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The development of the high level of English proficiency in the academic process of future economists

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Abstract: The article discloses the notion of “Business English” and the role of the most popular language, which provides the communication among economic subjects in the era of globalization, modernization and integration. There are analyzed modern demands to the process of future economist professional study, in which the greatest meaning is accentuated on the communicative skills and high level of the English proficiency as important factors of effective interaction in market society. It is pointed out, that the modern state of development of the external economic links requires the qualitative approach not only to the problem of economic study, but, also, to the ways of development of English student proficiency. The article presents the analysis of the problematic aspects of the formation and development of communicative competence in the educational process of the academy students of economic departments. There are examined the ways of the English language integration in the academic process of future economists to develop communicative skills in the context of professional study.

Keywords: communication skills, English proficiency, integration, business discourse, business practice



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1. The statement of problem

The role of English as the language of trade, finance and technology has grown into a development strategy in the 21st century, with the increasing recognition of its importance starting in the early 1990s. The intense globalization and human migration has highlighted not only an appreciation of the multiple languages and cultures, but also the significance of the ability to communicate effectively with people across language barriers. English in this era of globalization will increase the capacity of people to communicate and exchange ideas and goods across borders. The English language skill has become a necessity for establishing linkages with the rest of the world in international trade, economic development and even in the use of new technology.

The spread of the English language has been profound. It is increasingly used throughout business, intergovernmental agencies, and academics and there is really no viable alternative. While the discussion of the English language has been remarkable, the implications of these changes are not well understood. This paper investigates whether high level of English language proficiency provides an advantage to future economist.

2. The analysis of recent researches and publications

The topic under consideration has been considered in the scientific works and articles of such researchers as H. Grin, G. Graham, Z. Zhang, Chiswick, Barry R., Paul W. Miller, N. Buck. The scientist Crawford and the Washington Post columnist Noel Epstein have devoted much attention to the peculiarities of bilingual education in their scientific articles. The questions of disciplinary practices of acquiring professional skills in the process of bilingual education are disclosed in the works of Mc Carthy and Carter, Cummins, Helen Gao, K. Hakuta, M. Swain.

3. The statement of the purpose

The main purpose of this article is to define the main opportunities which can be opened by the high level of English proficiency and the effective ways of integrating English study into the academic process of future economists.

4. The presentation of the main material

If we analyze the labor market we can see that the profession of an “economist” – is one of the most demanded. Economists are working in all areas. No one enterprise, firm or company can operate without economists. They work wherever necessary to plan, calculate, analyze and control the economic activity of the enterprise and its income and expenses to determine the prospects for the future and so on. Economists can work as a financier, manager, accountant, auditor, etc. Depending on the specialty destination an economist should have the following important professional qualities:

- initiative;
- self-sufficiency (focus on our own strength, self-confidence);
- ability to defend his/her views reasonably;
- ability to switch from one activity to another;
- ability to plan his/her activity time;
- commitment to professional excellence;
- attention to details;
- selective attention;
- developed attention span;
- ability to represent figuratively objects, processes and phenomena;
- ability to transfer the image in a written description;
- analytical, logical and mathematical thinking;
- ability to think globally;
- strategic thinking;
- well-developed memory properties;
- ability to express his/her thoughts competently;
- ability to quickly navigate through the environment and events;
- skills of written presentation of information;
- tendency to work with documents;
- ability to analyze and systematize large amounts of information;
- ability to allocate time correctly and efficiently;
- ability to predict outcome;
- ability to work in a team [5].

Having analyzed the above-mentioned qualities we see that in terms of the subject of this article we are interested in: the ability to defend his/her opinion reasonably, the ability to express his/her thoughts intelligently and writing skills in presenting information, not only in native language, but in English also.

There is no doubt that professional knowledge and experience is essential for entrepreneurs and managers. But reaching and staying at the top requires more than just being knowledgeable and experienced. One of the reasons why some entrepreneurs are successful and some of them are let us stay less optimistic and successful, may lie in the ability to defend his/her opinion reasonably, the ability to express his/her thoughts intelligently and writing skills in presenting information not only in a native language, but also in one of well-spread foreign ones.

Of course, one has to agree that entrepreneurs and companies can hire interpreters who are both fluent and skilled. However, entrepreneurs cannot expect that people, who are not really involved in a company's matters, will establish relationships in the way loyal and committed employees of the company can. The solution to this problem lies in constant learning and studying the foreign language. But first of all, it is significant that employers realize the importance of learning (Business) English at the workplace.

With the rapid pace of globalization, it is increasingly useful to have a common language of discourse. For better or worse, English serves this role.

Undeniably, English has played a central role as the common international language in linking people who have different mother tongues. Although it ranks second only in terms of number of speakers, English is far more worldwide in its distribution than all other spoken languages. It is an official language in 52 countries as well as many small colonies and territories. In addition, 1/4 to 1/3 of the people in the world understands and speaks English to some degree. It has become the most useful language to learn for international travel and is now the *de facto lingua franca* of diplomacy [1].

Multinationals throughout the world are now using English as their official language, including numerous firms from non-native English speaking countries. For instance, Lufthansa a German airline company, Lenovo a Chinese computer company, Audi a German car maker, Rakuten Japanese technology company, and Aventis a French/German pharmaceutical firm all use English.

English proficiency is also crucial in academic disciplines where most top journals are published in English. For instance, in 1995 87.2% of all publications in physical sciences and 82.5% of all publications in social sciences were in English and these shares are growing (Ammon 2003). More specially, all of the top economics journals ranked by Engemann and Wall (2009) and all of the top 200 economics journals according to IDEAS/RePEc are published in English. Since tenure and compensation often hinge on research output, the need to publish articles in English speaking academic journals is a crucial determinant of future success in academic disciplines.

Most governments have long acknowledged that knowledge of the languages of the countries with whom they trade provide advantages. In this regard, learning languages is in itself a growth industry in the world. In the last four decades, researches have attempted to carry out economic analyses of language learning and use. The potential importance of language as a contributor to trade linkages has several foundations. Worth mentioning is the functionalist approach proposed by J. Carr which stated that "money and language share similar characteristics... just as money allows society to move beyond barter, a common language also facilitates transaction and lowers cost" [2].

The issue of English language learning in Ukrainian universities will increasingly challenge universities as the sector expands and broadens participation within a demand-driven system. In international education this has been a longstanding challenge. But now both domestic and international students are entering university study with varied English language ability. Ukrainian universities state that communication skills are important graduate attributes. Yet there are perceptions within the community that graduates lack the necessary English communication skills for employability. There is a gap between what universities espouse and community perceptions of graduates' oral and written communication skills. This raises questions about the quality of higher education in Ukraine.

The teaching of Business English requires a sound description of English in use in business. Mc Carthy and Carter rightly point out: "Knowing how language works and how people use it is a first and indispensable step towards deciding what shall be taught, and is one of the components, along with knowledge of the psychology of learning and the social and cultural contexts of learning, which feed in to how we teach languages". We cannot hope to answer basic questions about the form and content of language teaching syllabuses and materials without subjecting their raw material, the target language, to close scrutiny. The language-as-discourse view takes into account both language and the context in which it operates. Halliday's (1978) conception of register is relevant here. Register is used to relate language forms to the context in which they are used. The variables of field, tenor, and mode in turn relate linguistic choices to the three contextual variables – subject matter, interpersonal relations, and the channel of communication. Although it is far too simplistic to conceptualize Business English as one monolithic register, the concept of register provides a useful framework for discussing its features. At the level of field, we can say that Business English, which carries the semantic content of the business world, contrasts sharply with the English of the everyday world. Nelson (2000) demonstrates how the

two worlds differ in terms of the lexis used. Business lexis and non-business lexis differ “along a series of dichotomous axes: business vs society, positive and shallow states & qualities vs conflicting and more philosophical states & qualities, emotive vs non-emotive and dynamic actions vs reflection”.

That Business English is concerned with teaching communication rather than just language forms or skills must have a major impact on the design of Business English curricula in Ukraine.

There is an increasing awareness that the teaching of Business English is an interdisciplinary endeavor and should be informed by research into three essential fields – subject knowledge, business practice and language skills, and that they should be integrated. After all, communication requires knowledge of the subject matter of communication, the procedure of and strategies and tactics for communicating the message, and the disciplinary and professional contexts in which linguistic choices are made. Earlier curricula recognized to varying degrees the three fields as essential components to a complete curriculum, but they were often treated as autonomous and independent areas of study. For example, the curriculum in use at the University of International Business and Economics contains courses in business disciplines, language skills, and language studies, but they are not related as a coherent whole [4].

Thus, the Professor of China University of Economic and Business, Z. Zhang suggests to use the curriculum which incorporates the three areas of knowledge and skills. The first direction represents courses in business studies, like micro and macro-economics, marketing, finance, and fundamentals of business law. These courses do not involve the functional treatment of subject knowledge or use them as materials for developing language skills, as is the case in a content-based approach to language teaching. Instead, they treat disciplinary knowledge systematically and are important in that they carry the disciplinary knowledge students of Business English have to process. In a sense, they are part of the semantics of Business English. Moreover, they are partly the means of acquainting students with disciplinary cultures and preparing them for membership in their target discourse community, including its ways of perceiving, structuring, questioning, and hypothesizing in the domains of study. Finally, through an in-depth and systematic study of a discipline, students receive academic training, which was usually lacking in earlier curricula for English majors oriented to foreign trade. In practice, lectures in these courses are delivered in English as the language of instruction. Following this, students learn both subject knowledge and the way of handling the knowledge in their target language.

The courses represented in the second direction (Business Practice) acquaint students with the procedures, conventions, politeness systems, strategies and tactics for addressing various goals in the professional community. They constitute the other part of the semantic content of Business English. Courses in practices in international business, professional etiquette and business ethics are among the essential ones. As these courses involve procedural and Business knowledge, Business discourse, Business practice, factual information as well as critical awareness of business practices, ideal ways of running the courses, include lectures plus seminars and computer-assisted learning. Lectures transmit basic information and seminars, provide the stage on which students can discuss their understanding of the facts and demonstrate their awareness. Regular seminar sessions may be supplemented by inviting business professionals to explain professional practices by citing their own experiences. The computer can play a role when it comes to rather schematic business procedures. Computers with interactive programs allow students to work through business procedures and activities, which gives students valuable hands on experience of business practice. English is still the preferred working language. For one thing, students can practice English in settings and activities different from those of their subject of study. Obviously, describing a procedure is different from forming a hypothesis and thus requires a different set of lexicogrammatical items. For another, students would feel more comfortable talking about the practices in English which they have learned about through the English language.

Business discourse, represented as the third direction, plays a pivotal role in organizing Business English curricula. It is where language and business interact. Appropriate and successful business discourse requires subject knowledge on the one hand and insights into business practice on the other. As the level of business discourse rises, so do the levels of subject knowledge and business practice. Business discourse involves study skills, business skills, and language awareness. These three areas can be dealt with by invoking three sets of genres and activities. The study skills set centers on genres that are realistically handled in business studies, such as academic writing, discussion and presentations. The business skills set concerns such genres as meeting, negotiating, socializing, telephoning and corresponding. The language awareness set includes activities like the analysis of texts of different genres in terms of accuracy and appropriacy to enhance students' ability to reflect on the use of language in business. The genres can be graded according to the generality and specificity of the subject knowledge and/or business practice involved [3, 5].

5. Conclusion and the perspectives of future researches

Business English as English in use in business represents a domain of social and economic life, with its own subject matter, interpersonal relations, and choice of media and channel of communication. It thus deserves attention as an independent field of interdisciplinary study. Integrating and applying the insights into Business

English from these complementary perspectives, we should feel more confident in our endeavor to educate students of English who aspire to business expertise.

Author details (in Ukrainian)

Розвиток високого рівня володіння англійською мовою в навчальному процесі майбутніх економістів

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Анотація. У статті з'ясовано поняття «бізнес-англійська» та роль цієї найбільш поширеної мови, що забезпечує комунікацію між економічними суб'єктами в епоху глобалізації, модернізації та інтеграції. Проаналізовано сучасні вимоги до професійної підготовки майбутніх економістів, серед яких все більшого значення набувають комунікативні навички та високий рівень володіння англійською мовою як вагомими чинниками якісної взаємодії в діяльності суб'єктів ринкових відносин. Наголошується, що сучасний стан розвитку зовнішньоекономічних зв'язків потребує якісно нового підходу не тільки до проблем вивчення економіки взагалі, але й, зокрема, до іншомовної мовної підготовки майбутнього економіста. Розглянуто основні можливості, що відкриваються перед майбутніми економістами завдяки високому рівню володіння англійською мовою. Проаналізовано проблемні аспекти формування та розвитку комунікативної компетенції в навчальному процесі економічних спеціальностей вищих навчальних закладів. Розглянуто шляхи інтеграції англійської мови в навчальну діяльність майбутніх економістів з метою розвитку мовних навичок у контексті професійного навчання.

Ключові слова: комунікативні навички, рівень володіння англійською мовою, інтеграція, бізнес дискурс, бізнес практика.

Author details (in Russian)

Развитие высокого уровня владения английским языком в учебном процессе будущих экономистов

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Аннотация. В статье раскрыто понятие «бизнес-английский» и роль этого наиболее распространенного языка, который обеспечивает коммуникацию между экономическими субъектами в эпоху глобализации, модернизации и интеграции. Проанализированы современные требования к профессиональной подготовке будущих экономистов, среди которых все большее значение приобретают коммуникативные навыки и высокий уровень владения английским языком как весомые факторы качественного взаимодействия в деятельности субъектов рыночных отношений. Отмечается, что современное состояние развития внешнеэкономических связей требует качественно нового подхода не только к проблемам изучения экономики вообще, но и, в частности, к иноязычной языковой подготовке будущего экономиста. Рассмотрены основные возможности, которые открываются перед будущими экономистами благодаря высокому уровню владения английским языком. Проанализированы проблемные аспекты формирования и развития коммуникативной компетенции в учебном процессе экономических специальностей высших учебных заведений. Рассмотрены пути интеграции английского языка в учебную деятельность будущих экономистов с целью развития языковых навыков в контексте профессиональной учебы.

Ключевые слова: коммуникативные навыки, уровень владения английским языком, интеграция, бизнес дискурс, бизнес практика.

Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at <http://sepd.tntu.edu.ua/images/stories/pdf/2015/15gomofe.pdf>

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