

Discourse Approach to Communicative Competence Formation of University Students

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The paper studies one of the urgent problems of current higher education – the training of a new specialist's generation. The authors reveal the concept of a competitive specialist with professional communicative competence. They pay special attention to the need for future specialists to develop foreign language communicative competence within the "discourse – communication – cross-cultural professional collaboration" paradigm. In this regard, particular attention deserves the formation of discursive competence as a component of the professional communicative competence of a specialist. It is considered that a university graduate knows various types of discourses and their characteristics, knows the methods of their construction and perception in specific areas and communication scenarios. The authors provide examples of training in foreign language professional communication based on modern methods and techniques of teaching foreign languages (for example, a training project, visual means, and text work). The authors conclude that in current conditions, a competitive specialist needs to demonstrate readiness for cross-cultural communication activities using a foreign language in international professional and business relations.

Keywords: communicative competence, nonlinguistic university, foreign language, discourse approach, synergetic approach, teaching foreign language, professional communication

INTRODUCTION

The rapidly accelerating pace of global changes in society and the world creates one of the urgent problems of the scientific and pedagogical community – the search for ways and means of forming a model of a new generation of specialists. It requires a mobile, dynamic, and precise reorientation of the normative and parametric standards of a specialist, both technical and humanitarian (Kubrushko, Kozlenkova,

Mikhailenko & Nazarova, 2018). But, how to form a qualitatively new specialist who meets the needs of modern society remains a big question.

The authors believe that the higher the quality of education – the higher the indicators of all human life spheres. The intellectual, spiritual, and cultural state of society depends on education quality.

High-quality of higher education gives a young specialist a guarantee of success. Objectively, individual's success ensures a high and qualitative standard of living in society (Blank, 1982).

The idea of creating a new generation of specialists was confirmed in the Bologna Declaration, according to which the joint principles of the European Universities network are developed. The qualifications for European Higher Education creates a regulatory environment that largely determines current socio-economic development.

Besides, today it is evident that in the modern super dynamic world, the higher education systems of such countries as Russia and Belarus should become more flexible and functional. Their construction should be based on the principle of advanced development, focusing on innovative solutions of scientific and technological progress and international educational standards (Fadel, Bialik & Trilling, 2015).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research aims to explain the need for a discursive approach to create a university student's communicative competence. Research objectives include (1) defining communicative competence and its components and (2) clarifying the optimal organizational and pedagogical conditions for its creation using a discursive approach.

The authors use the competence-based and synergetic approaches methods – analysis of methodological literature, pedagogical modeling, and design, as well as practical testing of intermediate results due to their own pedagogical activities.

The competence-based method ensures an optimal understanding of the professional activity content of specialists, based on their qualifications and training level. Designing such content provides the formation of a basic competency set for graduates, reflecting both professional skills, conceptual and worldview foundations of specialist consciousness. The authors believe that the competence-based method will make it possible to create the entirety's educational process successfully. Constructing an algorithm for an integral paradigm of the transfer and formation of scientific and professional knowledge can allow us to describe a specialist's model that reflects the content of all professional functions.

The professional activity of today's specialists includes a set of interrelated functions: (1) information and analytical, (2) diagnostic, (3) organizational, (4) communicative, (5) control and correction, and others (Marton & Saljo, 2004). That is why the interests of many researchers of methodological techniques in the specialists training turn to the synergetic concept, which provides for the modeling of the training process considering interdisciplinary consistency. According to H. Haken, the term "synergetics" describes the coordinated interaction of separate parts of a single integral structure (2009). Practice shows that the synergistic approach plays an important role in vocational education – it determines the approaches to the construction of educational systems, educational process organization, as well as ensuring the formation of general and special competencies in the transfer and consolidation of interrelated interdisciplinary knowledge (Pershin, Makeeva & Tsilenko, 2004). This concept considers the learning process as an adaptive modification, a stepwise transition to continuous self-education throughout life. Synergetics provides a systematic reflection and condition for specialist self-determination, adaptation, and search for alternative possibilities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Currently, scientists from leading national and foreign universities update theoretical and practical research and develop new integrative methodological approaches to personnel training. In particular, increasingly important becomes the project activities methodology associated with the practical application of the knowledge gained during the professional activities of graduates. The first place is taken by the

innovative content of scientific and technological development, which determines the global real-virtual reality awareness, the availability of new research resources, and increased graduate competitiveness, both within their country and abroad.

Today, a specialist must possess (1) a skill of analyzing and forecasting rapidly changing production and economic processes, (2) high erudition, (3) entrepreneurship, (4) mobility, (5) the ability to make independent, responsible activity decisions, (6) generate qualitatively new ideas, and (7) strive for continuous education and self-education throughout all life.

Thus, the competence evaluation of a university graduate considers the cognitive abilities in the fundamental sciences, an adequate understanding of the socio-cultural, moral, and ethical values of modern globalized society, and also is an indicator of the professional training level and their competitiveness.

Within the given context, special attention should be paid to the quality of graduates' communicative training and the formation and development of foreign language information and analytical skills. The organization degree of the timely exchange of scientific, technical, and professional-pragmatic information determines the high efficiency of professional problem solutions by partners.

Thus, in globalization, international cooperation's success is conditioned by the level of foreign language communicative competence of any profile specialist.

Therefore, a university graduate must be able to perceive, create, and transmit professionally important information (ideas, algorithms, concepts) in a foreign language in a verbal, figurative, graphic, and audiovisual format, using relevant speech means in many areas and scenarios of professional communication.

Specialist communicative competence evidently is an essential component of a competitive specialist personality. Professional intercultural communication is a form of business relations implementation. Professional, communicative competence evidently is a crucial component of a competitive specialist personality. Communication between partners plays a connecting role in international business interaction, the product of which is long-term, sustainable, and mutually beneficial business relationships.

Communicative professional competence provides the ability to master the complex communication skills of foreign languages in various social structures, assuming knowledge of socio-cultural, extralinguistic, ethical, aesthetic, confessional, national, mental, and other applied aspects. This creates a need for the formation of verbal and non-verbal behavior in different cultures, as well as perception and respect for nationally specific values (Tsilenko, Tarmazova & Klyukina, 2016).

Consequently, foreign language communicative competence assumes considering the linguistic and psychological characteristics of the dialogue, as well as the ability of its participants to predict the scenario and its consequences. A specialist must have some meta-competencies that describe their activities (e. g., pragmatic, intellectual, and emotionally-forceful aspects of activity). Such meta-competencies contribute to achieving the primary goal of communication – mutual understanding between partners (Zeer, Tretyakova, Scherbina & Bukovey, 2019).

Thus, a sufficient level of comprehensive communicative competence formation of a competitive specialist during communication in a foreign language is a crucial moment in the successful activity of any developing company.

Discursive competence is mainly important as an integral component of communicative competence. Discursive competence assumes the availability of knowledge about various types of discourses and their characteristics, mastery of their construction techniques and understanding, considering specific areas and communication situations.

Discourse is a foundational category in linguistics and social sciences. Interpretation of the “discourse” concept is the base of discursive competence. Discourse is directly related to speech, the process of speech activity, as well as the way of expressing thoughts.

The analysis of this phenomenon involves determining the specific characteristics of discourse and its role in teaching foreign language professional communication. Discourse understanding is connected with the description of the communicative interaction process and the final result of mental activity and communication.

Today, we study the “discourse” concept from a cross-cultural approach to communication between representatives of different cultures based on the corresponding cognitive models. This approach allows us to consider the influence of the culturally determined speech content on professional activity strategies. We consider a speech activity as a reflection of the world national picture in the strategies of communicative behavior and linguistic means to express culturally colored meanings. Discourse is characterized by determinism, a directed choice of linguistic means that reflect the intentional attitudes of communicants (Zyryanova, 2009).

Thus, the formation of foreign language communicative competence of graduates of nonlinguistic universities must be carried out within the framework of the “discourse – communication – cross-cultural professional collaboration” paradigm (Makarov, 2003). Analyzing its current methods and techniques of formation, it is advisable to consider the organizing training process in foreign language professional communication using current methods and techniques of teaching foreign languages.

Visual means of information transmission and perception take an important place in the process of teaching foreign languages. They play the role of visual-semantic support and a link between the word’s semantic and sound side. In particular, L. S. Kryuchkova (2017) substantiates the effectiveness of visual reading of the text that contains tables, figures, graphs, photographs, and presentations. In her opinion, “the accompanying illustration plays the role of the so-called “anchor” or visual “reference outline,” contributing to a more successful reproduction of both the lexical component and the grammatical structure of the text sentences by students”.

N. V. Moshchinskaya claims that “the visual perception of the text and its illustrative material significantly increases the interest and motivation of students to learn this material” (2013). At the same time, the teacher’s task is to shape students’ ability to correlate visual images and their lexical equivalents. This plays a vital role in further independent work with texts. Finding the correct semantic connections and using lexical and grammatical forms will allow students to easily and correctly build their own statements.

The authors refer to one more method that is actively used in foreign language classes – students’ educational project activities. According to E. S. Polat’s definition, the project method is a way of realizing the didactic goal through a detailed, step-by-step development of an algorithm for solving the proposed problem and its certain design. This method is based on students’ independent activity – both individually, in pairs, and groups; moreover, it must be performed strictly within a limited period (Polat, Bukharkina, Moiseyeva & Petrov, 2008).

The project method was developed based on J. Dewey’s pragmatic pedagogy of the first half of the 20th century. Today, the project method is gaining special relevance in teaching foreign languages. This is primarily due to the widespread use of information and communication technologies.

The authors emphasize that using this method in teaching foreign language professional communication requires the teacher’s careful planning – from the stage of preparation and formulation of the problem to the final presentation of students’ results, their self-assessment, and reflection. In identifying and formulating the problems within which students will work, it is crucial to consider the scope of their future professional activities. In other words, the problems considered in the classroom must be correlated with the tasks solved in practice. Then, one should indicate the sources and methods of searching and obtaining information by students and determine the type of design and presentation of the activity final results: presentation, creative report, debate, round table, etc.

The teacher plays a vital role during collecting, systematizing, and analyzing the obtained data and the process of presenting and summing up the activity results at the stage of students’ self-assessment, reflection, and formulation of conclusions.

The authors believe that the main advantage of project activity lies in creating students’ skills of independent search, processing (analysis, synthesis), and presentation of information in an accessible form, solving the assigned tasks. This is one of the fundamental and most important skills of a successful specialist in the current high-tech and information-rich world. Because the information search is carried out by students in foreign language sources, we can confidently conclude that project activities greatly contribute to the expansion of the students’ vocabulary and improve the studied language’s grammatical structure skills. Consequently, the final educational product (i.e., preparation of a presentation, monologue, or

participation in a polylogue) is a form of conscious expression of one's own thoughts (Tkacheva & Sazonova, 2014; Kucirkova, Alipichev, Vasbieva & Kalugina, 2017).

Project educational activity enriches students with new knowledge and the experience of independent research activities, which contributes to the formation of grammatical and communication skills of the studied language. In this regard, T. A. Shaykhullina argues that "this technique helps students in the formation and development of linguistic knowledge, emphasizes that the process of learning a language should help to discover this knowledge and be of a research and experimental nature" (2006).

Another methodological technique widely practiced in communicative professional competence formation is working with texts. With its cognitive and educational potential, the text was always considered the primary information source in the learning process. In our opinion, the text serves as the main resource base for the formation, development, and further improvement of speech skills and abilities.

Here arises the question of how to organize training in foreign language professional communication based on pragmatically valuable materials containing particular terminology.

According to M. M. Zinovkina, the formation and expansion of a termbase, which understood as a set of special lexical units denoting certain professional concepts, is an intellectual and cognitive activity of a person, based on the study of the basic concepts of a certain area of professional activity (2008).

In this regard, it should be emphasized that when compiling educational and methodological developments for nonlinguistic universities, it is important to be guided primarily by the urgent need to improve the efficiency and intensify teaching professional vocabulary. Certain criteria should be followed when selecting professionally-oriented texts, namely:

- Matching of texts and their terminological content with the communicative needs of students;
- Representative genre diversity, for example, description of processes and devices, instructions, scientific and scientific-journalistic articles, organizational, business and commercial documents, etc.;
- Matching between the complexity level of text and stage of training (beginner, intermediate, and advanced);
- Availability of different textual information presentation forms – written (printed and electronic), audio, and video formats.

Practical experience shows that applying the above-mentioned criteria in the text material selection contributes to more effective assimilation of professional vocabulary by students during the class and independent work.

As commonly known, information and communication competence is the most crucial component of specialist competence. The specifics of the meaning and use of terms should be reflected in the training materials and create an exercise system base to work with texts.

It is advisable to divide the work on the terminological content of a professionally-oriented foreign language text into the following stages: (1) pre-text, (2) text, (3) post-text, and (4) communicative.

During the pre-text stage of studying professionally-oriented vocabulary, students learn professional terminology of the studied topic. Pre-text exercises should include such types of tasks as (1) defining the meaning of new terms (translation by context, without reliance on a dictionary), (2) correlating terms and their definitions (and vice versa), (3) choosing synonyms and antonyms, and options for lexical compatibility. It is also advisable to consider the features of translation of international terminological vocabulary (considering the "false friends" of the translator), word formation methods, and polysemy.

Text stage involves the implementation of various types of exercises based on special texts, namely: (1) finding previously learned terms and phrases in the text, (2) determining if the statements are truth/false, (3) filling the blanks, and also (4) analytical study reading with a discussion of lexical and grammatical features of the text.

Post-text stage includes exercises to consolidate the terminological vocabulary in oral speech (e. g., during the quasi-professional conversation), as well as exercises for oral and written reverse translation. This stage also includes a discussion of the text content to determine both the knowledge of certain terms and understanding of the entire text content. The current stage creates almost all components of students'

professional communicative competence since it contains modeling of professional activities, imitation of social and professional interaction using a foreign language.

Communicative stage aims to create speech skills based on problematic texts. Students learn graphic methods of presenting information and various nonlinear texts (graphs, diagrams, tables, etc.). There are the following graphical presentation methods: “conceptual, semantic network and mental maps; denotational maps of the text” (Tsilenko et al., 2016). It is possible to form methods and techniques to work with foreign nonlinear information, to convey the text content and a visual image by structuring the text in the form of a table or a stepped diagram, or during the work in mini-groups to fill in tables with incomplete data based on text material.

At this stage, it is advisable to use creative exercises with additional information to compose a well-grounded statement, write a scientific/popular science article, prepare a presentation report on the problem considered in a journalistic or scientific text. Creative exercises contribute to the development of creative thinking in a foreign language. It, in turn, stimulates speech activity and develops students’ communication skills (Maksimuk & Levonyuk, 2020).

The proposed work methods are designed to help students understand professional discourse and ways of presenting, consolidating, and reproducing professional vocabulary. The authors believe that working with professionally-oriented texts with access to the imitation of specialists’ professional activities can vary and be supplemented depending on the specifics of the audience, goals, and stage of training. Thus, the teacher will be able to provide an individual, personality-oriented teaching style in both classroom and independent work.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, one of the priority components of a competitive specialist’s personality is the readiness for cross-cultural professional and communicative activities. The key to success is accomplished professional and communicative competence, a special place of which is given to discursive competence. Knowledge of one or several foreign languages allows a specialist of any profile to become an active and qualified participant of professional and business relations, capable of effectively solving assigned tasks and finding qualitatively new and nonstandard approaches to solve these problems.

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