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**CREATING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT  
AT LANGUAGE LESSONS**

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*The article deals with the innovative foreign language teaching methods such as the techniques of creating a positive learning environment, which have become of great current interest due to the development of a learner-centered teaching approach.*

**Key words:** *foreign language, teaching methods, learning environment, learner-centered approach, development, individual, teacher.*

**СОЗДАНИЕ БЛАГОПРИЯТНОЙ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОЙ СРЕДЫ  
НА ЯЗЫКОВЫХ ЗАНЯТИЯХ**

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*В статье рассматриваются современные методы обучения иностранным языкам, в частности техники создания благоприятной образовательной среды, которые стали особенно актуальны в связи с развитием личностно-ориентированного подхода в преподавании.*

**Ключевые слова:** *иностраный язык, методы обучения, образовательная среда, личностно-ориентированный подход, развитие, личность, педагог.*

An educator is a mediator between knowledge and a learner, and each act of teaching is called upon to make certain changes both in the very nature of the student's activity and in the achievement of a personhood process. Education is aimed at the development of the individual, and in teaching this direction is realized through the organization of mastering by students of scientific knowledge and methods of activity. These aims are correlated with the functions of teaching: educational, pedagogic and developmental. The content of these three functions shows that modern pedagogical science treats the learner not as an object of the teacher's influences but as an active subject of the learning process, the success of which is ultimately determined by the student's attitude to learning, developed cognitive interest, degree of awareness and independence in acquiring knowledge.

A modern learning environment has become highly learner-centered being created by individuals, as everybody develops according to their individual characteristics and creates their own space of entry into history and culture, their vision of values and priorities of knowledge. [4] In view of this, we should

concentrate not only on the question “WHAT to teach?”, but also take into consideration the question “HOW to teach?” that is no less important.

Carl Ransom Rogers, an American psychologist and one of the founding fathers of psychotherapy research, developed a so-called person-centered approach to understanding personality and human relationships. Later, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he applied his experiences with adult therapy to the education process and developed the concept of learner-centered approach. [1] Rogers pointed out five strategies regarding learner-centered teaching:

1. Prizing – a teacher should not only punish for mistakes, but praise for correct answers as well;
2. Accepting – a teacher should accept that each student perceives learning material differently depending on their background and personal experience;
3. Trusting – a teacher should not think the worst of their students, but always believe in their learning potential;
4. Empathy – a teacher should be sympathetic and understanding towards the learners as they are individualities, not just students;
5. Realness – a teacher should remember that the educational process is a part of real life. [5]

These strategies can be fully applied to creating a positive learning environment at language lessons. By such an environment we mean a psychologically favourable atmosphere built during the educational process. The key to success also comprises some more techniques apart from those mentioned above. Let us consider them more closely.

There is a common opinion that at language lessons students must be taught only in a target language. But if we talk about non-linguistic specialties, at the initial stage teachers may use a mother tongue to explain some subtle shades of meaning or specific usage concerning new vocabulary or morphosyntactic issues as a lot of grammar rules may sound quite difficult even in a native language not to mention a target one. Students should feel comfortable, not tense and it will give them the opportunity to get a better command of a foreign language.

The next point is bossiness. We must avoid being dictators at lessons; our opinion is not the only one true. Indubitably, our knowledge and experience are more profound, but do admit that full submission, students’ fear to express their own ideas and dispute with an educator will do no good. Teacher’s arrogance and authoritativeness are able to destroy any positive learning environment, so try to build relationships with a sense of mutual respect and trust, be more open and democratic with learners.

Be humane and supportive. Show kindness, care and sympathy towards students, get to know them better. An undone home assignment may have a plausible excuse, and our task is to find the “roots”. Students are also people with their daily problems, private ruefulness and grief, and their unwillingness to answer some questions or do some exercises can be induced by disturbance of the general sense of

well-being, by problems connected with close relatives or simply caused by lack of sleep. Even a brief question “How are you? Is everything OK?” can change a student’s mood and the emotional climate of the whole class. [3]

One more aspect of no little interest is a sense of respect. Teachers should by no means humiliate their students. Such words as “You are stupid!” are inappropriate in the educational context! Young learners are vulnerable and sensitive to any manifestation of disrespect. Remember that students, like adults, have not only physical needs but also important psychological needs for security and order, love and belonging, personal power and competence, freedom and novelty, and fun. Moreover, this issue centers around pedagogical ethics.

Some teachers underestimate the importance of such things as facial expressions, body language, and the voice tone. To create trust-based relations you should be confident, but do not overdo it. Be relaxed and positive. There is a tendency in Russian educational institutions that teachers sit still at a desk or stand at a blackboard with their arms folded and their faces frowned, emotionless and disinterested. You should move around the classroom to get students follow your direction, keep an eye contact with them, sometimes have a look in their written works or slightly touch someone’s shoulder passing by. All these techniques will keep learners’ attention during a lesson. Do not forget about the voice tone, it should not be monotonous and indifferent. Sometimes use a pitched voice or vice versa a whisper. Your face should express a range of emotions. Smile and encourage students’ smiling in return. Adopt a constant habit of being positive and engaged within a lesson.

Do not be afraid to get off a subject of a lesson (even if it is a lengthy lecture), play some vocabulary or grammar games, tell learners a funny story or a joke to dissipate the tension. A good sense of humour wins students’ favour and gives them the notion that you are on the same wave. In return, it helps to create a welcoming and engaging atmosphere where students feel they belong to the same learning environment. Humour is undervalued in the context of education, but it may eliminate some psychological barriers between a student and a teacher.

The last but not least is encouragement. A teacher should build an educational process in such a way that students will not be afraid to make mistakes. Instead of “You’ve made a mistake” we should say “Try again!”. Teachers should not always expect only explicit answers. Give students some challenging tasks, “food for thought”, and encourage their every single effort to get to the core of the matter. When learners are rebuked for mistakes, they feel insecure and incompetent. It is much sensible to praise them for an unconventional approach in a task solution, for strategies and processes that let to learners’ achievements. The phrase “Next time you will succeed!” will inspire your students more than the words “You are wrong again!” and will give them strong motivation in mastering a foreign language.

Various contexts, locations and cultures in which students learn are defined as the learning environment. A positive learning environment is characterized as supportive, caring, challenging and safe. Positive learning environments have been shown to produce better academic results and strengthen other life skills for learners. [2] And a teacher as the educational leader in a classroom has the ability to create

positive learning environments for the students. By applying specific strategies such as creating a sense of trust and building relationships, we are contributing to the creation of a positive learning environment and experience for our students.

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