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Efficiency of Binary Lectures in Teaching Major Linguistic Courses (Linguistics of Discourse and Cognitive Linguistics)
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Abstract

The paper attempts to prove the efficiency of binary lecture courses by experiment in the academic group illustrating the outcomes of their progress and feedback about the new type of a course. Teaching theoretical linguistic disciplines in English for the students who are non-native speakers is rather a controversial issue in contemporary higher education, namely for foreign language department students. On the one hand, it is necessary to involve as much English as possible. On the other hand, comprehension of theoretical material is not easy even in a native language. The objectives of the current research are to find the solution of the problem and suggest an optimal form of delivering lectures, to test a binary lecture as the main form of a lesson during the whole course.

Keywords: binary lecture; team teaching; linguistics; modern foreign language education concept; intra disciplinary format; interactive method

1. Introduction

New requirements to competencies of language experts in Kazakhstan have lead to the formation of new approaches to teaching foreign languages and training future linguists and language teachers. Especially, cultural aspect in language learning becomes more and more topical in the epoch of mass globalization and integration. The problem of developing language skills and linguacultural skills at the same time puts the problems of modernization in foreign language education (Kounanbayeva, 2005). How to make learners aware of a foreign culture as naturally as possible? How to teach the skills of making parallels of our perception of the world and the perception of native speakers? That is the point which is considered in the paper, and we try to suggest an option to solve the issue.

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New approaches definitely include various methods, techniques and forms of lessons. One of the unique forms that have become extremely popular in the recent years worldwide is team teaching. Team teaching is practiced in many higher educational institutions, and only few of them hold the full team-taught courses due to different reasons. Instructors understand the meaning of team teaching in their own ways to meet the requirements of their individual teaching styles and lesson objectives. It is generally agreed that there are five formats that is common for most of co-teaching lessons. Friend and Cook (Friend & Lynne, 1996) distinguish six approaches to co-teaching that provide ways for two teachers to work together in a classroom. There may be several options: one can teach and another one just support; they can teach in parallels, i.e. simultaneously; alternative teaching; station teaching; and team teaching where more than two colleagues are involved.

For instruction to be considered a co-teaching format, both partners must participate fully in all aspects of instruction. Full participation does not mean doing the same thing all the time: it does mean that each teacher's role is coordinated to contribute to the effectiveness of the lesson. Co-teaching also does not mean that one teacher is always the primary teacher and one is always in a supporting role. Co-teachers shift roles and focus to match the lesson and target student needs.

In team teaching which is one format of co-teaching both teachers are responsible for planning, and they share the instruction of all students. The lessons are taught by both teachers who are actively engaged in conversation, not lecture, to encourage discussion by students. Both teachers are actively involved in the management of the lesson and discipline. This approach can be very effective with the classroom teacher and a student teacher or two student teachers working together.

2. Theoretical background of the research

Team teaching is a form of the lesson which does not specify any content of it. It can cover any subjects, topics, amount and type of study material. Likewise, a binary (“bi-” from Latin “two”, “twice”) lecture is also a type of team-teaching. Both teachers play an active role in the process (Bordovskaya & Rean, 2006). However, a binary lecture emphasizes the content of the material rather than the number of classroom instructors. “Binary” here stands for “double view on the subject” rather than “two teachers”, though a couple of speakers are also the essential requirement of any binary lecture. It is a kind of lecture delivery in the form of a dialogue between two viewpoints and contrasting angles of view on the same topic, delivered by two instructors. The instructors can be the representatives of different scientific schools, or between a scholar and practical specialist, or between a teacher and a student.

Binary lectures were firstly presented in the work of Verbitskiy who placed it in the system of context teaching through non-traditional lectures. He distinguished problem lectures, lecture of visualization, lecture of two (which was later modified as binary), lecture with intentionally planned errors, press-conference lecture (Verbitskiy, 1991). In his scientific manuals Smolkin describes various forms of non-traditional lectures to enhance the learning and cognitive activity of students and professional development of teaching staff. Except Vezhbitskiy’s typology, he suggests six more types of non-traditional lectures. They are a conversation lecture, discussion lecture, lecture with the analysis of specific situations, research lecture (fluent "brainstorming"), a lecture by applying the technique of feedback, consultation lecture (Smolkin, 1991).

Ahmetova and Isaeva (2006) summarize the eleven new supply options of lecture material. They include five types of non-traditional lectures specified by Verbitskiy and six ones presented by Smolkin. These lecture options focus on the intensification of the educational process and development of personal qualities of the student.

Chernilevskiy, Kulnevich and Lakotsenina add another type of non-traditional university lectures. Chernilevskiy (2011) calls this type of lecture "lecture with the use of didactic methods" (the methods of "brainstorming" method of specific situations, etc.). Kulnevich and Lakotsenina (2005) specify the form of non-traditional lecture marked as the "lecture with the use of gaming techniques" (brainstorming techniques, methods of case study, etc.). Although most of them have the elements of practical lessons rather than lectures, we focus on the binary lecture as the crucial core type of non-traditional lecture. All the forms of work in the classroom can be easily integrated into the binary lecture including brainstorming, consultancy, case-study, etc. However, we insist on keeping the essence of a lecture which is aimed firstly at the oral sequential presentation or teaching people about a particular subject (Bligh, 2000). We can just add some elements of non-traditional lecture, but the lecture must be kept as explanation and description of the theoretical material.

Dyusupbayeva (2010) explains the nature of binary lecture as a lecture delivered by two teachers and by two
teachers with the active participation of students. She emphasizes the role of the problem-solving principle of any lecture and the importance of dialogue which makes the students to be involved into discussion. It teaches students to compare different views, doubt some questions, choose between different opinions, and express their own opinions.

One more peculiarity is that it concerns lectures, i.e. theoretical materials that are more complicated to acquire. A binary lecture solves the following crucial problems:

- Complex perception of a problem and situation. It is considered not from one angle of view which often happens in traditional lecture. One lecturer can impose his/her own opinion, though unconsciously;
- Ability to work with information, make creative transformations;
- Mobile switching of attention from one thought to another;
- Increase of interest towards the topic;
- Productive interaction between teachers and learners (Artyushina & Abdulkhalikova, 2008).

In the following research we make the first attempt to establish a binary lecture not as a non-standard entertaining technique but as a type of binary lectures course which should be involved as a preferable option into the higher educational process.

3. Application of binary lectures in the classroom

In our case the situation is extremely complicated as English is not a native language for the students and the subjects must be taught in English. So, there must be suggested some ways of minimizing obstacles in comprehension making complex terms easier to understand. It is proved that a man understands information better in dialogues rather than in monologues. In this way we can explain a desire of a child to eavesdrop surroundings satisfying curiosity. In dialogues learners can hear simplification of the difficult material, asking for paraphrases and interpretations, moreover, they can actively interact in the process being not only listeners, but direct participants as well.

According to the participants, binary lessons are classified as:

- teacher – student;
- scholar – practical specialist;
- representative of one scientific school and another.

According to the content we have presented the following approaches of the binary lecture:

- inter-disciplinary when two or more subjects are involved. They can be both relative subjects (linguistics and literature, methods of teaching and general pedagogy) and non-relative (English and Chemistry, Maths and Literature);
- intra-disciplinary which cover two or more trends or branches of the same discipline represented by several schools or directions.

In the present research we describe the intra-disciplinary approach to the subjects Cognitive Linguistics and Linguistics of Discourse. The subjects are difficult because they are interpreted differently in native (Kazakh and Russian) and foreign (European and American) linguistics.

4. Objectives of the research

In the current experiment we have a strong purpose to prove practical efficiency and demonstrate concrete outcomes of the students who have passed the major courses in binary lecture formats. As it is a form of a lesson involving maximum of interactive regime of work and students’ active participation, we adhered to the idea of contrasting between the students who passed the same discipline according to the same syllabus, but with two different lecture formats – traditional and binary. Moreover, one of the basic tasks was to suggest a binary lecture as a reasonable option for the traditional form, to suggest shifting it from the status of an alternative form.

5. Methodology

The current research utilizes quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the comparison between binary versus traditional approaches to lecture delivery by contrasting the students’ achievements in learning Cognitive
Linguistics and Linguistics of Discourse. The main empirical method of our research is practical experiment which lasted 7 weeks and covered half of the courses of Cognitive Linguistics and Linguistics of Discourse. Quantitative part of research was successfully realized by mid-term tests the students passed at the seventh week of the experiment. Assessment of the students was held by computer testing. Besides, there were conducted step by step current brief paper-based tests prepared for the students at each lesson in order to avoid subjectivity in assessment. Qualitative side of the research was implemented through observation of the achievements by answers and the degree of interest and participation of the students.

Student’s own satisfaction with the outcomes, their feedback is another measurement tool of success of any experiment. At the end of the courses the experimental group was asked to share the impressions and evaluate the effectiveness by different criteria including the easiness of perception, availability of sources, and quality of instructors’ work, reaction to questions and new ideas from the audience. Feedback was taken by a specially arranged survey which consisted of several simple questions. The survey was handed out at the end of the course. It also comprised a section of comments, remarks and suggestions for each criterion.

6. Procedure of the research

6.1 Description of the experiment

The experiment covered 42 students of Master’s degree program, in major “Foreign language: two foreign languages”, Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Almaty, Kazakhstan. The group of students was divided into two sub-groups. Group1 (21 students) was taught using a new form of binary teaching during the first mid-term period (January 26 – March 19, 2015). Group 2 (21 student) continued traditional study when one lecturer presents materials and students give feedback at the seminar lessons. The groups were formed according to their GPA. Each group consisted of excellent students, students with middle GPA and students at the bottom of the group. The approximate proportion was 2 (excellent), 3 (average), 1 (low). The experiment covered two subjects of the elective component of the curriculum: Cognitive Linguistics and Linguistics of Discourse.

At the first stage of the research, in order to evaluate the students’ initial knowledge of pre-requisite disciplines, they passed paper-based test which showed average scores of 82 in group 1 (experimental group) and 85,3 in group 2. So, the initial level of both groups was almost the same, group 2 had even higher average score. During the whole first mid-term period the experimental group had a binary lecture on one subject and a lecture on the second one. In the process of the experiment there were involved two teachers for one subject: a local lecturer who teaches this subject, and a visiting lecturer, a specialist in the field in the USA and a native English speaker.

Both cognitive linguistics and discourse are the disciplines which have different interpretations in European and American (Western) and native (Kazakhstani and Russian) linguistics. The terminology also has some peculiarities. It is necessary to dwell upon both sources, compare and make analysis of different authors which is not an easy task for the first year MA student who has not gained much research experience. Binary lecture presents an alternative option to combine both views and show it in parallel contrast from the viewpoints of two schools. If we presented the material from the sources of Kazakh and Russian linguists, assistant teacher presented Western authors on the same topics, we had a discussion, and students made a comparison themselves being actively involved into the conversation. The intradisciplinary format was used in the course as the topics of the syllabus remained the same, we did not add any elements of other relative or distant subjects. We just divided and emphasized the differences and similarities of two major linguistic schools. In Figure 1 we illustrate a demonstration of peer-review lesson plan on Cognitive Linguistics designed in the form of a dialogue between two scientific schools.

6.2 Content of the experimental lectures
The plan is given as a table for making it easier for the lecturers themselves to see the contrast. Seminar lessons were also conducted in an interactive way using all active forms of a lesson. Observations showed the contrast between traditional and binary forms of lectures. At binary lectures students expressed the highest level of interest and desire to take part in discussions. Certainly, the scenario of the lecture is rough and approximate, as there always can be changes, interruptions from the part of the students. Spontaneity is an integral component of any binary lecture. Some topics that were not supposed to be discussed thoroughly need more attention. However, the outline of the lecture must always be fully covered. Rough parallel highlighting of the theme from two scientific schools must be prepared in advance by the lecturers.

Figure 2 shows the following subtopic of the theme “Concept, conceptualization and conceptual structures”: definition of a concept given by two schools. Students had an opportunity to observe intellectual debate or “professional disagreement” (Leavitt, 2006) among two teachers. When such “disagreements” were successful, students learnt to disagree without hostility and respect the opposite views on the same situations. They also learnt how to look at the new material through various perspectives, which is important for their research work.

![Fig. 1. Peer review lecture plan of binary lecture 6 on Cognitive linguistics](image)

![Fig. 2. Parallel plan of two speeches in binary lecture (Cognitive Linguistics)](image)

In Figure 2 we can observe not only two opposing views on the definition of the term “concept”, but a conflict and serious differences in the understanding of the term. Lecturer 2 emphasizes that cultural element is not an object of investigations in the Western cognitive science as it is in Kazakhstan. The words of two colleagues are shown in different colours in order to show the contrast of parallel viewpoints. This is an option of a binary lecture plan design. Figure 3 illustrates the fragment of the binary lecture plan in Linguistics of Discourse.
6.3 Final assessment of knowledge

As a result of experiment, there was conducted a mid-term test among two groups of students. Table 1 and Table 2 show the results of the tests.

Table 1. Average scores of mid-term test in Cognitive Linguistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Specialty</th>
<th>Average score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 (experimental)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>MA, Foreign language: two foreign languages</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2 (control)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>MA, Foreign language: two foreign languages</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Average scores of mid-term test in Linguistics of Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Specialty</th>
<th>Average score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 (experimental)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>MA, Foreign language: two foreign languages</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2 (control)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>MA, Foreign language: two foreign languages</td>
<td>82.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we compare the results of both disciplines, we can see that experimental groups have more progress than the control ones, though in Linguistics of Discourse the difference is not as significant as in the previous discipline. Thus, quantitative approach to the issue showed the concrete results in numbers.
6.4 Learners’ feedback analysis

The feedback about the binary lecture course from the students was positive. They expressed their wish to continue working in this very format emphasizing the fact that they had really understood the materials better. After the courses ended there were handed out an evaluation list for each of the students about the impressions and suggestions. They were to assess each criterion by 5-scores system (1 is the worst, 5 is the best). Table 3 shows the results of the evaluation list.

Table 3. Students’ evaluation list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Average grade</th>
<th>Feedback from the students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Availability of lecture delivery</td>
<td>4,0</td>
<td>“…and first we could not follow the ideas, as there were two lecturers instead of one. But then it turned out to be entertaining, we got used to it”. “When Joseph came first into our class, I could not understand his speech. May be because he is a native speaker. And we don’t often listen to such lectures by native speakers. Now I understand everything. Sometimes I understand him better than our Kazakh teacher)).).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of interest</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“…To tell the truth I could hardly stay awake at the course of Discourse Linguistics. When Joseph joined the course I found that this subject is extremely interesting…” “…I like the way our two teachers discuss the topic and argue. We find out many curious peculiarities in two cultures and sciences…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension of the topic from different viewpoints</td>
<td>4, 4</td>
<td>“…Now I realize that one thing can be understood differently in various cultures. I knew it, but at the lectures I myself saw and heard these contradictions. Perhaps, I will implement this way of making contrasts in my Master’s dissertation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the lecture</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“…I understand better when I speak or write myself. I prefer doing myself rather than listening to someone. So, I liked that we also participated in discussions. And they (teachers) didn’t say that we were wrong. They accepted all the opinions. It stimulates, encourages you…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson planning</td>
<td>3, 8</td>
<td>“…If a teacher makes such innovations, why not using more games, exercises rather than talking all the time. There were some activities to fix the material. But I think they could involve more games into their lesson plan…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of instructor’s delivery and knowledge</td>
<td>4,6</td>
<td>“…Joseph is trained a bit better, and unfortunately it is obvious while presenting the material. But Zhazira is closer to us anyway as she understands us and at least she is a representative of our nationality…” “…I was scared first)). I can hardly understand one lecturer. How to listen to two of them?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides, there were asked two questions for students which are presented in Table 4.
Table 4. Questions to students and their comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Interesting Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to have all your lessons in this format?</td>
<td>“May be one day it will also seem dull for us. But now it is just fun. We don’t want to sleep at the lecture! It’s amazing”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What suggestions do you have for future development of binary lectures format?</td>
<td>“I would like the administration to arrange something like this in supervision of our research work. We need different opinions on our themes”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here we can see some unusual remarks, some of which are not quite positive. However, they did not reflect somehow the average grades for each criterion. Generally, according to the results of the survey, the students were highly motivated to study at the end of the course. 19 out of 21 students were eager to have all the major disciplines conducted in team teaching form. It is important to emphasize the level of the students who are already doing their Master’s degree. So, in this case we should strive for developing language skills and knowledge that can be applied rather than simply arising interest (Kounanbayeva, 2013), because MA students are considered to be trained, already motivated and ready to do their own research.

7. Discussions and results of the research outcomes

Research was aimed at showing the efficiency of binary lectures as a format and to suggest changing its status from the alternative to the essential format of lecture delivery. According to the analysis and discussions of students’ feedback and peer-review session about the course, there were made a conclusion, defined drawbacks of the format and the ways of solution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disadvantage</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students may feel uncomfortable when they hear different ways of revealing the same idea.</td>
<td>This skill is of high importance in today’s globalizing world. However, in order to reduce the stress of students, it is preferable to select partners who both have ever taught in the group. At first time it will be less fearful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initially it is hard to shift the attention from one person to another</td>
<td>It is hard for learners because there is a constant frame of a usual lecture in their mind. At the first lectures it is important to minimize debates and arguments, dialogues. They should be involved gradually step-by-step.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is very time-consuming (for teachers)</td>
<td>Both teachers should be a constant couple who always work together for the same level of learners and the same disciplines. If it is not an experimental lesson, a lesson just for fun, both partners will get used to share the roles and obligations in designing lesson plans and teaching materials. In order to simplify the work and save up time, binary courses should be conducted constantly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Conclusion

Though binary lectures are quite time-consuming and take much energy from lecturers, the experiment above proved that it is one of the most effective ways of presenting difficult theoretical material. On the one hand, the nature of a lecture is kept. It is still the same presentation of material. On the other hand, it stimulates creativity and activity making traditional lecture more alive and interactive. Moreover, it contributes to the realization of one of the
main linguistic-cultural principle in Modern Foreign Language education which is the leading conception. In Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages practice of binary lectures delivery has taken a serious step forward after the experiment and now elaboration and modification of theoretical courses into binary course forms are in the process.

References


