THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH in training professional FOREIGN language for STUDENTS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract: The initial professional language training of future specialists in the sphere of International Relations includes enriching the vocabulary through learning the terms of physical and political geography. The study of specific terminology is the task of a foreign language integrated learning course, within the framework of which students can obtain knowledge of both the naming (foreign language) and the substantive (subjective) aspects of the profile conceptual apparatus. To implement the integrated language course, the present study used a comprehensive approach and a method of a three-step lesson. These methods allowed the use of an individualized approach to deal with significant volumes of vocabulary, its semantic and grammatical features.

**Keywords:** political linguistics, foreign language lesson, higher education, individualized learning, comprehensive approach, working with vocabulary

# **introduction**

Professional language training for students who study the speciality of "International Relations" is connected with the field of political linguistics. In its applied methodological aspect, political linguistics reveals a problem field for foreign language learning from the standpoint of the professional interests of future international relations specialists. At the same time, the feature of this professional training involves the regular integration of general language and profile language courses. The need for early integration of such courses increases in the conditions of foreign language teaching in the Baccalaureate. This is due to the fact that most of our students start to learn a foreign language (in the present case it is the German language) with A1 level and in four-year period they are to reach the level of B2-C1 general language training, as well as to master the language skills of professional communication. In this regard, the integrated language courses suggest learning foreign language vocabulary in the profile area in the first year of training. A teacher can take geography as one of the first profile themes. This refers to the terminological apparatus of both physical and political geography within the learned foreign language. Depending on the students’ specialization this vocabulary may include both general geographic terminology and terminology that is specific to the particular region being studied. It should be noted that in our practice we regularly encounter situations that require not only the study of foreign names of geographical objects, but also the mastering of geographic topics, since the content side of a number of geographical concepts seems to be unfamiliar to students in some cases. Such a nuance requires, on the one hand, additional self-training of the teacher in the discipline of “Geography”. On the other hand, it urges to create and use special didactic materials that combine both teaching material on a geographical topic and exercises in the field of foreign language learning. This comprehensive approach helps realize the idea of multitasking [1], which is described in our work. In addition, in the view of significantly different levels of students’ knowledge of geography in general, it will be helpful to propose the use of an individualized approach.

Thus, such individualization will allow each student to get acquainted with the topic under study at his own pace and volume, which fully fits the trend of actual person-oriented training [2]. In our practice we traditionally rely on the principle of individualized learning and the corresponding approaches in perspective of the Montessori Method of education [3]. This article mainly focuses on some examples showing individualized training on a number of foreign (the German language) language teaching materials from the field of physical and political geography, which is especially in demand while training students of International Relations and Foreign Area Studies.

# **methodology**

The methodological basis of our work involves the approaches of the Montessori Method of education. The application of Montessori's ideas to a foreign language lesson [4] is a poorly developed field, but the promising one. The Montessori system advocates the principle of freedom of development, selfsufficiency and independence of students, reliance on inner motivation, the search for individual growth points, and the principle of individualized learning within the framework of original didactic approaches [5].

Any pedagogical activity that refers to M. Montessori’s ideas is a priori determined by the principle of freedom. Being a creative force that is inherent in the human personality, freedom contributes to the all-round development of the individual, as it launches nature-friendly processes [6]. Applying to the lesson of a foreign language, the principle of freedom is expressed in freedom of choice of place and type of educational activity, freedom to choose partners for cooperation, freedom of repetition of exercises, etc. "Freedom is an activity" [7: 73], and its consequence is active discipline built on inner motivation.

The formation of a motivated search is impossible outside a specially designed didactic environment. In higher education the rules for creating such a comprehensive environment require certain modification. Instead of constant availability of materials for each topic covered, we offer students a range of exercises on a separate thematic block or section. One of the most important principles is the possibility of self-control inherent in didactic material. The student’s ability to independently find and correct his mistakes attests to the highest degree of his self-sufficiency [8].

The role of the teacher in this case follows a special conceptual formula: his main status is an observer and researcher. Among the basic functions that the teacher should have are self-training, the preparation of didactic materials, teaching in the view of the principle of non-interference in students’ work, interpretation of the observed results at all stages of the training process [9, 12].

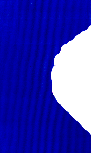
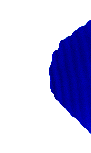
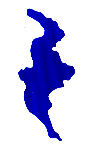
**2. Results and discussion**

The results given below are obtained during the lessons of the German language as a foreign language, but they can undoubtedly be used in teaching other foreign languages after appropriate elaboration [10]. There is one of the examples illustrating an individualized approach to work on vocabulary in the direction of “Physical Geography. Earth’s relief” for international relations students. The concepts denoting the types of the Earth's surface are found in the names of a number of geographic objects studied during foreign language lessons, for example, die Straße von Gibraltar, die Landenge von Panama, der Bodensee, Malaysischer Archipel, Mecklenburger Seenplatte and others. Besides the acquaintance with proper names, dealing with such vocabulary implies the ability to generalize and classify geographical objects, such as lakes, islands, archipelagos, etc. Such a classification requires students to understand the essence of the geographical term, for example, the Maldives is an archipelago, and Gibraltar is a strait. Orientation at the level of concepts helps to solve grammatical questions of the gender and the choice of the preposition. However, there appears a frequent problem at this stage: not all students have a clear idea of what an archipelago and isthmus are, what the difference between a fjord and a bay is. Obviously, the introduction of such a nomenclature by an uninterrupted method requires the use of a comprehensive approach that is designed to ensure the assimilation of both linguistic and profile information, as well as the creation of special didactic material. In our practice, we use cards with a schematic depiction of a number of terrestrial relief objects [3; 11]. These are five identical pairs of geographic objects, opposed to each other only in color, but having absolutely identical contours: lake and island; fjord and peninsula; bay and cape; group of lakes and archipelago; strait and isthmus (Fig. 1).

Each image is provided with a card with the name of the geographical concept in German: der See; die Insel; der Fjord; die Halbinsel; die Bucht; das Kap; die Seeplatte; die Inselgruppe; die Meerenge; die Landenge.

The leading method in working with individual lexical units is the so-called three-step lesson, repeatedly described in the literature [3; 6].

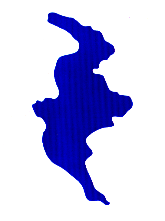
*Fig. 1. Pairs of cards to the theme “Relief of the Earth's surface. Water and Land.”*



Its main steps (the introduction of concepts, consolidation and control) are based on another important principle of the described system - the delineation principle of degrees of complexity.

In accordance with the requirements of the three-step lesson, the initial acquaintance is conducted with a limited number of new concepts. The main task of the first stage is the introduction of concepts. At this stage, pair images and related vocabulary cards are displayed (Fig. 2).

*Fig. 2. A pair of cards “Lake” / “Island” and word cards.*



**der See**



**die Insel**

The second stage is oriented towards the consolidation of concepts. This step involves working with exercises, the number of which depends on how quickly the student learns new words. The choice of exercises is individual, but always meets the requirement of structuring from simple to complex. Standard exercises are known, built on the following types of questions: “Wo ist der See?”

Another exercise includes two cards with paired images (for example, “Lake” and “Island”), two cards with the corresponding captions, and two control cards for self-examination. The task is to select a concept suitable for the image and its naming in response to the teacher's request: “Zeigen Sie den See!” (Fig. 3).

The next type of exercise is represented by cards with generalized concepts “Lake”, “Island”, etc. and cards with names of famous islands and lakes in a foreign language. The task is to classify certain geographical names by conceptual groups. For example, the teacher can use such names of islands and lakes as Kreta, Grönland, Oster-Insel, Genfer See, Baikal, Kaspisches Meer. It is clear, the set of concepts contains the names of both known and complex for the classification geographical objects. This exercise is also provided with a card for self-monitoring:

*Fig. 3. Selection of names for cards and control cards.*



**der See**

**die Insel**



**der See**



**die Insel**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **der See** | **die Insel** |
| Genfer See | Oster-Insel |
| Kaspisches Meer | Kreta |
| Baikal | Grönland |

The following an exercise for work with one definition is focused on the vocabulary expansion on the topic under study and indirectly on the repetition of constructing complex sentences. The exercise includes two copies of cards with the definition of the concept being studied: one working copy and one for the control. The first copy is a definition in a form of mosaic cut into several parts. From the scattered words and expressions it is necessary to collect the whole definition. In our practice, we divide the definition into four parts:

/ Der See / ist / ein [Gewässer](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stillgew%C3%A4sser), / das vollständig von einer [Landfläche](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landfl%C3%A4che" \o "Landfläche) umgeben ist. /

The definition on second uncut card gives the possibility to check the answer. A similar exercise involves working with several definitions. Just like in the previous example, the exercise involves preparing two sets of cards (cut mosaic cards and the whole ones) with definitions of several concepts. We introduce the definition of the term “die Insel” along with the already given definition of the term “der See”.

/ Die Insel ist eine Landmasse, die vollständig von Wasser umgeben ist. /

This type of work includes finding the appropriate pairs of concepts and definitions and is focused on distinguishing lexical information. As in the previous exercise, cards with a whole definition act as a source of self-control. The described task can be proposed in a simpler or more complex version. It should be emphasized that the second stage of training with new lexical units is the longest one. As additional exercises, you can suggest coloring the contour maps and sign an appropriate image or select photos of various reliefs of the Earth's surface in order to distribute them among the concepts studied. Of particular interest is also the familiarity with the synonyms of the concepts studied (die Landenge und der Isthmus; die Meerenge und die Meeresstraße) and the difference in the nuances of their meanings (der Fjord und die Förde).

At this stage, the status of a teacher-observer who offers an exercise to the student is fully manifested. Further students work on fixing the vocabulary independently. The teacher observes, answers their questions, analyzes the current situation, recommends a sequence of exercises, and decides on the transition to the third stage. The main requirement of such a transition: the teacher should be completely sure that the student has learned new concepts.

The third stage is monitoring and evaluation, which should not be an end in itself of the described work. This is the shortest step, and it is conducted by the teacher. Showing the student a card with an image, the teacher asks one question: “Was ist das?” If the answers are wrong, uncertain or not at all, then this indicates that the control is too early. In this case, you should return to the second stage and continue the exercises.

In the light of the professional language training of international relations students at the entry level, a separate area of work with vocabulary is the study of terms from the field of political geography, i.e. the names of countries in a foreign language. It is known that a special difficulty in connection with the German language learning is concerned with the indicating a gender of a number of exceptional names of countries. These “toponyms-exceptions” refer to both the feminine and masculine genders. They are also plural and always used with the article subjected to declension.

As in the above example of working with vocabulary from the field of physical geography, we use the three-step lesson method in cases where it is necessary to introduce new vocabulary. Within the topic under study, the names of each gender are studied both separately and as a group of plural names.

At the first stage, the corresponding names of countries and cities are traditionally displayed. To do this, you can use special cards containing the noun-name of the country with the article. Usually the number of cards does not exceed 5-7 titles. Working with the concept of grammatical gender, we also use the color-coding method to help establish additional sensory (visual) associations. Thus, masculine cards have a blue frame, a feminine gender - red, plural - violet. The color of the neuter gender is yellow. After the introduction of new “concepts-exceptions”, for example, the masculine gender der Iran, der Irak, der Libanon, der Sudan, der Vatikan, der Niger, we turn to the exercises.

The first block of exercises is performed on contour maps. Supplementary materials to them are sets of cards of the first stage with “names-exceptions” classified by gender. Here students do certain tasks such as searching and color marking of the corresponding state on the map, signing its name, designating its capital. If we are talking about masculine words, then we paint the corresponding states in blue. Later, this contour map will be supplemented with data on the “names-exceptions” of the feminine gender and plural ones.

One more block of exercises comprises the tasks for comparing the corresponding names of countries and their capitals. The set includes two types of cards with names of states and capitals. For example, the above described set of masculine gender names is decomposed into the following pairs of cards: «der Iran» – «Teheran»; «der Irak» – «Bagdad»; «der Libanon» – «Beirut»; «der Sudan» – «Khartum»; «der Kosovo» – «Pristina»; «der Vatikan»; «die Niederlande» - «Den Haag»; «der Niger» – «Niamey». The cards are provided with the appropriate gender color coding. To check the errors there is a table with already referenced names.

The further algorithm of work assumes a return to the first stage with the purpose of introduction and further training of the “names-exceptions” of the feminine gender and the plural forms. After isolated work with each group of words, you can suggest a mixed exercise on the distribution of cards with the names of states to groups according to the generic membership.

At the end of this long stage of the exercises, we come to the final third stage - control. This control can be carried out as an uninterrupted method by selecting an article of the appropriate kind for a given word or a transfer method (for example, in the form of a traditional lexical dictation).

# **Summary**

The use of the comprehensive approach at the initial stage of the professional language training of students in the sphere of “International Relations” makes it possible to solve the problem of studying certain aspects of political and physical geography during foreign language lessons. The comprehensive approach, implemented with the help of special didactic material, integrates the linguistic and profile tasks of studying special political and geographical terminology. The implementation of such integrated work in foreign language lessons is possible with reliance on the principle of individualized learning. In this regard, the Montessori pedagogy approaches, based on the principle of freedom of choice, have proved themselves confidently. The rule of isolation of the degree of complexity, the special didactic material and the three-step lesson method proposed by Montessori for work on enriching the vocabulary provide the tool base for the proposed comprehensive approach.

# **conclusions**

The introduction of new forms of work in the field of professional language training creates a favorable learning atmosphere, supports interest in the discipline and brings satisfaction of the work. Reliance on visibility and the use of manual activity facilitates the process of assimilation, since it includes the work of visual and motor memory. In a broad sense, referring to the ideas of such alternative systems as Montessori's pedagogy opens a wide sphere for enriching foreign language learning process and creating new methods.

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