

Psychological and Pedagogical Conditions for Effective Application of Dialogic Communication among Teenagers

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ABSTRACT

Our personality develops gradually, and this process is influenced by various factors, with language being one of the most important. We need to communicate with other people, to speak as much, as we need occupation, and this need determines the development of our personalities. Language is deeply embedded in our conscious and subconscious. Through language we perceive most of the information about the world and the way it is organised. It helps children identify themselves. By learning language, we acquire cognitive frames and schemes of possible actions, as well as behaviour models and patterns we can employ in various situations.

The article presents the analysis of the other works on the problem, performed in order to define dialogic communication, its characteristics, functions, and the role it plays in the development of personality. It also demonstrates why dialogic communication should be used more widely in schools.

The experiments conducted allowed us to determine the psychological and pedagogical conditions required for effective development of dialogic communication between teenagers. We also came to a conclusion that the effectiveness of dialogic communication in schools depends on the combination of various pedagogical conditions, including the teacher's determination and motivation, the use of didactic literature, education methods, link between education and real life, speech norms, and communication standards.

KEYWORDS

dialogue, dialogic communication, dialogic communication functions, communicant, dialogic speech.

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Introduction

To collaborate with other people and achieve goals, one needs to abide by certain communication standards, to be aware of the norms, values, and behaviour

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patterns used by the society, and be able to apply this knowledge in both formal and informal communication.

When one does not want to tell about their thoughts and feelings, one cannot be understood by others. Most often, such communication strategy leads to failure. People who behave this way often suffer from excessive pressure and stress, bear grudge to other people, the world and even themselves.

Every person who lacks or avoids communication, is bound to lose contact with others, and as a result, will cease feeling involved and will have to live in alien environment. Such person will thus be unable to acquire correct cognitive models, while the number of the wrong models may at some point reach critical level.

Common sense tells us, that if we do not interact with other people, we have no opportunity to broaden our outlook and develop relationships, and thus will remain ignorant of many aspects of our life. The negative consequence of such a communication strategy will be not just the underdeveloped social intelligence, but also a very low level of general intelligence. Difficulties in understanding each other are caused by the lack of proper communication, which, in turn, effects or mind and behaviour patterns in a negative way.

Researchers agree that the above-mentioned factors interact and reinforce each other. Inadequate communication strategy results in intellectual disability (e.g. delusion, prejudice, wrong beliefs, ineffective behaviour patterns, defective strategies, etc.). Ineffective intellectual habits, in turn, interfere with the development of communication skills that in this case remain on the primitive level. As a result, the overall intellectual level of the society decreases dramatically. (Bohm 1996; Agapova 2004).

Dialogic communication is generally considered to be an organised communication process that enables us to learn and develop our personalities. Participants of dialogic communication are called communicants (D'jakonov 2006).

The key function of a dialogue is to intensify cognitive processes in our brain. Dialogue, as a form of communication, requires all the participants to apply their intelligence, and thus to review their outlook and cognitive models, and reconstruct their own self. Dialogue determines and sustains emotions, i.e. our intellectual activity focused on recovering the inner balance and creating the meaning of existence. This kind of intellectual activity plays a great role in managing crisis situations. (Bloh 2007).

Thus, dialogic communication activates and enhances the intellectual powers of the communicants. Any real life dialogue is, therefore, a cognitive necessity. It is used to investigate the world, and understand other people's activities, to build up relationships.

People feel the need to communicate and tell each other about their emotions, teach each other, give advice, support, comfort, inform, etc. This is real, mutual, communication, aimed at developing and updating our cognitive models of cooperation. And this is what we refer to as dialogic communication in this article.

Dialogic communication may concern our beliefs, motives, behaviour patterns, or decision making processes. It helps to develop emotional relationships between the communicants, stimulate their emotions, reduce tension, reach psychological comfort, control emotions, and perceive social values. (Vaclavik, et. al. 2000).

Both individuals and society feel the need for dialogic communication. It helps to understand the objectives and meaning of collective activities, reach understanding, tolerance, and trust. Dialogue provides communicants with psychological support, an opportunity to believe in themselves and raise their social status, to watch and correct their own behaviour, to become better. (Zhuravlev 2007; Zabrodin 2005a).

Dialogic communication encourages self-understanding and understanding of others, stimulates creative thinking and broadens our psychological experience. It is not merely a process of information exchange. It also focuses on the communicants and group activity, and encourages correction of relationship patterns, forms friendly and warm atmosphere. (Sedov 2004).

It is suggested, that dialogic communication allows for better translation of values as the communication focuses not on these values in themselves, thus allowing for their cognitive perception. The primary objectives of dialogic communication are the following: to orient in interpersonal relationships, to analyse situations, and to consider and try various social roles. (Florenskaja 2001).

Dialogic communication constructs mental schemes for solving various communication problems, helps to perceive social values, set goals, and analyse various situations. By means of a dialogue our mind learns to forecast the consequences and evaluate solutions, it develops our own self, and mobilises our cognitive abilities and communication skills. (Zabrodin 2005b).

Dialogue puts the communicants in such context, where they have to solve a number of communication problems and achieve certain objectives. These problems include game elements, dramatisation, and competition, and can be solved via joint creative activity of the communicants. The aim of any activity in a dialogue is to meet cognitive demands of the communicants, i.e. to reflect and investigate the reality, and to overcome the boundaries of daily routine. Dialogic communication activates the process of self-cognition, as reflexive communication enhances our perception and cognition of social values and the problems of existence, such as good and evil, responsibility and duty, empathy, justice. (Harash 1986)

This is one of the fundamental ideas of the cognitive psychology of communication. Whatever approach we take to describing or explaining the human nature, man's motives and conduct, we always turn to the basic principles - of course, man is a homo sapiens, but man is eager for knowledge and transformation, and what's more, man communicates by means of dialogue (Crossley 2013, p. 135).

We consider dialogic communication to be a tool for overcoming cognitive dissonance, acquiring knowledge, activating cognition and other mental processes. Dialogic communication presents practically all the variations of phenomenological aspects of cognitive psychology of communication, i.e. the psychology of cognition processes, meaning creation, and accumulation of knowledge (Galickih 2004, p. 122)

According to contemporary child development theories, during the socialisation period teenagers require both psychological and pedagogical support. This support should help them determine their goals and lifestyle, their attitude towards life and other people, develop their own principles and ethics. It should also encourage them in their eagerness to change the world they live in, and adjust it to their personal beliefs. (Lishin 2007; Karpova 2013).



Dialogic communication provides this support to all the members of various social groups, including teenagers. The major objective of pedagogics is to develop approaches that will stimulate teenagers in dialogic communication, direct their activity, and thus provide for cognitive effectiveness of such communication. This can be done by actively introducing dialogue as a form of communication.

Every social group occupies its social and psychological space that determines the form and character of dialogic communication in this group. (Tokareva 2013).

People are interested in real life dialogues, as they provoke various emotions, influence our ideas and conduct. No group can survive without dialogue, at list a spontaneous one. Dialogues in various social groups may vary in their functions, role distribution, the degree of freedom, character (conflict or constitutive dialogue), the level of independence, etc. Real life spontaneous communication occurs on various levels - family, society, professional communication. It is an essential part of life for any community, which helps develop more sophisticated cognitive models of the world and the society. (Cypik 2005)

It is, therefore, of great importance to develop techniques that can be used to form a linguistic persona, i.e. an individual with a high level of linguistic and communicative competence, who cares about their mother tongue and is able to convey their ideas and emotions via language.

Methodology

Linguodidactics has always paid a lot of attention to the development of speaking skills. As to dialogic communication, it is commonly considered by teachers that colloquial speech and dialogues are the things that students learn naturally in everyday praxis, and hence, there is no need to teach oral dialogic communication in schools. School teachers usually focus on the development of monological speech skills, both oral and written. (Dudkovskaja 2014; Bastrikova 2004).

However, long history of theoretical studies and practical research prove, that teenagers should be taught all forms of communication, including the dialogic ones (Sturikova 2009; Titova 2007). To solve this problems, we should determine their character and consider the psychological and pedagogical conditions required for effective use of dialogic communication. Thorough research and analysis of the results obtained allows for better understanding of the present state. On this basis, plans for its improvement can be made.

Dialogue is a form of communication, where every communicant demonstrates their individual characteristics. The way we interact with others tells a lot about our communication skills and our character; and the way we organise our speech, build up phrases and sentences, demonstrates our level of culture, literacy and linguistic competence.

Even the communicative approach to teaching is based on applying various interaction models. With age, we learn to make more complex phrases and sentences, and our vocabulary becomes larger. This progress, however, may slow down and even stop at some point, if we lack motivation, practice, or incentives. Our whole lives we learn to control our speech, to choose phrasing that is the most accurate and adequate in each situation, in order to understand our partners, and the purpose of communication itself. But it is at school that we acquire the basis for further improvement of our linguistic competence. (Sturikova 2009).

In order to effectively organise education process and develop dialogic communication skills of teenagers, it is necessary to determine the level of the

skills pupils already have, and the motivation level of both pupils and teachers, their willingness to participate in dialogic communication; it is also important to choose correct methodology and study the background.

To analyse the process of teaching dialogic communication and its effectiveness, we conducted a survey among teachers and pupils of the sixth and seventh forms, organised interviews, creative tasks, essays, i.e. used various forms of dialogic communication.

Results

Below are given some of the teachers' answers to our questions.

1. What is the objective of teaching dialogic communication during native language classes?

«To teach pupils discuss various topics and use communication strategies appropriate in the given context»; «To teach pupils communicate in various spheres of society, and follow the standards and norms of communication and speech; to enrich pupils' thesaurus; to develop rhetoric skills»; «To improve communication skills and teach how to use intonation, mimics and gestures correctly».

2. What activities do you use to develop pupils' communication skills?

“Making dialogues with the process divided in several stages. Pupils may be required to use certain sentences and phrases, to describe situations, or to make a whole dialogue on a given topic on their own. This, of course, requires preliminary vocabulary practice”; “Making dialogues on various topics for various situations, roleplays, editing oral and written dialogues”; “Reading dialogues applying correct intonation, making oral and written monologues and dialogues, reconstructing simple and complex sentences, using clauses, etc.”

3. How can pupils improve their language through dialogic communication?

“Dialogic communication broadens the vocabulary, teaches conversation etiquette, and enhances spontaneous speech skills”; “In dialogues pupils acquire cultural, general and specific knowledge through language”.

4. How well do pupils master dialogic communication skills in the 6th form?

- Quite well.

in the 7th form?

- Quite well.

5. What difficulties do pupils face while learning dialogic communication?

«6th form pupils cannot adequately express their ideas in oral and written dialogues; 7th form pupils lack practice, as they apply correct dialogic communication in classes only, and not in real life»; «Pupils have difficulties in replying to their partners in spontaneous dialogues».

6. What tasks and activities do you consider to be the most effective for developing dialogic communication skills

- in the 6th form?

“Analysing sample dialogues”; “Making dialogues and using certain words and phrases”; “Roleplaying dialogues”; “Making dialogues about personal experience”.

- in the 7th form?



“Making dialogues for specific situations and participating in spontaneous dialogues”; “Creative thinking, reconstruction of dialogues”.

7. What role does dialogic communication training play in teaching native language?

“It helps to develop speaking skills, as there is no opportunity to do it regularly and consistently due to the large amount of material to be taught”; “No particular role”.

8. What aspects do you assess when teaching dialogic communication?

“Conversation etiquette and style”; “Intonation”; “Logic and structure of dialogues, punctuation”.

9. What writing activities do you use?

“Editing dialogues”; “Making sentences according to schemes, copying dialogues from fiction books”; “Writing dialogues”.

10. What activities, apart from the ones given in the study guide, do you use?

“I try to employ themes that each class will be interested in, such as school events”; “Activities that develop creativity, imagination, and logic”; “Creative reconstruction of dialogues, editing”.

11. What are the major assessment criteria?

“Content and meaning, vocabulary use, ability to cope with non-standard situations”; “Rhetoric skills”; “Turn-taking in dialogues”.

12. What topics are the most popular with your pupils?

“School life”; “Communication in everyday situations (at home, in the store, at the chemist’s, in public transport, phone, etc.)”.

13. What topics do pupils usually discuss in their free time?

“Computers”; “The Internet”; “Spare time activities”; “Appearance and behaviour”; “Mobile phones and gadgets”; “Music”; “Relationships between boys and girls”.

14. How do themes that concern society and culture help in learning native language?

“They help to vary the material and avoid repetitions”; “They do not help all the time”; “They help to learn and understand national and cultural values”.

15. How do you determine what themes to use in classes?

“I use study guides and didactic materials that suggest certain themes”.

16. How do you combine communicative content and socially-oriented approach in teaching native language and dialogic communication?

“I pick up socially-oriented themes for dialogues”; “I ask pupils to make dialogues using the vocabulary we have studied during the class.”

17. What socially-oriented themes are most popular with pupils?

“Ecology”; “Morale and ethics”; “History of my city”; “My family”.

18. Are you fully content with the study guides you use. Would you like to add anything?

“I think that study guides should contain theory and practical exercises that would comply with cultural and social approach to education. They also should be adjusted to each form”.

19. What extracurricular tasks and activities do you use?

“Going to theatres, concerts, and exhibitions”, master-classes, quizzes.

20. Do you require extra methodological support? What kind of support?

“Textbooks with socially-oriented topics”; “Methodology and scenarios of school events and festivals”.

After attending classes, talking to teachers, and pupils, and analysing their written works, we came to a conclusion, that only 34% of the pupils have a high enough level of communication competence. It is therefore, necessary to develop effective methods for improving pupils' communication skills.

Discussion

We are now going to focus on several points that follow from the analysis. The practice of teaching dialogic communication is long enough, but it is still necessary to analyse this experience, make it systematic and available to a large audience. Teachers are aware of the importance of dialogic communication as an education tool, and develop new methods and approaches.

But they still do not divide the process of teaching dialogic communication into separate stages. Making learning process more complicated is one of the basic principles of education. However, what we observed, is that the level of complexity is practically the same all the time.

The approaches presented also lack another important aspect - the aim of communication, which is to understand and to be understood. This is probably the reason why most pupils cannot master all the stages of dialogic communication, especially the final part of a dialogue. It is also advisable to take into account pupils' age and interests, when determining the themes of dialogues.

According to the survey, the themes that are suggested by the programme differ from those that pupils are interested in. Hence, the list of themes should be broader and include the ones that are of particular interest to pupils. This will enable teachers to better understand their pupils and influence their tastes.

Oral dialogues prevail greatly over the written ones. The latter, however, allows pupils to practice various syntactic structures, to reproduce intonation patterns in writing, improve their style, the way they organise the text. It also enables pupils to understand literature on a much deeper level.

Another problem is that the vocabulary studied is not always activated through dialogues. Thus, if pupils learn vocabulary on professional terms and phrases, it would be only reasonable to ask them to write an essay "My father's/mother's job" with dialogues in it as a home task. This would encourage children to talk to their parents about their professions and jobs. According to the survey, teenagers are only aware of the professions they can contact with in everyday life (such as doctors, teachers, salesmen, etc.), or the ones they see in the mass media and movies (lawyers, detectives, bankers). There were also a number of pupils who cannot tell anything about their parents' jobs. Therefore, this exercise will also be useful for their socialisation.

Another possible exercise is to ask pupils to review the essays by their classmates. The class is divided into groups of four. In each group, pupils exchange their essays, proofread them and select the best ones. Then a representative of each group reads the best essay aloud to the whole class. Thus, pupils do not only practice communication skills, but also learn about various jobs, which may later help them make their career choice.

Teachers should also have tools for assessing pupils' communication competence and adjust the learning process accordingly. It is also a good idea to introduce various oral and written exercises: making dialogues on a set topic in accordance with the situation, making dialogues based on pictures, and writing dialogues on such topics as "How would you describe yourself in 20 years' time?".



Such exercises make it clearer for pupils why they should practice the techniques of starting, conducting, and finishing a dialogue.

Another effective learning tool is dialogue reproduction. All the phrases of a dialogue are written on separate sheets of paper. Then pupils have to use these phrases to comply a meaningful and logical dialogue, which is then compared with the original. Pupils may also be asked to develop the theme of the dialogue they are reconstructing.

It is also very important that pupils analyse their own dialogues in order to determine the aim of each communicant. Understanding the aims of communication helps pupils make better dialogues.

Conclusion

Dialogic communication comprises cognitive communication tools that aim at enhancing children's perception, cognition, intelligence, explanation skills and understanding by constructing a complex communication model (its theoretical concepts and constructs).

Dialogic communication helps to develop effective strategies and overall cognitive schemes, as well as transfer social innovations from one community to another.

Dialogic communication enables us to gradually correct and adjust our cognitive schemes, to identify inadequate ideas and beliefs, to determine effective plans and views, and to better understand the society we live in. In dialogue we also develop various alternative social strategies, which lowers the stress level and prevents emotional crisis.

Our study allows us to suggest, that for effective development of dialogic communication competence in teenagers, the following pedagogical conditions are required.

1) Teachers should be interested in teaching dialogic communication forms and understand the need for this.

2) The material used should comply with the themes discussed in language classes.

3) Both traditional and innovative education techniques and approaches should be used.

4) Dialogic communication practice should be directly linked to real life communication in order to motivate pupils.

5) Pupils should demonstrate their speaking skills and knowledge of speaking etiquette.

Although some of the aspects of the problem considered in the article have been analysed in theoretical works, there is still a lot to be done. There is a strong need for a new methodology for the development of dialogic communication skills, as well as for new didactic materials adjusted to each stage of the education process.

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