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V. V. Perlova,

Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor
(H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University)

educationandsciencetoday@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-0522-2871

USING SOCIAL NETWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH WHILE TEACHING ENGLISH METHODOLOGY TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Techniques of implementation of the student-centered approach engaging the social network can have a good potential for integration in the learning process as they are able to create conditions for placing the student's needs in the centre of learning and teaching, forming initiative, creative and responsible attitude on the part of the students and preparing young people for life in the digital world where computer technologies are becoming an obligatory part of any professional activity including teaching foreign languages. Working out such techniques is considered an important methodological problem. The methods of research include analysis of scientific resources on the problem, working out the method of teaching that integrates online tasks with classroom activities, verification of its efficiency in the learning and teaching process and interpretation of the results received. Practical significance of this work is provided by creation of the teaching techniques which reflect modern requirements of the society in the educational sphere: the students are supposed to form knowledge on methods of teaching English, develop teaching skills and at the same time learn how to use the modern digital technologies for achieving professional pedagogic aims. Positive results of this research serve as basis for further inquiry aimed at involving the Internet technologies into the process of learning and teaching foreign languages since using social networking as part of foreign language courses can noticeably increase students' motivation towards the learning target.

Key words: social network, student-centered approach, students of philological departments, methods of teaching English.

Considering complexity and dynamic nature of the modern world we cannot hope to succeed in teaching and learning the foreign language using one method or following only one approach. It is a combination of methods, techniques and teaching tools that can create necessary conditions for successful learning. Therefore, using social networking while implementing the student-centered approach seems to be quite effective as both of them are phenomena of the modern world and they are willingly accepted by young people. **The scientific problem** of working out techniques of connecting social networking and student-centered approach become even more important when we deal with students of pedagogical universities whose future job is to teach English to learners who are living in the digital world and who value independence and development.

Analysis of scientific research shows that the idea to combine social networking and learner-centered teaching of the students of philological departments is quite new. These two phenomena are highlighted to some extent in the methodological literature [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8] but still as separate scientific problems. Moreover, techniques of implementing the student-centered approach at classes of methodology of teaching English with the help of social networking are not developed yet.

Thus, the main **goal** of the article is to introduce a scheme of teaching the course of Methods of teaching English in Higher Educational Establishments based on combination of the student-centered approach and social networking and analyze its effectiveness. The **methods** to achieve the goal include studying the main principles of the student-centered approach, potential of social networking for teaching, carrying out the methodological experiment and analysis of the results received in class.

The main part of the article deals with the methodological techniques of using social network in classes of English methodology for realizing practically the student-centered approach.

The principal characteristic feature of the student-centered approach is focus on learner's needs rather than on teacher's beliefs of what is good for the learner. It is claimed that the approach contributes to students' feeling of self-respect, their critical thinking skills, it encourages their self-directedness [1]. It is persistently emphasized in methodological literature that the student-centered approach has a big potential for developing students' responsibility and increasing their motivation [2; 3; 7]. The effective implementation of the student-centered approach is equally important for secondary and higher educational establishments [3; 7].

The main principles of the student-centered approach are the following:

- the students are placed in the centre of the learning process and are directly involved in it;
- while learning the students influence the content, activities, materials and pace of learning;
- the instructor provides students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another and coaches them in the skills they need to do so effectively;
- instructions place a strong emphasis on learning outcomes;

- the prior knowledge of students is used as background for future learning [1; 7].

M. Weimer proposed five areas that needed to change in order to achieve learner-centered teaching. These areas are: the choice of content, the instructor's role, responsibility for learning, the process of assessment, and the power relationship between teacher and students [7].

Looking carefully at social networking as a teaching tool we may see its big potential for introducing all the above mentioned changes in the process of formation of the professional competence of future English teachers.

First of all, there is a good chance that the content used for social network sessions can be up-to-date and motivating because the online analytics indicate the level of popularity of the content and if it is low it signals about the necessity of introducing changes into the content for improving its quality. Moreover, online sessions provide opportunities for students to process more material in addition to traditional classes. Secondly, online sessions change the role of the teacher and the students in the direction of equality: both students and teacher become ordinary Internet users whose online activity can be praised as well as criticized by anyone. That's why the opinion about the online product (e.g., student's assignment or teacher's commentary) cannot depend on any authoritative point of view; it is always the objective reflection of the product quality. This very fact increases greatly students' and teacher's responsibility as it is natural for a person to long for praise and to beware of criticism. Thirdly, social networks offer an alternative system of assessment (in comparison to the traditional system used in educational establishments): extra verbal techniques based on using *likes*, *dislikes* and *smileys* which are extremely popular with Internet users.

In addition to the advantages mentioned above A. B. Kajornboon and C. D. Roper point out the following:

- social networks can be used for collaborative work as students can critique on each other's works and assignments with fairly easy access;
- students can ask teachers questions via the Internet;
- the teacher can observe the discussion without making students feel embarrassed;
- the teacher has an opportunity to give individual remarks;
- online sessions form permanent records that can be reread and studied;
- several rounds can be organized to improve skills and correct mistakes;
- online sessions accommodate distance and time [4; 6].

All these arguments prominently stand in favour of the idea of using social networks for implementation of the student-centered approach.

Thus, social networking became a part of the teaching project that had the following aims:

- to form students' methodological skills of designing a communicative task as an effective technique of developing their future learners' communicative competence because such skills are an integral component of the professional competence of the English teacher;
- to develop students' creativity, analytical skills and responsibility;
- to form students' collaborative skills while social networking.

The idea of the project was inspired by the conception of constructivism which prescribes a whole new level of student involvement with content where content is more the means of knowledge than the end of it [7].

The project included two components: in class and online sessions. The in class session was based on workshops and seminars which covered the methodological problems of formation, development and evaluation of the key skills of the professional communicative competence of the English teacher.

The main aim of the workshops was to form the students' awareness of the communicative principles of teaching English. The topics of the workshops were the following.

1. *Professional communicative competence in the foreign language as a goal of University education.*
2. *The main approaches used for formation of the students' professional communicative competence.*
3. *Facilitation of the process of foreign language acquisition by students.*
4. *Evaluation, selection and adaptation of materials for teaching University students.*
5. *Levels of formation of the professional communicative competence.*

They were closely connected with the topics of the seminars, that is:

1. *Stages of formation of professional communicative competence.*
2. *Implementation of the main approaches for formation of the students' professional communicative competence.*
3. *Techniques of developing students' effective strategies to learn the foreign language.*
4. *Methods and techniques of adaptation of materials for teaching University students.*
5. *Assessment of the level of formation of the professional communicative competence.*

The seminars were mainly aimed at forming students' initial skills of producing communicatively orientated studying materials.

The online session, in its turn, provided the students with extra activities on the topics given above. The key feature of the online session was a combination of three aims: firstly, the students were supposed to further develop their productive skills of designing communicative tasks as a teaching technique and to represent the

final product that is their own communicative tasks characterized by all the necessary features; secondly, they were expected to realize practically the principles of the student-centered approach as they were to work in collaboration with each other without being constantly coached by the teacher; thirdly, the students were to get acquainted with certain techniques of using social networks for teaching English being involved themselves into these very techniques.

The whole project took place within the University course of Methods of teaching English to University students from 4.09.15 to 2.10.15 in [H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University](#). The participants of the project were 15 fifth year students doing Master Studies at the Faculty of Foreign Philology.

The instructions for the participants were formulated in accordance with the components of the project and distributed among ten steps.

Step 1 (in class). During the first two workshops the students got acquainted with the definition and characteristics of the communicative task as a central technique within a number of modern approaches such as the student-centered, TBL and action-oriented approaches and were encouraged to form their understanding of these phenomena on the basis of the data provided by the teacher.

Step 2 (in class). The students were involved in analytical and partially productive activity during the first two seminars while comparing communicative tasks with language and speech activities and updating activities increasing their communicative value.

Step 3 (online). The learners were offered to design communicative tasks for teaching English to University students and publish them online in the group *Methods of teaching English to Univ. students* VK. The group was created for this very purpose [7]. The students' communicative tasks were to correspond to the generally accepted criteria: 1) primary focus on meaning, 2) reference to situations of real life communication, 3) presence of communication gap, 4) possibilities for learners to choose linguistic means themselves, 5) presence of a clearly stated non-linguistic outcome [5; 8].

Step 4 (online). The students were to accompany their online tasks by self analysis indicating the features that differentiate communicative tasks from activities.

Step 5 (online). The students had two days to study each other's communicative tasks and press *like* button below the tasks they liked best.

Step 6 (in class). The students' online assignments were discussed in class within the next methodological topic. The strong sides were emphasized, the drawbacks were analyzed.

Step 7 (online). The students were to work online again. This time they were supposed to leave comments to one assignment that followed their own. The comment was supposed to contain description of a positive feature of the peer's communicative task and a suggestion of how to improve its weak part.

Step 8 (in class). The results of commenting were discussed in class within the following methodological topic; the students' attention was drawn to the factors that provided objectivity of the comments.

Step 9 (online). At a final stage of the online session the students introduced changes into their communicative tasks created in Step 3. This was done after the methods of material adaptation were discussed in class and the students were able to use all their experience received during both sessions.

Step 10 (in class). In class there was a summarizing discussion of the main features of the communicative tasks and ways of implementation of student-centered, TBL and action-orientated approaches; the students described the difficulties they had encountered during the project and shared the ways of coping with them.

The described procedure of the project allowed us to collect rather valuable methodological data.

Students' performance in class and online was assessed with quantitative indices.

The object of assessment of in class performance was the level of students' understanding the essence of the communicative task, the principles of student-centered, TBL and action-oriented approaches, techniques of application of methodological data mentioned above for facilitation of the learning and teaching process and adaptation of materials for studies. Tests of the true-false and complete the statements formats were used to get the indices of students' success in learning during the session in class. The criteria of assessment were as follows: 90–100 % of correctly performed test corresponded to level "excellent", 75–89 % – level "good", 60–74 % – level "satisfactory", 0–59 % – level "unsatisfactory". The results of the in class session are given in Table 1.

TABLE 1

The amount of students who reached the indicated levels of success in class

Levels of assessment		The amount of students				
		Step 1	Step 2	Step 6	Step 8	Step 10
Successful performance	excellent	0	4	5	7	8
	good	8	2	9	4	7
	satisfactory	3	3	0	4	0
Unsuccessful performance	unsatisfactory	4	6	1	0	0

Table 1 clearly shows that the amount of students who achieved the excellent level increased by the end of the project while the amount of those who had unsatisfactory level at the beginning equaled to zero at the final step.

As for the online session, all of it was based on the students' productive and analytical work; therefore, it was mainly assessed in terms of successful / unsuccessful performance. Parameters of successful / unsuccessful performance were defined for each step separately:

Step 3: the successful performance was considered to be a student's product that contained all the five features of the communicative task enumerated above.

Step 4: the students were supposed to indicate all the five features of the communicative task in their own product, in this case their performance was considered to be successful.

Step 5: it was decided that the successful performance was *liking* the products which contained all the features of the communicative task; then the average amount of *likes* for full-fledged communicative tasks was counted.

Step 7: the students' products were described as successful if they indicated correctly the positive feature of the task they were reviewing and offered their suggestions concerning its objective drawback.

Step 9: the successful performance was considered to be a student's product that contained all the five features of the communicative task.

The results of the online session with indication of the aim of each step are given in Figure 1.

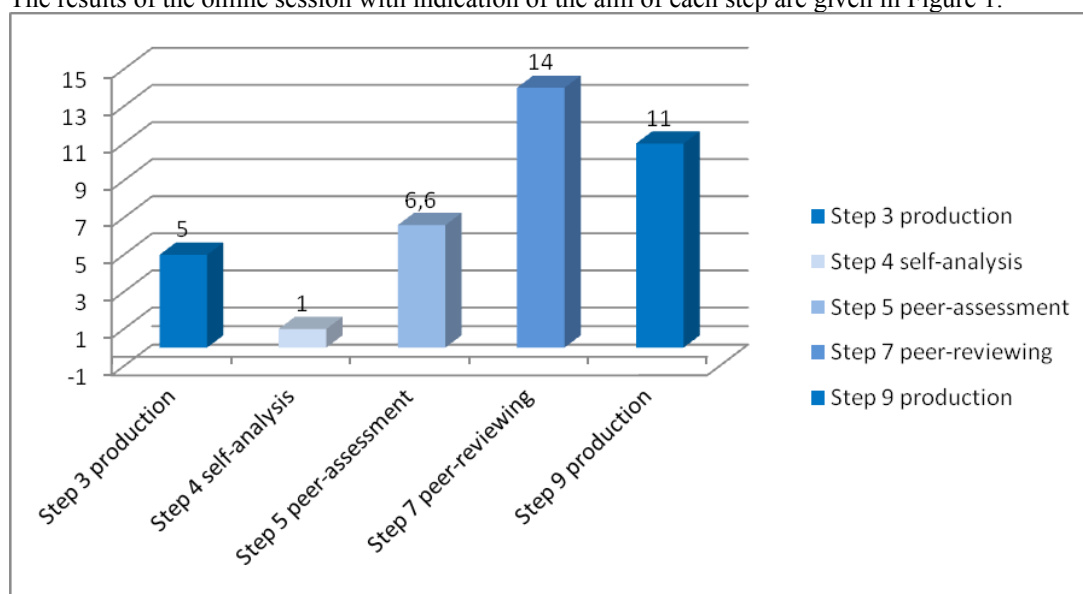


FIGURE 1. The amount of successful performance during the online session

The data represented in Figure 1 shows a considerable improvement of the students' performance on the production level: at the initial stage only 5 students coped with the assignment successfully, at the final stage there were 11 students who created the products that corresponded to the established requirements.

In the process of carrying out the project it was obvious that the online session influenced the quality of students' performance in class. To verify this observation it was decided to count the percentage of successful performance during the whole project and to represent it graphically (see Figure 2).

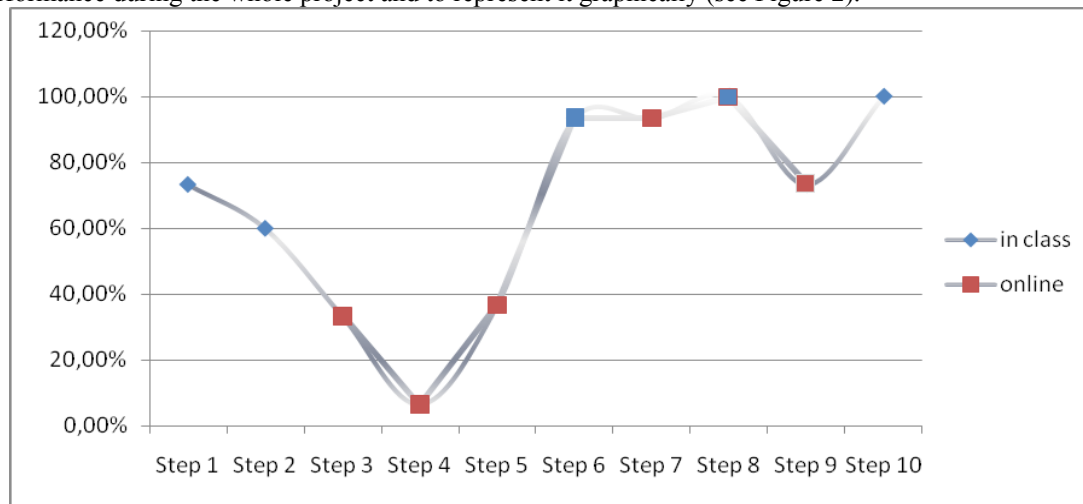


FIGURE 2. Comparison of successful performance in class and online

Thus, Figure 2 shows that each online session (despite of its own unstable behavior) stimulated the increase of successful performance during the workshops and seminars that followed it in class.

The collected data of quantitative indices prove effectiveness of the methodological idea of combining in class and online sessions for achieving appropriate results in learning.

Alongside with quantitative indices it was interesting to observe the quality of the learning and teaching process which was changing towards learner-centeredness as the project proceeded.

To begin with it is worth remarking that the students felt quite impressed when they were offered to publish their tasks online, at the same time they were slightly confused and embarrassed as this type of assignment is not a habitual activity for Ukrainian students yet. Perhaps these emotions contributed positively to the quality of the students' tasks and the majority of their products, though lacking certain communicative features, were already quite original and bright at the initial stage, for example, *"Imagine that you are an alien from a different planet. You have been watching over the human activities for many centuries, and you have come to a disappointing conclusion: humans are destroying the planet. You came to Earth with a very responsible mission: you should convince people to stop killing the Earth. Write a short essay about the importance of a caring attitude to Mother Earth so that everybody could hear you"* [9]. This fact can prove that the students felt motivated from the very beginning of the online session and did not approach the assignment formally but tried to do their best. When we discussed this step in class the students confessed that they felt much more responsible while doing the assignment online in comparison to ordinary homework.

During the discussion we also managed to reveal one more factor that improved the quality of the assignment – a sense of competition. Some students mentioned that they had been truly waiting for new *likes* when they had been doing Step 5. The online statistic analysis shows that the group was visited 110 times on September, 16, the last day of "giving likes" to each other. This is the biggest amount of visits for the whole history of the group. It can prove that the students were really concerned to get positive feedback from their peers.

The average amount of *likes* given for full-fledged communicative tasks is 6,6 in contrast to 6,3 for the products that lacked some communicative features. This fact can stand for supposition that the participants of the project tried to be objective while assessing each other's work.

It is necessary to admit that the most difficult online assignment for students was self-analysis of their own products. The majority made one and the same mistake: instead of referring to the communicative features in their assignments they enumerated general characteristics which are universal for any communicative task, for example, *"Imagine that you are a great inventor. You have decided to invent a new device without which people in future will not be able to imagine their every day life. Describe your invention to your groupmates, prove why you want to invent this device, what's the benefit of it, what advantages it has and how to use it."*

This task has the features:

1. *focus on meaning*
2. *students are free to choose language means*
3. *the task is organized within a certain situation*
4. *there's an information gap*
5. *there's a clearly stated non-linguistic outcome"* [9].

So the creative work turned out to be more appealing for the students' than the analytical one. It's not easy to define its reason. Maybe the result of the productive activity is more prominent in students' point of view than the one of the analytical work and thus, more important. However, whatever the reasons are, Step 7 aimed at peer-analysis showed quite different results. The majority of the students while commenting on each other's tasks gave a more professional judgment. This time they showed much better understanding of the nature of the task and they offered correct suggestions of how to make it more communicative. The following example can prove it.

The task: *"You take part in the experiment according to which you have to spend 3 months on a desert island alone. You won't be provided with food and water. You are allowed to take with you only 10 things. Decide what you will take and explain to your groupmates why you will need each of them."*

The comment: *"...In task at least two participants contribute to the situation, so how about involving one more person (you and your best friend take part in the experiment...) in the interaction and discuss those things with him or her, so that there would be an information gap."* [9].

This positive dynamics led the most of the participants to the excellent level of successful performance when they were offered to introduce changes into their initial products at Step 9 of the online session. At this stage the majority of the students represented the improved communicative tasks which corresponded to all the criteria. This time they really included the situation and non-linguistic outcomes such as *a new holiday, a booklet, a scenario, an establishment*, etc into their tasks.

As a **conclusion** it is necessary to say that the students' informal approach towards the assignment, their increased responsibility and sense of competition, as well as successful peer assessment can serve as evidence of effective realization of the student-centered approach and indices of high quality of the project. The information

given above makes it possible for us to claim that using social networking is a really effective teaching tool for implementation of the student-centered approach as it provides the choice of content, the instructor's role, responsibility for learning, alternative assessment and relationship between teacher and students that place the student in the centre of the learning and teaching process. The aims of the project were achieved as the majority of students were able to create communicative tasks, to give objective judgment of each other's products and became actively involved into learning activity online. Working out techniques of combination of social networking and student-centered at practical English classes can become **further scientific perspectives**.

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Перлова В. В. Использование социальной сети для внедрения личностно-ориентированного подхода при обучении студентов университета методики преподавания английского языка.

В статье представлены приёмы использования социальной сети для внедрения принципов личностно-ориентированного подхода при работе со студентами-филологами на занятиях по методике преподавания английского языка в вузе. Выяснено, что вовлечение социальной сети в учебный процесс заметно повышает мотивацию и ответственность студентов. Теоретически и практически обоснована целесообразность использования наряду с аудиторными видами учебной деятельности заданий, для выполнения которых студенты пользуются социальной сетью.

Ключевые слова: социальная сеть, личностно-ориентированный подход, студенты-филологи, методика преподавания английского языка.

Перлова В. В. Використання соціальної мережі для впровадження особистісно-орієнтованого підходу при навчанні студентів університету методики викладання англійської мови.

У статті представлено прийоми використання соціальної мережі для впровадження принципів особистісно-орієнтованого підходу при роботі зі студентами-філологами на заняттях з методики викладання англійської мови у ВНЗ. З'ясовано, що залучення соціальної мережі до навчального процесу помітно підвищує мотивацію і відповідальність студентів. Теоретично і практично обґрунтовано доцільність використання паралельно із аудиторними видами навчальної діяльності завдань, для виконання яких студенти користуються соціальною мережею.

Ключові слова: соціальна мережа, особистісно-орієнтований підхід, студенти-філологи, методика викладання англійської мови.