The present article aims at familiarizing teachers with a range of educational strategies described by Marzano and his colleagues in the book *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Students Achievement*. Teachers are permanently looking for means to expand their professional skills. We all agree that teacher training and development are essential to improving our students’ learning outcomes. That is why numerous ways and means how to teach better have been suggested over the short history of the EFL area. Moreover, after ‘serving’ for a period of time, they are replaced with others, more effective and interesting. To make instruction more efficient, teachers should permanently progress, thus ensuring the required skills and the confidence they need to work successfully, and the qualifications that demonstrate it. Teachers willing to progress do their best to enhance the excellence of teaching by means of raising their language proficiency, by considering continuing professional development opportunities in order to correspond to modern international standards. Language is central for the students’ capability of being active members of the society, as their ability to express themselves is often crucial. Language proficiency can be defined as the ability to communicate or perform in an acquired language. It is a well-known fact that successful communication comprises the instantaneous use of logic, grammar, and rhetoric that should be practiced simultaneously by both the teacher and the student via cooperation. Modern teachers are intently looking for new productive methods aiming at increasing students’ achievement through real teacher-student communication.

Robert Marzano, a well-known educational scholar, has done research on standard-based assessment, cognition, high-yield teaching strategies, school leadership, etc. In the book *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Students Achievement* he and his colleagues Debra Pickering and Pollock Janedescribed nine strategies which
easily correspond to the three aspects of communication—logic, grammar, and rhetoric. They came to the conclusion that these strategies are most likely to positively influence student achievement at all grade levels and in all subjects. They have formulated them in the following way: identifying similarities and differences; summarizing and note taking; reinforcing effort and providing recognition; homework and practice; nonlinguistic representations; cooperative learning; setting objectives and providing feedback; generating and testing hypotheses; cues, questions and advanced organizers (Marzano 2001: 7). They are also called Marzano’s nine high-yield instructional strategies. Here is how they can be applied in practice.

1. Identifying similarities and differences. Scholars consider that this strategy is basic to human thought, and Marzano thinks the process of identifying similarities and differences is “the core of all learning.” It is indisputable that the ability to break a notion into its analogous and divergent characteristics allows learners to recognize and solve intricate subjects by analyzing them in a simpler way. Teachers themselves should decide whether to introduce similarities and differences directly, with further discussion and analysis, or they could just ask students to find similarities and differences independently. He proposes that instruction should comprise both activities ‘teacher-directed’ and ‘student directed’. Whereas ‘teacher-directed’ activities aim at identifying particular items, ‘student-directed’ activities stimulate variety and expand comprehension. Marzano et al. draw at least four noticeable generalizations from the research in this area. The first is “presenting students with explicit guidance in identifying similarities and differences enhances students’ understanding of and ability to use knowledge”. The second is “asking students to independently identify similarities and differences enhances students’ understanding of and ability to use knowledge”. The third is “representing similarities and differences in graphic or symbolic form enhances students’ understanding of and ability to use knowledge”; and the last is “identification of similarities and differences can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The identification of similarities and differences is a highly robust activity (Marzano 2001:15-16). Students should be able to compare, classify, and create metaphors, analogies and graphic representations. For
instance, T-charts and Venn diagrams can be used to compare and classify items, identify analogies and differences, compare and contrast ideas, etc.

2. **Summarizing and note taking.** In order to summarize the material efficiently, students must be aware of the structure of the context they are working on in order to delete, substitute, and preserve the information. Summarizing during the note taking process comprises deleting insignificant data and redundant material, replacing superordinate terms for lists, and producing a topic sentence. It is essential for students to learn to work with the information they have got: deleting unessential information, substituting it with more relevant information, keeping fundamental information, writing and rewriting it, and eventually analyzing it. For instance, teachers can model the main summarization techniques, find vital concepts and outlines, discuss clusters and narrative organizers, talk over journal summaries, break down assignments, create graphic organizers, explain how to make column notes, ask students make reports, and use reciprocal teaching, etc. The description of this technique ends with the following statement “Although we sometimes refer to summarizing and note taking as mere “study skills,” they are two of the most powerful skills students can cultivate. They provide students with tools for identifying and understanding the most important aspects of what they are learning (Marzano 2001: 48).

3. **Reinforcing effort and providing recognition.** Marzano et al. stick to the opinion that students are not always aware of the significance of having confidence in effort, though they can be taught. “The remedy for this is for teachers make sure that they explicitly teach and exemplify the connection between effort and achievement.” (Marzano 2001: 51) For illustration, teachers could bring own illustrations of their success, or they can provide examples of well-known personalities who succeeded in life only because they did not give up. The authors introduce the term *providing recognition*, as a category of instructional strategies, though it might be the most misunderstood (Marzano 2001: 53). For a better understanding he suggests the terms “praise” and “reward”, though they would be technically inaccurate, that is why he sticks to *providing recognition*. Teachers should reward their students considering the performance standards, using symbolic recognition rather than just noticeable rewards. Apparently, abstract rewards,
particularly praise can become powerful motivators for students, when they are given for achieving definite performance goals. For example he suggests applying of adaptation of what is commonly referred to as “Pause, Prompt, and Praise” strategy (Marzano 2001: 59). It could be used effectively when the students are engaged in a rather challenging task with which they are having difficulty.

Besides appropriate verbal recognition of students’ accomplishments, it might be appropriate to give students real, symbolic signs of recognition such as stickers, awards, coupons, and treats.

Teachers can apply this strategy into practice holding high expectations, displaying students’ final products, verbally praising students’ effort, encouraging them to share ideas and thoughts, etc. In conclusion, reinforcing effort can aid give students a very valuable lessons — the harder they try, the more successful they are. “In addition, providing recognition for attainment of specific goals not only enhances achievement, but it stimulates motivation.” (ibid)

4. Homework and practice are well known instructional techniques that provide students with chances to expand their understanding and abilities relative to the content that has been presented to them earlier. There is still much controversy concerning the amount of the homework given to students and parents’ role in homework. The authors affirm “Parent involvement in homework should be kept to a minimum”. (p. 63). Unfortunately, there is no clear answer on this point. “The purpose of homework should be identified and articulated.” (Marzano 2001: 63) In order to get better results, the structure, content, and strategies of the homework must be outlined explicitly. Marzano et al. write “the purpose of homework should be identified and articulated. Not all homework is the same. That is, homework can be assigned for different purposes, and depending on the purpose, the form of homework and the feedback provided students will differ.” (ibid) Experienced teachers know that homework is really appreciated when it is regularly checked and moreover, it is connected to learning, i.e. students learn from their home assignments and further share their knowledge with others. Teachers need to vary the amount of given homework based on student grade level (less at the elementary level, more at the secondary level.
For instance, they can ask the students to retell something, recite some poetry, write a book review, etc. Marzano ends the chapter devoted to this issue “homework and practice are ways of extending the school day and providing students with opportunities to refine and extend their knowledge. Teachers can use both of these practices as powerful instructional tools.” (ibid)

5. **Nonlinguistic representations** are forms of imagery expressed as mental pictures or even physical sensations, such as smell, taste, touch, kinesthetic association, and sound. They enhance students’ capacity to represent and enlarge information via mental images. Such activities imply making graphic representations and physical models, creating mental pictures or drawing pictures, using pictographs, as well as engaging students in kinesthetic activities. Marzano et al. cite Anderson (1990) who claims that “fortunately, the process of generating nonlinguistic representations engages students in elaborative thinking” (Anderson 1990: 82). That is, when a student generates a nonlinguistic representation of knowledge, s/he has expanded on it. Finally, the power of elaboration can be enhanced by asking students to explain and justify their explanations (Willoughby 1997: 682–685). For example, teachers can use visual tools and manipulatives, problem-solution organizers, spider webs, diagrams, concept maps, drawings, maps, charts, thinking maps, graphic organizers, storyboards, etc.

6. **Cooperative learning (CL)** is a teaching method where students of mixed levels of ability are arranged into groups and rewarded according to the group’s success, rather than the success of an individual member. Kagan defines CL as “a teaching arrangement that refers to small, heterogeneous groups of students working together to achieve a common goal” (Kagan 1994: 23). In order to learn something the students work together, moreover, they are in charge of their teammates’ results as well. Marzano et al. recommend practicing “cooperative” grouping strategies in a heterogeneous class. They provide David Johnson and Roger Johnson’s classification, in which five defining elements of CL are described: “Positive interdependence (a sense of sink or swim together); Face-to-face promotive interaction (helping each other learn, applauding success and efforts); Individual and group accountability (each of us has to contribute to the group
achieving its goals); Interpersonal and small group skills (communication, trust, leadership, decision making, and conflict resolution); Group processing (reflecting on how well the team is functioning and how to function even better)” (Marzano 2001: 85-86). Three generalizations can be used to guide CL. They affirm that “organizing groups based on ability levels should be done sparingly; cooperative groups should be kept rather small in size; cooperative learning should be applied consistently and systematically, but not overused (Marzano 2001: 87-88). The following activities can be done in class using CL: integrating content and language through group engagement, using reader’s theatre, circle of friends, cube it, shared reading/writing, plays, science projects, debates, jigsaw, group reports, etc. In short, “teachers can use CL in a variety of ways in many different situations” (Marzano 2001: 91).

7. Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback. Everybody knows that the ability of setting appropriate goals is essential, as it helps to establish the learning direction and needs for. Marzano et al. quote John Hattie, who came to the conclusion that “The most powerful single modification that enhances achievement is feedback. The simplest prescription for improving education must be ‘dollops of feedback’” (Hattie 1992: 9). It is recommended that the corrective feedback be instant and specific if we want quick, maximum improvement. It would be better if the students are also involved in the feedback process. Marzano et al. affirm “There is no reason why students should not be part of the feedback process. In fact, student-led feedback has many desirable effects” (Marzano 2001: 101). Teachers need to create precise but flexible goals, tolerating some student choice; teacher feedback must be helpful, appropriate, and explicit. Teachers can set the main goal of an activity, and then encourage learners to personalize it by finding areas of interest to them. As a rule feedback brings positive results.

8. Generating and Testing Hypotheses. Marzano et al. claim “By definition, the process of generating and testing hypotheses involves the application of knowledge” (Marzano 2001: 104). Two generalizations can direct the use of hypothesis generation and testing in the classroom: 1. Hypothesis generation and testing can be approached in a more inductive or deductive manner; 2. Teachers should ask students to clearly explain their hypotheses and their
conclusions (Marzano 2001: 104-105). That is deductive and inductive thinking coupled with explanations and conclusions should guide the use of hypothesis generation and testing in the classroom. It is logical that students generate, describe, test and defend hypotheses using both strategies, inductive and deductive, via history investigation, discovery, experimental inquiry, problem solving and decision making.

9. Questions, cues, and advance organizers. Marzano et al. state that “the techniques in the final category of instructional strategies all help students retrieve what they already know about a topic. In nontechnical terms, this is sometimes referred to as “activating prior knowledge.” (Marzano 2001: 111) Practice shows that the activation of preceding knowledge is extremely important to learning of all types. Having researched this issue Marzano et al. developed several generalizations that will direct teachers how to use cues and questions properly. The first states that the cues and questions must center on what is significant as opposed to what is unusual. The second one affirms that higher level questions lead to deeper knowledge than lower level questions. According to the third generalization waiting a bit before accepting students’ responses leads to increasing the depth of their answers. The fourth generalization emphasizes that questions are efficient learning tools “even when asked before a learning experience.” (Marzano 2001: 114) Such results can be obtained through graphic organizers; by providing guiding (lead-in) questions before each lesson, predicting and drawing conclusions; advising students to skim their readings to find key vocabulary or annotating the text, etc. In essence, assisting learners “think about new knowledge before experiencing it can go a long way toward enhancing student achievement.” (Marzano 2001: 120)

All things considered we can state that the balanced application of the above-mentioned strategies will definitely improve the quality of teaching at different levels in any educational setting. Teachers should only learn how to apply them correctly in practice on a regular basis.

Bibliography


Резюме
Современные учителя постоянно находятся в поиске средств для улучшения своих профессиональных навыков. Они ищут новые стратегии и методы, направленные на повышение достижений учащихся. Данная статья направлена на ознакомление учителей с различными образовательными стратегиями, описанными Робертом Марзано и его коллегами в книге *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*.

**Keywords:** Identifying; summarizing; reinforcing effort; providing recognition; practice; nonlinguistic representations; cooperative learning; setting objectives and providing feedback; generating and testing hypotheses.