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## **TEACHING UNPLUGGED AS A MEANS OF IMPROVING LANGUAGE LEARNING EFFICIENCY**

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*Статья посвящена процедуре применения автономного обучения как средства повышения эффективности изучения языка. Автор определяет этот метод, подчеркивает его плюсы и минусы, описывает его потенциал в преподавании языка и приводит примеры упражнений в рамках данного метода.*

**Ключевые слова:** автономное обучение, повышение эффективности изучения иностранного языка, плюсы и минусы автономного обучения.

*The article deals with the procedure of applying teaching unplugged as a means of improving language-learning efficiency. The author defines this method, stresses on its pros and cons, and describes its potential for the current language teaching, gives examples of some activities within the method.*

**Keywords:** Teaching Unplugged method, language-learning efficiency, principles of Teaching Unplugged, pros and drawbacks of Teaching Unplugged method.

Today foreign languages are becoming not only a means of interpersonal communication, but also an effective tool for the formation of personality and an indicator of the level and quality of education and the development of general cultural and professional competencies of a higher school graduate. Education of students has its own characteristics due to the peculiarities of their motivational sphere which is characterized by such forms as intention, purpose, aspiration, as well as the degree of relevance, scale, content of the activity being implemented, etc. All this undoubtedly requires the search for new forms, methods and technologies of teaching foreign language to students of higher educational institutions. In our previous article, we considered heuristic method in teaching foreign languages, its pros and cons and effectiveness in teaching foreign languages [1]. By the way, it can be successfully applied in unplugged teaching.

At present in the framework of the communicative approach in teaching foreign languages, foreign teachers and educators distinguish the Dogme or Teaching Unplugged method. The novelty of this method lies in the transition from the cognitive aspect in the teaching of a foreign language to the psychological aspect and the rejection of textbooks and technologies. For the first time, the Dogme method became known from Luke Meddings and Scott Thornbury's book "A Dogme for ELT", where they criticize the modern lesson for being too overloaded with textbooks, printouts, technologies while learning a foreign language, that, in their opinion, complicates and aggravates the learning process [5]. One cannot but agree that on one hand, books and printouts help the teacher to diversify the lesson, but on the other hand, it does not give an opportunity to deviate from the curriculum, to go beyond the scope of a particular lesson, suppressing the initiative coming directly from the students. As an alternative, Scott Thornbury and Luke Meddings propose to abandon all materials, to go to the live conversation of the teacher and students based on real life experience, with the help of the grammar and vocabulary that students have at this stage of education.

In this way Teaching Unplugged is the term used for a teaching method and philosophy, which has three primary aims: teaching through conversation, taking out external input such as course book and technology and letting the lesson content be driven by the students rather than being pre-planned by the teacher [3].

Taking into account the meaning of the word "unplug" ("disconnecting") Teaching Unplugged can be interpreted as "learning without a textbook" that al-

lows teachers to involve students in the process of communication, based on the real life situation that occurs here and now, to lead the students to the formation of their opinions. Learning in this context is seen as a social process in which students construct knowledge, and the role of the teacher is reduced to directing. The teacher should draw attention to various phenomena that “pop up” in the course of communication and reinforce the material. Another advantage of the method is complete freedom from external factors that makes it possible to reduce the distance between the teacher and the student. The teacher is open to students allowing them to determine the course of the lesson. The teacher is no longer dependent on access to the Internet, an unreadable disc, manuals, photocopies. Nothing but a board, a marker, a piece of paper and a pen are needed. The lesson can be held in any convenient place. The principle of “living” spontaneous language is based on meeting the students’ current language needs. To do this, teachers must use methods that promote the development of communication skills, for example, the repetition of the same replicas, which helps to memorize new words and grammatical structures. The analysis and correction of students’ speech errors should be considered as a part of the learning process, which consists of restoring the structure of the utterance, by recording and processing the produced speech errors.

From the said above, it is possible to identify several key principles that make up the philosophy of the Teaching Unplugged method: interactive communication between students and the teacher; making students to understand the fact that “people in the room” can serve as a resource for learning a language; learning as a social and dialogical process; learning exclusively through conversation, the initiator of which is the teacher; use of spontaneous language, comprehended not through the narration, but through interaction when making decisions; drawing students’ attention to language situations, where it is appropriate to use certain speech skills; activating the student’s speech through the “pulling out” of his individuality; use of teaching materials that are interesting both for the teacher and the student and etc. [2].

To sum up it should be mentioned that Teaching Unplugged is 100 per cent based on the students’ actual language needs. To realize this in full every teacher should remember: “The most important part of Teaching Unplugged for the teacher is not how you generate the emergent language but what you do with the language” [4].

An extensive list of activities with a full description is represented on [www.teachingenglish.org.uk/category/articles-site-structure-11](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/category/articles-site-structure-11). Here are some examples of such activities with the instruction to one of them: mega bridges, picture to story, lateral thinking, opinion poll, story lines, adopt a word, lexical threads, eavesdropping, headlines, how are you feeling now, and etc. [4].

***How are you feeling right now?*** (<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/seminars/live-lesson-dogme>)

A) T says, “How are you feeling right now?” and writes the question at the top of the board.

B) In pairs, T asks Ss to discuss how they're feeling right now and why.

C) T hands out post-it notes and asks everyone to write down a sentence or two about how they're feeling and sticks them up on the wall. T asks Ss to stand up, visit each paper on the walls in pairs and take a quick tally of the most popular responses.

D) T tells the Ss that most of the responses were about being nervous. T asks, "What kind of situations make you feel nervous? Discuss in pairs." T monitors and helps with language, notes good uses of language and problematic uses and puts them on the board for open-class discussion.

E) T asks one student from each pair to take out a sheet of paper, draw a star on it, and note down five situations that make you feel the most nervous.

F) T puts pairs into groups of four to discuss, find out if they agree on any of them. T asks Ss to

G) T asks Ss to write down the following question on a sheet of paper: What do you do to get over being nervous? Ss write down a sentence or two, T collects and corrects them, redistributes them and has the Ss mix and mingle, and ask a yes/no question to find the person in class who has their paper. Ss ask follow-up questions once they find the person they're looking for.

H) T calls on a few Ss to share what they discovered in open class. T puts the Ss in pairs and asks them to rank the top three remedies for nervousness.

I) T ends class with Ss in groups of four deciding what they think is the best remedy for nervousness.

Nevertheless, there are some drawbacks. Probably the biggest disadvantage is the absence of a lesson plan and the transfer of the initiative by the teacher to the student who does not have sufficient knowledge of the language. It is believed that the method is focused on the average and higher level of learners of a foreign language, because without understanding the structure of the language it is impossible to master communicative competence. In addition, the majority of students cannot imagine learning that does not rely on the curriculum and teaching aids, because of which the group may feel that the teacher is simply not prepared for classes. The lack of technology can also cause a negative assessment by students of the course that could appear outdated and old fashioned to some students who have become used to judging a service or product on the quality of its technological process. Furthermore, if you take away the course book, the internet, articles from newspapers and magazines and all the other language input that we bring into class, the teacher himself may feel a little exposed.

Undoubtedly, effective teaching foreign languages is impossible without cooperation of both participants of the educational process. Autonomy and creativity of the student requires from the teacher be autonomous, creative and capable of flexibility, professional adaptability and constant creative search.

Thus, the use of Teaching Unplugged within the framework of the communicative methodology in the course of teaching a foreign language can contribute to the

development of cognitive motivation, creative realization of students, help the students to work as effectively as possible, strengthen students' confidence in learning a foreign language, overcome the language barrier and, as a result, access to a new modern level of proficiency in a foreign language learning process.

In conclusion, we cannot but mention the words written by some famous people: "The class is not the class in the traditional sense, but a meeting place where knowledge is sought and not where it is transmitted" (Paulo Freire, educator); "A good teacher cannot be fixed in a routine... During teaching, each moment requires a sensitive mind that is constantly changing and constantly adapting" (Bruce Lee, actor), "Language which the learner needs the teacher fits" (Scott Thornbury, teacher, educator).

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