Learning08: Methodologies and Practices for Approaching Learning as a Social Phenomenon Inside and Outside of School

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LSP Teaching in Social Context: Multimodal Approach

LSP knowledge becomes a must for professionals working in a particular socio-cultural context. Thus LSP teaching should take place in a similar context at least. Multimodal approach to teaching can be of great help in this realm. This approach to teaching is based on linguistic reality that verbal language never constitutes an homogeneous entity. As a social instrument of communication and of interaction between people, it diversifies and specializes itself according to the users, and current usage to generate different kind of discourses that emerge in different socio-cultural contexts through different modes of presentation. Now days we eyewitness burgeoning text forms associated with new information and multimedia technologies what leads to rethinking language as a multimodal phenomenon.

That's why the argument for a pedagogy which embraces visual and multimodal approach to teaching foreign languages representation is widely recognized among both academicians and teachers. Further on we set some examples when using multimodal approach to teaching English for Russian lawyers-to-be.

For instance, professional behavior varies a lot in Russian and American and British Court Rooms. It refers to the procedure on the whole, to the speech structure, its style and non-verbal aspects. In order to help Russian students get awareness of these specific discourse patterns we use video reports from Court rooms (from the site www.courtTV.com) for further discussions and simulations. To develop students experience in exchanging professional ideas teachers often give students such assignments as to visit professional forums for lawyers to analyze their style of arguing ideas, disputing opponents, etc.

Another form of learning in a social context is case studies with further students' blog writing and on-line visual opinion exchange (through www.visiq.com) on the matter under discussion. Case studies are arranged as project work. Students choose a case, search for video reports, documents, court tape scripts and newspaper article to provide a detailed case profile through the classroom presentation. Different channels of information accumulated in such presentations make students feel the real socio-cultural context of their future career

Learning terminology is of particular importance.

The Visual Thinking   program (www.thevisualthinking.com) seems to be a useful visual tool as students can visualize   the conceptual map of the term the context , its paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations   with other language signs.

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Electronic concordance programs help to visualize the usage of words in different syntactic combinations of real time discourse

There is no doubt that multimodal approach enhances LSP learning experience and activities within and outside classroom contexts.