

Emotive Tactics and Techniques Used in Online Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language

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Abstract. *The paper analyzes emotive tactics as part of the linguistic didactic model of an online class of Russian as a foreign language (RFL). The authors describe the linguistic didactic model of an online RFL class, analyze communicative effects of using the model in E-learning, pinpoint difficulties arising from using the model, and present a list of optimal emotive techniques that ensure the desired communicative effect on students in the process of teaching Russian to speakers of Taiwanese. The method of research is an experiment.*

Key words – *Russian as a foreign language, online classes, emotive tactics, communicative competence, linguistic didactic model, binary lesson aim, context learning, cross-cultural communication*.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Development of speech and discourse management and cultural competences in teaching a foreign language is most effective in communication of non-native speakers with native speakers. In E-learning, one form of such communication is an online class, when the parties interact live. Unlike offline learning, face to face communication involves certain limitations for an expert review. The main limitation is the irreversibility of speech: the teacher's words are not repeated several times to ensure that students can hear, understand, clarify, remember, etc. but are said only once, here and now. Another limitation is the unique character of the emotive context of any online class. When making a video for an electronic offline class, it is possible to create several takes to perfect gestures and facial expressions, improve visual effects, etc., whereas in real time mode the teacher's emotions are unique and irreversible. The emotional contact between the teacher and the students affects the process of learning. Thus, it is important to develop a general linguistic didactic model of an online class and make specific recommendations for optimal emotive techniques of such model.

For this paper, we analyze the emotive content of the linguistic didactic model of an online RFL class, with the following characteristics:

- in terms of the information flow – distant (with two active subjects involved; the information flow is directed both ways),
- in terms of the number of participants – group (2-4 members),

- in terms of aims/objectives – academic (part of a university or college curriculum),

- in terms of methodological focus – productive (with speaking as the main activity).

The aim of our research is to identify emotive tactics used by the teacher within the linguistic didactic model of an online RFL class with an optimal effect on the participants. The additional aim is to list tactics/techniques that help deal with emotional barriers arising within the linguistic didactic model under analysis.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Our research is based on the analysis of current trends in E-learning and teaching foreign languages [4]. We use the following terminology. The term *linguistic didactic model* is understood differently by researchers [3, p. 114]. By *linguistic didactic model of an online RFL class* we understand a generalized system of functionally interrelated elements: didactic aim, subjective structure, principles, didactic units, teaching methods and techniques, training materials, and competence-based content. The linguistic didactic model determines actions of the subjects involved that help fulfil the aims and objectives of teaching and learning.

The term *emotive* is mostly understood by researchers as a unity of emotional and evaluative characteristics. We use the term *emotive tactics* to refer to the component of the comprehensive communicative strategy that consists of a number of emotive techniques aimed at making and maintaining contact with an interlocutor (*ameliorative emotive tactics*) or at stopping an interaction (*pejorative emotive tactics*). Emotive tactics/techniques correlate with several elements of the model mentioned above. First, they correlate with the subjective structure: ideally (according to the model), the teacher creates the emotive content of the class by intentionally using emotive tactics/techniques; the student creates the emotive content of the interaction by unintentionally using some tactics or techniques. Second, emotive tactics/techniques correlate with the competence-based content of the linguistic didactic model since controlling one's emotions, creating the emotive motivation and making emotive evaluations in the process of education represent the professional skills of teachers. Another obvious correlation is between the emotive tactics/techniques and instruments used within the model.

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III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method of research is an experiment, and research procedures include activities of project work. We based our experiment on the online course of every-day Russian within the framework of cooperation between Northern (Arctic) Federal University, Russia, and Department of the Russian language at Tamkang University, Taiwan. To develop and test the linguistic didactic model, a four-year-long experiment was conducted within the framework of the *Conversations in Russian* module. Throughout the module, native speakers of Russian, master degree students of Pedagogical Education, taught Russian as a foreign language to the students of Tamkang University using the online platform Adobe Connect 8.

The following activities were used in the experiment: project work aimed at developing and running online classes on a certain topic, analysis of the interlocutors' communicative behaviour and education process and results. The experiment presupposes the roles of the teacher and the students.

Conditions of communication were as follows: online communication between one teacher and 2-3 students in each chat room for an academic hour once a week throughout the academic year (except for weekends, holidays and exam periods).

Research procedures: organized participant observation, collection of actual speech samples, analysis of data, pedagogical modelling.

IV. RESULTS

The model of an online RFL class developed and tested in the experiment represents the process of learning through the subject-subject interaction (Figure 1).

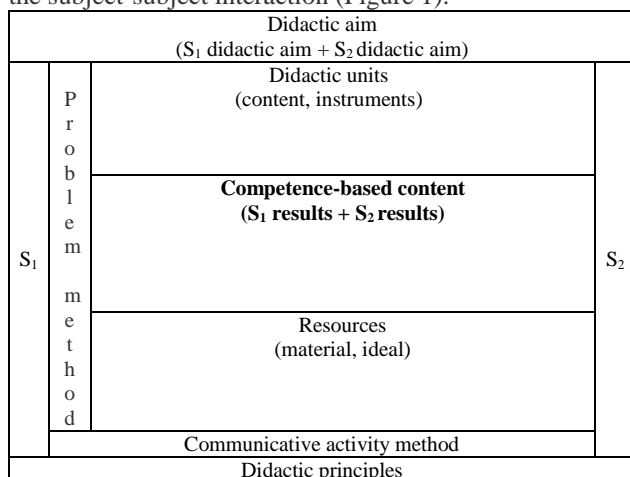


Fig. 1. Linguistic didactic model of an online class

The model is unique because it has a "binary" didactic aim: to organize an online class in a way that ensures an optimal effect on all participants. Throughout classes, the teacher (S₁) can practice methods of teaching foreign language and develop their professional skills. Thus, native speakers find themselves in a test-case situation of context teaching. The student (S₂) develops their language and speech skills. The common area of education results will

incorporate cultural, communicative and discourse management skills. The *binary didactic aim* is the aim comprising two elements that correspond with intentions and needs of two subjects communicating in the process of learning.

When using the model, teachers are advised to close the status gap as much as possible. That means that the social roles of interlocutors are conventionally considered equal. Such conventionality is obvious since native speakers automatically find themselves in the position of teachers. However, such role play is necessary to ensure optimal conditions for developing speaking skills in students.

The following principles are considered the most important for an online class: use of visual aids as a common didactic principle; psychological principles of motivation and recognition of individual characteristics; linguistic principles of systematicity, centrism, minimalism and stylistic differentiation; methodological principles of the spoken language lead, developing interrelated speech activities, topic-specific classes, considering differences in students' language levels. Specific features of online classes are cross-cultural and interpersonal communication, flexible organization of topics, and the use of spontaneous and prepared speech [2].

Considering individual psychological characteristics is important cognitive effect ("joy of learning") and hedonistic communicative effect ("joy of communication"). To achieve this, we recommend using the following tactics and techniques.

Emotive tactics are divided into verbal (speech) and non-verbal (gestures, facial expressions). To practice the latter, we suggest using the technique called "Mirror": the teacher should pay attention to facial expressions and gestures of interlocutors during the first class and try to capture the trends and stick to them. Russian master degree students tend to have difficulties using this technique since not every Russian "teacher" can mirror smiles of joy on Taiwanese students' faces.

For effective communication, it is necessary to control the teacher's facial expressions throughout the class (eyes open wide and looking in the camera, eye contact, a smile on the face, active facial expressions that demonstrate emotions) and gestures (hand gestures closely to the face to ensure that they are easily seen on the screen). Drama classes could be useful to practice showing emotions. The typical facial expression of Russian teachers should be prohibited: "strict teacher" (characteristics: dry patronizing tone, not smiling, focus on control function) and "uninterested interlocutor" (characteristics: flat tone, fatigue expression, unnatural pauses in conversation, eyes off the camera).

Effective emotive tactics can be divided into the following four groups.

Self-focused tactics:

1) Flipped advice tactic. Technique "*Kak mne...?*" "*How can I...?*". The most effective motivation for speaking is

asking for advice and recommendations about various things that interlocutors have experience with: *"Ya ne znayu, kak pobedit' strakh na ekzamine. U vas est' sekrety?" "I don't know how to deal with fear at exams. Do you know a trick?", "Vy katalis' tam na lozhadyakh? Verkhom? ... Ya nikogda ne katalas'. Rasskazhite o vpechatleniyakh." "Did you go horse-riding there? ... I have never tried horse-riding. Could you tell me what it was like?"* At the same time, it is important to show that you are truly interested in what you are going to hear and willing to use new information in your life: *"Dayte retsept. Ya hochu udivit' muzha. Ya zapishu." "Could you give me the recipe? I want to surprise my husband. I'll write it down."* Various regulative dialogues are acted out in class: *"Ya ne ponyala, napishite mne eto slovo." "I didn't understand. Could you write that word for me?"; "U menyia ne rabotaet zvuk, podskazhite, chto ya dolzhen sdelat'." "The volume doesn't work. Could you tell what to do?'. etc.*

2) Flipped explanation tactic. Technique *"I didn't understand"*. A part of the class is organized following the principle of flipped classroom: *"Ya prochital tekst, no on ochen' trudny, ya malo ponyal. Davayte razbirat'sya vmeste." "I have read the text but it is very difficult, I didn't understand much."* This tactic includes all types of wh-questions, providing that the teacher shows his/her true lack of comprehension: *"Kak-kak?" "What did you say?", "A zachem?" "What for?", "Pochemu?!" "Why?!", etc.* The stress is always on the question word.

3) Demonstration of equal status tactic. Technique *"I have tried"*. For example, the teacher, before showing some object, says: *"Seychas pokazhu. Ya podgotovilas'" "I will show it to you right now. I have prepared"*. The intonation and the meaning of the phrase signal on the emotive level that the interlocutors are equal, the teacher tries to do his/her best for the students, while showing some vulnerability at the same time, and also wants positive feedback. Within this tactic, regulative dialogues are acted out that are connected with planning, for example, a motivating question from the teacher: *"Chto mne nuzhno podgotovit' k sleduyushchemu zanyatiyu?" "What should I prepare for our next class?."*

Axiological tactics:

1) Approval tactic. Technique *"Kakie molodtsy" "What great guys"*. Basic tactic. For a positive evaluation, it is crucial to use a number of synonyms that help students develop their vocabulary. We recommend preparing new words of appraisal for every class and use them many times to ensure that they make their way to students' passive vocabulary. Cf. predicates and interjections of evaluation: *Podkhodit' 'It will do', Goditsa 'It's a deal', Chudno 'Wonderful', Vot eto voobshche otlichno 'This is excellent', Vot eto da 'Wow', S uma soyti 'That's fantastic', etc.*

2) Astonishment tactic. Technique *"Neuzheli" 'Really?'*. For example: after students answer some question the teacher reacts by saying: *"Otkuda vy znaete? Ya byla uverena, chto vy ne znaete!" "How did you know? I thought you didn't know!"*. The phrase and its intonation are used for an admirative positive evaluation.

3) Admiration tactic. Technique *"Kak vy eto sdelali?!" "How did you do it?!"*. Gradation of approval is formed with lexical and grammatical means and intonation: *"Vy takie smelye. Ya by ni za chto ne poletela <na vozdushnom share>!" "You are so brave. I would never fly <an air balloon>!", "Nichego sebe!" "That's incredible!"*.

4) Joke tactic. It involves working with various genres: funny stories, puns. A good joke in a conversation is invaluable for emotional contact.

Dynamic tactics:

1) Game tactic. Technique *"Ugaday!" 'Guess!'*. Games used in online classes are numerous: games with gestures, linguistic and intellectual ones. Sometimes a word of instruction can turn a learning activity into a game, cf. tasks for picture description: *"Nazovite traditsionnye prazdnichnye blyuda russkogo stola" 'Name traditional festive Russian dishes' and "Ugadayte, chto stavyat russkie na stol" 'Guess what Russians have on a festive table'.*

2) Surprise tactic. Technique *"Smotrite, chto ya prines" 'Look what I have got'*. This tactic breaks expectations connected with a class. A surprise can be in the form of some object. For example, Christmas tree decorations, paper snowflakes and cookies brought for the class dedicated to New Year's Day and Christmas, or a foreign student from one of the participants' countries invited to take part in the class. A change in the regular pattern of the class may serve as a surprise element. For example, the teacher gives a presentation on a particular topic but instead of asking questions afterwards he/she only answers them.

3) Scenario tactic. Technique *"A esli ..." 'If something happens ...'*. This tactic helps really feel the situation. Cf. two wordings: *"Chto mozhno posmotret' v Taybee?" 'What can I see in Taipei?' and "Esli ya priedu k vam v gosti, chto mne nuzhno posmotret' obyazatel'no?" 'If I come to visit you, what must I see?'*. The second variant is bound to cause a response and the conversation continues.

You-focused tactics:

1) Actual interest tactic. Technique *"A kak u vas?" 'And what about you?'*. This tactic unites all questions about the interlocutor's personal experience. For example, the teacher asks the group a question and addresses it to a particular student: *"Yanan', ty, naverno, znaesh'. Ty zhila v Rossii." 'Yanang, you must know. You have lived in Russia.'* The interlocutor always gives an emotive response to the teacher's attention to certain facts and details from their life. Questions can be different: from general questions (*"A kogda nachinaetsya Novy god v Tayvane?" 'And when do you celebrate New Years' Day in Taiwan?'*), to questions about a certain community (*"U vas est' stipendiya?" 'Do you get scholarship?'*), to individual questions (*"A chem ty kormish' svoyu koshku?" 'And what do you feed your cat?'*). It is important to begin a question with the word "and", which makes you look more interested. Without it, the question sounds dry.

2) Sudden interest tactic. Technique *"A ty nosil borodu?" 'And have you ever had a beard?'*. The name of this tactic

appeared in the process of making questions about the portrait of Ivan the Terrible, who founded Arkhangelsk. First the teacher asks typical questions, for example, "*Kto izobrazhen na slayde?*" '*Who is shown on the slide?*', "*Kakoy tsar?*" '*Which tsar?*', "*Kogda on pravil?*" '*What is the period of his reign?*', "*Kak vy думаете, kakoy kharakter u nego byl?*" '*What do you think he was like?*', etc., and then comes an unexpected question "*A ty nosil borodu?*" '*And have you ever had a beard?*'. All attention is on the interlocutor; a sudden shift of focus causes a surprise and activates cognitive mechanisms.

3) Closing the distance tactic. Technique "*A kakie devushki tebe нравятся?*" '*And what girls do you like?*'. This tactic is different from the ones mentioned before in the way that question topics help make interlocutors close. We recommend preparing interlocutors to such questions in advance by sharing your personal information. For example: "*U menya malo druzey. I ya perezhivayu po etomu povodu. A u tebya est' slozhnosti v obshchenii s drugimi lyudmi?*" '*I don't have many friends. And it worries me. Do you have problems interacting with other people?*'. This tactic presupposes introducing some information about yourself in a conversation. For example, a presentation about the teacher's hometown includes, besides the landmarks, a photo of his/her house, school, etc. It is this photo that causes an emotional response in students.

The tactics mentioned above serve to create emotive content and context of the class, facilitating communication and learning.

Choosing training materials and didactic units is vital for linguistic didactic modelling. For training materials, various verbal and non-verbal stimuli of communication are used – texts, objects, events, etc. A didactic unit of content is a topic ("Modern music", "Women's rights", "Holidays", etc.). An instrumental didactic unit is a discourse, genre. A didactic objective of an online class focused on speaking skills is to develop skills to hold a conversation of a certain type (enquiry, discussion, etiquette phrases, regulative dialogue) by choosing appropriate genres for the discourse. In the case of etiquette phrases, for example, students practice greeting, apologizing, congratulating, complimenting, etc. The teacher learns to make sample patterns of genres, introduce synonyms, and simulate communicative contexts in dialogues in order to use different genres.

Emotive tactics correlate with the main method of an online module – communicative. In a live conversation, the teacher helps learners of Russian develop communicative skills, learn new material by creating optimal emotive conditions and students use language skills to communicate and learn about the Russian culture. This way, emotive tactics perform instrumental functions.

Within the framework of the context method, which presupposes developing professional skills during an online class that is a project and/or a problem-solving activity for the teacher, emotive tactics become didactic units. The teacher learns to formulate objectives of a class, structure its content, select effective methods and techniques of teaching,

find or create optimal training materials, etc. Emotive tactics should play a well-defined role in this process.

The core of the linguistic didactic model is competences. Communicative skills, being a condition, an instrument and the aim of teaching a foreign language, "are formed at the crossroads of the ICT skills and levels of communicative skills (speech, discourse, socio-cultural level)" [1, p. 105-106]. Special skills are made up by speech (for non-native speakers) and linguistic didactic competence (for native speakers). The students' learning results are as follows. They can formulate their opinion and argue, talk about events, ask Yes/No questions and wh-questions, ask to repeat, ask for details, make evaluations, etc. As for the teacher, they can plan and control results of teaching/learning, use effective techniques, make various patterns of genres and motivate learners to talk.

V. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the model and its test results shows both advantages and disadvantages of this form of teaching. Methodological difficulties (interlocutors' status selection, language level, observing the ratio between language, speech and communicative elements, etc.) can be overcome if classes are properly planned and prepared for. Spontaneous communication cannot ensure maximum dynamics of non-native speakers' speaking skills development and is not focused on developing linguistic didactic skills in native speakers. Thus, when planning "free" speaking exercises, it is necessary to focus on minor details of didactic objectives, development of speech patterns, etc. Selecting emotive tactics/techniques when preparing for an online class is especially important.

The linguistic didactic model of an online RFL class described in this paper can be used for an expert review of online courses, modules and separate classes. The suggested list of emotive tactics can be used as part of teaching resources in preparation for online classes.

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