

**FOSTERING AGRICULTURAL STUDENDS' SOFT SKILLS
IN THE PROCESS OF TARGET LANGUAGE TEACHING**

**РОЗВИТОК М'ЯКИХ НАВИЧОК У СТУДЕНТІВ АГРАРНИХ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТЕЙ
У ПРОЦЕСІ НАВЧАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ**

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***Abstract.** In the study effective teaching methods for the development of agricultural students' soft skills were identified and a number of recommendations were formulated regarding the ways of their development in the process of target language training through group forms of activity. Thus, the peculiarities of applying the method of discussion, work in small groups and the case study are described. It is noted that the use of these interactive methods contributes to the improvement of socially significant and professional qualities of agricultural students (the ability to analyze, work in a team, think critically, defend own view, etc.).*

***Keywords:** soft skills, target language, interactive methods, agricultural students*

Introduction. The development of higher education nowadays is characterized by innovations, the orientation of educational programs on the competence approach. The formation of general competencies is now considered an important learning outcome in higher education institutions, along with professional competencies.

The current stage of socio-economic development of Ukraine requires a significant increase in human resources on the basis of innovations in higher education system, an important component of which is to improve the quality of agricultural students' training. In accordance with modern requirements, in addition to professional competencies, future agrarians need to form general competencies, including the ability to analyze and synthesize, search, process and analyze information from various sources; ability to apply knowledge in practical situations [5].

Regardless of the future specialization, other personal, non-professional skills are important for employees as well. Recently, among potential employers, except professional skills, so-called hard skills, there are requirements for graduates to have extra skills, so-called "soft skills".

Disparate professional competencies, which are specified in job descriptions, qualification characteristics, can be defined and measured, the presence of formed soft skills is not so easy to determine, but like any skills, they can be honed and developed through purposeful practice [2].

The purpose of the paper is to characterize the didactic possibilities of interactive methods for agricultural students' soft skills development in the process of teaching target languages.

Results. In the dictionary the term "soft skills" is defined as "personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people" [4].

In many contexts, soft skills are equated or used as synonyms for such concepts as "skills for employment", "non-professional skills", "key skills", "life skills", "people skills", "skills for social progress", etc. Soft skills are associated with social skills for effective interaction with colleagues, partners, clients. They are communication, work in a team, time management, creativity, resolution of conflicts, stress tolerance.

Focusing on the activity while developing soft skills, it is necessary to change the format of this technology in cooperation with students. A new generation of students is crying out for gamification, e-learning, m-learning, social education. Thus, when designing forms of interaction between an instructor and students, it is important to keep up with current educational trends in the process of soft skills development.

The problem of group interaction is relevant for future agrarians, as agricultural work is of a collective nature and its productivity depends on the coordination of efforts of many specialists in the agrarian sector. The development of contacts with foreign partners in the supply of agricultural machinery, seeds and fertilizers, participation in international business projects requires from agricultural students not only quality target language training, but also the ability to cooperate, establish interaction, etc.

Applying the technology of group interaction in the educational process promotes the development of personal qualities, namely: to accept the goals of group interaction, to identify them with personal goals; to coordinate distributive and combined functions, that is to build in strict sequence the order of their implementation according to a certain

program that takes into account the activities of each participant; to accept the position of another as equal to his personal position; to establish a relationship in group action, which allows you to use the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities in the group decision-making process [3].

The most important directions of students' group interaction development are the creation of a favorable socio-psychological climate, the atmosphere of innovation. Thus, the educational process of the university, during which future specialists acquire social skills, develop the basics of communication, develop the ability to find original solutions, update their personal experience, should create favorable conditions for group interaction.

Regarding to the effective organizational forms of teaching that promote the interaction of agricultural students in the process of target language learning, we consider it necessary to apply interactive methods, as the current educational process at the university is characterized by widespread use of these methods.

For instance, discussions in small groups. Such method belong to the communicative exercises, which contain a detailed exchange of thoughts, messages, impressions, evaluative judgments. Discussive form of communication allows to organically integrate students' knowledge from different fields in solving the problem, gives the opportunity to use at the time of speech formed language tools needed to express opinions.

The discussion involves consideration of a controversial topic, clash of views, as well as greater independence of the participants in the communicative process. Interaction in the discussion is based not just on consistent statements, but on meaningful self-organization, that is students' appeal to each other for in-depth and diverse discussion of ideas, points of view. The technology of learning in the discussion is an important means of cognitive activity of students: the discussion promotes the development of critical thinking, allows determining one's own position, and deepens knowledge on this issue.

The interactive nature of the discussion contributes to the formation of skills necessary for future agrarians: clearly formulate opinion, express their own point of

view, analyze information, select the necessary facts, build them in a logical sequence, discuss and defend their position, argue and counter-arguments. Discussion of problematic issues contributes to the formation of students' ability to establish interpersonal relationships.

The method of uniting students into small groups for joint performing tasks is one of the most popular technologies in higher education institutions. The technology of learning in small groups is based on the following principles: social interaction of students, positive interdependence, personal responsibility of each member of the group, equal share of everyone's participation.

The peculiarity of this method is that all students of the group are involved in the work; they learn to work in a group (team); a positive attitude towards the opponent is formed; everyone has the opportunity to offer his own opinion; in a short period of time students can learn a lot of new material; skills of tolerant communication, ability to argue one's point of view, find an alternative solution of a problem are formed.

In the process of learning a target language, educators can use a variety of methods and techniques in small groups. Thus, when discussing a problem, it is advisable to use "brainstorming", which involves the spontaneous expression of ideas, facts about the proposed topic or situation. Working in small groups should be used to solve a complex problem that requires collective discussion.

Case study is another method that can be applied to develop agricultural students' soft skills. The method of case study is based on the description of a specific professional activity that is the professional process is modeled in real conditions in accordance with the content of training. Students analyze a specific case that describes real issue (situations). The content of cases can be a variety of professional texts, articles from newspapers, magazines, videos and audio, etc. Students discuss the case in small groups.

In the training case, agricultural students acquire the following skills: they learn to distribute tasks, establish communication (cooperate), make decisions; take joint responsibility for their implementation and the result. Solving situational tasks, future

agrarians gain their own experience that will be necessary for future professional activity.

This method is characterized by collective cognitive activity, which involves a variety of techniques: exchange of ideas, discussion, interpersonal interaction, which leads to active communication. Learning in cooperation, teamwork, collective methods of educational work provide easy cognitive activity and a high level of educational communication of students.

Applying the method of specific situations analysis in the process of target language learning contributes to the solution of the following educational goals: the development of analytical thinking, the use of analysis in dynamics; mastering practical skills of working with information (isolation, structuring and ranking according to the importance of problems); making management decisions; formation of the ability to choose the best options for effective interaction with other people [1].

The peculiarity of the cases is the ability to combine theory and practice, which is very important in training future specialists in agriculture. The case method has a number of advantages, namely: involves students into real life situations; stimulates critical thinking and provides finding a solution to the problem; develops communication skills, etc.

The case study method is characterized by collective cognitive activity, which involves a variety of techniques: “brainstorming”, exchange of ideas, discussion, interaction, which leads to active interpersonal communication. In the course of using the method, students develop specific skills of working with information: search for the necessary knowledge through independent processing of source information, its analysis, synthesis, formulation of the problem and its individual components [6].

Conclusions. In the study it was found out that effective methods of teaching a target language to develop agricultural students’ soft skills are the method of discussion, work in small groups and case study. Applying these interactive methods contributes to the improvement of socially significant and professional qualities of future agrarians (the ability to analyze, work in a team, think critically, defend their views, etc.).

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Анотація. У статті визначено ефективні методи навчання щодо розвитку м'яких навичок у студентів аграрних спеціальностей і сформульовано ряд рекомендацій щодо шляхів їх розвитку в процесі вивчення іноземної мови через групові форми роботи. Так, охарактеризовано особливості використання методу дискусії, роботи в малих групах і кейс-

методу. Встановлено, що використання зазначених інтерактивних методів сприяє удосконаленню соціально значущих і професійних якостей майбутніх аграріїв (вміння аналізувати, працювати в команді, критично мислити, відстоювати свій погляд тощо).

Ключові слова: м'які навички, іноземна мова, інтерактивні методи, студенти аграрних спеціальностей