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ENHANCING NEGOTIATION SKILLS WITHIN EDUCATIONAL SETTING

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The study of negotiation skills within education extends beyond verbal communication to encompass cultural competence. Language instruction not only facilitates language acquisition but also fosters development of negotiation skills. Thus, the focus of the present study is on integrating negotiation skills training within the framework of English language instruction, in higher education in particular. The investigation carried out with the application of qualitative and quantitative research methodology, investigates the role of negotiation in educational contexts, discusses the significance of integrating negotiation skills training into higher education, evaluates the effectiveness of various teaching methods in enhancing students' negotiation abilities, examines the relationship between negotiation and language acquisition. As a result, it can be stated that the integration of negotiation training into the education classroom holds immense potential for students (both academically and personally) in today's globalized world, thus representing not only an educational imperative but also a societal necessity enabling students to navigate confidently in today's increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Keywords: *negotiation skills, educational setting, cultural competence, methods and fundamentals, techniques.*

Introduction

Negotiation is the communication between two or more interlocutors with the aim of settling disputes, gaining individual or collective advantage, coming up with solutions that will satisfy diverse interests. Both parties are interested in negotiation on topics of mutual interest and strive to come to an agreement (Fisher et al, 1984). As a fundamental aspect of human interaction and the cornerstone of effective communication through language, negotiation plays a significant role in various domains of human activity such as politics, diplomacy, personal relationships (Ali, 2023). It occurs in public (states, governments, businesses, law, non-profit organizations) and private (friendships, marriage, education, sales, etc.) settings

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and environments. Negotiation comprises mutually acceptable agreements as a means of resolving disputes (Imm, 2022) and, notwithstanding differing opinions, considers the concerns of all sides in a conflict and enhances understanding between them.

In the modern world, the cultivation of negotiation skills has become integral to the students' linguistic and cultural development, aligning with the present demands of professional and personal growth. Integration of negotiation skills training into higher education represents a critical component in an interconnected and diverse society in which effective collaboration with peers, colleagues and global counterparts is a cornerstone for success. This also refers to Armenian higher education in which the English language lays a solid foundation for students and serves as a gateway to intercultural communication and collaboration. Thus, in the era of globalization, technological advancements, and numerous cultural exchanges, the ability to negotiate successfully has become essential in both academic and real-world contexts. In other words, proficiency in negotiation is becoming increasingly vital for students who will soon enter the workforce and engage in different socio-political and cultural initiatives in which problem-solving and decision-making require strong negotiation skills to discuss complex issues, analyze various perspectives, and present proper solutions. By integrating negotiation training into the language classroom, educators will foster students' critical thinking skills and empower them to face problems and challenges in a confident and reasonable way.

Hence, in the next parts of the present study we will refer to the investigation of the significance of integrating negotiation skills training into higher education, with a focus on the English language classroom, and the evaluation of some teaching methods in enhancing the students' negotiation abilities. We will start with examining some theoretical frameworks and models related to negotiation.

Negotiation in educational setting

Negotiation skills are important across various aspects of contemporary life, with conflict resolution being particularly critical. The ability to negotiate helps to resolve conflicts, identify common grounds, and maintain wholesome relationships, making it a crucial skill in today's world (Adnan et al, 2016). A variety of publications provided conceptual material for the study and instruction of negotiation courses since the second half of the 20th century (Schelling, 1960; Siegel and Fouraker, 1960; Rapport, 1966). Later advancements led to the conceptual development of negotiation research as well as the creation of educational resources for use in the classroom. The progress on the practice side was just as significant. However, the interdisciplinary field of negotiation in

education reached maturity only in the early 1990s when research paradigm started to take into consideration the negotiation processes and conflict resolution within ongoing relationships and social contexts. Since then, teaching negotiation in educational setting has involved using interactive role-play exercises, books, videos, role-play simulations built around a particular negotiation skill or concept, deal setup and design, dispute resolution systems, arbitration, meeting facilitation (Teaching Negotiation, 2008-2023).

A classroom is the place not only to teach and learn negotiation skills but also to get involved in real-life negotiation, as it is here that many disagreements start either between the students and teachers or between the students themselves. Strong negotiation abilities are required from both sides to restore harmony in the classroom. The teacher here is the one who both teaches negotiation skills and negotiates in real-life situations by using most diplomatic words, by being compassionate, by listening to problems and sharing opinions. In educational setting, including higher education, the following types of negotiation are observed:

- (1) negotiation with students,
- (2) negotiation between students,
- (3) negotiation between the teachers and parents,
- (4) negotiation with other professionals (Richards, 2023).

Negotiation with students is more difficult today than before, as the students do not consider that teachers are always right, and they are not quite wrong. To establish healthy relationships, both students and teachers must be heard and respected in the process of teaching, learning and modelling good communication skills and learning the art of negotiation. Negotiation between students is also challenging, but it will work if clear policies and procedures are established from the start. Conflicts that arise will be solved only when strong negotiating skills are employed. The teacher, as a mediator, must use positive language and help the students cut down on escalation and come up with ways to go forward. Negotiation between the teacher and parents also requires good communication and negotiation skills. The teacher should always use positive language when speaking about a student, be flexible and listen to what the parent is saying. Negotiation with other professionals, i.e. other educators and colleagues, is an indispensable part of a teacher's job. Professional relationships depend greatly on positive communication at staff meetings, assemblies and other events. Compromise and negotiation skills must be employed when solving problems.

Thus, teaching negotiation in educational setting includes setting a good example for the students, building negotiation with the learners, building negotiation between the learners fostering a great learning atmosphere in the classroom and outside the classroom.

Negotiation in language learning

As already mentioned, teaching negotiation skills to students is crucial, for it prepares them for future success in various walks of life and contributes to their personal and social development. Knowledge and mastery of good negotiation skills provide effective communication (including active listening and clear expression of ideas), self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, preparation for future career in the professional world and success in the workplace, critical thinking and problem solving, ethical decision-making and more.

There are different forms of negotiation skills to be used in the classroom to make higher education students hone their English communicative skills. According to Garfinkel (1967, p. 38), the methods to be used in language learning are the following:

1. **Interactive method of negotiation** which is important in language learning in particular. In this instance, language is used in an overtly social negotiation to show whether one has understood or even believed what the other person has said, or to change and rearrange their language in order to make points more clearly and be understood by others.

2. **Method of procedural negotiation** refers to finding and sharing meaning as the main goal of interactive, personal negotiation. Procedural negotiation is the most important in the foreign language classroom. While overt and social in nature, this method is similar to interactive negotiation in that its main goal is agreement rather than meaning. The meaning of negotiation is arguably the most common in daily speech, and it is frequently used to describe the actions taken by employers, trade unions, and diplomats in the event of disagreement between different parties. The method is vital to language acquisition because language learning takes place in the social setting of a classroom. Here, controlling instruction as a group activity is the main purpose of procedural negotiation.

3. **Personal negotiation method** requires to perceive and communicate meaning in a new language and engage in a psychological process called *personal negotiation*. Interactive negotiation, sharing, verifying, and elaborating on meanings, and procedural negotiation, coming to a decision, will be included in the communicative and social activities of a language class, provided they are allowed the proper space to happen. Significantly, all three are connected as well. When learning a foreign language (in our case – English) in the higher education classroom setting, negotiation can first of all be used to create a harmonious relationship between three teaching-learning agendas: the group's evolving collective curriculum, individual learning agendas, and any external requirements upon the learning in terms of pre-specified knowledge and capabilities.

It is vital to mention some fundamentals to be focused on when teaching the language:

- Negotiation is a means for responsible membership of the classroom community. The classroom community establishes procedures and routines in order to realize its own ideals and priorities. The classroom atmosphere is somewhat democratic, and it is more likely that a cooperative approach to accomplishing common objectives can be promoted. This may help students get engaged as a part of a new speech community and culture.

- Negotiation can construct and reflect learning as an emancipatory process. The learner's position as a member of society and seeker of new skills and information in any setting can be used to identify their potential for liberation. Their emancipatory potential is to join a language community as a new member. This, however, does not mean that negotiation does not require discipline. It just means that to make decisions collaboratively each student's objective is balanced with everyone else's. In other words, students build their own learning on both individual and group levels. Such a social attitude supports students' independent learning outside of the classroom and in the larger community.

- Negotiation activates the social and cultural resources of the language classroom group. The knowledge created in a classroom is more than that of any one person, not even the teacher, since it develops via a group process involving texts, classroom discussion, and social activities. Together, the teacher and students create fresh insights, form diverse, flexible and dynamic knowledge. Language input from various media are channeled through social interaction in the classroom. The language that is made available for learning is created in this way within the discourse of the classroom.

- Negotiation enables learners to exercise their active agency in learning. In the framework of negotiation every student brings examples of previous experiences, understandings, intentions, and new solutions are sought based on prior knowledge. Thus, negotiation becomes a feature of language instruction that is known as learner centered.

- Negotiation enriches classroom discourse as a resource for language learning. Individual personal negotiation matters, but there may not be many possibilities for interactive negotiation during some learning tasks. In these situations, students are required to make the most of their language courses in order to connect their learning objectives to the explicit classroom norms and practices (Breen, 2000).

The experience of learning the language in the classroom reflects the learners' social and communicative abilities in addition to their linguistic proficiency. In his/her turn, the teacher helps students understand the importance of adaptability in both acquisition and use of the language. To do this, the teacher initiates

discussions of various topics, social and cultural topics included. Understanding non-verbal cues and cultural nuances further enhances the negotiator's ability to navigate in complex real-life situations. Thus, teaching negotiation skills in the higher education English language classroom is a valuable way to prepare students for real-life social and cultural situations where they need to communicate effectively in English.

The students usually test, develop, and improve their analytical, social, and negotiating skills through a range of assignments. The assignments are not always fixed, they can be modified in accordance with the group's goals. In addition, teams in negotiation tasks must be guaranteed to stay friendly in spite of potential disagreements. Furthermore, to be more specific, it must be noted that students must get much involved in active listening and then articulate their concerns in the language they are learning. The latter is an indispensable part of successful negotiation. In today's politics and diplomacy, negotiation skills are a means of conflict resolution. To be an expert in the mentioned fields, students need to focus on case studies including both historic peace treaties, contemporary global or local diplomatic summits. Such materials must be studied for extraction of valuable lessons in effective negotiation techniques. By understanding the intricacies of negotiation, students will be able to overcome difficulties in complex scenarios and find mutually beneficial agreements.

At large, development of negotiation skills in higher education language classroom means encouraging students to join debates, applying negotiation methods to practical situations, trying negotiation exercises on peace, politics, trade, shopping, fashion and clothes, parents and children, employment, education, science and technology, books, social networks, etc. As a result, negotiation skills will be acquired through vocabulary building, active listening, emotional intelligence, patience, process managing, creative thinking, case studies, debates, feedback and reflection, collaborative projects, group assignments, simulation games, role-switching.

Conclusion

In our globalizing world, proficiency in English as a foreign language in higher education extends beyond mere linguistic competence and includes the capacity to successfully negotiate socio-cultural encounters. Negotiation abilities are valuable both in personal and professional contexts, promoting effective communication, teamwork, and dispute resolution. There are several reasons why negotiation skills should be included in the English language classroom.

- Negotiation skills enable learners to confidently handle complex and challenging communication situations and overcome language obstacles to promote meaningful relationships.
- Negotiation skills give learners the necessary skills to succeed in a variety of professional contexts.
- Negotiating skills improve employability in the global labor market.
- Negotiating skills encourage critical thinking, empathy, and intercultural competency.
- At large, negotiation skills prepare students for life and work after graduation.

In conclusion, teaching negotiation skills to high school students of foreign language (in our case English) is not only an educational imperative today but also a societal necessity, which will help young individuals find their place in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. Teaching negotiation skills within the foreign language classroom represents a valuable investment in students' academic and personal development. Outlining the theoretical foundations of teaching negotiation skills will add to the growing body of knowledge on language pedagogy and intercultural communication.

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**ԲԱՆԱԿՑԱՅԻՆ ՀՄՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ԶԱՐԳԱՅՈՒՄԸ
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Աննա Կարապետյան

Կրթության բնագավառում բանակցային հմտությունների ուսումնասիրությունը դուրս է գալիս բանավոր հաղորդակցության շրջանակներից՝ ներառելով մշակութային իրազեկությունը: Ելնելով այն համոզմունքից, որ լեզվի ուսուցումը նպաստում է բանակցային հմտությունների զարգացմանը՝ սույն հոդվածում ուսումնասիրվում է օտար լեզվի (այս դեպքում անգլերենի) ուսուցման շրջանակներում բանակցային հմտությունների ինտեգրման դերը կրթական (մասնավորապես բարձրագույն կրթության) ոլորտում, քննարկվում է տարբեր դասավանդման մեթոդների արդյունավետությունը՝ որակական և քանակական հետազոտության մեթոդաբանության կիրառմամբ: Հոդվածում կարևորվում է կապը բանակցությունների և լեզվի յուրացման միջև, ինչը նպաստում է ուսանողների բանակցային կարողությունների զարգացմանը: Արդյունքում, կարելի է փաստել, որ բանակցային ուսուցման ինտեգրումը կրթական ոլորտ արդյունավետ է ուսանողների համար (ինչպես ակադեմիական, այնպես էլ անձնական առումներով)՝ այսօրվա գլոբալացված աշխարհում դառնալով ոչ միայն կրթության հրամայական, այլև սոցիալական անհրաժեշտություն, ինչը հնարավորություն է տալիս ուսանողներին վստահ առաջ ընթանալ այսօրվա բարդ և փոխկապակցված աշխարհում:

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