Использование стратегии Уолта Диснея в междисциплинарном обучении навыкам критического мышления и коммуникации на английском языке в вузе

Методика междисциплинарного обучения и преподавания в высшей школе является актуальной и недостаточно изученной темой. Теоретические и эмпирические исследования освещают, как правило, концептуальные вопросы междисциплинарного образования и универсальные методы и приемы междисциплинарного обучения. Цель настоящего эмпирического исследования - описать опыт применения стратегии Уолта Диснея в рамках междисциплинарного курса обучения английскому языку как иностранному для студентов-бакалавров в бизнесшколе. Методика направлена на развитие навыков критического мышления и решения сложных задач в интеграции с языковыми и коммуникативными навыками. Представленная в статье методика использования стратегии Уолта Диснея в междисциплинарном обучении по дисциплине "Иностранный язык" является результатом авторского осмысления и не была ранее описана в научно-методической литературе.

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Teaching the Russian-Language Free Dialogic Communication to the Chinese Students

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The article discusses methodological issues of teaching the Russian-language free dialogic communication to the Chinese students. Both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors that cause learning difficulties are considered. Relying on the analysis of these factors and on the results of a students’ survey, the authors developed a set of tasks, exercises and activities that promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills integrated with language and communication skills. This paper aims to represent experiential methodology of using Walt Disney strategy adapted for an interdisciplinary learning goal in the English language and communication course for this purpose in the professional literature before.

Key words and phrases: methods of teaching Russian as a foreign language; person-oriented activity-based approach; cooperative learning; Chinese students; free dialogic communication; listening and speaking skills.

Methodology of interdisciplinary learning and teaching in higher education is a topical issue yet underinvestigated. Theoretical and empirical studies shed light mainly on conceptual questions of interdisciplinary education and describe general methods and techniques. This paper aims to represent experiential methodology of using Walt Disney strategy adapted for an interdisciplinary learning goal in the English language and communication course at bachelor level in business school. The methodology focuses on the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills integrated with language and communication skills. This paper contributes to research on interdisciplinary methodology and teaching a foreign language based on Walt Disney strategy which has not been interpreted for this purpose in the professional literature before.

Key words and phrases: interdisciplinary language learning and teaching; critical thinking; communication skills; interdisciplinary practices; higher education.

Walt Disney Strategy as an Interdisciplinary Learning Activity for Communication and Critical Thinking Skills Development

How to foster critical thinking and have students solve complex problems are among most important questions in higher education worldwide. Solutions to complex societal problems (financial crises, climate change, poverty,
migration, etc.) cannot be reached without interdisciplinary way of thinking. Thus, critical thinking and interdisciplinary skills have become crucial XXI-century skills necessary for workforce of the knowledge economy [11]. Both issues are on pedagogical agenda and they are heightening the need of promoting interdisciplinary way of studies since it enables future professionals to seek for the big picture responses to contemporary societal challenges. The topicality and relevance of this study relies on the growing demand for introducing interdisciplinary learning and teaching practices in higher education programs.

Interdisciplinary approach to learning and teaching aims at integration of different disciplinary insights in order to produce a broader and more in-depth understanding of complex problems which are unlikely to be achieved by means of single discipline knowledge. For this purpose, interdisciplinary program designers distinguished three groups of constituent skills for interdisciplinary understanding: critical thinking, collaboration and reflection [3, p. 35].

These three sets of skills are fundamental to interdisciplinary studies. Critical thinking comes to the forefront of interdisciplinary learning since students need to think across disciplines and courses in order to analyze, compare and contrast, evaluate and integrate diverse insights, theories and perspectives. Clusters of critical thinking skills (attribute, analysis, evaluation and sequence) can be infused into the existing content of studies [6] and become the focal points of teaching along with subject-specific competences. Interdisciplinary collaboration is fuelled by strong interpersonal communication skills [4, p. 13]. Working in multidisciplinary teams, students need to be able to negotiate meanings, deal with opposing points of views and achieve consensus on shared goals. Reflection is viewed as a supporting skill to understand what specific results have been achieved and how students have come to results in the process of learning.

At the same time interdisciplinary pedagogy is an emerging area of research. While an increasing number of empirical studies on interdisciplinary approach and learning activities investigate their general benefits and applicability to different knowledge domains, the potential of English as a foreign language (EFL) discipline stays unexplored in terms of developing the methodology of interdisciplinary learning and teaching. This study presents the adaptation of Walt Disney strategy as an authentic business practice of stimulating creative and innovative problem-solving to the needs of interdisciplinary teaching business and management students in the English language and communication course. The identification and reasoning of using Walt Disney strategy to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills integrated with language and communication skills have novelty value for interdisciplinary pedagogy in higher education.

The aim of the paper is to propose a new methodology of interdisciplinary learning and teaching in order to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills integrated with the English language and communication skills in the context of business education.

The objectives of the study are as follows:
1. to overview the existing interdisciplinary teaching and learning methodology;
2. to provide the rationale for using adapted Walt Disney strategy as an interdisciplinary learning activity;
3. to describe the methodology of employing Walt Disney strategy in teaching the English language and communication course for business and management students.

An explanatory case study method was used to analyze and describe a practical way of using the interdisciplinary learning and teaching method under consideration. This method was particularly useful in showing the stages in the process of organization and implementation of Walt Disney strategy.

Overview of interdisciplinary learning practices
Designing and implementing interdisciplinary learning activities necessitate appropriate and effective pedagogic strategies and methods. The empirical interdisciplinary studies [2; 5; 10; 12] examine different aspects of methodology: organization forms of studies, methods of teaching, teacher’s and student’s roles as well as kinds of activities. Among known and relatable forms of studies for interdisciplinary learning are team-teaching, organizing self-directing, mixed experience / expertise classrooms of students and outside classroom activities along with practices of real-life problem-solving, group projects, community-service learning, problem-based learning and others (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Forms of studies, tasks and activities for interdisciplinary learning
Team-teaching has become a popular form of organization of interdisciplinary studies as it brings two or more experts with different perspectives in the classroom scenario and promotes student engagement through diversity exposure and multiple views [10]. Creating mixed experience / expertise classrooms of students is justified for working on a common project to solve a complex problem; however, as E. R. Reynolds puts it, professors may become discouraged to teach and manage mixed-experience classrooms that are heavily dependent on peer interaction [Ibidem]. J. W. Weber and S. W. Englehart claim that the method of service learning is most effective for business students from the perspective of exploring own ethics and values by participating in real-life community-based activities [12]. The comparative analysis of problem-based learning and project-based learning revealed that both pedagogies are suitable to enhance students’ interdisciplinary competence [2]. At the same time, the authors conclude that interdisciplinary problem-based learning allows students to profit more.

The main criterion in selecting a pedagogical method for program designers should be its workability to help students understand interdisciplinary methodology and appreciate the way disciplines are combined or juxtaposed. The value of a pedagogic tool is in demonstration to students how to integrate knowledge across disciplines [13].

Interdisciplinary practices have got a big learning potential for developing “the capacity to integrate knowledge and modes of thinking in two or more disciplines to produce a cognitive advancement – for example, explaining a phenomenon, solving a problem, creating a product, raising a new question – in ways that would have been unlikely through single disciplinary means” [1, p. 16]. Having an enormous resource to foster students’ cognitive development, interdisciplinary programs allow for the development of a range of thinking modes: analytical, critical, diagnostic and integrative ones.

M. Yang [14] points out how challenging it is for the teacher to help students understand the relationship between the disciplines and draw interdisciplinary linkages in terms of content methodologies. An extra challenge would be to persuade students that it is meaningful to venture into interdisciplinary investigation.

**Walt Disney strategy as an interdisciplinary learning activity**

Walt Disney strategy or method was originally inspired by an American entrepreneur and film producer Walt Disney and further developed to address problems oriented at making innovative creative solutions [8]. It has become an effective practice to tackle professional, corporate and academic manifold issues so far.

For academic purposes, Walt Disney strategy facilitates the process of developing critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration skills, namely a questioning attitude, formulating a common goal in a group, analyzing in the process of solving a problem [4, p. 71]. Students are exposed to three stages of decision-making process: first, learn to express an open and positive attitude when brainstorming unconventional ideas, second, translate the ideas into a structured action plan and, finally, critically analyze the feasibility of the ideas. The main learning outcomes to be achieved are the following:

- students are able to produce multiple solutions to complex problems;
- students are able to formulate the key question to specify a creative solution;
- students are able to critically evaluate and give feedback on a solution.

**The teaching procedure**

**Stage 1.** Present the students with a case, a problem or a research question. Then divide the class into smaller groups of 6-7 students.

**Stage 2.** Ask students to begin with brainstorming ideas to the given problem in the **dream room** (this may be an actual room or a part of the classroom). It is important at this stage not to restrict any ideas and give a free flow of thoughts without boundaries. Every student in a group needs to write their ideas and contribute them to the group bulk of ideas. All ideas are collected, and students provide a positive feedback to each one since only favorable comments are allowed in the dream room.

**Stage 3.** Students move to the **reality room** where they choose 1-2 ideas generated in the dream room in order to elaborate them and translate into a working plan. The main questions to be discussed in the reality room are “How does it work?” or “How can we make it work?” Students need to remain positive about possibilities of solving a problem and, at the same time, be precise and accurate about their suggestions.

**Stage 4.** The final room is called the **sweatbox** when students pitch their ideas to another group of students. Groups provide feedback to each other’s ideas pursuing the guiding question “Is it possible to realize an idea?” [Ibidem, p. 72].

Sets of guiding questions to explore in every ‘room’ may be adjusted to the communication goal of a task with the focus on the main function of each stage (Figure 2).

This strategy was adapted for teaching Year 2 bachelor students of the Graduate School of Management, St. Petersburg University, to develop language and communication skills integrated with critical thinking and problem-solving skills in ‘Language and Communication Skills in English: Subject-Specific’ course. The students were split into two subgroups (A and B) and introduced to a business idea developed by a young American entrepreneur. Two different though complementary video sources of information describe the features of the business product and portray motivation of the startupper to launch a business [7; 9]. The communicative goal of the task for students is to offer a strategy of the business product entering a new market and evaluate the feasibility of the idea from the perspectives of a dreamer, realist and critic. Students prepare a PESTEL (political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors) analysis of a given market as home assignment before the activity is organized in class. By doing so, they integrate different disciplinary perspectives to explain, justify and communicate their solution to a complex business task in mini-group presentations. Hence students develop their critical thinking and communication skills.
**Figure 2.** The guiding questions related to three stages of Walt Disney strategy

Dream room
- What do we want?
- What are the solutions?
- What are the benefits of applying these solutions?
- Are there any opportunities?

Reality room
- How can we apply this idea in reality?
- What is the action plan to apply the idea?
- What is the timeline to apply this idea?
- How to evaluate the idea?

Sweatbox
- What could be wrong with the idea?
- What is missing?
- What are the weaknesses in the plan?
- Why cannot we apply it?

**Task design**

In class, students were provided with two different cards (templates) to guide their learning process and task completion. We held the activity in two different classrooms so that students could have a gap in the input information with the goal of further communication and information exchange between the sub-groups. Upon watching different video clips, students of both sub-groups meet each other and do the task from Stage 1.2 onwards collaboratively.

**Student card A**

**Stage 1.1.** While watching an interview with Alexandra Maw, the founder of Kaleidoscope Juice, students complete Table 1.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The product that Alexandra Maw has developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Special features of the product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Competitive advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Product range</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student card B**

At the same stage student sub-group B watches another video clip in a different room and complete Table 2.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The product that Alexandra Maw has developed and its features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How did she come to this idea?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Stage 1.2.** Students think of the novelty features, target audience and opportunities for growth of the business idea on the Mexican market and take notes in the form of a concept map.

**Stage 2.** Preparation for a mini-group presentation.

Students work in three mini-groups: dreamers, realists, and critics in order to analyze the business idea and present each mini-group solution to what extent the Mexican market can be favorable to the implementation of the business idea. 5-minute presentations are based on the PESTEL analysis prepared beforehand.

Students follow the guidelines for preparing the presentation. For example, for dreamers the guidelines are as follows: the ultimate goal is to share the dream of the business idea presented in the video without any restrictions or criticism. This would help to build a pool of creative ideas. Some of the ideas might be viable, while others might be not. Dreamers ask themselves questions that would help them describe ideas and thoughts (Figure 2. Dream room). The realist group of students pursues the objective of thinking in a more logical planning style. They imagine that the business idea is possible and start developing a manageable action plan to achieve it. All the thoughts should be constructive to create a plan. The questions (Figure 2. Reality room) navigate student work. Mini-group 3 – the critics – needs to discover the barriers of applying the idea in a new business environment and suggest ways to overcome the obstacles. The mini-group has to provide a constructive critique of the business idea in order to find its weaknesses on the way to its realization. Students follow the questions (Figure 2. Sweatbox).
Stage 3. Presentations of the ideas generated by mini-groups in the following sequence: dreamers, realists, critics. Students need to actively listen to peer-presentations in order to get an overall evaluation of the business idea and formulate content questions during ‘question – answer’ sessions following each presentation.

Stage 4. Students write an argumentative paragraph on the following question: “Could this business idea be successfully implemented on the Mexican market? Why? Why not?” In their paragraphs students rely on the results of three mini-groups presentations.

Assessment of the learning outcomes

In the language and communication course there are two main foci for assessment: language skills and communication skills. They are balanced and underlie the assessment criteria: communicative task achievement, content management, delivery of presentation and organization (for argumentative paragraph), grammar resource, lexical resource and pronunciation (for presentation).

The communicative task achievement in this case implies the ability of students to think critically which is intertwined with effective communication. For successful communicative task completion, students need to be able to:
- explain to what extent the indicated market is favourable to the business idea;
- adhere to the assigned role (dreamer, realist or critic);
- provide ample evidence to prove their position.

In terms of content management, students are expected to:
- fully analyze the business idea;
- provide evidence from the PESTEL analysis (at least three factors) to support their arguments;
- develop a well-structured coherent argument and support it with relevant reasons;
- speak up within the given time bounds.

Students’ delivery of presentations is evaluated against the following rubrics:
- present, highlight, and exemplify key ideas fluently and appropriately;
- use the register appropriate to the academic context;
- establish and maintain rapport with the audience;
- show appropriate body language;
- handle questions at Q&A session efficiently.

The assessment of the English language skills (grammatical and lexical resources) is focused at relevance, accuracy and range of items and structures used by students at B2+ level (Common European Framework of Reference, CEFR). Pronunciation skills include the assessment of control of phonological features and the ability to place word stress accurately as well as articulate individual sounds clearly.

The second aspect of the integrated task which is argumentative paragraph writing enables students to demonstrate another set of language skills such as the use of simple and complex grammatical structures to express cause and effect relationships, voice possibility/probability by using modal verbs, evaluate solutions by means of hedging language, manage cohesive devices in the text and punctuate.

Conclusion

This study has offered a new methodology of interdisciplinary learning and teaching with the focus on critical thinking and problem-solving skills integrated with language and communication skills. The overview of the known interdisciplinary practices revealed the shortage of studies on teaching interdisciplinary language and communication courses. The results obtained in the course of teaching the adapted version of Walt Disney strategy for interdisciplinary learning purposes indicate its workability and efficiency in the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills integrated with the English language and communication skills.

The proposed methodology – the rationale and teaching procedure – allows course designers and instructors to acknowledge the potential of language and communication disciplines for solving complex problems in the academic setting. It can give birth to new perspectives on how higher education courses can benefit from integration across disciplines.

At the same time, further research is needed to investigate and discuss new interdisciplinary teaching and learning methods and activities that can facilitate students’ capacity to integrate knowledge from two or more disciplines along with different modes of thinking.

References


Использование стратегии Уолта Диснея в междисциплинарном обучении навыкам критического мышления и коммуникации на английском языке в вузе

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Методика междисциплинарного обучения и преподавания в высшей школе является актуальной и недостаточно изученной темой. Теоретические и эмпирические исследования освещают, как правило, концептуальные вопросы междисциплинарного образования и универсальные методы и приемы междисциплинарного обучения. Цель настоящего эмпирического исследования – описать опыт применения стратегии Уолта Диснея в рамках междисциплинарного курса обучения английскому языку как иностранному для студентов-бакалавров в бизнес-школе. Методика направлена на развитие навыков критического мышления и решения сложных задач в интеграции с языковыми и коммуникативными навыками. Представленная в статье методика использования стратегии Уолта Диснея в междисциплинарном обучении по дисциплине «Иностранный язык» является результатом авторского осмысления и не была ранее описана в научно-методической литературе.

Ключевые слова и фразы: междисциплинарное изучение языка; навыки критического мышления; коммуникативные навыки; методы и приемы междисциплинарного обучения; высшее образование.

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В статье представлены дополнительные варианты организации работы обучающихся над характерными сведениями по лингвофольклористике русской народной сказки. Это может быть практически востребованным и полезным как в преподавании русского языка как иностранного студентам в процессе высшего профессионального образования, так и при обучении школьников филологическим дисциплинам. Разработанные задания творческого характера с элементами применения эвристического полилога ориентированы на уяснение специфики сюжетоведения в повествовании, культурообусловленной оценочной характеристики образов героев, особенностей использования разговорной и просторечной лексики и фразеологии, междометий, народной афористики и др.

Ключевые слова и фразы: комплексный анализ текста; культуроедческая направленность преподавания; лингвофольклористика; эвристическое обучение; эвристический полилог; проблемное обучение.

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Комплексный анализ текста в культуроведческом ракурсе (с элементами проблемно-эвристической организации обучения студентов-инофонов)

В своей повседневной проектной и конструктивной, коммуникативной и организационной деятельности каждый преподаватель филологических дисциплин неизбежно сталкивается с насущной проблемой: как организовать «общение-диалог» с текстом так, чтобы не только не утратить, а напротив, повысить...