

STUDENT CONFERENCE AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PROCESS OF TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

In the modern market of educational services, the need for competitive specialists is growing. The teachers of the English language department of F. Skorina Gomel State University actively participate in the training of such specialists, considering teaching foreign languages as one of the links in the formation of a professionally competent, harmonious and cultural personality. To solve the problem of high-quality training of specialists, not only classes in a foreign language according to the program are used, but also other types of extracurricular activities: conferences, Olympiads and competitions.

The staff of the department pays great attention to holding a conference for students of natural science specialties. This type of creative and research activity of students has long been present in the work of the department. According to James Matthew Alston «Conferences tend to be the most prestigious forms of events as well, so they are the place where you most want the opportunity to present your work as a talk or as a poster. Speaking of which, conferences will usually involve a number of talks by prominent speakers in addition to poster sessions where researchers present their ideas and data in a visual format» [1].

In preparation for speaking at the conference, participants learn the art of searching for information on the topic of research, the ability to plan their work, correctly formulate it and present it to the audience. The students learn to think creatively, independently plan their actions and predict possible presentation options. This kind of activity is characterized by high communication and involves the expression of student's opinion, feelings and the acceptance of personal responsibility for the work that he does. It is also important that during the preparation of the material the student involuntarily memorizes a variety of lexical means and grammatical structures, the development of creative thinking and imagination is stimulated. That is, one can say that work on the material of the conference is combined with the creation and consolidation of the language base.

Initially, the topics of conferences at our university were limited to the framework of regional studies. The realization of the fact that a modern competent specialist simply must not only be able to learn and have the ability to find information, but also to process it and use it for professional purposes, led to the decision to expand the boundaries of the subject matter. Currently, the topic of the conference, which is attended by students from different faculties, is as follows: «What is interesting in the world?» This theme assumes freedom of expression and a variety of means of expressing meaning.

The teachers of the department take into account the importance of this type of work in increasing the effectiveness of teaching and its place in the study of a foreign language. The knowledge obtained independently, by overcoming feasible difficulties, is assimilated more

firmly than that obtained in a finished form. Indeed, working independently, each student directly comes into contact with educational and additional material, concentrating all his attention on it, mobilizing individual reserves of an intellectual, emotional and volitional nature. This means that he cannot be neutral-passive. Therefore, we try to involve in such activities not only students who do well in a foreign language. Participation in the conference is offered to everyone, even to students who have just started studying English at the university. Work in groups is encouraged: one of the students is looking for material, another is preparing a presentation and the third is acting as a speaker. Thus, students learn to work in a team, and this activity is the most creative process.

In addition, students master the ability to work not only with the Power Point program, but also with more modern software tools for the presentation of graphical information, such as Visme for presenting a large number of animated objects, Slidebean, Canva, etc.

Teachers and students are involved in the preparation for the conference. Consequently, the teacher's responsibility for the communicative educational and upbringing aspects increases. It is only important that the teacher does not overtly control students and regulate their activities.

Since a public presentation has its own characteristics, speakers must have subject and communicative competence, as well as scientific vocabulary.

Preparing for the conference requires a lot of work. First of all, students should be given the opportunity to choose the topic of interest to them. Then students with the necessary skills in various types of speech activities should study various kinds of information on this issue. The teacher, on the other hand, can help in the layout of the material, editing the text, drawing up a speech plan, check how well the student is fluent in pronunciation and intonation, and help to ensure psychological adaptation when speaking in front of an audience.

It should be noted that in recent years, students' interest in speaking at the conference has noticeably increased. Good quality reports are provided. Especially convincing are works that are accompanied by computer presentations. The topics of the presentations cover a wide variety of spheres of human life: computer technologies used in mobile phones, contemporary painting, poetry, the use of mathematical laws in works of art and much more. Participants are creative in the use of presentations: they precede the demonstration by displaying unknown words and phrases contained in the text on the screen, provide explanations if necessary, answer questions from the audience and communicate with those present themselves. This helps create a comfortable working environment.

Since modern students have good computer skills with a variety of software, then during the presentation, all the rules and nuances that take place when creating this kind of product (font, color, various technological effects) are taken into account.

At the end of the conference, anonymous voting is carried out by all participants and a commission of teachers. As a result, the best work is determined. When voting, you must specify the evaluation criteria.

One can say that when using this methodological system, students improve their abilities for observation, analysis, synthesis, mechanisms of memory, attention, and the degree of logical thinking increases. In addition, it helps to form many important personality traits: a sense of responsibility, the ability to assess and self-esteem, the ability to compare facts and draw conclusions.

The teachers of the Department of English Language are constantly in search of new forms of conferences using the latest advances in communication technologies. In addition, participants from abroad are attracted to participate in the conferences. This type of activity contributes to the mutual scientific and cultural enrichment of students and teachers.

References

1 Alston, James Matthew. What's the difference between a conference, a seminar, a workshop and a symposium? [Electronic resource] / James Matthew Alston. – 2019. – Mode of access : <https://conferencemonkey.org/blog/whats-the-difference-between-a-conference-a-seminar-a-workshop-and-a-symposium-1075915>. – Date of access : 29.09.2020.