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FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND CHALLENGES AT THE SECONDARY SPECIALIZED STAGE

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ABSTRACT: Foreign language education plays a vital role in shaping the academic and professional skills of students at the secondary specialized stage. This article explores modern methodological approaches to teaching foreign languages and highlights the major challenges faced in this educational sector. Emphasis is placed on communicative competence, integration of technology, and learner-centered strategies. In addition, the paper discusses issues such as lack of motivation, limited exposure to authentic language environments, and teacher preparedness. Solutions are proposed based on recent research and practical experiences, aiming to contribute to more effective language learning outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Foreign language education, methodology, secondary specialized education, challenges, communicative competence, learner-centered approach.

INTRODUCTION

The globalization of society has significantly increased the demand for proficient foreign language skills. In secondary specialized education, mastering a foreign language is not only a requirement but also a key factor for students' future success. As the educational landscape evolves, so must the methods and approaches used to teach foreign languages. The purpose of this article is to examine the contemporary methodological approaches applied in foreign language education at the secondary specialized stage and to identify the prevailing challenges that hinder the effective acquisition of language skills. Understanding and addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring that students acquire the communicative competence necessary for active participation in an increasingly interconnected world.

In recent years, several innovative approaches have been introduced to enhance foreign language instruction. Among them, the communicative approach stands out for its emphasis on real-life communication skills. Rather than focusing solely on grammar and vocabulary, this method encourages students to use the language actively in meaningful contexts, promoting fluency and confidence.
Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is another notable method, structuring lessons around the completion of specific tasks that simulate real-world situations. TBLT fosters practical language use, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, making language learning more dynamic and interactive.
Moreover, the integration of technology has transformed the language learning experience. Digital tools such as online platforms, language learning apps, and virtual exchanges offer students greater access to authentic materials and intercultural communication opportunities. These technologies make learning more engaging, flexible, and personalized, catering to various learning styles and preferences. The learner-centered approach is also gaining prominence. By emphasizing the needs, interests, and learning styles of individual students, this approach promotes personalized instruction, differentiated tasks, and active learner involvement. It aims to boost student motivation, autonomy, and a sense of responsibility for one's own learning. Furthermore, the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach has gained popularity. CLIL involves teaching a subject, such as history or science, through a foreign

language, thereby integrating content and language learning. This method enhances language skills in a meaningful context and encourages deeper cognitive engagement.

Challenges in Foreign Language Education at the Secondary Specialized Stage

Despite the advances in methodology, several persistent challenges complicate the effective teaching and learning of foreign languages at the secondary specialized level. One major issue is students' lack of motivation. Many learners view language learning as a mandatory subject rather than an opportunity for personal and professional growth. This attitude can lead to minimal engagement and slow progress, especially when the relevance of language skills to their future careers is not clearly demonstrated.

Limited exposure to authentic language environments is another significant challenge. In many educational contexts, students have few opportunities to practice the target language outside the classroom, resulting in a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Authentic exposure is crucial for developing listening, speaking, and intercultural communication skills.

Teacher preparedness and continuous professional development are critical yet often neglected factors. Teachers must be trained in modern methodologies, digital literacy, and intercultural competence to effectively meet students' needs. However, access to ongoing training programs remains limited in many institutions, and traditional teaching methods still dominate in some classrooms.

Additionally, large class sizes and insufficient teaching resources can hinder the implementation of interactive and student-centered approaches, forcing teachers to revert to traditional, teacher-centered methods. Overcrowded classrooms limit opportunities for individualized instruction and meaningful communication practice.

Results and analysis of studies

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Schools should promote the intrinsic value of foreign language learning by connecting it to students' personal goals and career aspirations. Implementing project-based learning and offering real-life language experiences, such as language clubs, internships, and international partnerships, can significantly enhance motivation.

To increase exposure to authentic language use, institutions should incorporate multimedia materials, organize virtual exchanges, and encourage participation in international competitions or online language communities. Creating 'language-rich' environments within schools, such as bilingual signage and language immersion days, can also provide additional practice opportunities. Investing in teacher training is essential. Professional development programs must focus on modern teaching methods, integration of technology, and strategies for fostering student autonomy. Teacher exchange programs and collaborations with international educational institutions can further enrich teachers' methodological repertoire.

Finally, educational policymakers should strive to reduce class sizes and allocate sufficient resources for language education. Providing well-equipped language labs, access to up-to-date teaching materials, and support for innovative teaching projects can create a more supportive environment for effective language learning.

Conclusions.

Foreign language education at the secondary specialized stage faces both exciting opportunities and serious challenges. While methodological advancements offer promising avenues for enhancing language instruction, addressing motivational, environmental, and institutional barriers is crucial.

By embracing innovative approaches, supporting teachers, and creating more authentic language learning environments, educators can better equip students with the linguistic and cultural competencies

necessary for success in the globalized world. Ongoing research and collaboration among educators, policymakers, and the broader community are essential to ensure the continuous improvement of foreign language education.

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