimental and from the control group, passed to a sufficient level. The similar dynamics is observed in relation to students who at the beginning of the experiment were at a sufficient level of core competencies' formation. The results of diagnostic measurements in the experimental and control groups at the beginning and at the end of the experimental work are presented in Table 1.

The statistical significance's level testing was carried out using the criterion χ^2. A high level of statistical significance gives the basis to consider the results obtained to be objective and significant, and the hypothesis to be proven.

Thus, it is proved experimentally that for the formation and diagnostics of core competencies related to professional activities (the ability independently and effectively to solve problems in the field of professional activities and readiness to constant

Table 1: The formation of college students core competencies' at the beginning and at the end of the experiment

Levels	Number students (%)			
	Experimental group (96 students)		Control group (74 students)	
	Before	After	Before	After
I	41 (42.7)	12 (12.5)	34 (460	27 (36.5)
II	35 (36.5)	28 (29.2)	28 (37.8)	25 (33.8)
III	20 (20.8)	38 (39.6)	12 (16.2)	18 (24.3)
IV	0 (0)	18 (18.7)	0 (0)	4 (5.4)

professional growth and acquisition of new knowledge), in addition to professionally-oriented situations created during foreign language lessons, work with authentic texts, it is necessary to introduce additional special courses.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Analysis of college students' training in the field of foreign languages and the latest requirements of the modern labor market shows that the development of core competences is achieved by using of educational material's content, the selection of which is made on the basis of criteria compliance with the requirements of practice (the labor market); variability; representativeness and validity of selected linguistic material (concerning spheres, themes and situations of professional communication); relative completeness; integrity; typicality; compliance with the main directions of development of pedagogy and didactics; efficiency of included forms and methods of foreign languages' teaching in the content and technology.

The study shows that in the whole "project method" is an effective innovative technology that helps to increase the level of college students' core competencies' formation by means of a foreign language. However, the observations have shown that most often the use of project technology still lags behind the use of traditional practice in the process of foreign languages' teaching. This is due to incomplete or untimely awareness of teachers about the specifics of competence approach's use in the learning process, conservative atmosphere at the departments of foreign languages, as well as the existing difficulties in using of project technology from the side of students: Language difficulties, lack of the capacity for independent critical thinking, self-organization and self-learning. Therefore, the organization of project work requires, above all, to study the major theoretical and practical basics of project technology's using in educational process aimed at the emerging challenges' eliminating that was undertaken in this research.

5. CONCLUSION

Thus, this article clarifies the composition of college students' core competences in foreign languages teaching, which includes, in addition to knowledge of the subject (cognitive bases of core competencies), kinds of college students' foreign language's professional activities, as well as socially-communicative and professional-communicative abilities necessary for their mastery.

The set of criteria for selection of the content of the discipline "foreign language," focused on the development of college students' core competencies' formation, as well as relevant forms, methods and means of teaching are identified. Pedagogical technology of College students' core competencies' formation in the process of a foreign language's learning is presented, suggesting a learning process's constructing on a unit-modular basis. On the basis of the project method the organization of studying process for each of the module is built, contributing not only to the formation of foreign language knowledge, abilities and skills, but personal and professional development of students.

The study does not cover all aspects of multifaceted and complex problem of students' core competencies' formation. Further theoretical and practical development of this problem requires the study of issues such as the development of a methodology to assess the level of core competencies' formation, the development of teachers' core competences (criteria identifying of teachers' activities' efficiency). The subject for special study could be the search for and justification of other ways of core competencies' formation, as well as the problem of influence of external and internal factors on the formation of college students' core competencies.

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