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Educational Paradigm Shift in Teaching Foreign Language Oral Professional Communication to Non-Language-Majoring Students

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Abstract

The present article deals with the problem of teaching foreign language oral professional communication to students of non-language majors. It lays emphasis on the need for possessing language skills in the context of every professional field, and explains a necessity to revise the content of training foreign language programs for non-language departments in connection with a transition to a two-level education system. The need to include specific language, types of discourse and typical communicative situations reflecting real communication in professional sphere is emphasized.

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1. Introduction

In the context of the educational processes globalization, namely in connection with the transition to a two-level system of education, there is a need to change the concept of foreign language teaching in general and for non-language-majoring students in particular. A two-level system involves shortening the professional training, i.e. after a four-year bachelor program students should be ready to start a professional career. In this regard, the introduction of professionally-oriented foreign language course is supposed to occur in the second year of the program. Professionally-oriented foreign language training is currently a major part of the whole educational process at non-language departments. Thus, language training should be oriented to the subsequent qualification.

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Great contribution to the study of the specified problem has been made by the scientists working in the field of language development for specific purposes (I. P. Aghabekian, O. G. Polyakov, T. U. Polyakova, I. A. Tsaturova, E. Hatch, H. D. Brown, etc.). The problem of teaching foreign language program syllabus is treated differently. In our case, the most interesting is the definition that Kuchma (1991) gives to oral communication, understanding by the syllabus «something that students need to learn to reach the level of communicative competence that will stay in line with objective of the institution» (Kuchma, 1991:63).

As for its components, the kit is also different in different works. Most syllabus components for communication training suggested by different authors are represented in the work by Galskova and Solovtsova. They distinguish the following components (Galskova & Solovtsova, 1991:33):

- the scope of communicative activities, themes, situations and programs for their deployment, communication and social role, speech acts and speech material (texts, speech patterns, etc.);
- language material, its registration rules and skills of operating it;
- a set of special speech abilities that provide practical knowledge of a foreign language as a means of communication and cognition;
- the system of knowledge of national and cultural peculiarities and realities of the country of the target language, at least usual forms of speech and the ability to use them in various areas of speech communication;
- general learning skills, rational methods of mental work to ensure a culture of students' learning and cognitive activity in order to master a foreign language and enhance its level.

A comparison of the above optional syllabus components led to the conclusion that due to the training orientation to professional communication, in addition to the linguistic components (language skills, speech skills, etc.), many researchers have started to include extralinguistic components in the syllabus: the communication fields, which are extralinguistic background affecting verbal behavior and the choice of linguistic resources as well as the situation of communication, which indicates the specific conditions of partners' interaction, a set of topics representing informative specifics of the subject.

It is obvious that the content of foreign language communicative training cannot remain isolated from the content of vocational education. According to the current curriculum, a foreign language course for non-language-majoring students usually precedes a number of professional courses, which complicates students' understanding of the content of vocational training material. But students can learn professional information from professionally-oriented texts and assignments in a foreign language. Consequently, a foreign language is a means of acquiring new extralinguistic expertise.

2. Teaching foreign language oral professional communication

2.1. Theoretical basis for teaching professional discourse

Professional orientation is expressed in the creation of situational conditions that are similar to the future work of the student, which implies careful approach to the selection of material, thematic courses, professional literature and lexical material. In other words, in addition to obtaining proper language skills within a particular course, we are also talking about the study of the specialist's speech in its actual functioning. As a result of communicatively significant information processing, students should get a cognitive model (scheme) (Tsurikova, 2007:103) of communicative situations that represent the typical attitudes and patterns of communication between the participants of specific professional environment by the elements of professional discourse.

The professional discourse is a specialist's purposeful speech activity, characterized by communicants' common knowledge and stereotyped situation of communication that takes course in accordance with rules and standards accepted in the professional environment, and which is aimed at task execution for a socially significant result. The main difference from other types of discourse is that it is included in the context of professional activities, implemented in business communication and represents such speech acts as presentation of the material, written or oral information exchange, expression of the opinion, discussion, etc. It is characterized by a specific vocabulary

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