PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AS THE KEY COMPONENT OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES COURSE DESIGN

ПРОФЕСІЙНА КОМУНІКАТИВНА КОМПЕТЕНТНІСТЬ ЯК КЛЮЧОВА СКЛАДОВА ПРОЕКТУВАННЯ КУРСУ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ ЗА ПРОФЕСІЙНИМ СПРЯМУВАННЯМ

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Following the steps of improving the quality of higher education, this article focuses on the development of professional communicative competence of the future Information Technology specialists, consisting of intercultural, humanities, social and linguistic components. In this context learning Foreign Language for Specific Purposes, which enables students to adapt quickly to new challenges of academic and professional communities, is becoming very important – provoking interest not just among university teachers but also among learners. Analysing the programs of universities in different countries, we came to the conclusion that the appropriate Foreign Language for Specific Purposes course design could solve the issue of the development process. The historical background of foreign language learning for specific purposes, its development as a branch of applied linguistics, and potential directions for further research is also presented in this article. The basic objectives, content and learning tools professional foreign language communication are defined and generalized. It has been made an investigation in the sphere of professional communicative competence of the future IT specialists and made an attempt to develop a model of the successful course. The survey among the students (future Information Technology specialists) was conducted and analysed to determine the key components of the course activities. It was found that the content of professional foreign language communication is an organic component of higher education. The professional skills and abilities of the future Information Technology specialists in the field of intercultural language communication are substantiated. Taking into consideration the relevant experience of teaching Foreign Language for Specific Purposes, was made an attempt to develop a model of the successful course design. It is proved that the course development should be based on strong collaboration between the subject specialists (IT experts) and the language teachers. A hypothesis is put forward regarding the foreign language teachers need to gather all necessary information about a student's subject course, decide how teaching Foreign Language for Specific Purposes fits to their course and what priorities does the department and students could see.

Key words: *Higher education, IT specialists, Foreign Language for Specific Purposes, Professional communicative competence, Course design, Intercultural communication.*

Досліджуючи етапи підвищення якості вищої освіти, стаття охоплює так звані рівні розвитку професійно-комунікативної компетентності майбутніх спеціалістів з інформаційних технологій, які складаються з міжкультурного, гуманітарного, соціального та лінгвістичного компонентів. У цьому контексті вивчення курсу іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням, який дозволяє студентам швидко адаптуватися до нових викликів академічних та професійних спільнот – є надзвичайно важливою складовою навчального плану, викликаючи інтерес не лише серед викладачів університету, але й серед студентів. Аналізуючи програми університетів різних країн, ми дійшли висновку, що запропоноване проектування курсу іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням може вирішити питання процесу розвитку майбутніх спеціалістів. У нашому дослідженні розглянуто попередній науковий підхід до проблеми проектування курсів з іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням як за кордоном, так і в Україні. У цій статті, також, представлені історичні передумови початку процесу навчання іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням, її розвиток як розділу прикладної лінгвістики та потенційні напрямки подальших досліджень. Визначено та узагальнено основні цілі, зміст та засоби навчання іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням. Проведено дослідження у сфері професійної комунікативної компетентності майбутніх IT-фахівців. У зв'язку з цим було організовано та проаналізовано анкетування студентів (майбутніх спеціалістів з інформаційних технологій) з метою визначення ключових складових успішного функціонування курсу іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням. З'ясовано, що зміст курсу є органічною складовою вищої освіти. Обґрунтовано професійні вміння та навички майбутніх фахівців з інформаційних технологій у сфері міжкультурної мовної комунікації. Враховуючи досвід викладання курсу іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням, було спроектовано нову модель. Доведено, що розробка курсу має базуватися на тісній співпраці між фахівцями-предметниками (IT-спеціалістами) та викладачами іноземної мови.

Ключові слова: *вища освіта, IT-спеціалісти, іноземна мова за професійним спрямуванням, професійна комунікативна компетентність, проектування курсу, міжкультурна комунікація.*

Introduction. The rapid growth of information and communication technologies and expansion of international relations have caused the globalisation of higher education. The actual professional capacity of a future Information Technology (IT) specialist implies not only professional knowledge, but also a number of social-humanities skills, which are alternative for a computer science education and fall into the category of soft skills while forming the social-humanities competence of an expert. The significance of

social-humanities competences and intercultural communicative competence is a set forth in the criteria of the international IT spheres and organisations that provide accreditation for computer science education programmes and certify the level of educational attainment of their graduates.

Currently the qualifying standards made by employers of IT graduates directly refer to their ability to work in a diversified team; the possession of methods of effective argumentation; realisation of foreign professional communication; comprehension of professional and ethical liability of decision-making; and critical analysis of decisions made, with flexibility in a variable IT, social and political environment [4].

Considering all the above mentioned, it becomes obvious that all the universities and other higher institutions will reconsider their educational policy and eventually abandon traditional approaches in teaching future IT specialist, such as narrow-purposed teaching, targeting a labour-market of only one country, and discontinuity of education processes. We must go with the times and take into account any changes in the international space. In educating a highly qualified IT specialist, the institutions should develop and introduce different foreign language courses which would promote development of the extra professional-orientated abilities of the students. Among these abilities can be, for example: self-education, critical or lateral thinking and professional communication.

Analysing the programs of universities in different countries, we have made a conclusion that the appropriate Foreign Language for Specific Purposes (FLSP) course design could solve the above mentioned issue.

Literature review. In the literature many abbreviations were found that have been used in describing professionally-orientated teaching of a foreign language, terms such as: Foreign Language for Specific Purposes (FLSP), Foreign Language for Academic Purposes (FLAP); Foreign Language for Occupational Purposes (FLOP); Foreign Language for Vocational Purposes (FLVP); Foreign Language for Professional Purposes (FLPP); Foreign Language for Business Purposes (FLBP); and Foreign Language for Specific Purposes (FLSP) [1; 2].

In order to avoid misunderstanding among scientists who carried out research in this field, in the methodology, there was an attempt to break out two main directions of professionally-orientated teaching of a foreign language: thus, they have become FLAP and FLSP. The first recorded use of the term FLAP appeared in the 1970s in the works of American and British scientists (R.C. Yorker, J.B. Heaton, T.F. Johns) [2], who retained the emphasis of teaching foreign language on practical skills required for study purposes in formal education systems [3]. Historically, FLSP was dominated by the teaching of FLAP because most materials and research works were carried out in the area of FLAP. Only since the 1980s FLSP has become a vital and innovative activity within the teaching of foreign language [8].

The problem of professional communicative competence has been investigating by many researches, such as: M. Bernavskaya, D. Demchenko, E. Gorkaltseva, M. Halutska, V. Ivanova, M. Odinokaya, T. Krepkaya, O. Kuzminska, N. Kostenko, D. Matukhin, O.Y. Mikhailova, A. Melnyk, N. Mukan, V. Redko, N. Sura, O. Sheredekina, E. Razinkina, N. Redchenko, L. Pankova, I. Trostinskaia, E. Pozdeeva, E. Tareva, B. Tarev, O. Tunkaliuk; J. Adams, M. Allan, T. Becher, K. Cagiltay, J. Craner, W. Cupach, T. Dahlgren, T. Dudley-Evans, M. Duffy, M. Farooq, A. Fejes, Ch. Graham, X. Gu, K. Johansson, B-R. Lim, S. Marriot, J. Whitty, M. John, J. Richards, J. Trim, B. Spitzberg, W. Hackett, E. Hall and many others.

Research methods. The first definition of FLSP was produced by T. Hutchinson and Waters in 1987 [2]. They suggested that FLSP should contain the simple question: Why does the learner need to learn a foreign language? The answer will determine the language required and the learning context, and thus establishes the primacy of need in FLSP. Need is defined by the reasons which explain why students are learning foreign languages, which can vary from study purposes to work purposes: applying for an academic exchange programme or participating in business negotiations [3].

Another definition of FLSP was offered by P. Strevens in 1988, who provided four absolute and two variable characteristics of this notion. The absolute characteristics are that FLSP consists of Language Teaching, which is:

– designed to meet specified needs of the learner;

– related in content to particular disciplines, occupations and activities;

– centred on language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, etc.;

The variable characteristics are that FLSP:

– may be restricted as to the learning skills to be learned, for example, reading, writing, speaking;

– may not be taught according to preordained methodology [10].

The third definition of FLSP, proposed by S. Robinson, was also focused on the primacy of needs analysis and what exactly students have to do when they have a basic language level [2]. It is mentioned homogeneous classes as another characteristic of FLSP in terms of the work or specialist studies that the students could be involved in.

However, each definition had the right to exist but they had some weak points: none of the above definitions could not be considered universal and could not present all aspects of FLSP course. P. Strevens' definition is the most comprehensive, but it can lead to certain confusion among teachers, providing a false impression that FLSP is always related directly to a subject-content.

Due to the experience, not only a subject or course content plays the main role, its role is smaller in comparison with the professional environment, situations and activities which are typical to the discipline it serves, in our case it is IT specialist-oriented. The next confusion is connected to homogeneity in classes, promoted by S. Robinson. In reality, it is difficult to achieve, mainly because in the context of one major there could be several specialist studies. Moreover, no definition reflects the nature of the interaction between the FLSP teacher and the learners. In FLSP classes the teacher acts more like a language consultant, emphasising the equal status with learners who have their own expertise in the subject matter.

To summarize the existing surveys and theories nowadays, professional foreign language teaching and professional communicative competence can be defined as a set of exercises or assignments that involve well-structured, long term, meaningful independent research activities of students in a foreign language [11]. Such activities should be carried out as a part of their class or homework. The purpose is to encourage students' interest to specific issues requiring them in FLSP course. This defines the main objectives of the project method:

1. To transfer certain amount of knowledge to students (future IT specialists), to teach them how to apply their knowledge on their own to address new educational and practical tasks due to the specification of course design.

2. To help a student to gain communicative skills, so he/she could work in different groups and play various social roles.

3. To expand students' social network so they could make acquaintance with other professionals and learn an issue from different perspectives.

4. To teach students to use research techniques: how to gather and analyze required information, analyze the information considering different points of view, hypothesize and present conclusions.

The review of modern methodological literature allows us to present teaching FLSP in terms of professional competency development (D. Matukhin, E. Gorkaltseva) [3], the culture of professional self-realization as a fundamental factor of students' internet communication in the modern educational environment of higher education (M. Odinokaya, T. Krepkaya, O. Sheredekina, M. Bernavskaya) [5], creating a communicative language teaching environment for improving students' communicative competence at EFL/EAP university level (M. Farooq) [8]. FLSP course may also be interdisciplinary (when referred to the scope of knowledge), flexible (in terms of project coordination), long-term (in terms of duration), or verbal/written (in terms of communication type) (N. Redchenko) [11].

The teacher's role in the proses of creating a perfect organized FLSP course is to analyze and use the information obtained to make an overall assessment of students' performance. According to E. Tareva, B. Tarev [11], the overall course assessment includes: analysis of significance and relevance of the issue chosen; correctness of study methods chosen and techniques to process the results; each project member's active behavior based on his/her individual performance; collective decision-making; communication and mutual cooperation; required and sufficient insight into the issue; evidence-based solutions; esthetic presentation of the given project; ability to answer opponents' questions; brief and reasonable answers by every group member.

We would like to add more features to the list above: professionally-oriented foreign language, oral practice existence and teacher-student cooperation.

The purpose of the article. In Ukraine, the concept of professional foreign language teaching or, as it is generally accepted FLSP course, is rather new and not fully investigated, although the given methodological tendency as an area of applied linguistics has been developing from the late 1960s [1]. The original interest in FLSP movement resulted from general developments in the world of economy at that period. The developments implied the growth of science and technology, the increased use of foreign professional communication, as well as the increased number of international contacts and education programmes.

The aim of this project is to sum up the world's experience in order to define basic criteria that can be the foundation for the successful FLSP course design. The ultimate purpose is to introduce the aim of necessity in course development for the future IT specialists in Ukraine.

Results and discussion. In our project, FLSP cannot be considered as just a set of specific themes or topics; specific vocabulary directly related to subject-content; or specific language skills such as reading, writing, etc. The FLSP course should reflect structural characteristics of the learner's special purposes and should be geared to the specific needs of the target situation. The choice of register, genres and associated language will depend on situations, which students need to manage when carrying out the activity.

When designing the structure and content of an FLSP course for the IT specialists, account should be taken of the global goals of IT-oriented education that reflects the requirements of international IT spheres and the social demand of society towards the experts of a particular economic field. In our project an attempt to reveal the features of FLSP teaching to students at Bachelor's level is made.

Acting in accordance with the professional educational state standards of Ukraine, it was revealed that a number of professional skills and abilities the specialist must possess at the end of FLSP course are:

– willingness to participate in all stages of IT development;

– ability to use advanced methods, tools and technologies to solve problems in the professional activity;

– ability to collect, process, analyse and synthesise information in solving professional problems;

– ability to work with professional IT literature and other scientific information in order to get awareness of recent achievements in the IT sphere and to obtain advanced professional knowledge;

– ability to organise interdisciplinary team-work;

– ability to evaluate accumulated experience, analyse own capabilities to update knowledge by means of modern information technologies and to weigh up challenges of new scientific and social environments [4].

The content of an FLSP course should be designed with focus on the development of the skills and abilities mentioned above, otherwise the disharmony between the goals of the education and its content can demotivate students, and could result that knowledge they would get will be unimportant and out of the context. Besides, foreign language is now regarded as not only a tool of professional communication but also as a tool of professional growth. A good command of foreign language by IT students implies the development of additional professional focused skills which can be:

– self-management and self-education skills that can be applied in independent students' work, with different sources to collect necessary information;

– general scientific skills focused on IT development;

– management and creative skills applicable to team-work;

– critical or lateral thinking that implies the ability to analyse the final or the finished product; find the alternative and non-standard way for problem solving.

Students'-focused professional skills can be formed and developed on the basis of general-purpose skills. The efficiency of their development will depend on the organisation and the content of the courses offered them while studying. Taking into account the aforesaid, FLSP is considered a foundation for professional skills development.

Taking into consideration the relevant experience of FLSP study in Ukraine and foreign countries methodology, we have made an attempt to design a model of an FLSP course and its content that meets students' needs; the characteristics of the professional field; the requirements of the state educational standard of Ukraine and the standards of international accreditation.

Development of the course structure implies consistency and correlation of the common objective-subordinated and result-orientated theme units. In this case, the objective of the course is as follows: improvement of a professional foreign language communicative competence of IT specialists, which will be of high importance for their professional career. The predicted result of vocational education will be in the formation and development of general and targeted professional skills of IT experts.

In order to determine the needs of IT specialists, a survey was carried out with a target group in Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University. The above mentioned survey was restricted by the questions related to students' necessities, lacks and wants in FLSP course. By necessities mean the information that a learner has to know in order to perform effectively the target situation, for example, lectures, seminars in foreign language etc., and the discourse components and linguistic features commonly used in FLSP course, for example, functions, structures, vocabulary. Wants mean a learner's motivation in the learning process and usually imply what a learner 'wants' from the FLSP course. Lacks represent the gap between the target proficiency and what a learner already knows. In other words, lacks analysis is the analysis of deficiency in a learner's knowledge.

Thus, the aforementioned points seem relevant and should be taken into account in the development of an FLSP course structure, design and teaching material. A survey questionnaire was conducted among 68 IT students (future Bachelor's Degree students) in Institute of Physics, Technology and Computer Sciences, Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University. The objective of this survey was to determine key positions in the course development. A list of questions is presented below:

1. What do you need FLSP course for?

2. What does FLSP course mean to you?

3. What do you expect from the FLSP course?

4. What language skills do you want to develop in order to communicate with other specialists and resolve professional issues effectively?

5. What language issues do you need to improve, and for what purpose?

The survey results are shown below in the Table 1:

According to the giving results of the survey questionnaire, the following conclusion can be made: in our course design we should pay attention to the balance between academic skills, study skills and professionally-orientated requirements within the constant technological development and growth.

However, FLSP teaching should not be considered a separate subject-content study. As was mentioned above, the professional activity of the IT specialist includes oral and written communication, participation in international projects, and formation of self-work strategies that can be a tool in acquiring professional up-to-date knowledge. Therefore, it is proposed that the alternative approach to FLSP course development was carried out, when the focus was on the FLSP tasks (project and research exercises, text-analysis, discourse and genre analysis

Table 1

**The results of students' needs analysis
on FLSP course**

Students' needs	Answers (%)
participating in international conferences and other events	22%
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taking part in international projects	35%
getting a job in an international company	43%
special language (vocabulary) for the professional sphere	52%
special communicative situations that can occur in future professional life (negotiations, making presentations, small-group discussions, etc.)	48%
ability to communicate in other countries on professional issues (topics)	73%
ability to write scientific papers	27%
writing	45%
reading	10%
speaking	25%
listening comprehension	20%
professional vocabulary	54%
technical translation	21%
technical writing	20%
grammar	5%

and IT vocabulary) but also the other components (academic writing, reference skills, listening and note-taking) were also included as a parallel course or as a part of the whole course, so each subject-content unit could be integrated with different components according to the students' needs.

Due to our research we create a model of the successful FLSP course:

Course objectives:

– acquisition of skills and abilities of practical knowledge of a foreign language in all types of speech activity in the scope of topics due to professional needs;

– obtaining the latest professional information through the work with foreign resources;

– formation of working skills with original sources in a professional IT direction;

– enrichment of vocabulary with foreign professional terminology;

– promoting the fundamentalization of general vocational education through its deep professional competence in the professional spheres.

The content of the FLSP course must be deep learning of speech activities using original texts in foreign languages, which will improve the basic communicative skills and abilities of reading, speaking, listening, translation and writing.

According to the curriculum and course plan, the future IT specialists must have such knowledge after completing the course:

– lexical material in the amount of 1000 lexical units;

– grammar material within the limits provided by the course program;

Also they should know:

– requirements for registration within the information received from foreign sources by abstract, annotation, etc.;

– requirements for registration of business correspondence;

– ways to obtain the latest professional information from foreign resources.

According to the requirements of the curriculum, the future IT specialists must be able to:

– to read original literature in a foreign language in the relevant field of knowledge;

– to conduct a conversation within the necessary business communication in the social, cultural and professional spheres;

– to use language effectively and skilfully in public life, education and for professional purposes, to express oneself quickly and spontaneously without noticeable difficulties;

– to abstract and annotate texts of IT content in a foreign language;

– to analyze statistical data of IT sphere.

Conclusion. In our research we have made an investigation in the sphere of professional communicative competence of the future IT specialists and made an attempt to develop a model of the successful course. We may affirm that highly developed communication skills in foreign language enable future specialists to be in demand, not just in their home country but all over the world, because of expansion of international contacts in science and technology. To achieve efficiency in teaching professional communication, the universities need to review the traditional approaches to FLSP teaching, as well.

The development of the course should be based on strong collaboration between the subject specialists (IT experts) and the language teachers. The foreign language teachers need to gather all necessary information about a student's subject course, decide how FLSP fits to their course and what priorities does the department and students see.

Also, it is very important to establish the balance between the department's expectations and the students' wants. The teaching material for the FLSP course should be selected by the IT experts, and then composed in the form of different communications exercises by foreign language teachers. It is also preferable to include a language communication practice abroad to immerse students into the language atmosphere of another country.

The material may not run in parallel with the subject course. So the content should be revised but can include new knowledge and ideas not mentioned in the subject course. Our project states the position

that FLSP course should be compulsory for the future IT specialists and selected individually by students according to their lacks and needs, and its specific component reflecting the actual way the language is used in the professional sphere.

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