РОЗВИТОК ЕКОНОМІЧНОЇ ОСВІТИ

DEVELOPING BUSINESS STUDENTS' TRANSFERABLE SKILLS FOR THEIR SUCCESSFUL PROFESSIONAL CAREER

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The role of professionally-oriented communicative competences obtained by university students for their future professional career formation and development is investigated. The methodological approaches for developing transferable skills when teaching and learning ESP courses for business and economic students are analysed. The approach to the formation of transferable skills which can be applied by future specialists in different contexts and situations is developed.
Keywords: professionally-oriented communicative language competences, transferable skills, skills-based approach, task-based approach, study skills.

Statement of problem. The 21st century with its intensive development of science and technology, widening of business as well as scientific and cultural relations internationally requires specialists to have the knowledge of a foreign language in order to be able to communicate effectively in the world of work and be competitive on demanding job market.

High level of foreign language teaching is perceived by universities as an effective and individualized assistance in achieving the highest level of students' language skills.

Today's highly competitive labour market demands our students to be provided with the skills that would prepare them for the challenges they will meet. Tremendous responsibility is placed on higher education for developing transferable skills in graduates to be successful in their future profession.

Analysis of recent papers. Since the 1980s attention has been given to transferable skills, which are defined in a variety of ways. The basic idea was that skills learned in one context could fairly readily be transferred to another, and this is included in a definition put forward by the Training Agency, which saw transferable skills as: the generic capabilities which allow people to succeed in a wide range of different tasks and jobs [13].

The Transferable Skills Project, for instance, defined transferable skills to be «skills developed in one situation which can be transferred to another situation» [6]. Manchester University's website defines transferable skills as «skills developed through experience, which can be used in the workplace» [14]. Transferable skills are abilities, aptitudes and qualities developed in one context that can be applied to another [1]. Bridges spoke of transferable skills in terms of their application across different contexts. This is what made them transferable. [3, p. 47].

Transferable skills have a number of synonyms**:** generic skills, key skills, skills for life and work, employability skills, essential skills, graduate skills, and soft skills.

Jack Richards [11, p. 161] makes claims in support of skills-based syllabuses to teach students transferable skills, which can be transferred to many other situations.

Aim of the paper. The aim of the research is to analyse the ESP syllabuses designed by the teachers of the Department of Foreign Languages of the National Mining University for the students specialized in business and economics and identify whether they include the skills the students need in their study and in the workplace.

Materials and methods. The university educational process is aimed at forming professional competences of students to provide them with productive professional activity and competitiveness on the labour market. In connection with intensified attention of employers towards graduates' individual qualities, the abilities for graduates' self-development must be formed

during their study at university. Up-to-date requirements to university graduates provide with not only necessary knowledge but with the abilities to efficiently solve diverse tasks. Therefore, the main task of didactics is not a simple knowledge transfer, but the formation of students' ability to act independently while solving job-related tasks, using available information, knowledge and skills obtained, that is the education is oriented on the formation of professional competences.

The overall aim of English for Specific Purposes teaching and learning is to prepare students to communicate effectively in their academic and professional environments. National Curriculum for Universities provides that communicative competences in English be acquired for real life academic and job-related areas and situations, which are generic for students of different specialisms [17].

The Curriculum was designed taking into account the Education and Qualification Standard and Educational Professional Programme requirements that specify the overall aim of ESP teaching and learning [17, p. 119]. The EQS and EPP adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine reflect educational and qualification characteristics of University graduates. It enhances the appeal and competitiveness of Ukrainian higher education through a transparent and flexible system of language teaching/learning.

The ESP Curriculum shifts the emphasis from language knowledge as a set of isolated constructs to the notion of language as an integrated system of skills and knowledge. The Curriculum is skills-based with its primary purpose to teach the specific language skill that may be useful or necessary in using a language. Therefore, skills-based instruction is most appropriate when students need specific skills.

According to IBEC Education and Skills Survey [10] higher educational institutions should embed generic or employability skills more fully into the curricula. Employees need to be highly skilled in generic skills such as people-related (communication and teamwork) skills, critical thinking, problem-solving and ICT (information and communications technology) [10, p. 23].

The task of any ESP course is to develop the transferable skills needed for students' future career.

«Employers want adaptive recruits, people who can rapidly fit into the workplace culture, work in teams, exhibit interpersonal skills, communicate well, take on responsibility, perform efficiently and effectively, they want adaptable people, people who can use their abilities and skills to make the organization evolve through bright ideas and persuading colleagues to adopt new approaches and they want transformative employees, people who can anticipate and lead change, who have higher level skills, such as analysis, critique, synthesis, etc» [16, pp. 239–249]. Therefore, the skills like communication, teamwork, leadership, problem solving, initiative, flexibility / adaptability, commitment, motivation, interpersonal skills are of primary importance. The development of the skills relevant to employment and future learning is an integral part of the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy, and it is a general requirement that all modules be written in terms of transferable skills to be developed [7, p. 68].

Generic job-related skills are specified in the ESP Curriculum [17, p. 39] as a sample list to illustrate how language serves various professional needs. The Curriculum claims that while designing an ESP course it is necessary to determine the specific communicative skills as well as the situations and job-related areas in which the students need to use them. This should be done through needs analysis.

The generic skills from the Curriculum were used as a resource for developing the syllabuses and learning materials for business and economic students of the National Mining University as well as for designing the coursebook for the obligatory course [8] taught at the first year of studies. The course consists of 4 modules, which encompass the following skills:

– Socialising in Academic and Professional Environments

– Obtaining and Processing Information for Specific Purposes

– Discussions and Presentations

– Communicating in Writing.

During module 1 (Socialising in Academic and Professional Environments) students practice the following job-related skills taken from the Curriculum:

– Dealing with telephone calls

– Locating and understanding travel information in a variety of sources (timetables, announcements, Internet pages, etc.)

– Exchanging information

– Completing forms with personal or company details, etc.

– Planning future events and tasks

– Discussing professional interests and leisure activities

– Taking notes.

Module 2 (Obtaining and Processing Information for Specific Purposes) covers such skills as:

– Locating information in various sources

– Reading for locating information (e.g. about possible contacts, etc.)

– Reading for specific purposes

– Dealing with instructions and notices.

– In module 3 (Discussions and Presentations) students develop the following skills:

– Participating in discussions

– Exchanging information on various issues

– Giving a presentation, a talk, etc.

– Engaging in a discussion

– Reporting on a conference, meeting, discussion

– Exchanging information.

– In module 4 (Communicating in Writing) students learn the following:

– Dealing with correspondence (letters, e-mails, etc.)

– Understanding and writing CVs, résumés, cover letters, references, etc.

– Writing for academic purposes (summary, abstract).

The other generic skills outlined in the ESP Curriculum are included into optional courses designed for business and economic students:

– Participating in interviews

– Understanding and writing office communications (reports, letters, memos, etc.)

– Arranging and re-arranging appointments and meetings

– Making and understanding minutes of a meeting

– Making enquiries, reservations, orders and bookings

– Checking into and out of a hotel

– Making agreements

– Understanding contract details

– Negotiating contracts.

The 2002 report, Employability Skills for the Future, published by the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, outlined an 'Employability Skills Framework' identifying eight employability skills [9]. They are:

– Communication skills

– Teamwork skills

– Problem-solving skills

– Initiative and enterprise skills

– Planning and organising skills

– Self-management skills

– Learning skills

– Technology skills.

Having analysed the syllabuses designed for business and economics students, it is possible to state that the skills needed for students' successful employment are developed at language courses. Moreover, transferable skills, which are necessary for students' effective performance, are very useful in their lives in general, for example, teamwork, communication skills, problem solving and planning skills.

Communication skills, including interpersonal skills, are considered by many employers as the most important of all transferable skills because they need employees who are able to communicate effectively at an appropriate level. Communication skills also include presenting effectively. Presentation skills are developed while preparing for various students' scientific conferences. Students learn how to present clearly and effectively a scientific topic. The Curriculum provides the presentation skills components that is of use to teachers who design the syllabuses (Tab.1) [17, pp. 41-43].

Teamwork skills contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes. Students practice these skills working in small groups to do some tasks, which encompass a wide range of skills, such as decision making, interpersonal communication, leadership, motivation, oral communication, and time management. Working in teams, students learn to work effectively with others as a member of a group.

The designers of the syllabuses should also identify suitable skills materials and activities to integrate them into the study process that should facilitate the transferability of the skills to the real world [5]. For example, problem-solving skills, which contribute to productive

outcomes, tend to be developed by doing case study, which is considered to be an ideal method of inducting students into their professional world. It also improves students' motivation to learn a language, develops responsibility as well as all the language skills.

Table 1

A Sample of a generic job-related skill specified by sub-skills, functions and structural components

Giving an Oral Presentation		
Sub-skills	Functions	Structural exponents
Introducing a presentation	Greeting and introducing oneself	Good morning / afternoon. My name 's …/ I am … Let me introduce myself. Let me start by saying a few words about …
	Presenting the title/subject	The subject of my presentation is … The focus of my paper (academic) is …Today I'd like to talk about…
	Specifying the purpose/ objective	We are here today to decide / agree/learn about … The purpose of the talk / presentation is … The talk / presentation is designed to …
	Signposting the presentation	My presentation will be in … parts. First / Firstly / First of all, I'll give you …. Second / secondly / Next / Then, … Lastly / finally I've divided my presentation into … parts / sections. They are … I'll be developing … main points. The first point will ….
Sequencing and linking ideas	Sequencing/ ordering	Firstly … , secondly … , thirdly … . Then … next… finally / lastly … Let's start with … Let's move / go onto … That brings us to … That covers … Let's go back to …
	Giving reasons/causes	Therefore As a result, Consequently. That's why … It may result in …
	Contrasting	But On the other hand,… However, …
	Comparing	Similarly, In the same way,
	Contradicting	In fact, Actually,
	Highlighting	In particular, Especially,
	Digressing	By the way, In passing
	Giving examples	For example, To illustrate this point, …
	Generalising	Usually Generally As a rule
Involving the audience	Asking rhetorical questions	What 's the explanation for this? How can we explain this? How can we do about it?
	Referring to the audience	We have all experienced … You may remember …

Describing and analysing performance	Describing performance to date	The …performed well/poorly. The … has / have shown considerable/slight growth/improvement/decrease…
	Analysing performance	The main explanation for this is … A key problem is …
	Describing trends, charts and graphs	There is/has been a slight / dramatic /considerable/significant/moderate decrease/fall/ drop/collapse/rise/increase in …
Using visual aids	Preparing the audience for a visual	Now, let's look at the position of … Now, I'll show you the … Let's move on now and look at … The next slide shows … The (upper) part of the slide gives information about … I'd like to draw your attention to …
	Focusing the audience's attention	As you can see … What is interesting/important is … I'd like to draw your attention to …
Ending a presentation	Summarising	To sum up… In brief … I'll briefly summarise the main issues. Let me summarise briefly what I've said.
	Concluding	In conclusion, … To conclude, …
	Recommending	My/our suggestion/proposal/recommendation would be/is to … We recommend/I'd like to suggest/I propose setting up….
	Closing formalities	I'd be happy to answer any questions. If you have any questions, I'd be pleased to answer them. Thank you for your attention.
Handling questions	Clarifying questions	If I understand the question correctly, you would like to know … When you say … do you mean…? I'm sorry, I didn't hear. Which slide was it? Sorry, could you repeat that?
	Avoiding giving an answer	Can we talk about that another time? I'm afraid that's not my field. I don't have the figures with me. I'm afraid I'm not the right person to answer that. Could we leave that till later?
	Checking the questioner is satisfied	May we go on? Does that answer your question? Is that clear?

Cases reflect typical real life situations, which students will have to encounter with in their professional activity. What is more, the case study method which is commonly used in teaching English for specific purposes is characterized by active student involvement, high degree of interaction among students, and the use of authentic materials (manuals, specifications, instructions, business letters, technical journals, etc.) that improve the reading comprehension and intensifies the relationship to the students' job. Besides, the language skills are developed in an integrated way: students read the case study thoroughly, working in groups they discuss business problems and recommend solutions (speaking + listening) and do a writing task which reflects the real world of business correspondence. Before reaching their own solution students discuss all the options practicing the language and developing communicative skills. The results of discussions can be given in the form of a presentation. Students develop management skills such as working in teams, leading teams, delegating and interacting effectively with each other, which is crucial for business and economics

students. Generic job-related skills such as giving presentations, understanding and writing reports, letters, memos etc., participating in discussions are trained with case-studies.

Initiative skills are also developed when teaching and learning a foreign language by getting students to initiate new ideas, which contribute to innovative outcomes.

Practicing planning and organising skills students demonstrate that they are able to analyse problems and come up with feasible and affordable solutions. They identify things to be done or improved, point out the skills they want to gain, i.e. they identify their goals. Students are involved in the search for appropriate learning materials, and regularly monitor and evaluate their own progress that helps them to watch the changes in their progress and learn to correct themselves. Students also learn how to evaluate and assess their own work actively participating in developing assessment criteria.

Students develop self-management skills when they organise their self-study. All the courses for business students include a self-study component being an integral part of the study process. Students read professionally-oriented texts and report on them, they make projects, presentations, etc. Practice shows that the most effective means of students' self-study activation is their participation in scientific conferences. Students are engaged in extensive purposeful reading with processing the information from various sources. They analyze and summarize the texts, make a written report and oral presentation, state and justify their opinions. Thus, project work is of great importance. Students can access the source material in their own time, work through the material at their own pace, choosing topics to match their own interests. They can work on their own, in pairs or small groups or as a class to complete a project sharing resources and ideas. Students' participation in project work demonstrates their willingness to learn and accepting responsibility which is valued by employers.

Business and economics students develop their technology skills. Implementation of information and communications technologies in the study process provides a shift in roles of both the teacher and students. The teacher becomes a facilitator and guide (being aware of a variety of materials available for improving students' language skills, being flexible and responding to the students' needs), a researcher, a designer (unlike working with conventional teaching materials), a collaborator with other teachers, a learner, and an evaluator. Students are becoming more active participants of the study process.

Skills-based syllabuses have the advantage of focusing on performance in relation to tasks and therefore provide a practical framework for designing courses and teaching materials [11, p.161]. A task-based approach is clearly significant for ESP, since the basic need of ESP students is that using the medium of English they should successfully perform a work or study task [12, pp. 39–40].

Teaching through tasks, which are relevant to students' future profession, increase motivation and do not focus on the language at the primary stage, creates favourable learning conditions for learners. Learning is fostered through performing a series of activities as steps towards successful task realization.

Jane Willis (1996) offers the following criteria to what a task is:
– It engages students' interest.
– There is a primary focus on meaning.
– There is an outcome.
– Success is judged in terms of outcome.
– Completion is priority.
– The task relates to real world activities.

In other words, a task is an activity 'where the target language is used by the learners for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome' [15].

If students are clear what the outcome should be, they are more likely to engage with the task. Successful task achievement will greatly increase their satisfaction and motivation. After completing the task, it is necessary to have a closer look at language forms.

Willis (1996) proposes six types of tasks as the basis for task-based learning:

1. Listing tasks: For example, students might have to make up a list of things they would pack if they were going on a beach vacation.

2. Sorting and ordering: Students work in pairs and make up a list of the most important characteristics of an ideal vacation.

3. Comparing: Students compare ads for two different supermarkets.

4. Problem-solving: Students read a letter to an advice columnist and suggest a solution to the writer's problems.

5. Sharing personal experience: Students discuss their reactions to an ethical or moral dilemma.

6. Creative tasks: Students prepare plans for redecorating a house.

Thus, listing includes brainstorming and fact-finding; ordering and sorting include sequencing, ranking, categorizing and classifying; comparing includes matching, finding differences and similarities; problem solving includes analyzing real or hypothetical situations, reasoning and decision making; sharing experience involves narrating, describing, exploring and explaining attitudes and expressing opinions and reactions; and creative tasks cover brainstorming, fact-finding, sorting, comparing and problem solving.

Their corresponding outcomes are:

– listing includes completed list or draft mind map;

– ordering and sorting - information sorted according to specific criteria;

– comparing - identification of similarities and differences;

– problem solving - finding solutions to problems;

– sharing experience - exchanging opinions and attitudes;

– creative tasks - end product – can be appreciated by audience.

The main advantage of using tasks is that the language is used for a meaningful communication. Other advantages of using tasks are the following:

– there is no language control in production stage;

– learners use their language knowledge;

– this approach offers reflection on language usage.

Both skills-based and task-based approaches were widely used while designing the activities for the English for Study and Work coursebook [8]. All those six types of tasks mentioned by Willis were used by the authors of the book. Fulfilling the task presupposes that students are working in pairs or small groups developing such skills as teamwork, communication, negotiation, etc. In order to actively participate in doing the task and complete it suc-

cessfully students share their responsibilities depending on their strengths and weaknesses.

The tasks that reflect the students' specialist world are meaningful, relevant, motivating, challenging, have a clear purpose and clear instructions, meet students' needs, make them think and share their opinions and own experiences, and allow to develop their confidence and fluency.

Students' successful study process as well as their professional career heavily rely on study skills that are aimed at developing students' abilities to make effective use of the learning opportunities created by teaching/learning situations. They encourage the development of independent learners in academic- and specialism-related areas. According to the objectives specified in the Curriculum [17], the study skills, which are developed throughout the Business English course, are grouped into the following categories:

– information location (e.g. locate specific study or subject-related information using library catalogue);

– academic speaking (e.g. make a presentation or give a talk on study-related topic);

– academic writing (e.g. summarize, paraphrase, synthesize ideas from different types of texts);

– organization and self-awareness (e.g. develop individual study plans);

– assessment (e.g. understand assessment requirements, including continuous assessment) [17, p. 38].

The focus on developing students' study skills reflects the values of the Bologna Process with its emphasis on individual responsibility for learning [2].

Study skills help students to develop independence in their learning which include the ability:

– to make effective use of the learning opportunities;

– to co-operate effectively in pair and group work;

– to use available materials for independent learning;

– to organise and use materials for self-directed learning;

– to identify one's own needs and goals;

– to organise one's own strategies and

– awareness of one's own strengths and

weaknesses as a learner. [4, p.107]

The awareness of the transferability of skills is fundamental to the modern creative knowledge society. While learning a language students develop a variety of transferable skills, which are transferred into other subjects, situations or contexts, thus helping students to be equipped with a multiplicity of transferable skills.

Conclusion. Generic skills have become skills in the organisation of the 21st century due, in part, to the demand for employees who are able to work autonomously, self-manage, adapt to change, and solve problems.

The professional language skills, that business students need to acquire, while studying for their Bachelor's degree, are developed in Business English syllabuses, designed by the teachers of the Department of Foreign Languages of the National Mining University

The skills that business students are to develop are professional transferable/job-related skills, which can be used by students in learning other subjects as well as in many other different contexts including their careers and personal lives.

Having analysed the syllabuses for business and economics students, it is possible to state that the skills needed for students' successful employment are developed at language courses. Besides applying these skills in careers and personal lives, students use transferable skills in learning other subjects.

The skills are developed through performing tasks in which the primary focus is on meaning. The students need to use their own linguistic and non-linguistic resources, and there is an outcome other than merely the display of language.

Study skills are aimed to develop professional communicative competences of students, thus becoming an integral part in teaching and learning a language. They are also professional transferable skills, which can be used by students in learning other subjects as well as in many other different contexts including their careers and personal lives.

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У статті досліджується роль отриманих у ВНЗ професійно орієнтованих комунікативних компетенцій для становлення та розвитку майбутньої професійної кар'єри студентів.

Проводиться аналіз методичних підходів, спрямованих на розвиток загальних професійних вмінь студентів-економістів при вивченні навчальної дисципліни «Англійська мова для спеціальних цілей». Пропонується підхід до формування загальних професійних вмінь майбутніх спеціалістів для різних контекстів та ситуацій.

Ключові слова: професійно орієнтовані комунікативні мовленнєві компетенції; загальні професійні вміння; методичний підхід, орієнтований на вміння; методичний підхід, орієнтований на виконання завдань; вміння вчитися.

В статье исследуется роль полученных в ВУЗе профессионально ориентированных коммуникативных компетенций для становления и развития будущей профессиональной карьеры студентов. Анализируются методические подходы, направленные на развитие общих профессиональных умений студентов-экономистов при изучении учебной дисциплины «Английский язык для специальных целей». Предлагается подход к формированию общих профессиональных умений будущих специалистов для различных контекстов и ситуаций

Ключевые слова: профессионально ориентированные коммуникативные речевые компетенции; общие профессиональные умения; методический подход, ориентированный на умения; методический подход, ориентированный на выполнение заданий; умение учиться.