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Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication

EFFICIENT TECHNOLOGIES OF BUSINESS ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Vladimir V. Vorobyov (a), Elena S. Zakirova (b)*, Alina R. Reva (c), Angela S. Voskovskaya (d),

Tatiana A. Karpova (e)

*Corresponding author

(a) People's Friendship University, Moscow, Russia

(b) Moscow State Linguistic University, P.O. Box 119034, 38 Ostozhenka, Moscow, Russia, zes.64@mail.ru

(c) Federal Antimonopoly Service, Moscow, Russia

(d) Department of Foreign Languages, Financial University, Moscow, Russia

(e) Department of Foreign Languages, Financial University, Moscow, Russia

Abstract

This article is devoted to the description of the author's methodology of teaching business cross-cultural communication to students of non-linguistic universities, which is the basis for the development of the textbook "Business English". Testing its results in the educational process allows to state a sufficiently high level of efficiency in mastering business foreign language and serving cross-cultural communication in the field of modern business. The methodology developed by the authors is based on a set of principles: the principle of strict selection of language tools and speech situations practiced in the modern business world; the communicative principle of teaching material with a wide variety of colloquial clichés used in the field of business communication based on the psychological and pedagogical approach in teaching languages; the principle of constructing semantically correct sentences in professional communication; the principle of a modular approach to the development of a coherent system of complete didactically and logically completed training modules; the principle of universality of educational levels, which allows using this textbook in the framework of educational undergraduate and graduate programs for students with various degrees of language training to develop basic competence of generating foreign language expressions in situations of business communication.

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Keywords: Business communication, cross-cultural communication, modular approach.



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1. Introduction

The study of a foreign language for the purpose of business communication and the application of various technologies of its teaching in higher educational institutions has been the subject of research works of many scholars (Borovaya et al., 2013; Holmes, 2009; Kuzmina & Aleksin, 2019; Melnichuk & Osipova, 2017; Poluosmak, 2015; Zakharova, 2016), since the relevance of this scientific field is quite obvious and sets the task for higher education to train specialists who speak high-level business foreign language, allowing university graduates to become equal partners of the world economic community. Business communication practice is important for training specialists in both the humanities and applied sciences, since the development of the ability of graduates to perform foreign business communication in the professional sphere also belongs to the basic requirements for mastering the language for special purposes as one of the main areas of modern linguistics (Vorobiyov et al., 2019).

It should be noted that professionally oriented teaching of a foreign language is also aimed at building students' communicative competencies that contribute to the graduates' successful practical use of a foreign language to solve problems related to professional and business communication in future activities. Therefore, the use of effective technologies for teaching business foreign languages in the educational process requires improving well-known methods and developing new ones, as well as creating teaching aids that will help graduates to develop successful competitiveness in the labour market (Melnichuk et al., 2018).

The authors of this article developed the Business English textbook (Karpova et al., 2020b), which includes textual material taking into account the characteristics of modern business, based on an integrated approach to studying the language tools used, as well as the results of a study of modern training methods, the most effective of which are presented in Table 01.

Table 01. The most effective methods of teaching a foreign language

Methods using information technologies	Project teaching methods	Game methods	Problematic methods
Use of Internet resources (web-quests, scientific Internet research)	Task Based Learning (TBL), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)	Roleplay game Business training game	Case study
Multimedia lingual tools (podcasts, webinars, video conferences)	Collective or cooperative learning methods: team learning	Flipped learning / Flipped classroom	Guided Discovery
Interactive electronic textbooks	Guidance association method	Tandem method	Brainstorming

It should be noted that in designing the textbook, the authors applied the above methods and their elements based on the principle of strict selection of language and speech situations (Karpova et al., 2020a; Voskovskaya & Karpova, 2018), the communicative principle of filing didactic material (Anyushenkova et al., 2020; Voskovskaya et al., 2019), and the principle of constructing semantically correct sentences in professional communication (Zakirova, 2014).

2. Problem Statement

The authors of this article revealed that teaching a business foreign language, taking into account the characteristics of modern business, is an urgent problem and requires solving theoretical and practical problems.

- The theoretical significance of the research is explained in the study of the features of foreign language teaching methods, their classification, and identification of the degree of efficiency is based on well-known scholarly works of Russian and foreign researchers (Belyaeva et al., 2019).
- The practical value of this work lies in the development of the author's method of teaching a business foreign language, which is the basis for creating a training manual that contributes to the effective formation of students' communicative competencies necessary for business communication in future professional activities.

3. Research Questions

The authors of this article examined issues related to the objectives of the study. The study of scientific papers on the theory and practice of teaching a foreign language allowed identifying the main trends.

3.1. Study of the importance of language education and communicative competence formation

The research was based on the axiological approach to the study of the importance of language education at the present stage of social development (language education as a state value; language education as a social value; language education as a personal value).

The research was focused on studying the formation of communicative competence as a person's ability to understand and generate foreign language utterances both in socially determined situations, taking into account linguistic and social rules, and in business communication situations, allowing for the peculiarities of modern business that native speakers adhere to. Such peculiarities include:

- the linguistic component (aspect) of communicative competence: knowledge of the system of the language being studied and the skills of operating linguistic (lexical, grammatical and phonetic) means of communication formed on their basis;
- the pragmatic component (aspect) of communicative competence: methods conducive to the development of understanding and generation of foreign language utterances in accordance with the specific situation of communication, speech task and communicative intention;
- the sociolinguistic component (aspect) of communicative competence: knowledge, skills and abilities that allow verbal and non-verbal communication with native speakers of the language being studied in accordance with national and cultural characteristics.

3.2. Study of best practices and the degree of teaching methods efficiency

During the research, the focus was on the study of the best practices and methods of developing didactic tools in teaching a business foreign language, including electronic versions, taking into consideration the level and module approaches of teaching foreign languages. The research also

concentrated on the determination of the degree of efficiency of teaching a foreign language by questioning teachers and students.

4. Purpose of the Study

Using the most effective linguistic and methodological tools tested in practice when compiling the training manual, the team of authors has set a goal to provide professional assistance to those who seek to fully and effectively master business English, factoring in the characteristics of modern business, which contributes to the development of competitiveness in the context of professional activity.

5. Research Methods

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study was basic laws, principles and categories of dialectics, pedagogy and psychology; scientific provisions on the role of humanization of education in the harmonious formation of personality and professional activities of a specialist; theoretical conclusions of modern research on the laws and contradictions of the pedagogical process in a university; main provisions of the competence-based approach in education.

6. Findings

The undoubtedly advantages of the presented textbook should include the author's proven practice in higher non-linguistic educational institutions; its positive results are experimentally confirmed when teaching students at Russian universities, which served as the basis for the authors' research. It should be noted that the uniqueness and the main difference between this textbook and its counterparts on the book market is that its creation is based on the principle of strict selection of language tools and speech situations practiced in the modern business world. We conducted a survey among Russian and foreign experts in the field of modern business and law in order to identify the main problematic situations that require special communication training for both business and language students. In accordance with the results of the questionnaire, the training manual contains sections reflecting the main realities of business communication, but it is not overloaded with unnecessary information, instead aiming at developing certain skills necessary to solve the problems most commonly encountered in business communication.

We consider it necessary to emphasize that a clear structuring of educational information based on the principle of a modular approach to learning (Sanakulova & Soibnazarova, 2017) has allowed us to develop a coherent system of full didactically and logically completed training modules: "Business Communication", "Job Application", "Business Correspondence", "Telephone Conversations", "Presentations", "Business Trip", "Successful Business Companies". It is particularly noteworthy that the structure of the entire textbook, as well as that of each separate section, is presented clearly and consistently, which allows students to understand the goals and objectives of each practical lesson.

The main didactic unit of each module is the text, which is the cognitive-communicative centre. The study of the text is accompanied by pre-text and post-text tasks and exercises aimed at developing the communicative competencies of business communication, both verbally and nonverbally. The first six modules contain a uniform system of exercises, the purpose of which is to have students read texts eliciting

the main constituents of business communication, to arrange roleplay games, to solve business cases, preparing and presenting projects within the framework of the topics studied. The seventh module includes authentic texts on the history of the formation of such most successful business companies as Microsoft, Apple, Sony, Google, Nike, Ford, Tesla, P&G, etc. The texts can be used to develop learning skills in reading, abstracting and summarizing texts, as well as for organizing students' independent work in extracurricular time.

An important advantage of the author's methodology for teaching business English is the communicative principle of teaching didactic material based on the multilateral paradigmatic approach in linguistics, as well as the psychological and pedagogical approach in teaching languages based on speech patterns and conversational clichés. Such approaches allow simulating situations of everyday business communication and contribute to a more complete understanding of the essence of business communication, as well as introducing its main types. The simulation of business-like situations allows you to teach how to easily conduct a casual conversation, from 'small talk' to discussing global business matters, producing a favorable impression on a partner, colleague, boss or client. Particular attention in the author's methodology of teaching business foreign language is given to such important issues when applying for a job as the correct drafting of a resume and a cover letter to a potential employer, preparation for a job interview and correct answers to questions during an interview listing the most frequently asked questions and recommendations for answers based on the advice of psychologists, etc.

The originality of this textbook also lies in the fact that it is based on the principle of universality of educational levels. This textbook, developed on the basis of the author's methodology, can be recommended for use in the educational process in the discipline "Business Foreign Language" as part of educational programs for undergraduate and graduate students with various degrees of language training. The set of tasks and exercises is aimed at developing basic competencies in accordance with the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standards of the Russian Federation and allows students to form the skills necessary for effective oral and written business communication with foreign colleagues and partners in the context of interpersonal and professional communication, taking into account the features of today's reality.

It should also be noted that an important component of the author's methodology is the creation of an original interactive electronic version, which is distinguished by the author's new software developments, and approach to the presentation of educational material. In an interesting and entertaining way, business terminology building is carried out at the level of one individual lexical unit, at the level of collocations and at the level of sentences. In addition, the system of exercises developed by the authors allows improving the skills of all types of speech activity: listening, reading, speaking and writing. Using presentation videos, students are immersed in the atmosphere of business communication in the modern environment. The structure of the interactive electronic complex, simple and understandable to the user after the initial familiarization, is rather effective for the students' further study and revision of the education material, as well as for being able to modify it themselves.

The team of authors conducted an empirical study, including observation, experiment, and generalization of the results in the form of tests, discussion and the implementation of the most effective teaching methods in Business English practice classes. The study conducted in 2017-2019 involved more

than 500 undergraduate and graduate students from the universities of the Russian Federation, such as the Moscow Linguistic University, the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation, Moscow Polytechnic University, All-Russian State University of Justice (RLA of the Ministry of Justice of Russia), and Siberian State University of Railway Engineering.

The research revealed that the project teaching methods, methods using information technologies, problematic methods, and game methods should be considered the most efficient methods of teaching Business English. The percentage is shown in Table 02.

Table 02. Indicators of the foreign language teaching methods efficiency

Methods	Degree of effectiveness (%)
Project teaching methods (TBL, CLIL, collective or cooperative learning methods: team learning, guidance association methods)	34%
Methods using information technologies (use of Internet resources, multimedia lingual tools, interactive electronic textbooks)	24.6%
Problematic methods (case study, Guided Discovery, brainstorming)	22.3%
Game methods (roleplay games, business training games, flipped learning / flipped classroom, tandem game)	19.1%

The authors have developed a comprehensive methodology that includes a system of exercises and assignments on the language material, taking into account the realities of modern business and relying on the most effective modern methods of teaching a foreign language.

In practice, it was possible to verify that students develop the ability to properly structure their business communication using the necessary speech patterns; to keep the attention of the audience, for example, when giving presentations and answering the most unexpected questions, which have no ready-made answers. The introduction of this textbook into the educational process through roleplay games showed that students have obvious success in the correct purposeful writing of a business letter in compliance with accepted standards, having telephone conversations, participating in negotiations in various communicative situations, for example, with an employer at an interview when applying for a job.

Before this textbook was published, it was successfully tested in the educational process on the basis of the above universities. During testing, numerous amendments, changes, additions, adjustments, consultations with native speakers were made.

7. Conclusion

The team of authors expresses confidence that thanks to the use of this textbook, Business English classes will be interesting, exciting, and effective for students and teachers, contributing to the students' mastering business English and achieving a successful career in business. It should be noted that this textbook was assigned the stamp of approval of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.

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