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## COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN BUSINESS ENGLISH TEACHING

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У статті розглянуто питання розвитку в студентів навичок ділового спілкування англійською мовою, описано особливості комунікативного підходу до навчання іноземної мови, який застосовується для успішного опанування студентами цих навичок. Оскільки англійська мова набула статусу мови міжнародного ділового спілкування, необхідність розвитку професійної комунікативної компетенції в майбутніх фахівців важко переоцінити. Запропоновано різні види мовленнєвої діяльності на практичних заняттях із ділової англійської мови, які сприяли б успішному опануванню лексичного матеріалу й основних комунікативних навичок студентів та підвищили б їх навчальну мотивацію.

**Ключові слова:** ділова англійська мова, комунікативні навички, ділове мовлення, комунікативний підхід, лексична компетенція.

В статье рассмотрены вопросы развития у студентов навыков делового общения на английском языке, описаны особенности коммуникативного подхода к изучению иностранного языка, который применяется для успешного освоения студентами этих навыков. Поскольку английский язык получил статус языка международного делового общения, необходимость развития профессиональной коммуникативной компетенции у будущих специалистов переоценить трудно. Предложены различные виды речевой деятельности на практических занятиях по деловому английскому языку, способствующих успешному освоению лексического материала и основных коммуникативных навыков студентов и повышающих их учебную мотивацию.

**Ключевые слова:** деловой английский язык, коммуникативные навыки, деловая речь, коммуникативный подход, лексическая компетенция.

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The article deals with the development of students' communicative skills in Business English, describes the peculiarities of the communicative approach to a foreign language teaching, which is used for the successful mastering of these skills by students. As English has acquired the status of the language of international business communication, the necessity of developing professional communicative competence of future specialists is difficult to overestimate. Much attention in the article is paid to the description of different communicative activities that may be provided on the practical English lessons and may help students to master successfully the language material and the main communicative skills and increase their educational motivation. Among the activities described are business situations modelling (negotiation, meeting, press-conference, telephone communication, applying for a job), group discussion, etc.

**Key words:** Business English, communicative skills, business communication, communicative approach, lexical competence.

**Formulation of the problem.** The importance of learning English as a language of international communication in modern conditions doesn't need any explanation, especially if it has to deal with business. Most negotiations and bargains all over the world are held in English, business is extending through international companies and thus

the usage of English is becoming more and more extended in business environment. In various fields such as trade, technology, tourism, diplomacy etc. communication in English is essential. It is very important for business people to know how to express themselves in spoken and written English adequately.



**The topicality** of the subject of our investigation is determined by the fact that in today's reality there is a particular need for highly qualified specialists in various fields that have the knowledge of the language most widespread in the world community. The successful development of the economy and competitiveness in international markets requires experts in various fields of science, technology and economics possessing a foreign language to the extent necessary for mutual understanding of different language cultures. So, the requirements to foreign language proficiency are significantly changing today, the practical skills of using business language in oral and written language, the ability to use a foreign language in professional activity are becoming more and more important.

In order to communicate effectively in English, a person must not only possess a good understanding of the English lexicon and related syntactical structures and rules but also be able to use them in various speech situations. Thus, the formation of the communicative competence of the students has become the priority in teaching English.

**The analysis of recent investigations.** The attempts to approximate the process of language learning to the process of communication have been made long ago. These were extremely helpful as they have stimulated creative communicative initiative of both teachers and students. In the past decades, the communicative approach to second language teaching has been the subject of unprecedented attention and research. It has been worked out by a great number of scientists in our country (E.I. Passov [5], L.V. Birkun [3]) and abroad (W. Littlewood [8], C. Livingstone [9], W.M. Rivers and M.S. Temperley [12], J.C. Richards and T. Rodgers [11]).

The question of the formation of communicative business skills of the students taking into account the requirements of the modern society have been studied by many domestic and foreign scientists as well: D. Bubnova [1], Z. Korniyeva [4], D. Pickett [10], T. Hutchinson and A. Waters [7].

At the same time the question of communicative-oriented teaching of Business English cannot be considered sufficiently developed and investigated and therefore, requires further research.

**The aim of the investigation.** In our investigation we consider the main aspects of developing the students' communicative skills in Business English, as well as the peculiarities of the communicative approach to foreign language teaching.

**Main material.** Professional foreign language competence entails a combination of

knowledge and speaking skills applicable to business, plus a mastery of foreign language communication strategies and tactics, combined with the ability to apply special methods of emotional communicative interaction [2, p. 78].

How efficiently professional foreign language competence is formed in students depends on how the context of their future professional activity is introduced into the educational process: whether the teacher takes into consideration the students' experience, interests and requirements, and how the motivation to study a foreign language is ensured. Efficiency increases when students' future professional activities are modelled in a foreign language class. It is clear that the use of traditional methods of foreign language teaching, such as demonstration, explanation, practice, usage, correction and evaluation, are not enough to prepare a competitive specialist for the global market.

Traditionally, English classes were teacher-centered, with teachers explaining vocabulary and grammatical structure. However it is obvious that focusing on a descriptive grammar is likely to inhibit learners' language acquisition. Students under teacher-centered systems are learning passively with fewer opportunities to use the language which severely prohibit the development of their language competence needed in the authentic communicative world. There is considerable evidence that grammar instruction and error correction do not lead to improved accuracy or fluency in expression.

The shift in pedagogy from the very traditional textbooks to materials that focus more on developing the new skills required of the graduates has become more and more evident since this approach contributes more to their success in the professional sphere.

The purpose of teaching a foreign language in a higher education institution is no longer just a matter of passing on knowledge of the subject (language competence), but the development of certain practical abilities, skills and personal traits, which enable and prepare experts to use language competently in the professional sphere.

In recent years, language teaching has moved towards a "whole person" approach, that could put the learner at the centre of the learning process, involving the creative and intuitive aspects of his personality. Instead of having a teacher-dominated classroom, where the teacher performs firmly at the centre of everything, the communicative approach has led to a decentralized classroom, emphasizing more pair and group work and making the students more active in the proceedings.



According to the communicative approach the learning process is treated as a model of communication process. To achieve this, it is necessary to model the basic, fundamentally important, essential parameters of communication, which include the personal character of the communicative activity of the subject of communication, the interaction of speech partners, the situation as a form of communication functioning, the content of the process of communication, the system of language means, which acquisition would provide communicative activities, the functional character of the assimilation and use of linguistic means, novelty of communication, etc. [5, p. 4].

Communicative-oriented teaching aims not only at giving students the practical knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the foreign language, but also at developing an understanding of how the appropriate language is used for communication. Formal aspects of the language – grammar, vocabulary, phonetics – are presented in the communicative contexts in order to form a direct understanding of how these forms are used in speech. In addition, skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing are systematically developed with a wide range of realistic types of training tasks that provide maximum opportunities for the use of the language being studied. This approach requires an open atmosphere of cooperation and active participation of students in the process of their learning. This approach helps, first of all, to stimulate the cognitive processes of the students and involve all of them in the learning process. Besides, the students are encouraged to express their thoughts, express their feelings and use their experience through activities which provide them with the basic corpus for spontaneous communication; they are engaged into the learning activities that imitate or create real or realistic situations. Students are encouraged to work together and take responsibility for their own learning and to develop their ability to learn.

The question how these attitudes can be linked to the development of communicative competence in a business context is of great importance for our investigation.

As has been said before, a foreign language in any educational institution is primarily studied for communication, so the learning process should be focused on mastering of all types of speech activity. A modern specialist should study the possibilities of foreign partners, their work, achievements in order to implement the best results into his work; maintain business contacts with the help of technical means of communication or face-to-face communication; negotiate with foreign

business partners; choose literary sources, use general scientific and specific methods of primary information collection if needed.

Business foreign language is treated as a language of professional orientation as well, it provides certain lexical material and certain types of communication in the business context. Business English is used in the business environment, its concept is being formed and is gaining importance with the strengthening of business integration. Thus, Business English teaching includes not only the provision of language knowledge, skills and abilities, but also the formation of understanding the nature of communication in business, mastering the methods of their implementation, cultural consciousness, as well as generalization on the pragmatic level of knowledge and skills received by the students while studying special, social and humanitarian disciplines [6, p. 133].

When teaching students business English, the tasks of the teacher are, first of all, to form a student's communicative competence in business speech, to expand his vocabulary with the help of special terms, to minimize uncertainties associated with the assimilation of the lexical and normative base of international documents.

In Business English teaching the communicative approach, which involves learning a language in a psychologically comfortable surroundings, has proven to be the most effective. A student must not only be interested in communication, but also understand that he is in the same situation as other students involved in the communication process, which in its turn will help him to forget about the fear of learning a foreign language. Students should be immersed into a foreign language as fully as possible, and the more student speaks English, the less his communication in a foreign language is slowed down by a native language.

The question bound to arise in the process of teaching communication skills is "How to develop the necessary confidence in our students?" They have to learn early how to express their personal intentions through all kinds of familiar and unfamiliar combinations of language elements at their disposal. The more active they are in linguistic activity, the more rapid the progress is. The teachers' task is to create and develop opportunities for their students to use foreign language for the natural purposes in relations with other people, where they can exchange messages of real interest to them. Various natural communicative contexts can be proposed to encourage students to develop their speaking skills (establishing and maintaining social



relations, expressing one's reactions, seeking and giving information, talking one's way out of a trouble, learning or teaching how to do or make something, conversing over the telephone, problem solving, acting out social roles, discussing ideas, sharing activities, entertaining, etc.).

In correspondence with the communicative orientation of the learning process, much attention in practical Business English classes should be paid to the development of dialogical speech. Students should be put in such conditions, in which they could solve the problems that are important for them, with the help of a foreign language, that is their educational activities should be as close to the real situation as possible. They acquire skills, experience in professional activities and learn language simultaneously.

Group discussion on the practical Business English lessons increases the motivation and personal involvement of the interlocutors in solving the problems discussed. They not only have to use the knowledge of a foreign language, but also formulate their own thoughts, find some means for defending their points of view. The discussion contributes to the development of lexical, grammatical, logical skills, encourages students to listen to the words said by others, thus developing the skills of understanding the spoken language, helps to develop the ability to express one's own thoughts independently.

The main typical situations of oral communication for students are press conferences, negotiations, presentations, discussions and conclusion of contracts, solving business issues with a partner on the phone, business conversations. Such situations require the ability to listen and to understand business speech, and it is here that difficulties arise when understanding the partner in the process of communication in a foreign language. Students do not fully understand the interlocutor, and therefore cannot always answer the question. But the most common difficulty in communication with foreign partners are unfamiliar terms and phrases, specific way of pronunciation, difficulties in understanding dialogical speech in face-to-face conversation and speech perception in conditions of technical barriers when communicating with a partner on the phone. In the case of imperfect English proficiency, students must learn to compensate for communicative failures and gaps. The main means are rephrasing, asking the interlocutor for help, using various nonverbal means of communication, such as facial expression, gestures, plans, schemes, etc.

Communication on the phone is also one of the forms of business communication.

The language used on the phone should be official, students should possess a certain set of words and phrases that are used when talking on the phone. Thoughts must be expressed and information explained very clearly and accurately, a person must demonstrate a deep understanding of the question being discussed, as it is not possible to refer to sources of information (charts, diagrams, instructions) when communicating on the phone.

The linguistic interaction of students in Business English lessons usually takes place in a variety of forms: pairs, triads, small groups, with the whole group. An active style of learning a foreign language by means of communication has proven to be the most effective in such activities as role-plays, problem-solving situations and free communication.

The use of role-plays enables the simulation of real communication situations, where ideas are discussed and opinions and feelings can be expressed. Role-plays, as a method of active learning, are aimed at both prepared and spontaneous speech development: they are based on interesting social or professional situations, where students learn to communicate in a foreign language. Role-playing increases students' motivation, as the language is learned in an interesting context and a collaborative atmosphere, where each student is responsible for the group's results. It facilitates learning social and business behaviour patterns, and also helps to form communication strategies and tactics in order to persuade, argue and reach planned results. Students, who take part in role-play games, make decisions and explain the reasons for these decisions, with the aim of developing fluency in speaking.

The task of role-play games is to demonstrate models of behaviour in standard social and professional situations. Role-play games help to form such key qualities as communicative abilities, tolerance, ability to work in small groups, independence of thinking, etc. [10, p. 84].

The following communicative situations simulated during the role-plays may be offered to students:

- a production meeting of the company employees;
- a round-table discussion: meeting of the representatives of different companies;
- negotiations with business partners.

The problem-solving activities during a Business English class focus on the use of critical thinking skills and techniques. Students may read some texts or articles that demonstrate various ways of solving problems (e. g., a company which encourages



employees to make suggestions and rewards the ones whose suggestions are adopted); practice making their own suggestions to solve specific problems; practice giving each other advice on real-life problems; work in groups to role-play a problem-solving meeting. The main benefit of making use of critical thinking skills and techniques is the fact that students better understand the concept in discussion, which can lead to and actually increases their ability to solve various business problems.

**Conclusions.** Thus, to develop students' communicative skills in Business English the work should be conducted towards modeling various communicative situations that would contribute to the effective mastering of lexical material, provide conditions for the development of students' thinking, contribute to forming certain skills of oral speech in the sphere of business. Role-plays (meetings, negotiations, discussions, etc.), problem-solving situations (*solving business issues with a partner on the phone, postponing a meeting, etc.*) and free communication activities have proven to be the most effective means to teach students business communication.

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