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PROBLEM OF CLASSIFICATION OF METHODS IN FOREIGN
LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract

In science the notion ‘method’ has always occupied a key position, because the method aims to uncover the ways and means of implementing scientific and practical objectives. The method organizes the components of any scientific or practice-oriented system, defines the laws of its development, provides the conditions for its successful functioning, largely determining the result of its realization in different conditions. The goal of this paper is to study the essence of the scientific concept of "method", to analyze approaches to the interpretation of this concept, to study the types of methods and classify these methods in terms of mastering and teaching foreign languages. It suggests the interpretation of the notion ‘method of teaching’ and shows the differences between the methods of teaching and close terms such as ‘approach’ and ‘technique’. It suggests the interpretation of the notion ‘method of teaching’ and shows the differences between the methods of teaching and close terms such as ‘approach’ and ‘technique’. The study includes the review of different approaches to classifications of methods and gives the author’s view on the system of the methods of teaching, their classification and the key methods. The article will be useful for teachers as well as scholars who are constantly faced with the choice of methods in implementation of practical and theoretical objectives in the sphere of the foreign language education.

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1. Introduction

In science the notion ‘method’ has always occupied a key position, because the method aims to uncover the ways and means of implementing scientific and practical objectives. The method organizes the components of any scientific or practice-oriented system, defines the laws of its development, provides the conditions for its successful functioning, largely determining the result of its realization in different conditions. In other words, it has underlying nature for the science in the whole.

In the dictionary by Ozhegov (1964), the word ‘method’ is interpreted as:

1) the way of theoretical study or practical implementation of something; 2) the way to act in a certain manner, a technique.

In the context of this interpretation, methods of teaching relate to the ways of practical implementation of activities aimed at realizing the content of a particular academic discipline.

Azimov and Shchukin (2009) give the following definition to the notion ‘method of teaching’: The set of the ways of the interrelated activity of the teacher and students aimed at achieving the objectives of education, upbringing and development of students.

2. Problem Statement

This definition can be taken as a basis, although it requires some clarification in connection with the consideration of the notion ‘method of teaching’ in the sphere of foreign language teaching at different levels of teaching operation. British researchers Richards and Rodgers (2001) distinguish three levels: the level of the approach, the level of the design and the level of the practical procedure. Similar levels (but without details) are suggested by Russian scientists Rogova et al. (1991).

1. At the approach level the method of teaching reveals a set of psycholinguistic and cognitive processes and procedures that mediate the learning process as well as the conditions that ensure their successful implementation. At this level the method of teaching realizes particular linguistic, psychological and methodological theories.

2. At the level of design the method of teaching describes the nature of the activities of the students and the teacher, types of their interaction, teacher and learner’s roles, the teaching material, its organization and selection, etc.

3. At the level of the practical procedure, the method of teaching is presented as a set of teaching techniques, strategies and tactics used by the teacher in the learning process. At this level, the method of teaching is as specific as possible in describing the conditions and means for its implementation.

3. Research Questions

In contrast to the theory of Richards and Rodgers (2001), the Russian foreign language education inclines to the opinion that not all methods should be operated at all three levels. Moreover, methods that are considered at the level of the approach can be realized in the system of methods of the lower level.

It is necessary to underline that the basis of each method of teaching is a dominant idea that allows building the system of teaching in a certain sequence. The dominant idea for the method of teaching is

considered this or that approach to teaching. We propose the following definition to the notion ‘approach to teaching’: an ordered, generalized and logically constructed idea, which is the basis for the most successful implementation of the strategic goal of foreign language teaching at this or that stage of the development of the society and the state.

The similarity of the approach to teaching and the method of teaching (at the level of approach) lies in: 1) the focus on the realization of specific learning objectives; 2) bases on certain principles that reveal their basic theory.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to study the essence of the scientific concept of "method", analyze approaches to the interpretation of this concept, study the types of methods and classify these methods in terms of mastering and teaching foreign languages. It suggests the interpretation of the notion ‘method of teaching’ and shows the differences between the methods of teaching and close terms such as ‘approach’ and ‘technique’.

5. Research Methods

The differences between them lie in the degree of evidence and the theoretical validity of the approach to teaching and the method of teaching. If the approach to teaching represents the general inference of an author on the issue of foreign language teaching that does not require particular proves, then the method of teaching is a theoretically grounded and experimentally verified theory. This theory is based on a certain structurally organized system of techniques, the special organization of the content of teaching, its selection, the particular rules of the teacher’s and the student’s behaviour.

It is important to note that the same method can rely on several approaches to teaching, and the same approach can be based on different methods.

The method of teaching includes an organized set of teaching operations – teaching techniques. The teaching technique is an elementary teaching act aimed at solving particular tasks of teaching at a certain stage of the process of the foreign language teaching (Gez, 1982).

It is necessary to point out that teaching techniques can be transferred to the category of methods of teaching when they become the basis of the educational process. Thus, the primary and systematic use of the songs at the foreign language classes in the teaching of junior schoolchildren gives the possibility to consider the song as a key method of teaching at this educational level.

Kapitonova and Shchukin (1987) describe a number of characteristics that a method of teaching should have in order to be called such. They are the following:

1. The method gives an idea of the main strategy of teaching.
2. The method is aimed at achieving a particular goal.
3. The theoretical basis of each method (or a group of methods) are certain concepts (linguistic, psychological and methodical).
4. The method is based on the system of principles, which reflect certain linguistic, psychological and methodological concepts.

5. The method does not depend on the conditions and the stage of the educational process.

Due to the multidimensionality the peculiarity of modern pedagogical systems is the use of chains of methods of teaching that realize one or another result of educational activity. In the sphere of foreign language teaching these chains of methods of teaching have got the name 'the systems of methods'.

Bim (1977) defines the system of methods of teaching as a socially conditioned, depending on the objectives, content and means of teaching, holistic set of methods of teaching based on interaction of methods with each other and hierarchy of teaching techniques inside them.

We allow ourselves to disagree with the outstanding scientist in terms of highlighting the methods of learning. In our opinion, with regard to the process of learning it is preferable not to use the notions 'method of teaching' and 'teaching technique' but to talk about the special ways of mastering of foreign language system that are basis of the students' learning strategies. The last ones can be both standardized and individual, and even characterize the peculiarities of the individual learning style of a student in the mastering of foreign language.

All modern researchers are unanimous in their opinions that there is no universal method of teaching that would be highly effective in all conditions of foreign language education. That is why it is very important to be able to combine different methods of teaching according to particular conditions of the foreign language teaching process.

Thus, having today a wide set of methods, the sphere of foreign language teaching strives for their systematization and hierarchy in order to provide the scientist and the teacher with the right choice of methods and their combinations for realization of practical and theoretical aims of teaching.

6. Findings

The attempts to identify the main methods of teaching and to classify the methods were made by many scientists in the sphere of foreign language education. Thus, the authors of "Methods of foreign language teaching in the secondary school" (Gez, 1982) distinguish 1) demonstration; 2) explanation and 3) exercise as the key methods in the foreign language education.

This approach to the selection of methods of teaching is possible only in the case if we consider the methods only on the level of the practical procedure, but even in this case a wide range of control methods is not covered.

Some other scholars distinguish 1) familiarization, 2) training, 3) applications and 4) control as the key methods in the sphere of foreign language teaching (Bim, 1977; Rogova et al., 1991). But they can be also considered only on the level of practical procedure.

In our opinion, the classification of methods suggested by Kapitonova and Shchukin (1987) is the most systematic and complete. Based on distinguishing the spheres of usage of methods (practical and theoretical), the authors offer to differentiate methods of investigation (universal and main scientific methods) and methods of teaching (general didactic and methods of a particular discipline).

The universal methods of investigation define the general approaches to the study of the picture of the world. The main scientific methods are used in all fields of knowledge taking into account the particularities of each branch of the science. The general didactic methods of teaching are used by teachers to achieve the goals of education and upbringing in a whole. They can be applied in all

disciplines of the pedagogical cycle. The methods of the foreign language teaching are used to teach a specific subject. They characterize the interaction between the teacher and the students mediated by the particular discipline.

Following this classification of the methods used in the foreign language education we suggest distinguishing special methods in the both groups of methods.

Special methods of investigation are used exclusively in this or that sphere of scientific knowledge (for example, the field stratification, the method of directed and free associative experiment, and the phonological analysis in the linguistic sciences, etc.).

Special methods of the foreign language teaching are used in training students in certain types of speech activity or in particular sides of speech.

We presented the classification of the methods used in the foreign language education in table 1.

Table 1. Classification of methods in foreign language education

Methods of investigation		Methods of teaching	
universal	analysis, synthesis, deduction, induction, analogy, modeling, abstraction, idealization, etc.	general didactic	demonstration, explanation, training, questioning, control, correction, game, discussion, etc.
main scientific	observation, experiment, studying of the literature, interviews, questionnaires, time studies, generalization of experience, etc.	methods of foreign language teaching	communicative language teaching, method of activating the reserve capabilities of the person and the team, direct, natural, grammar-translation method, emotive-conceptual method, audio-lingual method, Silent way, counselling-learning, etc.
special	pedagogical experiment, studying of advanced practical experience, experimental teaching	special methods of foreign language teaching	the method of exception of the visual channel of perception during listening, the sound-letter method and the method of the whole words in reading, inductive and deductive methods in teaching grammar

It is important to note that the key methods for the foreign language education are not general didactic methods but methods of foreign language teaching, because they determine the main direction (strategy) in the foreign language teaching, set reference points for learning foreign languages regardless of the educational level and the learning environment.

That is why in Russia in the sphere of foreign language education a notion ‘method of teaching’ is generally considered in broad and narrow senses: 1) as a strategic direction, teaching system characterized

by its objectives, a content, principles and methods of teaching; 2) as a procedure of teaching a foreign language (Galskova et al., 2017).

The methods of teaching in each of the highlighted groups can be divided according to one or another criteria. Thus, according to a level of the cognitive activity of the students, the general didactic methods of teaching can be subdivided into:

1) explanatory-illustrative or information-perceptive (these methods assume a low level of intellectual activity of the students, "assimilation" of a language and speech material in a finished form);

2) reproductive (these methods focus on the formation of the students' skills of using and applying the language knowledge gained through constant repetition);

3) methods of a problem presentation (these methods are realized through demonstration of a problem and the ways to solve it);

4) heuristic (these methods assume a high level of intellectual activity of the students, an independent obtaining knowledge and a solution of the problems under the supervision of the teacher);

5) researching (they implement through the organization of an independent search, creative activity of the students in the process of solution of various problems) (Lerner & Skatkin, 1965).

According to the focus of the teaching activity:

1) methods of organization and implementation of educational and cognitive activities of the students (methods that ensure: a) the transfer and perception of educational information - verbal, visual and practical; b) a certain character of mental activity - inductive, deductive, reproductive, researching; c) organization of practical activities for the application of the acquired knowledge, skills, abilities);

2) methods of stimulating and motivating learning activities of the students (interactive methods of teaching, roleplaying, brainstorming, debates, discussions) (Vaganova et al., 2020);

3) methods of control and self-control of the efficiency of educational-cognitive activity of the students (survey, examination, testing, implementation of control work) (Kapitonova & Shchukin, 1987).

According to the subject of the educational activity:

1) methods of teaching (the organization of knowledge (demonstration, explanation); the organization of training (formation of skills); the arrangement of application (the holistic training of foreign language speech activities); control tests (assimilation, correction and evaluation of the students);

2) methods of learning (familiarization, exercising, application, self-control) (Bim, 1977; Shamov & Kim, 2020).

According to the degree of awareness of the students in the mastering of foreign language activities the methods of foreign language teaching can be divided into:

- conscious methods (the grammar-translation method, the conscious-comparative method, the conscious-practical method) (Pronina et al., 2019);

- direct methods (the Palmer method, the 'method of the governess', army method, the audiolingual and audiovisual methods);

- combined methods (communicative language teaching, method of activating the reserve capabilities of the person and the team) (Sokolova & Plisov, 2019).

According to the type of speech activity the special methods can be divided into:

- methods in foreign language speaking (the method of situations, the textual method, the method of phrases, etc.);
- methods in foreign language listening (the method of exception of the visual channel of perception, the method of the verbal support, etc.);
- methods in foreign language reading (the sound-letter method, the method of the whole words, the phonological method, the method ‘whole-language’, etc.);
- methods in foreign language writing (the textual method, the process method, etc.).

7. Conclusion

Summarizing the ideas above, we can make the following conclusions:

1. The method is a fundamental notion of the foreign language education. It is a way (or a set of ways) of interconnected activity of the teacher and the students, involving the implementation of a specific sequence of techniques, embodying a certain dominant idea and aiming at achieving the objectives of education, upbringing and development of the students.

2. The method is closely connected with such notions as ‘objective’, ‘approach’, ‘technique’, ‘a system of teaching’ but it does not coincide with them in the whole sense.

3. The method can be considered at different levels of teaching operation: the level of the approach, the level of the modeling (design) and the level of the practical procedure.

4. Modern foreign language education has a large set of methods, the choice and the combination of which depend on the educational objectives and particular conditions of learning.

5. Classification of methods allows the systematic approach to the selection of methods for the implementation of the aims of practical and theoretical aspects. Meanwhile, there is no universal classification that could reflect the diversity of all methods in the foreign language education and outline the clear dividing line between them.

6. The above classification gives a general overview of the system of methods that are used in the foreign language education. It takes into account the different levels of teaching operations of the methods and bases on the differentiation of the methods between the methods of investigation and the methods of teaching.

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