

ICEST 2021**II International Conference on Economic and Social Trends for Sustainability of Modern Society****ANALYSIS OF METHODS OF PROMOTING QUALIFICATION
UPGRADING COURSES**

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Abstract

High-quality education is characterized both by knowledge necessary in the main activity of a specialist and by various auxiliary skills. Knowledge of a foreign language is a necessary educational component for any specialist. A foreign language has become one of the most important disciplines in non-linguistic universities. Students have changed their attitude towards its study and there appeared additional training programs in foreign languages. The paper presents the analysis of the training methods and effectiveness of the promotion of training programs in foreign languages in the professional sphere. Methods of information thematic search, collection, classification and comparative analysis of statistical data have been applied. The websites of German and Russian universities have been researched and analyzed in terms of offering students additional language qualifications in parallel with studies in their specialty. It is shown that at present the information content of the sites of language programs of Russian universities is inferior to German ones in the variety of services offered and the breadth and availability of the information provided. More than 150 course participants were surveyed in order to identify the reasons and motivation for learning a foreign language. Personal data were collected, grouped and statistically processed. The main factors of attractiveness of such language courses for students were identified and proposals were formulated to improve the promotion of language programs. It has been determined that students and specialists in technical fields represent the overwhelming majority among students of language courses. Effective tools for promoting language courses are proposed.

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Keywords: Additional education, comprehensive development, differentiated approach, professional competence, retraining program



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1. Introduction

A modern professional should not only be thoroughly trained for his particular job, but also be a comprehensively developed person with a broad outlook to be able to respond to challenges of modern society.

Comprehensive development in education enables future specialists to achieve success in a specific field, increase work efficiency and maintain a high professional level. The experts develop the necessary tools to support lifelong learning with the aim of "supporting people at all stages of education, professional activity and employment in realizing their interests, skills and competencies in order to independently form their educational and professional biography" (Franz et al., 2020, p. 20).

Moreover, the chances of finding a job for a future graduate can be increased, since comprehensively developed specialists are required both by the modern Russian and by the foreign labor market. Consequently, modern technical universities are faced with the problem of preparing their graduates in such a way that they not only master certain skills and abilities, but also strive to improve their skills (Podporina, 2014).

Foreign language courses held at the universities as a part of additional education also help to develop a student's focus on promotion, on professional growth. The main purpose of a foreign language is to form a communicative competence, that is, the ability to carry out interpersonal and intercultural communication (Radzhabova, 2017). Thus, mastering additional skills, such as foreign languages, is an important factor in training future professionals (Podporina, 2015).

In this regard, systematic researching and analyzing the peculiarities of promoting such an educational service as foreign language courses in a higher educational institution seems to be relevant.

2. Problem Statement

There is a challenge for universities to be promoted in the context of forced competition in the sphere of higher education. The public funding scheme forces educational institutions to compete with each other not only for student numbers, but also for improving higher education and research quality (Leshukov et al., 2016) In the presence of a sufficient number of both state and commercial educational institutions, to attract a larger number of applicants, universities need to carefully organize their campaign to form their image, the ideas about themselves and their educational services, implement a flexible information policy, constantly study demand and offer prices adequate to effective demand and high quality. Universities have to reconsider their previous strategies and reorient from the reactive to the more proactive approach. Modern marketing strategies are now focused on building and maintaining a strong institutional brand; a strong brand would confirm the credibility of academia in the global education market. Brand awareness, including that of the tangible and intangible brand constituents, might inspire brand affinity. There are various tactics that can be applied for the purpose of improving the students' awareness of language programs. The paper considers some of them (Stukalina, 2019).

3. Research Questions

The paper analyses the ways of attracting attention to foreign language programs and their effectiveness; the authors study the websites of German and Russian universities and analyze them in terms of offering students additional language qualifications in parallel with training in their specialty.

The authors analyze reasons and motivation for learning a foreign language. An on-line survey was conducted among students - participants of the professional retraining program "Translator in the field of professional communication".

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to consider the features of promoting foreign language courses in a non-linguistic university, to determine the main factors of attractiveness of courses and to propose a number of measures to improve the promotion of these programs.

5. Research Methods

Thematic information search, collection, classification and comparative analysis of statistical data were used for analyzing the methods and effectiveness of promoting training programs in foreign languages in the professional sphere.

Statistical data were collected through a questionnaire survey among students of professional retraining courses "Translator in the field of professional communication", classification and comparative analysis of statistical data were made to analyze the reasons and motivation for learning a foreign language. The software product Microsoft Excel was used for visual presentation of information.

6. Findings

6.1. Analysis of approaches to promoting language courses in Germany and Russia

Language is the key to a country's culture. Even if communication in English as the most widespread foreign language in the scientific world is possible, everyday communication still requires German courses for foreign citizens, according to the opinion of German experts. German courses subsidized by the German governments are publicized not only as language courses, but also as a part of integration and value courses (Alisha & Heinemann, 2017).

Every term the Department of International Relations of the University of Bonn (Universität Bonn, n.d.) offers German courses for foreign students, graduate students, scientists and their families. The offer usually includes paid German courses at levels A1 - A2 (beginner level), B1 - B2 (basic knowledge) and C1 - C2 (advanced level). The structure of courses and study time is organized considering the employment of students, as an addition to their research activities (See in Table 1).

The Foreign Languages Training Unit (SFA) in Regensburg offers both general foreign language courses and specialized foreign language courses in the professional field for students of all faculties (Zentrum für Sprache und Kommunikation Universität Regensburg, 2021). In the discipline "general

foreign language" training is offered in 18 languages, in the professional foreign language – in 7 languages. Such areas are necessary for the development of future professional skills not only for students, but also for university staff, so they are in great demand (See in Table 1).

The language center of the university in Freiburg teaches students mainly English (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg..., 2021). But it also offers training programs in Arabic, German for foreigners, Swedish, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Czech, Polish, Chinese, Japanese, Thai and Norwegian. According to the language center data, the number of students in foreign language courses is constantly growing (approximately 1200 people per term), and a sufficient amount of students are studying the second or the third foreign language.

The Center for Foreign Languages of the Technical University of Chemnitz (TU Chemnitz) (Technische Universität Chemnitz, 2021) is a member of the Association of Language Centers, Language Training and Foreign Language Institutes (AKS) and the European Association of University Language Centers (Cercles) and offers all students the opportunity to study foreign languages in a professional field focused on language training in oral and written communication for the purpose of studying abroad (student mobility) and in professional communication (employment opportunities). The language center teaches 10 popular foreign languages such as: Chinese A1 - A2, German (DaF A1 - C1), English B2 - C1, French A1 - B2, Italian, Latin, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Czech (A1 - B2). There is an On-line platform for teaching students in foreign languages (OPAL - Online-Plattform für Akademisches Lehren und Lernen).

Table 1. Characteristics of foreign language teaching programs in Germany

University	Number of courses general foreign language/ professional foreign language	Number of hours per week/term	Duration of training	Level of knowledge	Training cost (Euro)	Language courses for employees (additional option)	Working languages of the site
Regensburg	18 / 7	4	1 term	A1 –C1	no data	English for University Management Staff (B2–C1)	German
Freiburg	14 / 2	2 – 6	1 term	A1 –C2	80/160/240	data not provided	English / German
Chemnitz	10 / 1	4	1 term	A1 –C1	no data	English (scientific) for economists	English / German
Bonn	15 / 2	4	1 term	A1 –C2	no data	English (scientific) for post-graduate students, scholars and their family members	English / German/ Spanish

The language center at the Institute of Philology and Language Communication of the Siberian Federal University organizes courses in foreign languages, including the retraining program “Translator in the field of professional communication”

In Germany foreign language courses popularity is growing, while exams in specialized disciplines are partially conducted in English.

The website data of Regensburg University language center is the most accessible and understandable to the user.

Proposals for learning foreign languages as additional education at Russian universities are considered on the example of three Siberian universities. These universities were taken as an example because the situation in them is a typical one. The data on the language program at the Siberian Federal University, Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University and Siberian State University of Science and Technology are analyzed. This program is intended for those who wish to improve their competencies in the foreign languages and obtain additional qualifications, which can allow combining knowledge in the chosen specialty (technical, economic, humanitarian, natural scientific, etc.) and translation skills in the sphere of their professional interests.

Brief information about this program is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of foreign language training programs in Russia

University	Number of courses (General foreign language / professional foreign language)	Number of hours per week	Duration of training	Level of knowledge	Training cost (thousand roubles)	Language	Working languages of the site
Siberian Federal University	8 / 2	8	6 terms	A1 – C2	11	Continuing education seminars for teachers of German	English Chinese German Spanish
Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University named after V.P. Astafiev	4	16	3 terms	No data	40	No data	Russian
Siberian State University of Science and Technology named after academician M.F.Reshetnev	6/2	2	4 terms	A1 – C2	13 – 14	Seminars on methodological planning of English lessons	Russian English

The language center at the Institute of Philology and Language Communication of the Siberian Federal University organizes courses in foreign languages, including the retraining program “Translator in the field of professional communication” (Centr dopolnitel'nogo obrazovaniya IFiYAK SFU, 2021). Those who already have higher education or students (parallel education) who have passed entrance tests can be enrolled in the program. The program allows them to improve their knowledge of a foreign language and to master the techniques of professional translation, which can be useful in professional activities. The training course lasts three years in four languages (optional) - English, German, French, and Spanish.

Training takes place in the evenings for eight hours a week. The portal enables to work in English, Chinese, German and Spanish.

The center for additional professional management education of the Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University named after V.P. Astafiev offers a professional retraining program "Translator in the field of professional communication" (KGPU im V.P. Astaf'eva, 2021). The program accepts both people with higher education and third-fourth-year students and proposes training in intercultural communication in professional activities. The program offers up to 800 academic hours, the training lasts for 1.5 years. The group consists of maximum nine people. The courses are part-time education.

The Resource Center of Foreign Languages of the Siberian State University of Science and Technology offers training under the additional program of qualification upgrading courses, which lasts two years. This program is addressed to graduates and students. The professional retraining program with the assignment of a translator qualification is additional to the main specialty. A diploma of any additional qualifications is issued and is valid only with a diploma of basic education (SibGU, 2021).

In the course of a thematic search in Google and Yandex systems, links were found to the websites of universities organizing the training of students according to the additional professional retraining program "Translator in Professional Communication" (qualification upgrading courses). The list of the most popular search engine sites includes:

- Russian New University. (Rossijskij Novyj universitet, 2021)
- Siberian Federal University.
- Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University named after V.P. Astafiev.
- St. Petersburg Academic University.
- Moscow Technical University of Communications and Informatics (MTUCI).
- Russian University of Economics named after G.V. Plekhanov.
- Siberian State University named after academician M.F. Reshetnev.
- Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences of St. Petersburg Academic University (SPbAU, 2021)
- Institute of International Education and Language Communication within the Tomsk Polytechnic University (TPU, 2021)

Only students not younger than the third year, graduate students or certified specialists of all the above-mentioned training profiles can participate in the given program of all these universities. It means that potential participants of the program have approximately equal conditions for training.

The portals of the foreign language centers of higher education institutions are an important point of obtaining information on the available language courses. When studying the site information, it becomes obvious that universities use sites as an important operational tool in the implementation of their educational activities. The portals of universities are mainly aimed at addressing several groups of users, i.e., the functionality of the sites is limited to addressing their own students and staff, and not the wide external academic community.

Comparison of the variability of language programs proposals of additional education in Germany and Russia has shown that in German universities there is a greater variety of foreign language courses with a wide differentiated approach to teaching students, undergraduates, graduate students and their families. Each course program is designed for a specific language level A1 - C2, which is proposed to be mastered within one term and has specific goals:

- To attract citizens to learn foreign languages at all levels and throughout their working life.
- To facilitate access to studying foreign languages in Europe.
- To develop innovative approaches, study and transfer experience in the field of teaching foreign languages.
- To provide all students with learning aids for learning a foreign language.
- To raise the significance of multilingualism for the economic and social sphere of social life.

Russian universities can also offer various courses and foreign languages with a duration of study from 3-4 to 6 semesters. There are foreign language courses for both students and teachers with the involvement of invited teachers and multipliers of a foreign language; however, English language courses of different levels for teachers of other disciplines aimed at helping them in their work and scientific activities are not actively covered.

In addition, the effectiveness of promoting educational services through the website of the language center is achieved not only by the site attendance by all categories of the audience, but by the attendance of the target audience - if the share of target visitors is small, then the effectiveness will be very low.

6.2. Analysis of the relevance and attitude to studying foreign languages

An on-line survey among the students of the qualification upgrading courses related to the study of foreign languages was conducted. First of all, the participants of the survey mentioned such most important factors as:

- Work - proficiency in a foreign language gives an advantage in finding a more prestigious job with the possibility of further promotion, or having business trips abroad - 70% of the respondents.
- Traveling - instead of vacationing in large resorts or living in tourist areas, one can go for new experiences traveling on one's own - 56% of respondents.
- Study - the opportunity to study or internship abroad and the upcoming exam in a foreign language - in an equal percentage - 41%.

When asked about the amount of time spent on learning a foreign language and the importance of the role of a teacher, the respondents gave the following answers: the amount of time spent on learning a foreign language (72% of respondents) indicates a serious attitude towards learning; learning with a teacher seems to be the most optimal (72% of respondents) in comparison with self-study (42%), that is, self-study plays the role of an auxiliary type of education.

According to the research, 50% of respondents believe that additional language training is necessary for engineering education, as students can gain practical knowledge that will help in their further studies and work.

The quantitative characteristics of students in the program over the past five years have remained stable - these are students of technical (58%), humanitarian (34%) and economic (8%) specialties (Figure 1).

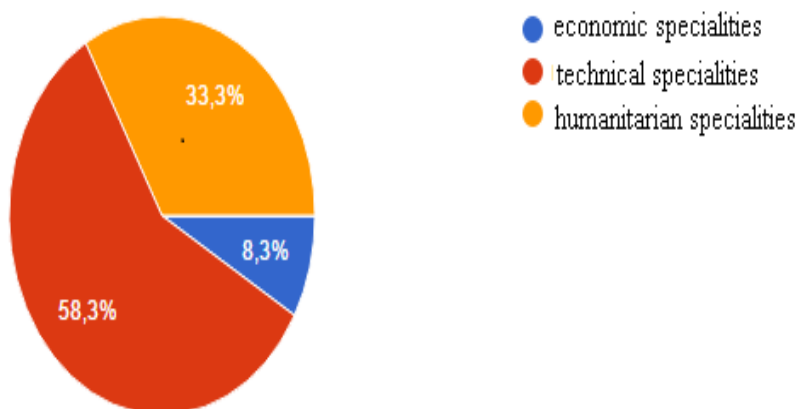


Figure 1. Specialization areas of program trainees

The majority of the students of qualification upgrading courses (60% of the respondents) prefer being taught by foreign specialists. Consequently, the invitation of foreign teachers would seem to be relevant for the promotion of foreign language courses. Such courses are also necessary for people who have already graduated from a higher educational institution (41% of respondents have higher education), therefore, communication campaigns aimed at this target audience are worth conducting.

The repeated survey, showing a stable interest in obtaining higher education in foreign languages, confirms the desire of students to increase their chances of getting an opportunity to become a high-class professional and achieve a prestigious job in the future (70%). The overwhelming majority of young people strive for self-improvement (80% of the respondents).

7. Conclusion

The provision of convincing and truthful information of the quality of the offered service is a necessary condition when attracting potential students of foreign language programs. Teaching students to communicate is an important components in the process of getting higher education. This component is facilitated by the attraction of foreign specialists, lecturing, holding seminars, and conferences in foreign

The survey conducted among students proved a rather serious attitude towards the study and the demand for additional courses in foreign languages.

Various activities are effectively used to promote foreign language courses:

- weeks of foreign languages;
- course presentations;
- participation in specialized exhibitions and fairs;
- conferences, Olympiads held by the university;
- seminars and symposia;
- open days for potential course participants, etc.

An important aspect of promotion is the Internet. Most educational institutions use PR communications insufficiently, while real life practice, the experience of prosperous educational institutions clearly demonstrate that a reliable guarantee of the successful operation of an educational institution in a market environment is the promotion of services through a Web site on the Internet. Nowadays such approaches are characterized by the widespread distribution, availability and popularity of Internet services among young people - the main consumer of the educational services market. Using a modern interface for greater attractiveness of the page, and consequently, of the course is also recommended.

Mainly thematic platforms are recommended to be used in order to popularize educational services and post information about the site.

The tools for creating target audience for a website of a higher education institution can be classified as follows:

- Registration of the site in thematic catalogs about education is required in addition to the existing registration in search engines. Such indexing of the Internet site by search engines will allow getting new visitors. It should be born in mind that it will be easier for search engines to index and subsequently find a site if the information on it is constantly updated.
- To raise a link to a web page, it is necessary to optimize the page according to the recommendations of Google to improve the visibility of the site for both users and search engines. Search engine optimization methods include improving the site structure, optimizing content, optimizing search for mobile systems.
- Maintaining the website's mailing list that can be offered to visitors. This will not allow losing target visitors (potential clients). The created subscription list is the main Internet asset, the base of potential clients for educational services.
- Placement of relevant articles about interesting events with useful information.
- Organization of feedback in the Feedback section, writing reviews on the course portal, maintaining relations with the alumni of the program.
- It is advisable to upload a sample diploma of the established sample for the additional retraining program "Translator in the field of professional communication" to visualize the result of the goals.

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