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CONTENTS

PEDAGOGY

Delcheva Ts. A. ABOUT THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE TRAINING OF FUTURE SOCIAL WORKERS AND THE SOCIAL PRACTICE	4
Goncharova Olga, Konovalenko Tetiana MAIN TENDENCIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRE-SERVICE LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION IN UKRAINE	7
Бєдакова С. В. ФОРМУВАННЯ ГРОМАДЯНСЬКОЇ ПОЗИЦІЇ МАЙБУТНІХ ВЧИТЕЛІВ МУЗИЧНОГО МИСТЕЦТВА НА ВИВЧЕННІ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ КУЛЬТУРНО-МИСТЕЦЬКОЇ СПАДЩИНИ В. БАРВІНСЬКОГО	11
Білецька І. О. ДВОМОВНЕ НАВЧАННЯ У СЕРЕДНІХ НАВЧАЛЬНИХ ЗАКЛАДАХ США: МІФИ ТА РЕАЛЬНІСТЬ	15
Савош В. О. АНАЛІЗ ПОНЯТТЯ «РОЗВИТОК» У КОНТЕКСТІ ФЕНОМЕНУ «ДІАДНИЙ БАЗИС»	21
Васильєва Л. Л. СЕМАНТИКА ОСНОВНИХ ЕЛЕМЕНТІВ МУЗИЧНОГО МОВЛЕННЯ HARD-AND-HEAVY: ПЕДАГОГІЧНИЙ АСПЕКТ	25
Ганна Шліхта МЕТОДИ КОНТРОЛЮ ЕФЕКТИВНОСТІ ПРОВЕДЕНОГО УРОКУ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТИ САМОВДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ ПЕДАГОГА	30
Жаворонкова В. В. ПСИХОЛОГО-ПЕДАГОГІЧНІ УМОВИ ПІДГОТОВКИ МАЙБУТНІХ ЛІКАРІВ ДО РОЗВИТКУ АНГЛОМОВНОЇ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ	34
Жумабаева А. Е., Жусупбекова Г. Г. КОММУНИКАТИВНЫЕ ТЕХНОЛОГИИ ОБУЧЕНИЯ В РАЗВИТИИ РЕЧЕВОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ МЛАДШИХ ШКОЛЬНИКОВ	38
Іовхімчук Н. В. ДИТЯЧА ЛІТЕРАТУРА ЯК ОСНОВА МОРАЛЬНОГО ВИХОВАННЯ МОЛОДШИХ ШКОЛЯРІВ	42
Момот О. О. МЕТОДИКА ВИХОВАННЯ ОСОБИСТОСТІ МАЙБУТНЬОГО ВЧИТЕЛЯ В ЗДОРОВ'ЯЗБЕРЕЖУВАЛЬНОМУ СЕРЕДОВИЩІ ВИЩОГО НАВЧАЛЬНОГО ЗАКЛАДУ	46
Ржевський Г. М. АНАЛІЗ ОСОБИСТІСНИХ ОСОБЛИВОСТЕЙ ТА ПРИЧИН ІНТЕРНЕТ-ЗАЛЕЖНОСТІ У СТУДЕНТІВ ВИЩИХ НАВЧАЛЬНИХ ЗАКЛАДІВ	50
Бабаліч В. А. РОЛЬ ФАХІВЦІВ ФІЗИЧНОГО ВИХОВАННЯ І СПОРТУ У СОЦІАЛЬНОМУ РОЗВИТКУ МОЛОДІ: ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИЙ ТА УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ ДОСВІД	60
<i>Куліненко Л. Б.</i> ВПЛИВ ПРАКТИКИ НА ФОРМУВАННЯ ГРОМАДСЬКИХ ЯКОСТЕЙ ОСОБИСТОСТІ	66
Meterbaeva K. M., Elkeeva A. B. WALK AS MEANS OF FORMATION OF INFORMATIVE COMPETENCE OF THE SENIOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN	73

MAIN TENDENCIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRE-SERVICE LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

PhD, Associate Professor Goncharova Olga, PhD, Associate Professor Konovalenko Tetiana

Ukraine, Melitopol, Bogdan Khmelnitskiy Melitopol State Pedagogical University

Abstract. The article deals with the description of the on-going joint project of the British Council Ukraine and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine "New Generation School Teacher". The authors reveal the findings of the Baseline study, carried out by the members of the project team, draw the readers' attention to the innovative Methodology Curriculum, designed for the future teachers of English, analyse the content of this curriculum, describe the features of the piloting process. The authors provide the readers with specific information, given in the monitoring report. The further stages of project implementation are specified.

Keywords: pre-service language teacher education, methodology, methodology curriculum, future teachers, piloting, monitoring.

Introduction. The modern stage of Pre-Service language teacher education in Ukraine is putting forward serious requirements for the professional development of a modern teacher. Contemporary system of education does not always take into account all these requirements for the teacher's professional training in a higher educational establishment. It is necessary to mention all stakeholders of the educational process. They are school learners, their parents, teachers, the administration of schools, University students, teachers-educators, Universities authorities. Thus, each stakeholder has his or her own needs related to the professional activity of a teacher of English.

It should be said that a lot of Ukrainian and foreign scholars research the issues of methodological training of future teachers, but quite few of them work at innovative trends: the impact of a dialogue of cultures and civilizations on language learning and teaching (V.V. Safonova), the integration of information technology into the teacher education curriculum (N. Wentworth, R. Earle, M. Connell), innovative use of technologies in teaching languages (G. Dudeney, N. Hockly), reconceptualisation of language teacher education for the 21st century (Rod Bolitho). Although, the issue of the reformation of the system of methodological training in Pre-Service language teacher education in Ukraine hasn't been fully covered.

The real challenge of the time is the modern reforms of the secondary and primary schooling in Ukraine, which don't go along with the outdated system of the future teacher's methodological training in the Universities. This situation has become a reason why in March, 2013 a joint project of the British Council Ukraine and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine "New Generation School Teacher" was launched.

Dissatisfaction with the state of teaching English at schools has promoted the necessity of the change in Pre-Service language teacher education in Ukraine. There appeared the need to fundamentally revise and reform the professional training of the future teacher of English. The seriousness of the situation was confirmed by the results of the Baseline study, initiated by the project team. The Baseline lasted throughout the year 2013-2014. It was found that "the methodical component of the curricula requires a significant increase in the number of classroom hours, allocated for the discipline "Methodology of teaching English". The findings of the Baseline also proved that University system of practical and laboratory classes had to be completely reorganized. It was presupposed that new Methodology curriculum will create an opportunity to study Methodology course throughout the whole period of teachers' training in the University" [4, p. 19].

The project team identified the urgent need to review the thematic modules of the Curriculum and to bring them into a line with the challenges of the day, with a particular focus on the reform of language education in Ukraine. The need to modernize and diversify the forms and methods of the training of future teachers of English was also pointed out in the Baseline.

The results of the Baseline study allowed the project team to state that there are no common approaches to the assessment of the academic achievements of students in the course "Methodology of teaching English", namely: different aspects of assessment, such as the number of forms and methods; evaluation criteria; content of the summative and formative assessment; the number of points, allocated for the summative and formative assessment. The object of the assessment is mainly

students' theoretical knowledge without taking into account the level of the development of their professional skills and abilities; assessment (in particular tests) is aimed at the revealing secondary knowledge, while little attention is paid to the basic professionally-oriented methodological skills of future teachers. There are also no alternative technologies of assessment and self-assessment, such as EPOSTL (European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages) [4, p. 20].

The findings of the Baseline have provided a rational for the development of an experimental Methodology curriculum. This document is characterized by a number of innovations, such as a qualitatively new approach to conducting classroom sessions, organizing self-study hours and pedagogical practice of students, as well as establishing a proper relationship between the content of this discipline and pedagogical practice, new format of the course paper.

New Methodology course is an integrated one, it is flexible, dynamic and purposeful. The curriculum is based on an integrated approach to Pre-Service language teacher education, which promotes the development of cognitive-emotional learning and development of teaching skills. The Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (No. 871 dated by August 12, 2015) "On conducting a pedagogical experiment on the methodological training of future teachers of English" officially announced the beginning of the piloting process [3].

The Methodology curriculum consists of six modules and has to be taught from the second year of studies in the University and continues until the end of the "Bachelor" degree study, that is, throughout the whole course. All knowledge received and skills developed in methodological classes are supported by the pedagogical practice, which is held once a fortnight (the 1st year of the course), and once a week (the 2nd and 3rd years of the course) [1].

The experimental course is characterized by the absence of traditional lectures and is aimed primarily at mastering key competencies through practical activities. There are mainly workshops, interactive or mini lectures, discussion groups, focused tasks of sessions, guided reading, observation of lessons in schools, micro-teaching.

It is important to mention that in this innovative Curriculum the topics of the traditional Methodology course are revised and substantially updated. Moreover, the content of the discipline is complemented with innovative topics that must be taken into account in the process of learning English. They are Second Language Acquisition, Developing Learner Autonomy, Working with Materials, Error Analysis and Dealing with Errors, Catering for SEN (Special Educational Needs), Classroom Action Research, Planning for CPD (Continuing Professional Development). In order to cover the innovative content, the members of the project team had to increase their own qualifications on the specified topics. For example, the teacher-educators did an online course "Special Educational Needs", organized by the British Council, which allowed them to provide a comprehensive insight into all methodological aspects and organically engage them in the Curriculum. In addition, seven British Council schools of professional development were held in Ukraine. These schools were attended not only by the members of the project team, but also by the teachers-educators who were going to pilot new Methodology course [2].

It should be mentioned that piloting of new Methodology curriculum has been carried out in 8 Universities of Ukraine. This article deals with the peculiarities of piloting process in Bogdan Khmelnitskiy Melitopol State Pedagogical University. In this higher educational institution the implementation of the innovative Methodology Curriculum started in the academic year of 2016-2017 and students of two faculties are involved into it (Philological Faculty as well as Educational-Scientific Institute of Socio-Humanitarian and Art Education). The features of the piloting process were documented by the project team members, working in this University. All levels of management of the University provided necessary support (rector, vice-rector, deans of the faculties, heads of the corresponding departments, teachers-educators, responsible for conducting the course). The Order of the Rector of the University regulated the structure and stages of the piloting process, specified its features and appointed teachers-educators, responsible for the experiment.

As for the piloting start the following steps have been made: several preparatory meetings with the representatives of all levels of management were held at the beginning of the academic year; the students participants of the experiment were selected (experimental and control groups); necessary changes were introduced to the general Curriculum; the proper schedule for contact hours was designed; the meeting with partner schools and school teachers was held; students-participants were informed of the content of the pedagogical experiment, acquainted with Curriculum guidelines and the details of the piloting process [1].

Methodology teachers, responsible for conducting the innovative course, were equipped with a set of documents (Curriculum map, Curriculum guidelines, and Supplementary materials). The teachers-

educators were supported in terms of sample unit maps, session materials, observation tasks, which had to be done by students during school experience, self-assessment checklists for students to use at the end of each unit, bibliography of literary sources, glossary with key terms, accompanied with Ukrainian equivalents. More and more Methodology teachers have been involved into the experiment by means of their attendance of training seminars and schools of professional development.

Students-participants received the Student's book, which fully covers course requirements concerning attendance, self-study hours, class participation, setting and meeting deadlines, as well as self-assessment. Students-participants also got the link to the project site http://ngschoolteacher.wixsite.com/ngscht, which contains all vital guidelines. Both students and teachers had an opportunity to get acquainted with the prospective learning outcomes of a graduate from the PRESETT Bachelor's programme, which are presented in Profile of a Newly-Qualified Teacher, designed by the project team [2].

Thus a favourable psychological atmosphere was created by means of constant project team members' meetings with the students-participants and teachers-educators throughout the academic year. These stakeholders were free to ask any questions or raise any issues concerning the piloting process.

One of the most important features of the first year of piloting was the continuing monitoring. It has to be mentioned that all the universities, participating in the project, exchanged monitoring visits. The agenda of the visits included Methodology class observation, meetings with the University authorities and teachers-educators, interviews with the students. Bogdan Khmelnitskiy Melitopol State Pedagogical University was visited by members of the project team – representatives of H.S.Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University.

Monitoring report included findings from students, methodology teachers, University authorities, schools (mentors and principals), action points (recommendations for support and follow-up, areas of concern), notes on areas of good practice. Session observation was aimed at giving the answers to the following questions: What activities/techniques help to involve students actively? What modes of interaction are observable in the session? What evidence is there of student motivation? How are bridges created between theory and practice? Is L1 used in the class? For what purposes? What opportunities are created to help students to display understanding? Moreover, Post-Observation teacher self-evaluation and self-reflection form was provided. All the reports were submitted to the British Council Ukraine office.

The findings from students provided an insight into the following issues:

- the new course is difficult but challenging;
- new language skills are developed;
- school observation is important as they can compare the new teaching they learn in the university about and the teaching that they see at school;
 - some students still want the teacher to be the main source of information;
 - students use Internet resources and a social network group was created;
- English is viewed mainly as a means of international communication and a means of getting new knowledge.

The findings from teachers referred to the next questions:

- 1. their sessions became more interactive;
- 2. second-year students lack theoretical background;
- 3. the interactive format of the sessions is more attractive for students:
- 4. some students do not feel they are going to teach, have not decided yet;
- 5. lack of time for preparation, no materials available;
- 6. encouragement from the Ministry, e.g. the issue of certificates for methodology teachers about upgrading their skills;
- 7. the teacher profile was used in the introduction session; and all the students downloaded it to their portfolios and occasionally referred to it;
 - 8. the issue of English as a life skill is not often mentioned;
- 9. teacher group meetings take place in the form of informal discussions though not on a regular basis;
 - 10. teachers feel lack of material recycling, each session new topic!;
- 11. school practice is discussed with the teacher responsible for the practice but seldom in methodology sessions.

The findings from university authorities include the following information:

- they support the participants of the new methodology implementation in terms of convenient schedules, equipment, Internet access;

- the university feel the lack of literature;
- there is positive feedback from both teachers and students;
- dissemination process is continuing: other teachers and students, school teachers;
- participation in the project is beneficial for the teachers' and students' professional growth.

The monitoring teachers suggested such action points as stronger support and promotion from the Ministry to encourage universities and teachers for further piloting; necessity of organising self-access centres with libraries; improved correlation between teachers and teaching English and Methodology.

There were mentioned some areas of good practice: using self-assessment lists at the end of sessions; setting up a social network group; enthusiastic teachers; support from the dean who is a project group member.

The piloting of the Methodology curriculum in Bogdan Khmelnitskiy Melitopol State Pedagogical University will go on till the year of 2020.

Conclusions. The joint project of the British Council Ukraine and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine "New Generation School Teacher" represents an innovative change in the Pre-Service language teacher education in Ukraine. The content of the Methodology curriculum fully reflects the challenges of the 21st century education. It is aimed at raise of the level of English-language teachers' methodological proficiency, which will gradually lead to the raise of school-leavers' level of English. It is out of the question that right now, after the first year of piloting, it is impossible to prove effectiveness of the Methodology curriculum as the piloting is still on. But the fact that more and more students and teachers, schools and decision-makers are involved in this process makes us sure that Pre-Service language teacher education will lead Ukraine into European educational space.

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