ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR IT STUDENTS USING LEXICAL APPROACH

ПІДВИЩЕННЯ РІВНЯ ВОЛОДІННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЮ МОВОЮ СТУДЕНТІВ ІТ СФЕРИ З ВИКОРИСТАННЯМ ЛЕКСИЧНОГО ПІДХОДУ

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The article explores effective strategies and best practices for enhancing English language proficiency among students in the field of Information Technology (IT). In an increasingly globalized world where English serves as the lingua franca of the tech industry, proficiency in English communication skills is essential for IT students to succeed in their academic and professional endeavors. The article begins by discussing the importance of English language proficiency in the context of IT education and the challenges IT students face while acquiring and using English effectively. It examines various strategies and approaches for enhancing English language skills, including integrated language and content instruction, project-based learning, technology-mediated language learning, and language support services. Additionally, the article highlights the role of teachers, curriculum design, assessment practices, and extracurricular activities in fostering English language development among IT students. Drawing on research findings and practical insights, the article provides recommendations and examples of successful initiatives aimed at improving English language proficiency in IT education. Additionally, the article aims to provide practical suggestions for teachers on how to implement it in reality. The novelty of the article about lexical approach as a constituent part to teaching and learning English lies in its approach to effectiveness by means of taking the language as meaningful chunks, phrases and collocations. The article argues that this approach allows learners to acquire the language by means of using constituent parts, thus dealing with communication tasks effectively. The article also suggests that this approach promotes learners' engagement, motivation, and autonomy, as well as their development of various language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. To sum up, by implementing these strategies and best practices, institutions can better prepare IT students to communicate confidently and effectively in English, thus equipping them with the language skills necessary for success in today's globalized IT industry.
Key words: *lexical approach, phrases, autonomy, language skills, proficiency.*

У статті досліджуються ефективні стратегії та найкращі практики для підвищення рівня володіння англійською мовою серед студентів у сфері інформаційних технологій (IT). У все більш глобалізованому світі володіння навичками спілкування англійською є важливим для студентів IT спеціальностей, щоб досягти успіху в своїх академічних і професійних сферах. У статті обговорюються важливість володіння англійською мовою в контексті IT освіти та проблем, з якими стикаються студенти IT спеціальностей під час вивчення та ефективного використання англійської мови. Також розглядаються різні стратегії та підходи до вдосконалення навичок англійської мови, включаючи інтегроване навчання мови та змісту, навчання на основі проєктів та вивчення мови за допомогою технологій. Крім того, у статті висвітлюється роль вчителів, розробки навчальних програм, методів оцінювання та позакласних заходів у сприянні розвитку англійської мови серед студентів . Спираючись на результати досліджень і практичні ідеї, у статті наводяться рекомендації та приклади успішних ініціатив, спрямованих на підвищення рівня володіння англійською мовою в IT освіті. Крім того, стаття має на меті надати практичні поради вчителям щодо того, як реалізувати це в реальності. Новизна статті про лексичний підхід як складову частину викладання та вивчення англійської мови полягає в її підході до ефективності за допомогою сприйняття мови як значущих фрагментів, фраз і словосполучень. У статті стверджується, що такий підхід дозволяє учням оволодівати мовою за допомогою використання її складових частин, таким чином сприяючи ефективному розвиткові навичок спілкування.

Стаття також припускає, що цей підхід сприяє залученню, мотивації та самостійності учнів, а також розвитку в них різних мовних навичок, таких як читання, письмо, говоріння та аудіювання.

Реалізуючи ці стратегії та найкращі практики, навчальні заклади можуть краще підготувати студентів IT спеціалістів до впевненого та ефективного спілкування англійською мовою, таким чином розвиваючи мовні навички, необхідні для успіху в сучасній глобалізованій IT індустрії.

Ключові слова: *лексичний підхід, фрази, автономія, мовні навички, рівень володіння мовою.*

Formulation of the problem. In an era of rapid technological advancements and global connectivity, proficiency in English has become indispensable for students pursuing careers in Information Technology (IT). As the lingua franca of the tech industry, English proficiency is not only essential for effective communication but also for looking for a variety of resources, collaborating with international teams, and advancing professionally. Recognizing the significance of English language skills, educational institutions and educators are increasingly focusing on implementing strategies and best practices to enhance the English language proficiency of IT students. The importance of English language proficiency in IT education cannot be overstated. IT professionals are often required to communicate complex technical concepts, collaborate with colleagues from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and present their ideas effectively to stakeholders. Whether it's writing technical documentation,

participating in video conferences, or contributing to open-source projects, strong English language skills are fundamental to success in the IT industry.

Despite the importance of English language proficiency, IT students often encounter challenges in acquiring and using English effectively. These challenges may include: technical jargon, communication skills and cultural differences.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The core idea of the lexical approach is to prioritize the teaching and learning of vocabulary as a fundamental aspect of language acquisition. This approach emphasizes the significance of words, phrases, and collocations in understanding and producing language. Rather than focusing solely on grammar rules or isolated language skills, the lexical approach recognizes that language learners benefit from a deep understanding of how words work in various contexts, including their meanings, collocations, and grammatical patterns. The goal is to build a rich and naturalistic lexical knowledge base, facilitating more effective communication and language use. "If you spend most of your time studying grammar, your English will not improve very much. You will see most improvement if you learn more words and expressions. You can say very little with grammar, but you can say almost anything with words!" [7, p. 13].

The lexical approach to language teaching emerged in the 1990s as a response to traditional language teaching methods centered around grammar-based approaches. Michael Lewis, a British applied linguist, is credited with popularizing the lexical approach. A traditional grammar-translation method emphasized the memorization of rules and isolated wordlists. Critics argued that this method was far from preparing learners for authentic language use and effective communication.

There has been a shift in language teaching philosophy. The lexical approach marked it advocating for a focus on teaching in chunks, including collocations, fixed expressions, and patterns, rather than isolated words or grammatical structures.

Michael Lewis's work significantly contributed to the formulation and popularization of the lexical approach. He argued for the centrality of lexis in language learning, stating that the teaching of vocabulary should take over the teaching of grammar. One of the key elements of the lexical approach is the concept of "lexical primacy". This suggests that the learning and processing of vocabulary precede and support the learning of grammar. Lewis proposed that language learners first acquire a substantial vocabulary, and grammar naturally emerges as learners notice and internalize recurrent patterns.

This approach values the acquisition of ready-made chunks of language that are immediately usable in various contexts. Over time, elements of the lexical approach have been integrated into language teaching practices worldwide. The lexical approach has influenced the development of materials, classroom activities, and language curricula, particularly in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language.

Therefore, scholars support the lexical approach as an efficient way to develop students' language proficiency and communicative competence.

Highlighting previously unsolved parts of the overall problem. Traditional language teaching methods have often focused on grammar, structures and rules, whereas the lexical approach emerges as a game-changer. This approach focuses on teaching vocabulary and phrases in context, enabling students to grasp language nuances and apply them effectively in real-world situations. Michael Lewis emphasizes the importance of vocabulary in language learning, suggesting that grammar is often derived from patterns found in vocabulary rather than the other way around. "Language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar" [3, p. 25]. Scott Thornbury stresses the centrality of meaning in language learning, advocating for a focus on meaningful chunks of language rather than isolated grammatical structures. "The fundamental purpose of language is for the expression of meaning" [7, p. 16].

However, some scholars have argued that communicative approaches to language instruction may not be as effective as more traditional methods. Stephen Krashen argues that language learning involves more than just memorizing vocabulary and that exposure to meaningful language input, including grammatical structures, is essential for acquisition. "Focusing solely on vocabulary acquisition neglects the importance of comprehensible input and grammatical structures" [1]. Diane Larsen-Freeman emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that incorporates both lexical chunks and grammatical knowledge in language learning. "While lexical chunks have their place, they should not overshadow the importance of understanding underlying grammatical structures" [2, p. 11]. David Nunan suggests that an exclusive focus on vocabulary may result in learners lacking a comprehensive understanding of grammatical rules and structures. "The lexical approach may neglect the systematic study of grammar, leading to gaps in learners' understanding" [4]. Norbert Schmitt states in favour of grammar learning. "Critics of the lexical approach argue that focusing primarily on vocabulary acquisition neglects the importance of grammar and syntax, leading to incomplete language proficiency" [5].

One argument against applying the lexical approach solely is that it can be difficult to ensure that students are actually learning the grammar points they need to know. In forming communication skills in a classroom, the focus is often on using language in context and on communication, rather than on

isolated grammar aspects. Another concern some scholars have is that lexical approach to language instruction may not be effective for all students. According to Swan: "a vast amount of exposure would be necessary for adult learners to derive all types of grammatical structure efficiently from lexis by the analysis of … chunks" [6, p. 20].

The purpose of the article. The purpose of an article lies in applying best practices to teach English to IT students by means of the lexical approach.

The article aims at:

– stating the background of applying the lexical approach in teaching;

– stating main principles of the lexical approach;

– providing elements of the lexical approach for teaching and boosting vocabulary such as using chunks, collocations incorporating authentic materials.

The importance of focusing on lexical approach states that learners need to develop communication skills by means of being able to use their vocabulary and work on enhancing it as the sphere of IT is specific. IT terminology can be highly specialized and complex, posing difficulties for students whose first language is not English. While IT students may excel in technical knowledge, they may struggle with communication skills such as speaking fluently, writing clearly, and understanding nuanced language. IT students may need to navigate cultural differences and communication norms when collaborating with international colleagues and clients.

There are several approaches to teaching vocabulary, including the traditional approach, the functional approach, and the communicative approach. Students become familiar with translation and separate words withdrawn from real context. Lexical approach is often criticized for teaching vocabulary rather than grammar.

Presenting main material. The lexical approach places a primary emphasis on building a robust vocabulary foundation, understanding word collocations, and recognizing phrases and expressions in context. For IT students, whose work demands precise and effective communication, the lexical approach provides a pathway to language proficiency that aligns seamlessly with the demands of their future careers.

1. In the IT sector, a specialized lexicon is crucial for effective communication. The lexical approach tailors language instruction to incorporate the specific terminology, acronyms, and jargon that prevails in the IT industry. By immersing students in IT language context, they acquire the vocabulary needed to articulate ideas and collaborate within the field.

2. It is clearly stated that communication mistakes are costly in IT projects. The lexical approach focuses on real scenarios and equips IT students with the ability to express ideas clearly and concisely. Whether engaging in team discussions, writing technical documentation, or presenting solutions, a well-developed lexicon enhances the overall effectiveness of communication.

3. IT professionals often encounter recurring patterns of language use, particularly in coding, troubleshooting, and system documentation. The lexical approach emphasizes collocations and common language patterns and helps students navigate these linguistic intricacies effortlessly. "Proponents of the lexical approach emphasize the importance of teaching vocabulary in chunks or phrases rather than in isolated words, believing this approach better reflects the way language is used in real-life communication" [6, p. 25].

4. Real-world IT scenarios are multifaceted and demand an agile language proficiency that goes beyond isolated grammar rules. The lexical approach encourages students to engage with language in diverse contexts, mirroring the complexity of IT projects. By immersing in realistic language use, they develop an intuitive understanding of how words and phrases operate within IT.

5. In an era where IT projects often involve international teams, effective communication transcends linguistic borders. The lexical approach enables students to collaborate seamlessly with colleagues from different linguistic backgrounds.

As the demand for highly skilled IT professionals continues to grow, the lexical approach emerges as an invaluable tool for educators seeking to prepare students for success in the field. By prioritizing the acquisition of specialized vocabulary, fostering enhanced communication skills, and emphasizing contextual language application, the lexical approach proves to be a catalyst for empowering the next generation of IT experts. Embracing the lexical approach in IT education is not merely an enhancement; it is a strategic investment in the linguistic competence and professional success of future IT professionals.

To address these challenges and enhance the English language proficiency of IT students, educators can implement various strategies and best practices as follows:

1. Integrating language learning with IT content enables students to develop both linguistic and technical skills simultaneously. This approach allows students to learn and practice English in authentic IT contexts, such as discussing programming concepts, writing code documentation, or giving presentations on software development.

2. Engaging IT students in project-based learning activities encourages active participation, collaboration, and problem-solving while providing opportunities to use English in real-world scenarios. Projects can range from developing software applications to conducting research on emerging

technologies, fostering language acquisition through hands-on experience.

3. Leveraging technology tools and resources can enhance English language learning for IT students. Online platforms, multimedia resources, language learning apps, and virtual collaboration tools can provide interactive and immersive language learning experiences tailored to the needs and interests of IT learners.

4. Providing language support services, such as English language courses, tutoring, language labs, and writing centers, can offer targeted assistance to IT students seeking to improve their English language skills. These services can address specific areas of language development, such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and academic writing.

Effective implementation of strategies for enhancing English language proficiency in IT education requires the collaboration of educators, curriculum designers, and assessment specialists. Teachers play a crucial role in designing and delivering language IT courses, integrating language learning activities into the curriculum, providing constructive feedback, and creating a supportive learning environment. Curriculum designers can develop language-enhanced IT curricula that align with students' linguistic needs, professional goals, and industry demands.

Numerous successful initiatives and programmes aimed at enhancing English language proficiency for IT students serve as models and sources of inspiration for educators and institutions. Recommendations for enhancing English language proficiency in IT education include: providing professional development opportunities for IT instructors, establishing partnerships with industry stakeholders to identify language proficiency requirements and industry-specific communication skills, promoting cross-cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills to prepare IT students for working in multicultural and globalized environments.

Application in English Language Instruction for IT students:

1. Instructors tailor vocabulary instruction to IT-related contexts, incorporating terminology, jargon, and expressions commonly used in the industry. For example, lessons may focus on technical terms related to programming languages, software development, cybersecurity, and data analytics.

2. English language materials and tasks are selected to reflect authentic IT scenarios, such as reading technical documentation, analyzing coding examples, participating in simulated project meetings, and writing professional emails. These authentic tasks immerse students in real-world language contexts, enhancing their language proficiency and workplace readiness.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the lexical approach in enhancing learners' vocabulary acquisition, fluency, and communicative competence. Pedagogical strategies such as contextualized instruction, task-based learning, and learner autonomy align with the principles of the lexical approach and contribute to meaningful language learning outcomes for IT students. By integrating empirical research findings with practical teaching methodologies, instructors can optimize English language instruction for IT students and empower them to succeed in the globalized IT workforce.

Conclusions. The lexical approach offers a pedagogical framework tailored to the language learning needs of IT students, emphasizing vocabulary acquisition, collocation awareness, and authentic language usage. By incorporating the principles of the lexical approach into English language instruction, educators can equip IT students with the linguistic skills and confidence needed to thrive in diverse professional contexts. Embracing the lexical approach can pave the way for enhanced communication, collaboration, and career opportunities in the dynamic field of IT.

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