System-based approach in a practice-focused language training of students-managers

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This paper shows the importance of implementation of a systematic approach into the process of language training of students studying management. The results of the survey prove the necessity of using practice-focused training while teaching English to future managers. A project work model combining the study of professional terminology in a foreign language with the solution of practical situations in management is proposed.

Keywords: system-based approach, language training, manager, interactive activities, project work, practice-focused training

The development of a modern economy needs to change traditional methods of teaching foreign languages to the students studying management. Traditional methodology usually includes studying grammar, vocabulary and phonetics material on the basis of specialized texts. Innovations in pedagogy implies the need for system-based approach that gives the graduate students opportunity to acquire competencies containing in modern educational standards. Mainly, the usage of system-based approach must form an educational environment that will meet the challenges of a modern society, considering its multinational structure of the population. The formed educational environment must determine how to develop cognitive and personal abilities of the students and to provide the expansion of student’s creative potential and cognitive activity to the future professional work.

The importance of taking into consideration multinational structure of the population at English classes in the Republic of Tatarstan have been studied in detail in the author’s early works. It was shown that some characteristic features of the first language of the Turkic group, mainly represented in the republic, influence on the study of Romano-Germanic languages. It was revealed that the integration of the native and foreign languages forms favorable conditions for identifying analogies in both languages and their subsequent more meaningful learning [1, p.290].

Competencies that must be formed as a result of studying English by future managers include the skills to write and to speak in English logically true, clearly and in a reasoned manner as well as the knowledge of English at a level ensuring effective professional activity in future.

Respectively, the students studying management must know and be able to use business and professional English language in practice, must be able to form their thoughts and opinions in English and to find the necessary information on economic and business problems in English. In general, language training should form communicative, subject, intellectual skills as well as the ability to solve specific practice-focused tasks using the knowledge of the specialized management disciplines and professional foreign language terminology. Scientific and technical development and advanced management technologies require the knowledge of a large number of English terms and concepts that managers need in practice. The management of companies and especially the top-management must know English for professional communication.

It is known that the hours of traditional classroom workload in universities are being reduced, whereas the number of students in a group is being increased. But the class hours using interactive teaching methods are being introduced, and in the educational curriculum there is still the time for students to work independently. Respectively, the training of future managers should be based on the development of independent creative and critical thinking through the use of innovative methods to adopt practice-focused language training in the process of teaching a foreign language.

The development of practice-focused speech activity on the basis of verbal, terminological, interactive teaching methods have been considered by G.V. Yurchuk and V.A. Adolph [3, p.1012].

Let us consider how these educational methods are used while future managers are taught a foreign language using the students’ project «Company Development Strategies» as an interactive method of teaching. Traditional project work is incredibly important for training future managers as a whole. This kind of work gives them experience to work in a team, decreases the level of conflict in the group, allows the students to be both an employer and employee, to demonstrate their leadership qualities, gives the skills of planning the stages of the project and the implementation of the overall project schedule [2, p.37].

To organize project work, a group of students should be divided into teams of 3-5 people. Depending on the students’ language knowledge level the teacher determines the language of the preliminary research and offers the materials on the dynamics of company’s development either in Russian or in English. Students can search material for this stage of project within the hours given to their individual work.

So, according to the Federal Law No.210-F3 of June 29, 2015 on Joint-Stock Companies a list of documents is established that must be disclosed, for example, the annual report on company’s activities and financial performance. Therefore, students can find these annual reports over the past three years on-line on the websites of companies. Reports include sections characterizing the dynamics of production, marketing, finance, staff policy, environmental component of production and so on. Each team is given a specific section of the company’s annual report for analysis, they
have to examine qualitative content and quantitative indicators over a three-year period.

Firstly, the teacher gives the task to use the dialectic method of training. It means to use logics analyzing company’s reports, searching for evidences and retractions, making conclusions. For example, analyzing the «Company Staff Policy» students elicit the characteristics of the employees by their age, gender, education, the availability of professional retraining and so on. Students also evaluate the rate of employee turnover over three years, determine the frequency and the effectiveness of employee qualification improvement.

Each team is responsible for a specific section of the annual report and prepares analytical reports characterizing the company’s current state and perspectives. In this case, the student gains new English terminology either in the process of studying the material (in the case of using information of a foreign company) or in the process of translating analytical report into English. Here we use the terminological group work based on the study of the concept’s content, which contributes to the correct memorization and application of the term.

While teaching future managers using the practice-focused language training the task of a foreign language teacher is facilitated by the fact that most of the professional management words are borrowed and are similar with English terms. At this stage, students should make up a vocabulary of professional terms which they have found in analytical reports. Then every team demonstrates the newly acquired knowledge to other teams. The team prepares an analytical review of the past and present state of the company and offers the ways how to develop the company.

For example, according to the results of a study of the company’s staff policy it is possible to propose the ways for increasing employee’s motivation and reducing personnel turnover indicators. The presentation is in this case a component of interactive learning and shows the result of the collective cognitive process because the student demonstrates the knowledge of professional English terminology on the presented problem that he obtained in a team work through dialogue, mutual learning and creative work.

All teams presenting the analysis and their suggestions according to specific sections of the annual plan receive a complete picture of the company development over previous periods, learn professional terminology of other teams and get information to formulate proposals for adjusting the company development strategy for future periods. Then the teacher works as a moderator of the final discussion, the aim of which is to develop the company’s general direction. The final stage of the project work is the development of the «Company Development Strategy».

While assessing project work, the teacher uses the assessment criteria established for students before the starting the project. The total rating consists of individual points for the following aspects - reading, speaking, using professional terminology, creative component, teamwork, decision making ability.

Thus, the use of a system-based approach while studying English for professional communication incredibly improves the level of language training; develops self-control, ability to self-education and interpersonal cooperation. Project work allows students to reduce the level of intra-group conflicts due to their common aim. The students increase their motivation to continue studying both «Management» subjects and a foreign language for the professional and business discussions. Gain of professional knowledge, specialized management concepts and terms while studying English, reading and analysis of specialized management documents, presentation of the project and the following professional discussion are the foundation of professional-oriented training.

References:

