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**METHODS OF TEACHING
ORIENTAL LANGUAGES
ACTUAL PROBLEMS AND TRENDS**

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Higher School of Economics
National Research University
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School of Asian Studies

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This edition includes the II-nd International conference: “Methods of Teaching Oriental Languages Actual Problems and Trends” collection of papers. The materials are devoted to the problems and methods of teaching Oriental languages, translation and intercultural communication. The collection of papers is intended for researchers and anyone interested in Oriental studies.

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**ROLE-PLAYING GAME AS A MEANS
OF NON-FORMAL MONITORING
AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION
ABILITIES IN ADVANCE STAGE
OF TEACHING ARABIC: THE CASE
OF PRACTICING ECONOMIC TRANSLATION**

Hereby we elaborate on several results of role-playing game (RPG) method introduced into the course - "**Practicing Economic Translation**" in Arabic in the framework of academic program of "BA in Asian and African Studies" as being taught at the School of Asian Studies, HSE. Specialists have been discussing Role Play (RP) method in teaching second language (L2) since 1980s. There have been several approaches to the issue, stating different modes of teaching through RP on different levels of preparedness of trainees, quoting it as simulation, gaming or drama.¹ Usually RP is limited to short situations such as "taking a taxi", "on the train station", "booking a hotel", "buying groceries", etc., mainly with the use of cue cards.² We argue here that RPG in our concept is a stand-alone type of training introduced in the third year of Arabic language studies to the trainees

¹ Greenblat C. 1988.

² Sysoyev P.V. 2002.

having completed basic course. RPG here is analyzed as an innovative element of skill quality control and evaluation and a means of honing professional abilities of trainees through practical gaming process, distinctly different from short-staged situational approach of RP and applicable only to trainees in advance stage of L2 learning.

The following focal points are suggested for discussion:

1. Characteristics of RPG as part of evaluation markers: RPG as a means of evaluation during advance stage.
2. RPG as a means of professional competence development (communicative and interpretative) and impetus for students' motivation to hone professional skills and abilities. Entrance level of competence of students.
3. Types of RPG.
4. Stages of preparation of RPG. Role played by course assistant.
5. Evaluation markers.
6. Results: problems and solutions.

While existing on the Subject Approach in students' learning level evaluation, the higher school education traditionally rests on KSA (Knowledge, Skill, Ability) criteria. The analysis of the ratio of KSA of the third year students shows that while having accumulated significant Knowledge of grammar and thesaurus and having obtained certain Skills in reading and writing, they are hardly capable of the Ability

to use those in oral and written translation. As the competence in translation is considered to be one of the most significant indicators of the level of preparedness for future professional occupation, there is a need for objective evaluation of translation competences in the framework of professional mock-up environment.

RPG is arguably one of the evaluation instruments closest to the stated objectives, as well as the accomplished means of honing of professional skills and abilities. Recently RPG has transitioned from the experimental stage to the full-fledged element of the educational standard. RPG has proved itself as an effective tool of education during a number of years, among the most successful examples being the MA Arabic Course in the MGIMO University.³

Contemporary competence markers approach to the evaluation of educational results calls for the graduate to be able to execute complex professional tasks. Being a complex professional task, the art of translation calls for the synthesis of isolated knowledge, skills and abilities into the multifaceted competences, which outline the level of Arabist/Orientalist training. Thus the competences consist of not only KSA, but personal qualities of the trainee as well as ***certain level of professional experience***. All these components shape the basis of construction of modus operandi of the graduate trainee versus tasks he will face in his professional career. In this respect RPG plays the role of transparent evaluator of trainees' competences on a multifaceted level

³ Pantyukhin N., Uspenskaya N., 2012.

of reactive and proactive behavior, language abilities, cultural adaptation and environmental awareness, at the same time being a highly effective simulator of professional cases giving a taste of real-life situations to the trainees. In the highly competitive atmosphere of RPG trainees receive significant impetus to strive for higher levels of professionalism, while at the same time getting experience operating within a group resolving issues and puzzles collectively.

Of the various scenarios of RPG we have isolated several most effective types:

- Bilateral economic and financial negotiations.
- Investment forum.
- IPO road-show simulation.
- Company marketing campaign.

Preparation of RPG falls into several stages or steps. First stage: where trainees engage in choosing the theme of RPG. This process involves close study of texts and video footage where trainees arrive at collective decision on what would be the next theme of the RPG. Second stage: where trainees write their own scenario to run for 45 min of live show in class. During the second stage roles are chosen and agreed. If the first stage goes with the supervision of instructor, the second stage is done without interference from the instructor. Third stage: outside of class contact hours trainees conduct trial run of the current RPG. Fourth stage: live run in class (45 min) in the presence of instructor. Fifth stage: analysis of results and

evaluation of each trainee performance.

Through stages 2-3 the Course Assistant (CA), chosen from the students of the senior year, plays an important, if not crucial, role. CA supervises preparatory work and trial run and provides trainees with practical advice and assistance, rooting out mistakes and outlining inconsistencies.

Evaluation Markers:

Use of correct tense, switching between direct and indirect narration, code switching during speech, use of professional idiom, fluency in thesaurus, speed of reaction, emotional level of expression. These are main evaluation markers used as basic points of attention of the instructor during assessment of each trainee's part in the RPG.

Results: problems and solutions

Several basic problems have been noted during practicing of RPG, which are: inclination of trainees towards learn-by-heart-use-in-class mode resulting in semi-freeze in situational conditions. Solution to this has been found mainly through instructor's intervention during each RPG show with unexpected situational variations whereas trainees have to react instantly to the changing dialogue venues. If done on permanent basis, this particular tool keeps trainees on alert and ready to improvise. There is also a tendency of trainees to try and simplify vocabulary during dialogue writing in scenario stage. The best way to combat this is to rely on CA intervention on behalf of the instructor with

relevant advice on thesaurus variation.

There are different opinions about implementation of RPGs in class. The focus of controversy seems to be the name "game", or, in some cases "play". The argument being that the process of language teaching is too serious a process to be "thinned out" by childish gaming approach. Our experience of two consecutive years of using RPGs in class has shown practical results in the following areas: 30% increase in translation proficiency, 40% enriched thesaurus, 20% raise in level of freedom of expression and 10% increase in level of situational awareness and reaction, and a significant increase in students' interest and motivation.

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**LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS
AS METHODOLOGICAL INSTRUMENT
FOR ADDED EFFECTIVENESS
OF TEACHING ARABIC
IN HIGHER SCHOOL:
THE CASE OF BASIC COURSE
OF ARABIC LANGUAGE**

The role of the Internet and its information resources in the field of education and in practice of foreign languages teaching cannot be overstated. With the advent of the Internet, with its vast information resources and revolutionary technologies, a real opportunity to change the concept of language education has appeared. It is obvious that to ignore such a powerful resource in education and, in particular, in teaching foreign languages according to the new educational standards, is impossible.

Learning Management Systems (LMS) represent educational technologies of the new generation, which open innovative opportunities and principally new approaches to optimization of the teaching/learning process. Having been implemented in HSE since 2009, LMS is becoming more and more popular with the passing of each year as an integral part of educational process. This is also true in teaching

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