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Fostering assertiveness of future doctors in teaching humanities

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Abstract. In Ukraine higher education is formed on the basis of requirements to humanitarian education, social and ethical experiences. Higher education is aimed at providing fundamental scientific and general culture, practical training of professionals. Teachers should offer interesting and feasible types of work which are imperative to students. It is obvious to distinguish assertiveness in behavior and in communication. Only in the process of teaching humanitarian subjects to future medical specialists better assertive results in practice and communication can be achieved. Mastering assertiveness as a trait of character in the process of teaching foreign languages should be based on communicative skills and practical experience.

Keywords: *assertiveness, foreign languages, humanitarian subjects, future doctors, higher medical educational institutions.*

Introduction. Teaching medical students is a fascinating and simultaneously quite time-consuming and long process requiring a teacher to have not only a great desire, patience and time, but also considerable knowledge of students' pedagogy and psychology. Language is the most important mechanism through which the individual becomes aware of his social situation; it is the major opportunity for students to gain knowledge themselves. Many well-known investigations on effective communication highlight the positive correlation between communication effectiveness and assertiveness. The formation of moral consciousness and high moral qualities of future medical specialists occupies a special place in the educational curriculum. Therefore, the activity of the university staff is aimed at developing and implementing common standards, principles and ideals, which are used as criteria for moral evaluation of medical students. In this connection studying and generalizing experience formation and development of fundamentals in the process of foreign languages teaching at higher medical educational institutions are supposed to be an actual and important issue as it is characterized by pedagogical science, culture, national education and humanitarian subjects.

Previous Studies. Assertiveness as a psychological trait of character has been studied in many investigations by E. Kristoff K. Kelly, D. Volpe, A. Lange, A. Lazarus, V. Romek, E. Krukovich, but it is necessary to investigate it from pedagogical point of view as being essential for future doctors in teaching foreign languages. Nowadays, mastering of foreign languages is comprehended as a constituent factor of personal becoming and prerequisite for creative growth in future. At the same time foreign languages represent an opportunity of reception of new information and exchange of experience, dialogue with foreign partners in a view of familiarizing with global experience and achievements in the field of education, science and cooperation. Thus, assertiveness means the ability of a person with dignity and confidence to assert own rights, while not violating the rights of others. Supporting this statement, it is obvious to implement it into the process of teaching medical students as the competence necessary for their future work. In fact, the term assertive behavior has come to be viewed synonymously with communication effectiveness. While the psychoanalysts view behavior mainly as a function of subconscious processes resulting from suppressed desires, the behaviorists consider learning to be the cause of actions (including style of communication) [9], and researchers postulate

that assertive behavior is marked by openness and receptiveness [8].

Therefore, success of medical students at higher educational institution provides a number of conditions, paying attention to the following factors: consideration of genetic data, the creation of developing environment at universities, the organization focused on educational influence, involvement of teachers in educational activities, the impact on the development of emotional and volitional students, the formation of the corresponding values of medical professionals, the development of psychological and methodological support of individual, providing comprehensive assistance in identifying the dominant abilities and aptitude development. These factors, influencing the formation of assertiveness in medical students, may be achieved in the process of studying humanitarian disciplines.

Materials and Methods. The development of skills to resolve conflicts through the formation of the capacity for patience (endurance, composure, self-control) and adoption (understanding, empathy, confidence, assertiveness) in collaboration with other people, patients or their relatives and even colleagues is recognized as an important task of current pedagogy in the process of teaching foreign languages to medical students. Students of medical specialties are known to study humanitarian subjects without pedagogy in their curriculum.

Therefore, **the aim** of this investigation is to reveal possible ways of students' development of assertiveness, self-reliance and confidence in future specialists of medical care and to determine teacher's role and educational environment in this process. It is necessary to differentiate assertive behaviour and assertive communication. To communicate in an assertive way is to affirm one's rights, to make decisions in a constructive way and to express personal opinion without aggressiveness. Assertiveness proposes another way of communicating, not a manner of being. Assertive behavior of future medical doctors means to help everybody in specific situations, to define personal position clearly, to acknowledge it or to defend it without aggressiveness. Teacher's and students' roles have to be differentiated in mastering traits of character. Nevertheless, teaching humanitarian disciplines should be based on the creation of moral attitudes, ideals and pedagogical competences. Thus, there are requirements for general education of medical students at higher medical institutions in mastering assertiveness:

- dealing with the world of emotions with confidence and realism;
- changing emotions to advantage in the workplace;

- acting with greater calmness due to management of one's emotions;
- training to guide one's emotions and take on board other ones.

Discussion and Results. Moral education at the medical university is a rather complex process due to the fact that the moral character of many students is predetermined by family traditions which are considered to be a crucial factor in formation of young medical personality. As a trait of character, assertiveness can give the means of adapting students' behavior in precise situations in order to better express his/her personality and to obtain more satisfaction of his/her personal and professional environment. According to S. Stein and H. Book "Assertiveness consists of three main components: (1) the ability to express feelings, (2) the ability to openly express beliefs and thoughts (to be able to express own opinion, not to succumb to pressure and to maintain a certain position, even if it is emotionally difficult, and even if you lose while doing something) and (3) the ability to protect their individual rights (not to pester or authorize others to use you). Confident people are not constrained and timid - they are able to express their feelings (often straight) without aggression and offensive superiority" [10]. Well-experienced doctor should know what is actually happening and to feel assertiveness in situations as it is helpful to be knowledgeable about persons involved. To develop these components teachers of foreign languages have to create favorable studying environment and to form communicative competence. The course of foreign languages aims to develop and broaden the prospective knowledge of English language teaching methodology, language awareness and language skills. An assertive person adopts a fixed or predetermined style of communication which is not responsive to the peculiarities of the situation or to the demands of the relationship. In fact, future doctor is alert to the realities of the moment and can monitor himself/herself as well as read other people's non-verbal cues or requests. Therefore, medical students should study to be particularly careful with their tone and body language; keeping the objectives of the interaction in mind. In other words, an assertive person communicates to achieve the situational objectives, keeping the relational objectives in mind. Besides, it gives students the ability to have a critical analysis of existing situations and materials as well as to supplement and create their own ones.

Therefore, formation of assertiveness as a personal trait primarily implies that a person is aware of how behavior is determined by his/her own inclinations and motivations, and how someone imposes settings. "Self-confidence is an acceptance of their actions, decisions, skills as correct and relevant (i.e. acceptance of oneself)." [3, p. 56]. Assertive behavior of future doctors does not always lead to goals, but the aim emphasizes positive assessment of personality's traits. Personal achieving reinforces the desire to reach other goals, the result as a sense of movement and self-esteem. In this context N.V. Telychko defines two factors which perform a decisive influence on ensuring talent development, personal abilities, achievement of students' life success: genetic (inherited inclinations) and social (education, upbringing and environment) [4]. However, the researcher notes that genetic factor is necessary, but social one is sufficient to ensure effective development of personal inclinations of

each student. Optimal realization of students' own potential in various activities contributes to adequately diagnose, appropriately design and further develop their personal qualities and parameters [4, p. 9].

Personal qualities and parameters of medical students have to be created by the teacher in the course of studying foreign languages. Assertiveness may be formed due to real understanding of the responsibility by future medical profession. From the first year of study each medical student should realize the nobility of treating patients achieving the results of well-known doctors and scientists. Educators must know what their students are all about to recognize opportunities for allowing assertiveness. Educators can get insight into their students by looking at what makes them upset, their motivations, likes and dislikes. Thus, a teacher should know how to interact with students for gathering useful information in teaching skilled assertiveness and allowing assertiveness to happen.

Hall E.T. postulated that the style of communication can vary from a high context culture, where background information is implicit to a low context culture and much of the background information must be made explicit in the interaction [6]. People from high context cultures often send more information implicitly, which means that openness is perhaps not the norm. Thus, in such settings an open style of communication may not be appreciated, especially when conformity is expected. During the process of learning a teacher can communicate important information to students about their ability to learn and the way they learn. Therefore, it is important to share assertiveness during the training years of medical students. Such training should, in fact, be imparted in some form to students of every age group. The researchers suggest a model of interpersonal communication that mutual understanding improves perceptual accuracy and communication [7]. It should be noted that assertive doctors are very receptive; therefore, it is easier to communicate with them, they are good listeners and ready to rationally evaluate what is presented and look for agreement.

Teaching skilled assertiveness successfully may be hampered without gathering practical information. Educators should learn skilled assertiveness from assertiveness by experience even when it is inconvenient. They should engage medical students in various types of activities, namely reading, speaking, listening and even writing. It advocates teaching of speaking skills at the expense of every traditional aim of language teaching. Probably the greatest advantage of teaching English to medical students correctly is that it actually teaches the language and doesn't teach about the language. Furthermore, due to its emphasis on speech, it is better for students who have a need in real communication in English. Finally teaching vocabulary using real medical situations is still widely used today when teaching English to speakers of other languages. Specific teaching methods would include such activities as reading aloud, question and answer exercises, conversation practices, dictation and fill-in-the-blank exercises. The students have to interact with each other, using English in order to complete the task.

Following the principles of self-organization and self-education in pedagogical activity is aimed at creating the educational system to study self-regulation processes at the educational institutions, identifying tendencies, inter-

nal mechanisms and reserves of created system without copying already existing samples in pedagogical activity [2, p. 358]. Assertive doctors are characterized by independence and self-sufficiency, which is manifested in various spheres of life and career, but the most obvious – in the sphere of interpersonal relationships with patients. External signs of confident behavior also become most clearly visible in everyday doctors' situations. Confident behavior means assertiveness as an integral part of future doctors' activity characterized by such features as: tolerance, purposefulness, creation, patience, reflection etc. In addition to the above-mentioned behavioral aspects that can be ascribed to assertive doctors, it is important to see how they differ in the perceptual and cognitive processes that govern behavior. A student may be able to display "assertive" behavior at all times because a person's assertiveness is dependent on his/her attitude to his/her "self", "the other" and perception of the situation. In addition, emotional condition is most likely to influence perception and understanding of interpersonal communications in future medical career. Studying foreign languages at higher medical educational institutions, future medical caregivers should achieve practical experience of ethical communicative competence even in critical situations:

- flexibility, adequate response to the rapidly changing situations;
- social orientation, focus on constructive relationships with partners, patients and their relatives;
- combination of spontaneity with the possibility of critical situation regulation;
- focusing on achieving success, avoiding medical failure.

Dealing with students' feelings is reflected as an objective characteristic in the nature of interaction between students and teachers explaining why empathy, self-awareness, and self-discipline are essential to success and positive humane interaction in medical profession. The main reason why assertive doctors think differently is that they have higher levels of self-awareness. It is significant to note that openness and receptiveness are manifestations of deeper personality characteristics hidden from the untrained eye. For assertion, or confidence, to be accompanied by a high level of receptiveness some other personality characteristics like self-monitoring and an internal control are required. They take responsibility for their failures and critically evaluate their own performance, since they do not ascribe the outcomes of their actions to external factors. Thus, assertive personality should have the following characteristics: **1)** express freely his thoughts, feelings, and communicate with patients at all levels; this communication is always open, honest, direct and adequate, **2)** active attitude to life: to achieve the desired, to try to influence events, **3)** self-respect activities. Nevertheless, teaching students the art of being assertive, confidently asserting their desire and needs without imposing those desire and needs on others, is one of the most common concerns at higher medical educational institutions. Teacher's goal in teaching process and formation of students' assertiveness is to appreciate others, to speak their minds respectfully and to respect their opinions. Successful medical students can expect valuable practical resources, professional guidance and friendly

correspondence throughout the entire duration of the studying process.

Therefore, determination of educational environment leading to the realization of individual's capacity is considered to be a significant aspect in the problem of medical education. D.P. Goleman claims "more academically competent: better able to put their ideas into words, to use and respond to reason, to concentrate, to make plans and follow them, and be more eager to learn" [5]. The development of talented medical specialists requires the creation of self-governing system that would provide identification and support of students, the development and implementation of their personal abilities, stimulation of creative work of students and teachers; revitalization of teaching and learning students' activities due to the creation of appropriate educational environment at educational institutions. Motivation as a key factor among features of teaching and learning medical students significantly increases social skills and cultural awareness, otherwise it may impede assertiveness. For opportunities to allow assertiveness and to teach skilled assertiveness successfully, educators must know much about their students' temperament, sensitivities, values, preferences, and curiosity. In addition to the positive assessment of their skills and abilities to self-confidence formation V.G. Romek adds the component such as behavioral repertoire and the belief in its efficacy [1]. Thus, an important step in teaching assertiveness is to take a genuine interest in their students and gather useful information for knowing them. Useful information can be obtained by observing behavior, finding out what is being communicated and determining the level of communication the student is capable of. The role of the native language also plays a very essential role in the formation of language culture in medical students, leading to creation of assertiveness. A certain foreign language level means a certain skill level in assertiveness. Efficiency of formation assertiveness in students is based on different types of creative activity (problematical principles and creative tasks).

Conclusion. The effective formation of future doctors' professional position in the process of professional training has to be systematically implemented due to transferring generalized psychological and pedagogical knowledge, their use in professional activity and relationships with students. Every time the level of teachers' requirements obliges proximal development of personality and personal character in the process of teaching humanities. Mastering assertiveness as a trait of character in the process of teaching foreign languages should be based on communicative skills while reading or retelling texts and discussing them. Foreign languages can help students to express their own feelings, thoughts, attitude to various situations or even life. Only with the help of a teacher future medical specialists can achieve better assertive results in communication with patients and medical staff hiding their feelings or in practical defense of their position and confident attitude to work in a team properly, to defend their point of view, to offer new solutions, to find compromises, to relate their opinion with the opinion of the community, to seek professional and personal growth. Thus, assertiveness as a quality of future caregivers seems to be very important in their career and daily life.

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Исаева О.С. Воспитание асертивности будущих врачей в процессе преподавания гуманитарных дисциплин

Аннотация. В Украине высшее образование формируется на основе требований гуманитаризации учебного процесса, а также социального и этического опыта. Высшее образование направлено на обеспечение фундаментальной научной и общей культуры, а также практического обучения специалистов. Преподаватели должны предложить виды работы, которые необходимы студентам, интересны и реальны для выполнения. Будущие медицинские специалисты смогут достичь лучших результатов асертивности на практике и в коммуникации только в процессе преподавания гуманитарных предметов. В процессе преподавания иностранных языков освоение асертивности как черты характера должно основываться на коммуникативных навыках и практическом опыте.

Ключевые слова: асертивность, иностранные языки, гуманитарные дисциплины, будущие врачи, высшие медицинские учебные заведения.