

Государственное образовательное учреждение
«Верхневилуйская республиканская гимназия им. М. А. Алексеева»
ул. Ленина, 69, с. Верхневилуйск, 678230, Республика Саха (Якутия)
E-mail: vgymn@narod.ru

ENGLISH THROUGH THE NATION'S TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I have been teaching English for 34 years at one school, Verkhneviluisk Republican Gymnasia after M. A. Alekseyev, the only People's teacher in our republic. Our school is specialized in math and physics where majority of students come from other parts of the republic to improve their knowledge in these subjects. So students have very little motivation to study English or no motivation at all. To my great surprise there are already more than 70 good English teachers among my students and about 25 of them are studying at different Universities to become English teachers. I consider it as the best result of my teaching career. It is interesting to note that some of my former students having become experienced teachers themselves still need my help. They come to observe my classes and ask for my advice. That is my greatest reward for being a teacher.

Now I would like to share my experience perhaps it will be useful to someone. So the first problem I have been dealing with for all these years is to have math-oriented students with low level of English motivated with language learning. In order to achieve this goal I divide the class into groups according to their levels: **beginners and pre-intermediate**. I have developed a special Corrective course for the beginners for 70 hours. The main idea of this course is as follows:

1. **To overcome psychological barrier:** to create non-threatening, safe and comfortable atmosphere for every student, during the 3 adaptation months in a new school

and new teachers create problems for them. I often use different music, songs and variable games at this stage.

2. To overcome language barrier

a) I think the first step to do is to develop the students' listening comprehension skills. I use authentic material for listening audio and video, DVD tapes. (I was lucky to visit twice the USA and UK and bring many teaching materials from there.) First, students are very shy and non-confident. Some of them feel shocked, because in small remote areas they are from, teachers didn't use such materials. (I am not blaming those teachers for having no opportunity to have it.) But I am very determined and speak only English in the classroom and keep using authentic material. Step by step students get used to my method of teaching.

b) To develop reading and speaking skills I use different schemes, tables, cards the so called **key schemes, key tables** based on Shatalov methods. I tried different methods and finally came to conclusion that for my math-oriented students all these logically organized schemes and tables work well. For example:

This is the individual card for one student only (especially for beginners), with personal signals known and understandable only for him/her. The student can use it when he is at soliloquy. It is always done in a colored variant. The more the teacher approves, appreciates, the more the student collaborates and challenges. This is a creative work too.

Grammar in structure

↘+ We live in Yakutia.
 ↘– We don't live in Bulgaria.
 ↗+ Do we live in Yakutia? – Yes? We do.
 ↗– Do we live in Bulgaria? – No? We don't.
 ↗↘ Do we live in Yakutia or in Bulgaria?
 ↘ Where do we live?
 ↘ Who lives in Yakutia?
 ↘↗+ We live in Yakutia, don't we? – Yes? We do.
 ↘↗+ We don't live in Bulgaria, do we? – No, we don't, etc.

As for speaking I try to teach my students on the examples of famous people. The heroes of Jack London, Ethel L. Voinich, Mark Twain and others are great models for self-education. I recommend to read these books to improve discipline, to keep fit, to educate themselves. A special scheme card is given to analyze the story they read. I try my students to pay a great attention to my big collection of literature (bought by me, presented by the American government and my former students etc.), pragmatic materials and use them in their daily activities. The works of other nations who visited Yakutia many years ago are of great value too: A. P. Middendorf, the explorer, O. N. Betting, Germany and Russian linguist, R. K. Maak, G. L. Maidel from Estonia, E. K. Pekarsky, V. L. Seroshevsky from Poland etc.

I have developed special grammar exercises, based on the so called structural approach. I put all the basic grammar material into structures. The main principal of my structure is to begin with a very simple thing and to come to a complex one.

The first 10 structures are given in written form and are trained in pairs. Using these structures students easily learn:

- 1) a significant grammar material as 4 types of questions;
- 2) from a very simple task achieve more intricate (complicated) themes;
- 3) use and know grammar in a proper way.

For home reading I made a special testing to check up the pupil's understanding. It is a very easy task to do and the quickest method to check. It is printed in «Верхневиллюйская гимназия в творческом поиске». Якутск, 2001. С. 54.

C) To develop writing skills I use the idea of K. Klementjeva. The idea is to use interesting communicative topics such as:

- Is there any life after death?
- Is it right to pay much money to sportsmen?
- The best and worst characteristics of the young generation are ...;
- The letters to presidents J. Bush, V. Putin, V. Shtyrov etc.;
- If I were a celebrity (a teacher, actor, an artist, a film star etc.);
- The country I would like to visit ... etc.

The topics, I advise to my students, depend on their interests, wish, and goals. Sometimes they challenge themselves to find out more intricate topics. Writing projects, journals, and essays develops a strong motivation to express their own thought on everyday life and personal problems. It also helps to understand students' personal needs and promotes cooperation between students and me. Students' essays with their interesting thoughts and ideas encourage me to say that I have found the right way to stimulate their activity. I make comments, suggestions to every essay sharing my ideas on the issue. My comments in English serve as additional material not only for reading but also as personal communication and consultation. This way I involve them in constant process of learning – and what is important – in the process of self-education and self-evaluation. After each commentary students try to do their best to improve errors as quick as possible. The more the teacher confides in, the more the student trust. I have developed some instructions and “rules of written communication” between me and student. Actually they are basic rules for essays; however, students perceive them as an individual advice for him / her personally. The rules are as follows:

- Make the beginning of the composition short, understandable.
- Choose suitable design and hold to it.
- Make the paragraph, the unit of the composition.
 - Use only definite, specific, concrete language.
 - Don't explain too much.
 - Make sure the reader knows who is speaking.
 - Avoid modern, fancy words and omit needless words.
 - Do not inject opinion.
 - Work neatly using the line on the left hand side.
 - The plot of the composition must be rich in content or give a full description of the plot to illustrate your knowledge.
 - Make a conclusion, your own point of view.

Basic instructions from other books and mine are very helpful to my teaching process in all four skills as: listening, reading, writing, speaking. These are requirements too besides they depend on the levels beginners, pre-intermediate, intermediate, advanced. Each level has its own instruction.

At the end of each year students have to give an account of studying in the manner of reports called a research work. Last year they explored their native village and made very interesting and problematic essays. Some of these works were printed some are being published with additions and colored pictured as a prospectus. I stress that the number of students who are challenged in writing poems, fairytales, doing translations of the songs, diaries, and stories are increasing every year.

I consider myself to be carved for this occupation only because I tried many other professions before entering and being a student of foreign languages Institute such as: milk doer, a saleswoman, a nurse, even happened to assist into giving a birth to a child, a washer, a teacher in the kindergarten, and then an announcer of the Eastern Siberian documentary film studio where I worked as an interpreter of the newsreels

from Russian in to Yakut. Now having worked for such a long time I came to conclusion that all sorts of methods even criticized ones are good enough to follow. More over these methods give to any teacher a choice to choose.

I suppose my native Sakha people's mentality is quite unique and different. I am so grateful to my ancestors who survived, tolerated such harsh winters of -60 -50 C and we descendants must preserve, develop further what they left for our future generation and carry out in the world civilization. I am very close to my nation's teaching philosophy that comes out our Nature as we consider ourselves to be "Children of Nature" I called my teaching method "**A circulation concept**"

It is based according to the Sakha tradition on 9 steps or stages. The main slogan of which is – A healthy family on a healthy mind brings to a healthy society. Everything goes around this concept like this:

1. In the center – ME. A child must know everything about himself.

2. The second circle is concerned about the family, the family tree, traditions etc.

3. The third circle deals with relatives from the mother's and father's sides.

4. The fourth is about clubs, different societies, clubs, organizations, schools, kindergartens etc.

5. The fifth is concentrated on communities where they live on.

6. The sixth coordinates with the region and republic.

7. The seventh circle represents nature surrounding us and the attitude to it, the whole country.

8. The eighth forms external world that is about space, the Earth,

9. The ninth is referred to our deities, religion etc.

On the whole it looks like a family tree. **The main principles of this concept are:**

- Help students learn English through their native language.

- Contextualize language involving people in real life. Students speak about,

nature, literature, politics, teenage problems, moral values etc.

- Focus on communication, in both oral and written form as a primary goal.
- Create opportunities for a student-centered environment.
- Help students learn what they study in the classroom and to the world they live in.
- Influence the lives of students, their families and friends.
- Integrate linguistic and cultural skills into meaningful wholes.
- Provide a teacher with the tools to make a student – centered environment possible.

All my educational work as a class teacher, lessons as an average teacher are conducted around this method. I think it is successful, I share it with my younger colleagues. This way I change my classroom into a conference hall, café, a hospital, New York, London museums etc.

I consider that the teacher who divides children into capable or incapable gives a grade for himself (gives his work a proper appreciation). I try **to guess** the definite direction the child develops according to his inclination and **inspire that way**.

My credo is **to bring up a real educated personality with knowledge + quality**. To my mind the child filled with only good knowledge won't do any good for his people and country, he will never give a hand to a poor or understand such people, he is always egoistic, heartless.

People study for the whole life. He can achieve something important at any age no matter how he studied at school. Even those who were not so brilliant at school can become famous scientists, engineers, in one word people of many trades. It must be also taken into consideration.

My method brings to the whole understanding **through the love for the target language to respect one's own family, country and the world**.

Everything according to our Sakha tradition connected with 9 stages or steps.

In the end, I'd like to add that we must come together to solve the most acute problem of our future generation so that to do everything possible to make our education more advanced, progressive because the future of Russia depends on its growing generation and the teachers.

Материал поступил в редколлегию 20.03.2008