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The influence of methods and means of teaching foreign languages on the students' learning outcomes and their academic motivation: review from Kazakhstani teachers' perspective

Abstract: Nowadays, with the development of international cooperation and socio-economic relations of the Republic of Kazakhstan with foreign countries, the need for highly-qualified specialists in various fields with the knowledge of foreign languages has increased. Therefore, educational institutions are paying more attention to the quality of training of foreign language teachers. The aim of this article was to study the impact of the grammar-translation and the communicative methods of teaching foreign languages in combination with authentic materials on the formation of students' language skills and their academic motivation. A survey was conducted among 30 teachers of foreign languages from five universities of Kazakhstan training future foreign language teachers. The following aspects were considered, namely, (a) teachers' opinion on the interdependence of teaching methods and students' academic motivation, (b) teachers' experiences of using authentic teaching materials, and (c) teachers' perception of the combination of these two methods along with authentic materials. It was concluded that both teaching methods have strong and weak sides. Therefore, it is necessary to use these two methods in complex with authentic materials in order to have a concurrent impact on the development of all four language skills of students and achieve the necessary results.

Keywords: academic motivation, academic performance, foreign language teaching, language skills, grammar-translation method, communicative method, authentic teaching materials.

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Научная статья

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Влияние методов и средств преподавания иностранных языков на результаты обучения студентов и их академическую мотивацию: обзор с точки зрения казахстанских преподавателей

Аннотация: С развитием международного сотрудничества и социально-экономических связей Республики Казахстан с зарубежными странами возросла потребность в высококвалифицированных специалистах в различных областях со знанием иностранных языков. Поэтому учебные заведения уделяют больше внимания качеству подготовки преподавателей иностранных языков. Целью данной статьи было изучение влияния грамматико-переводного и коммуникативного методов обучения иностранным языкам в сочетании с аутентичными материалами на формирование языковых навыков студентов и их академическую мотивацию. Был проведен опрос среди 30 преподавателей иностранных языков из пяти вузов Казахстана, которые готовят будущих учителей иностранных языков. Были рассмотрены следующие аспекты, а именно: мнение учителей о взаимозависимости методов обучения и академической мотивации студентов, опыт преподавателей в использовании аутентичных учебных материалов и мнение преподавателей о сочетании этих двух методов наряду с аутентичными материалами. Был

сделан вывод, что оба метода обучения имеют сильные и слабые стороны. Поэтому необходимо использовать эти два метода в комплексе с аутентичными материалами, чтобы оказать одновременное влияние на развитие всех четырех языковых навыков обучающихся и достичь необходимых результатов.

Ключевые слова: академическая мотивация, академическая успеваемость, преподавание иностранного языка, языковые навыки, метод грамматического перевода, коммуникативный метод, аутентичные учебные материалы.

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Introduction

The three-level training of teachers of foreign languages is widespread in Kazakhstan's universities: Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels. The main aim of the educational program "Foreign Language: Two Foreign Languages" is to train teachers of English and one additional foreign language of their choice (usually French, Chinese, Korean, German or Turkish). The duration of the Bachelor's program is four years. Upon completion of this program, students are supposed to acquire all language skills at the proficient level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). In addition to that, they need to have the knowledge of the system of the language studied and the pedagogical competences needed to be a highly qualified and competitive foreign language teacher. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) represent a self-assessment grid which can be used to access learners' language proficiency levels based on describing four skills in detail: listening, reading, speaking and writing (Cambridge University Press, 2001). It is supposed that at the professional level, students will be able to take part in any communication situations, easily read and understand all forms of written speech, express their thoughts clearly and easily, as well as write complex, coherent and cohesive texts, such as letters, reports, summaries or articles. The modern leading concept of foreign language education is the intercultural-communicative theory which means active introduction of a communicative method that has proven its success in developing students' conversational skills (Kunanbayeva, 2010). However, if we look at the specifics of various exams and tests conducted in our country at the republican levels, we can observe that all test tasks mainly focus on the grammatical and lexical components of the language. For example, according to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in the current and subsequent years, the quality of teacher training will be assessed by passing a national qualification test, which will determine the level of subject knowledge and proficiency in teaching methods of an academic subject. Employment of graduates in secondary schools is now possible only based on the results of the national qualification test.

Therefore, despite the fact that the leading concept of foreign language education is the intercultural-communicative theory, students still need the presence of the grammatical-translation method in their learning process in order to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to pass various qualification tests which mainly concentrate on the knowledge of grammatical rules and sufficient vocabulary and determine the suitability of a graduate for further employment. The results of the national qualification test can be considered as one of the components of the academic performance of students majoring in foreign languages. It is necessary to take into account the content of these tests in the process of training teachers and to carry out training using all methods that meet the modern requirements of our society.

Literature review

Academic performance is one of the most urgent problems of higher school pedagogy in connection with the increasing requirements for specialists. In order to improve the educational system, it is extremely important to pay attention to improving the academic performance of students. The concept of academic performance is considered by many authors, as a result of which there are many definitions of this concept, considering it from different sides. Nevertheless, most researchers agree on the definition

that academic performance is the result of learning, the amount of acquired knowledge, the strength of this knowledge, mastering the skills necessary in future professional activity (Ozhegov, 1990; Abrosimov, 2012; Birina, 2014; Lnohradskaya, 2012). Since, it is the students' academic performance is the final indicator that reflects the effectiveness of the educational institution in training specialists and the quality of educational services provided.

As we know, in the conditions of intensively developing international relations between countries, the importance of foreign languages as a means of interaction has increased. In different periods, depending on the goals of teaching and learning a foreign language, new methods appeared. In the XVIII – early XIX century, the process of learning languages pursued mainly general educational goals. According to this paradigm, the study of a foreign language was primarily aimed at the development of logical thinking and the outlook of students and only then at the practical mastery of the language (Shchukin, 2015). It was then that the most popular method of teaching was the grammar-translation method (GTM) of teaching, which is one of the oldest methods in the history of teaching foreign languages, also called the “traditional method” or the “classical method”. Initially, this method was used to study classical or so-called “dead” languages, such as Latin and Greek. The grammar-translation method was also known in the West as the “Prussian method” due to its widespread use in German gymnasiums of the 19th century. This method of teaching is characterized mainly by deductive grammar teaching through presentation and performing translation exercises in order to memorize speech models and analyze grammatical rules studied earlier (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). As for skills, reading and writing are given more attention than listening and speaking. Teachers and students have the traditional roles of transmitter and receiver of knowledge. According to Threesje Roza Souisa and Lelyemin Yanuarius, the more students know about the grammar of a language, the better they can express their thoughts and improve their communication skills (Souisa, Yanuarius, 2020). However, in the process of learning using the grammar-translation method of teaching, little attention is paid to speaking and listening skills, as well as the content of the material. It mainly focuses on reading and writing skills. Since its introduction, this method has been completely focused on the development of grammar knowledge (Kolisnichenko, Yatsun, 2018).

In the 1970–1980 years, due to the active development of international cooperation with foreign countries, the need to apply the acquired knowledge when communicating in real life situations increased. The increasing social demand for practical mastery of a foreign language has aroused particular interest in communication-oriented methods of teaching foreign languages. The dominance of the communicative approach required a radical revision of the teaching content. Thus, in accordance with the new social order of the XXI century, language teaching was aimed at mastering it as a means of intercultural communication. With the transition of the learning process to communicative-oriented learning, a communicative method of teaching foreign languages was developed. This method has become as popular as the method of grammatical translation. The communicative method was aimed at transforming the learning process by creating communication situations in artificial conditions that are close to real life. The communicative method is widely used by university teachers due to the fact that it allows students to interact with each other in a friendly atmosphere on almost any topic (Jin, Yoo, 2019). This is the most important characteristic of this method, since students' communicative competencies can be developed through increasing their motivation by involving them in meaningful situations of language interaction (Kolisnichenko, Yatsun, 2018). In addition, the communicative method of teaching pays more attention to the personal experience of students, as well as modern requirements of social interaction. Nevertheless, teachers still face some challenges when implementing this method in a language classroom. Take, for example, the insufficient level of grammar skills and vocabulary of students, which is why they cannot fully express their thoughts or freely interact with fellow students. It is in this case that the communicative method of teaching is sometimes inferior to the grammar-translation method of teaching for the reason that it is very difficult for low-level students to immerse themselves in the process of communication without the necessary background knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (Kolisnichenko, Yatsun, 2018). In a short period of time, communicative teaching

method allows students to achieve tangible results and improvements in oral communication (Adil, 2020). However, teaching under this method does not allow students to gain a complete understanding of the grammar of the language and its syntax (Fois, 2020). Thus, it can be assumed that the use of a communicative method of teaching foreign languages has a number of advantages in relation to the development of students' intercultural communication skills. The flexibility of this method allows to combine the study of culture with the study of language. It stimulates students' learning motivation by creating a friendly learning atmosphere.

Another important role in teaching foreign languages is played by the teaching materials used by the teacher. The choice of which can affect the effectiveness of the teaching process and the productivity of the learning process. Thanks to the wide possibilities of the global network, both teachers and students have wide access to a variety of resources. Nowadays, a huge number of books and textbooks are available, specially developed by leading experts of the world for foreign language learners. However, we should not forget that all these materials and exercises are designed for the purposes of language teaching and may not sufficiently reflect the actual conditions of language use by native speakers. Authentic materials can be used to eliminate this problem. Authentic materials are materials intended for daily use by native speakers that were not developed for educational purposes. They include films, television advertisements, street signs, songs, newspapers, menus, brochures, schedules, recipes, TV shows (Damayanti, Fauzi, Inayati, 2018). According to Yana Beresova, authentic materials can be a great opportunity to get acquainted with the “real” language used by native speakers in everyday life. In addition, this type of learning tool gives students the opportunity to immerse themselves in the culture of English-speaking countries. Last but not least, it has a positive impact on the level of motivation of students and the enrichment of their vocabulary (Beresova, 2015). In general, authentic materials can be divided into printed, auditory, visual, audiovisual and online materials¹.

Printed materials include: newspapers, magazines, advertising, books, restaurant menus, recipes, instructions, labels, television programs, comics. Audio materials include radio news, songs, voice messages, podcasts. Visual materials include posters, street signs, postcards. Audiovisual includes films, advertisements, documentaries, music videos, television programs, video instructions. Online materials include websites, blogs, social networks, games. There are many objections to the use of authentic materials in classes with a low level of language proficiency, since they may contain complex words and language structures. Although these problems may become a problem for students at the initial level, Richards supports the idea of using authentic materials in the process of teaching a foreign language because they contain cultural information about the target language, provide access to a real language, are more closely related to real language needs, and allow for a more creative approach to language learning (Richards, 2006).

The goal of the research

The purpose of this study was to investigate the teachers' attitudes towards the grammar-translation and communicative methods of teaching foreign languages in combination with authentic learning materials. According to the theoretical overview of the above-mentioned teaching methods we believe that combining both methods with the use of authentic materials will have a better effect on the formation of students' four languages skills, as well as their academic performance and motivation than using one of the methods in isolation.

The Research methodology

To achieve the goal of this study, a survey was conducted among 30 teachers of foreign languages from 5 different universities of Kazakhstan which provide training in the educational program 5B011900 “Foreign language: two foreign languages”. The survey method was chosen for this study mainly because this tool is much easier to distribute and administer. The online questionnaire, generated on the Google

¹ Web-presentation: Using authentic materials short - roger aguirre final, made by Embajada de EE.UU. en el Perú. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/ircdirector/using-authentic-materials-short-roger-aguirre-final>

Drive electronic platform, was distributed to respondents via email and WhatsApp messenger. Based on the results obtained, a statistical and comparative analysis was carried out.

Results of the Survey

In this sociological survey, a large proportion of respondents were teachers from the Non-Profit Joint Stock Company “Karaganda University named after academician E. A. Buketov” – 33 %, followed by participants from the Educational institution “Alikhan Bokeikhan University”, Semey – 30 %, Non-Profit Joint Stock Company “Shakarim University of Semey” – 20 %, Suleyman Demirel University, Almaty – 13 %, Non-Profit Joint Stock Company “West Kazakhstan University named after M. Utemisov” in Uralsk – 4 % (Figure 1).

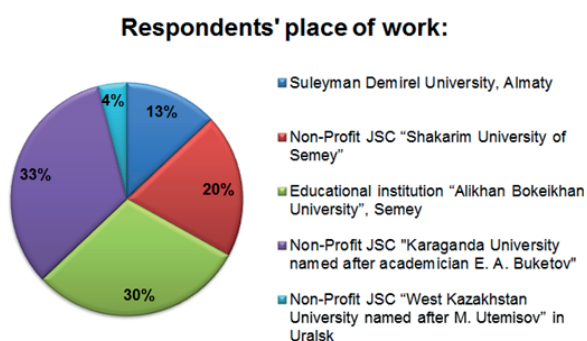


Fig. 1. Respondents' place of work (universities)

Рис. 1. Место работы респондентов (вузы)

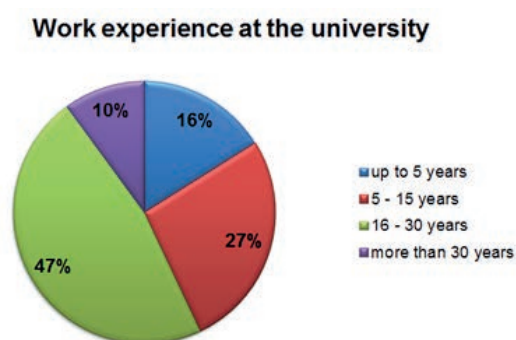


Fig. 2. Experience of teaching foreign languages at the university

Рис. 2. Опыт преподавания иностранных языков в вузе

The majority of respondents were in the age category from 25 to 40 years – 60 %, followed by the age group of 41–55 years – 23 %, participants aged 18 to 25 years made up 7 % and over 55 years – 10% of respondents. Of these, 50 % have postgraduate education, 30 % have a scientific degree, 20 % – with higher education. The prevailing part of the survey participants – 80 % teach only English, 3 % – only German, the remaining 17 % are bilingual teachers: English and German – 3 %, English and French – 7 %, English and Chinese – 7 %.

In general, respondents who have different experience of teaching foreign languages in higher educational institutions took part in the survey. Thus, 16 % of respondents have been working with students for less than 5 years, 27 % from 5 to 15 years, and 10 % of respondents over 30 years. In total, a little less than half – 47 % were teachers with experience from 16 to 30 years (Figure 2)

The overwhelming majority of respondents – 90 % agree that the level of motivation of students has an impact on their academic performance (Figure 3). 94 % of teachers support the statement that teaching methods also have an impact on the level of motivation of students (Figure 4). Thus, the following chain of influences is formed: teaching methods → motivation level → academic performance.

In order to determine the popularity of the methods considered in the literature review, one of the questionnaire questions was aimed at identifying the frequency of their use by teachers of Kazakhstani universities. As a result, it turned out that the communicative method of teaching with 100 % voting is used much more often than the grammar-translation method of teaching (Figure 5).

According to the table shown in Figure 6, the majority of teachers – 70 % consider the communicative teaching method as the most suitable for teaching listening skills. As for reading – 53 % of teachers preferred the grammar-translation method, and the number of adherents of the communicative method was comparatively lower – 37 %. According to the formation of speaking skills, the leading position belongs to the communicative method of teaching – 97 %. While, in teaching writing skills, the first place is taken by grammar-translation, a teaching method with 67 % of votes (Figure 6).

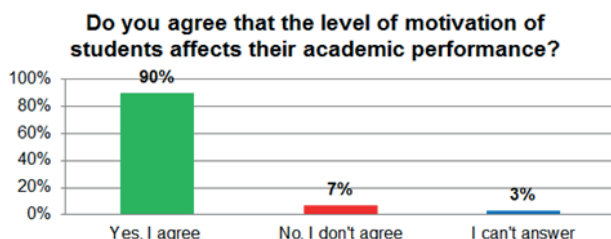


Fig. 3. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question about the influence of motivation level on students' academic performance

Рис. 3. Распределение ответов респондентов на вопрос о влиянии уровня мотивации на успеваемость студентов

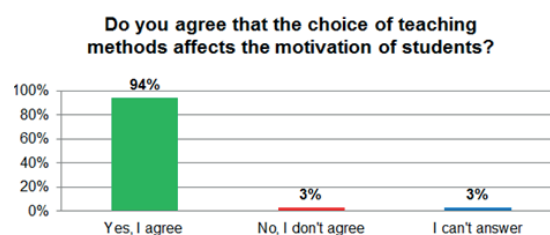


Fig. 4. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question about the influence of teaching methods on the level of motivation of students

Рис. 4. Распределение ответов респондентов на вопрос о влиянии методов обучения на уровень мотивации студентов

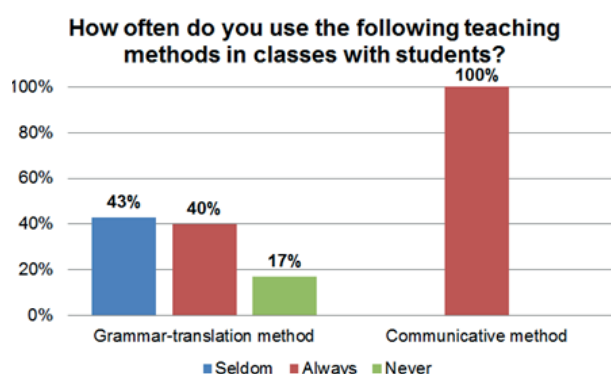


Fig. 5. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question about the frequency of use of grammar-translation and communicative teaching methods

Рис. 5. Распределение ответов респондентов на вопрос о частоте использования грамматико-переводных и коммуникативных методов обучения

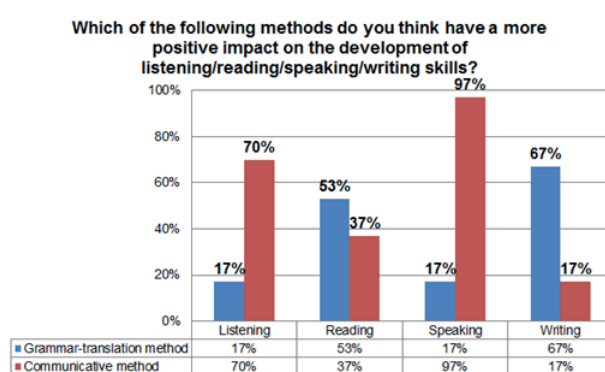


Fig. 6. Positive impact of grammar-translation and communicative methods on the development of language skills, such as listening, reading, speaking and writing

Рис. 6. Положительное влияние грамматико-переводных и коммуникативных методов на развитие языковых навыков, таких как аудирование, чтение, говорение и письмо

The next question of the questionnaire was focused on determining mainly what type of educational resources are used by the teachers of foreign languages. According to the results received, texts and exercises from textbooks took the first position with 77 % of votes, authentic audio and video materials, texts from newspapers and news sites without adaptation scored 68 % of votes, while in the adapted form, these materials were used by slightly more than half of the respondents – 58 % (Figure 7).

More than half of the interviewed teachers – 70 % agree that the use of authentic materials: newspapers, magazines, songs, films, video advertisements, recordings of talk shows/interviews in English when using the communicative and grammatical-translation method of teaching can positively affect the effectiveness of teaching and academic achievements of students (Figure 8).

Conclusion

It is a well-known that changing requirements for the quality of education on the part of society is the driving force of the educational paradigm of foreign language education, which is constantly searching for adequate and modern ways and methods of teaching and learning foreign languages. The quality of training of foreign language teachers directly depends on the quality and effectiveness of educational services offered by universities. Therefore, the problem of studying teaching methods as

factors affecting the academic performance and motivation of students is relevant and requires new research. In order to achieve the goals of education and meet the needs of society, it is necessary to constantly search for optimal methods and means of education.

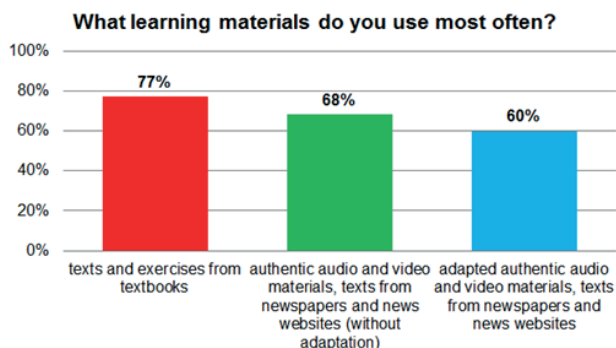


Fig. 7. The types of learning materials used by respondents

Рис. 7. Типы учебных материалов, которые использовали респонденты

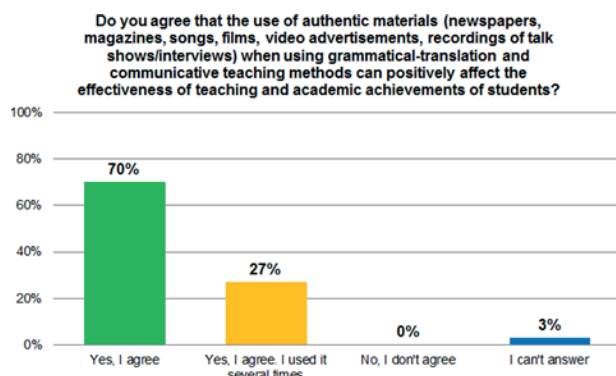


Fig. 8. Teachers' opinion on the combined use of authentic materials together with grammar-translation and communicative teaching methods

Рис. 8. Мнение учителей о сочетанном использовании аутентичных материалов с грамматико-переводными и коммуникативными методами обучения

This study has shown that teaching methods, learning materials, motivation of the student and his academic performance or success are very closely interrelated. The teaching methods used have an impact on the motivation of students – their interest in the activity performed. In turn, motivation to achieve certain results has a positive effect on their learning outcomes, which are reflected in the academic performance of students – in their grades. The international language proficiency exams, as well as tests at the national level, such as national qualification testing can be considered as indicators of academic performance and success of students. The complex application of grammar-translation and communicative teaching methods can have a positive impact on the results of various kinds of tests and exams. As can be seen from the results obtained from the survey, the communicative teaching method has lower results in the “Reading” and “Writing” sections, while the grammatical-translation method has weaker positions in the “Listening” and “Speaking” sections. That’s why it can be concluded that the grammar-translation method actively contributes to mastering the knowledge of grammar and the system of the studied language, improving the literacy of productive language skills such as speaking and writing. The communicative method of teaching promotes the activation of students’ conversational skills and makes it possible to put into practice all the knowledge formed within the framework of the grammatical-translation method.

Thus, as a result of this study, we came to the conclusion that in order to improve the academic performance and achievements of students, a comprehensive application of grammar-translation and communicative methods using authentic materials is necessary. Using such resources in English classes can make the learning process even more exciting, creative and motivating for students. The main principle of selecting these materials may be that they should reflect the situation that students may encounter in an English-speaking environment, i.e. contain the most relevant lexical and grammatical content. It is very important not to overload students, especially low level students, with narrowly focused texts, for example scientific and technical content. It is necessary to choose articles, songs or films that are not too difficult to understand and do not require too much time to read, or to allocate sufficient time for familiarization, i.e. to devote more time or to break the material into parts.

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