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**DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL SKILLS BY FOREIGN
LANGUAGE MEANS**

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Abstract

The paper considers the issues of organizing the training of linguistic specialists taking into account the requirements of the modern labor market. The authors note the relevance of the problem in the context of training highly qualified personnel able to address professional challenges and be competitive candidates in the market of jobs requiring the knowledge of a foreign language. The paper analyzes the statistics on the job market for foreign language teachers, translators and vacancies related to the professional use of a foreign language. The authors consider specialists' professional and personal qualities necessary to achieve success in profession and career, highlight the most important of them. The authors conclude that the formation and development of various aspects of professional competence in a future competitive specialist should be one of the key areas of his training at the university. Therefore, the paper proposes typical exercises and tasks that develop not only professional, but also personal qualities of a future specialist, describes the experience of using such tasks at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Kursk State University. The authors provide the results of student surveys conducted in 2019 and 2020, which indicate the positive impact of the proposed tasks on the development of students' personal qualities. The paper concludes that communication, cooperation, critical thinking and creativity are the main personal skills required in the modern labor market, which form and develop the key quality of a modern student – self-confidence, confidence in both professional and personal abilities and skills.

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Keywords: Professional skills, personal qualities, foreign language proficiency, communication, critical thinking, creative approach



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1. Introduction

The education system at any level is designed to respond as quickly and flexibly as possible to social, political and economic changes in society. The task of modern education is to train a specialist with the necessary set of professional competencies and qualities, which will, first of all, be competitive in the labor market. The current labor market is characterized by the following trends:

- focus on improving efficiency and, as a result, maintaining qualified personnel;
- search for highly qualified personnel – replacing several employees with one of the most qualified;
- demographic and qualification crisis;
- close cooperation with educational institutions;
- severe restrictions on recruitment and dismissal;
- reduction of staff quality – quality of education, level of intelligence, etc. (Blagoveshenskaya, 2018).

There are professional and personal skills of a specialist. The former include certain abilities and skills for successful profession and career, which can be taught and measured (e.g., foreign language proficiency, computer skills); the latter refer to personal abilities and skills that demonstrate relationships with other people, attitudes to life and professional activity (for example, flexibility, time management).

The most important skills of a future specialist necessary for successful professional activities include the following:

- ability to build relationships with all participants in professional activities;
- ability to motivate;
- ability to plan various activities;
- ability to make decisions on its own;
- self-confidence;
- effective communication skills;
- knowledge of theoretical and practical aspects of professional activity;
- leadership skills;
- tolerance;
- patience;
- discipline;
- ability to understand people;
- readiness for professional activity (Donado, 2017).

The listed characteristics of a modern specialist include only one that refers to professional skills – knowledge of theoretical and practical aspects of the profession, which can be formed, developed and evaluated. It is obvious that a mere knowledge of the subject is not enough for the modern labor market to successfully carry out professional activities and receive the status of a competitive specialist.

For example, in the USA 92% of specialists believe that personal skills are no less important than professional ones, while 89% of employers have difficulty finding and hiring employees with the necessary personal skills (Damari et al., 2017).

2. Problem Statement

In Russia, employers consider communication, leadership and creativity to be the most important personal qualities of a modern specialist – 79%, 60% and 69%, respectively (HAYS Recruiting experts worldwide, 2017; Way to Choosing a Profession 2016-2017, 2017).

Competition in the labour market is very high. Today, the market accounts for 48% of specialists, 24% of masters, 15% of candidates with several degrees, 8% of bachelors, 4% of candidates with incomplete higher education and only 1% without higher education. At the same time, the ratio of the needs of the labour market and the professions of university graduates in humanities is 3 to 20 (Perspectives of Labour Market in Russia, 2021).

The study of statistical survey data reveals changes in the requirements of the labour market for a specialist over the past decades (Table 01).

Table 1. Education standards (Jenkins & Thompson, 2020)

1992	2000	2002	2016
Basic skills		Life and career	Interoperability
Analysis		Critical thinking	Personality qualities
Personal qualities	Communication	Cooperation	Technology use
Resources	Decision-making	Creativity	Systemic thinking
Interoperability	Interoperability	Communication	Communication skills
Information systems	Lifelong learning	Information	Information use
Technologies		Media	Resource Management
		Technologies	Critical thinking
			Applied academic skills

The analysis of the above table makes it possible to conclude that if university graduates want to be competitive specialists in modern society, they need to have effective communication skills, a creative approach to problem solving, critical thinking and ability to interact with other people.

In terms of the demand for specialists with knowledge of a foreign language, then it seems advisable first of all to analyze the current state of studying and teaching foreign languages.

In Russia, there are currently 275 universities with linguistic specialties. According to the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center survey (2014), 22% note the possibility of higher-paid work in the future as the main motivation for learning foreign languages (as cited in Bondareva, 2016).

Besides, according to 2016 data, 11% of people studying foreign languages do this via the Internet, the average age of students is 25-35 years. About 63% of them use only online training tools, another 37% study languages in a blended format (Profession of Future..., 2021). Changing the language learning market in favor of the Internet depends, among other things, on the different cost of classes. Researchers predict a decline in the language learning market by 2022: from 26.8 billion rubles in 2016 to 24.6 billion rubles in 2022. At the same time, the ratio of online training should increase from 5.8% to 15.9%. Experts noted that the users that study languages on the Internet without the help of a tutor consider the efficiency of such education quite low. Despite this, about 59% of students pay for content. The future of the business in the online language learning segment is connected with corporate trends. In addition to the growing interest from companies, researchers note the interest of the school audience. The growing interest of today's

schoolchildren will force the business to create new solutions, including with “more sophisticated gamification”. The Russian education market as a whole will continue to grow by 2021: from 1.8 trillion rubles in 2016 to 2 trillion rubles in 2021. At the same time, the ratio of online education will grow to 2.6% and amount to 53.3 billion rubles (Market of Learning Foreign Languages..., 2021).

Foreign language as such occurs in 5% of vacancies. In 2015 the level of English language proficiency – Intermediate – required in the labor market was 54% compared to other levels with 96.4% of all vacancies offered requiring English proficiency. As for the requirements of employers for the level of foreign language proficiency it makes the following: Intermediate – 19%, candidates’ proficiency – 24%, Upper-intermediate – employers require 48%, candidates proficiency – 39%, Advanced – employers require 29%, candidates proficiency – 20% (Eurostat – Foreign language learning statistics, 2021).

3. Research Questions

The demand for specialists from scientific and educational sphere has decreased in the regions, unlike Moscow and St. Petersburg, where their demand is growing quite actively (by 14% over 2019). Over 2019 the number of CVs in the scientific and educational sphere (+27%) has increased in Russia as a whole. This illustrates that the competition in this area is growing, but still remains at one of the lowest levels – an average of 1.7 CVs per vacancy. This means that there are fewer specialists than necessary (Rozhkova & Roshin, 2019; What is Going on in the Labour Market, 2019). The language learning market will decrease by 2022 amid the growth of the online market. This is stated in the study by Netology Group, the Higher School of Economics, IIDF, POF, ComScore agency and East-West Digital News. According to 2019, the demand for English professors amounted to 250 vacancies, English teachers – 90 vacancies of the total number offered on the labor market (The Most Demanded Professions of Teachers in 2019, 2021). According to the research, by 2025 employment in education is expected to grow by 9.58% in the EU, and in Russia by 1.3% (National Education Association, n.d.).

The prerequisite for the integration of our set of tasks was the observation and analysis of the work of students during classes and as a result, understanding that the ability to interact with others, effective communication skills, critical thinking and creative approach to solving professional and life problems are developed at a fairly low level, and other disciplines within the learning areas due to the insufficient number of study hours or the combination of several groups into one allow paying due attention only to the development of professional competencies.

4. Purpose of the Study

As mentioned above, communication, cooperation, critical thinking and creativity are key skills in today’s labour market. As a result, the formation and development of these aspects of professional competence of a future competitive specialist should be one of the key areas of university training.

In this regard, it seems advisable to use tasks and exercises that integrate the development of foreign-language communicative competence, as well as personal qualities and skills.

5. Research Methods

Observation, questionnaire and experimental training were used to solve the tasks of the study. The study was conducted as part of experimental training (2019-2020) covering 100 students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Kursk State University aged 19 to 21 years and 4 teachers. At the first stage in 2019, the basic level of personal skills development in subjects was diagnosed through self-evaluation using a questionnaire containing 15 indicators, and its results were evaluated in accordance with the rubric (Table 2), according to which most students at that time had an average level of personal skills development. After diagnosing and analyzing the obtained data, a set of tasks was developed on the basis of a study manual. In terms of the content, the formative stage was the implementation of a set of tasks for the development of personal skills. The survey was conducted among 100 students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Kursk State University (Pedagogical Education) (Table 02).

Table 2. Questionnaire **Instruction:** The questionnaire presents a number of personal skills (communication, cooperation, critical thinking, creativity) that a successful modern specialist should have. Rate your current level of skill formation on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 – very bad, 2 – bad, 3 – satisfactory, 4 – good, 5 – excellent):

Questions	Results
<i>Set a clear goal for learning/daily activities</i> 5 4 3 2 1	25% – satisfactory 40% – good 35% – excellent
<i>Select up-to-date information on a given topic</i> 5 4 3 2 1	10% – bad 30% – satisfactory 40% – good 20% – excellent
<i>3. Easy to work in a team</i> 5 4 3 2 1	25% – bad 25% – satisfactory 40% – good 10% – excellent
<i>4. Be confident and understand others</i> 5 4 3 2 1	20% – bad 20% – satisfactory 30% – good 30% – excellent
<i>5. Balance between prepared speech and improvisation</i> 5 4 3 2 1	45% – bad 30% – satisfactory 25% – good
<i>6. Speak simple and clear</i> 5 4 3 2 1	25% – bad 40% – satisfactory 35% – good

7. Evaluate the interests and desires of others 5 4 3 2 1	35% – bad 25% – satisfactory 30% – good 10% – excellent
8. Think through the organization of information 5 4 3 2 1	20% – bad 20% – satisfactory 30% – good 30% – excellent
9. Be able to provoke interest in the audience 5 4 3 2 1	30% – bad 35% – satisfactory 35% – good 30% –
10. Create a favorable atmosphere during paired/group training activities 5 4 3 2 1	satisfactory 45% – good 25% – excellent
11. Concede to achieve a common goal 5 4 3 2 1	40% – bad 30% – satisfactory 25% – good 5% – excellent
12. Find different solutions to educational/life problems, including non-standard 5 4 3 2 1	20% – bad 35% – satisfactory 30% – good 15% – excellent
13. Separate key information from secondary 5 4 3 2 1	25% – satisfactory 55% – good 20% – excellent
14. Summarize important conclusions and thoughts in short and clear wording 5 4 3 2 1	35% – bad 25% – satisfactory 20% – good 20% – excellent
15. Accept any questions, criticism friendly and gratefully without being lost with a timely and full answer 5 4 3 2 1	40% – bad 25% – satisfactory 35% – good

At the second stage, a set of tasks for the development of students' personal skills was developed and tested. The objectives of the experimental training were the following: (1) to develop communication skills, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity in addressing learning challenges; 2) to develop personal skills and readiness for their independent application in situations of everyday communication and professional activity.

In terms of the content, experimental training included three related blocks: introductory, educational-communicative and reflexive-final block. The combination of active and interactive methods and forms of training (projects, discussions, analysis of video and audio materials, mini-presentations, presentations on a given topic) made it possible to achieve the goals at each stage. Didactic means and

methods of active training contributed to the development of personal qualities and professional competencies.

6. Findings

Having analyzed the English language teaching kits and manuals used at the Faculty of Foreign Languages in various training programs we came to the conclusion that despite the existence of tasks aimed at developing collaborative skills, creativity, communication and critical thinking within Speaking, Discussion, Listening sections, the key section Reading, on the basis of which the entire training module is based (since the text is a unit of study), in 90% of cases only such tasks are offered: answer the questions, find ... in the text, retell the text.

It seems advisable and effective for us to integrate tasks for the development of personal qualities of students into work with a text that takes a large amount of time and acts as a key link in the formation and development of a foreign-language competence.

Given these conditions, an exemplary set of tasks was developed on the basis of one of the texts in the framework of the textbook “English Language Course for Students of Language Universities. Coursebook for Upper-Intermediate students” by Yastrebova et al. (2014) which is used in a number of disciplines in English for 3-4-year students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Kursk State University (KSU), namely: Society: Part IV “People and Lifestyles”, Unit 8 “All Work and No Play..?”, text “The Rise of the Ergonarchy”, pp. 365-367.

Communication skills

1. Read the article “The Rise of the Ergonarchy”, pp. 365-367 and ask your classmate 3 questions to check his/her understanding of the basic and secondary information (development of controlled dialogical speech skills).

2. Make a list of the main characteristics of modern society based on the text (work in groups). Select the 3 most important characteristics and justify your choice (development of controlled monological speech skills).

3. Agree/disagree with the statements: What one generation sees as a luxury, the next sees as a necessities; Some people work to live, while others live to work, etc. Use speech clichés to express agreement/disagreement. Observe the standards of speech etiquette (development of uncontrolled monological speech skills).

4. Discuss in pairs the advantages/disadvantages of modern society. What would you change and why? Use speech clichés. Observe the norms of business communication (development of uncontrolled dialogical speech skills).

Critical thinking skills

1. Create a cluster based on the article “The Rise of the Ergonarchy”, pp. 365-367 (Figure 01).

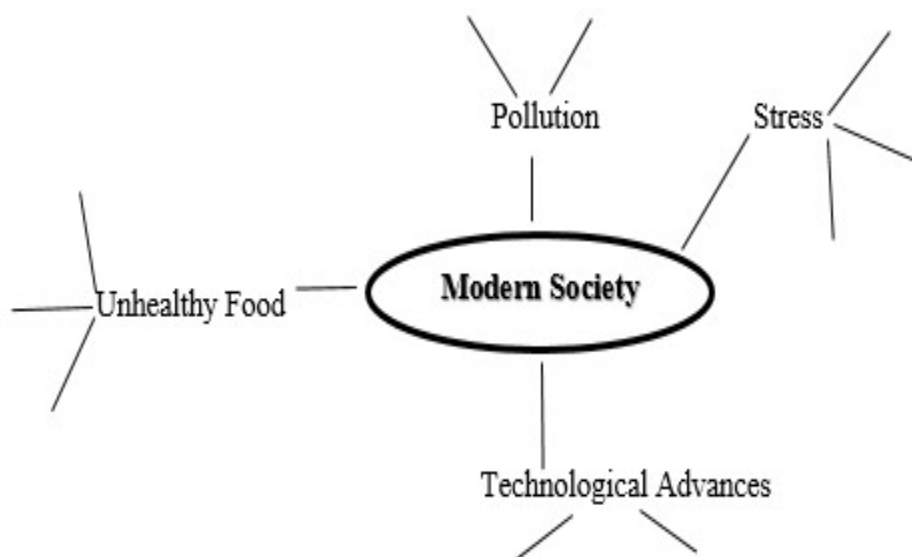


Figure 1. Cluster on the basis of the article “The Rise of the Ergonarchy”

2. Discuss in pairs. “Thick Questions”: Why do not people regardless of the technological advances work efficiently at present? What is lifestyle? What kind of lifestyle do young people tend to choose nowadays?

3. Discuss in groups the ideal lifestyle of a modern person. Number the characteristics from 1 to 10, where 1 is the most important characteristic.

4. Based on the article “The Rise of the Ergonarchy” select the problem of modern society, make a forecast of future development and propose a solution to it. Use IDEAL technology:

- **I** Identify a problem (Identify the problem in the most general terms).
- **D** Debate a problem (Define its essence, formulate the problem in the form of a question that should be extremely accurate, specific, begin with the word “How”, and not contain negations).
- **E** Essential solutions (Generation of as bigger number of ways of solving the problem as possible with brainstorming).
- **A** Activity (Select the best option (s)).
- **L** Logical conclusions (Logical conclusions, analysis of the work done).

Compare your findings with those of your classmates.

Collaborative and creative skills

1. Survey. Discuss in pairs/groups: What is meritocracy? Do you think it is a reality or a utopia? (manageable collaboration).

2. Create the “Road to Success” posters in groups that would answer the following questions: how to become successful, how to cope with stress, how to build a career, how to plan time, hobbies, etc., and advertise your concept (unmanageable collaboration).

3. Write an essay based on the text. Formulate the topic yourself (300 words).

4. Project work/simulation. Your team is opening a leisure centre. Develop the work plan of the center taking into account the different age and professional interests of potential clients (Table 03).

Table 3. Organization of Project Work

Position	Description of activities	Student
Student 1: team leader	Monitors that everyone spoke only English; ensures that each student of the group participates in the project.	
Student 2: financial expert	Makes the center budget with the help of all team members. Plans to purchase the necessary equipment.	
Student 3: records in writing	Records an advertisement and fills the center's work plan with the help of all team members.	
Student 4/5... : marketing experts, coaches, trainers	Analyze and evaluate potential clients, their interests and needs, compile a list of clubs, sections, events. Make a portfolio for an employee, questions for an interview.	

During the experiment, similar tasks were used with all the texts of modules and sections of the tutorial. During the conversation and observation, it turned out that students increased their motivation to work in classes and learn a foreign language, and improved confidence in their abilities and skills. Moreover, there was a positive change in the group's relationship, an interest in discussing their views and acceptance of the views of others.

The control stage was the repeated diagnosis of the development of personal skills of students based on the results of experimental training. First, an output questionnaire was conducted according to the same 15 indicators as in the theoretical stage, and using the same rubric, which involves three outcomes: 1) low (0-45 points); 2) average (45-60 points); 3) high (60-75 points) (Table 4).

As a result, higher results were obtained compared to the original results. It is worth noting that the results of the assessment demonstrate positive differences in indicators: "be confident and understand others" and "find different solutions to educational/life problems, including non-standard ones".

Table 4. Rubric to assess the level of formation of soft skills

Levels	Personal skills
Low (0-45 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - poorly developed skills related to knowledge of structure and organization of oral/written presentation; - poorly developed skills in systematizing and synthesizing information from various sources; - serious problems at the stage of audience analysis and presentation; - unable to provoke the interest and create a favorable atmosphere; - does not know how to select the material for visualization; - does not possess stable phrases and clichéd formulas of speech etiquette/business communication; - unable to competently use the possibilities of his voice and find a compromise in communication; - is under severe stress during pair/group work and does not know how to concede others/defend personal point of view; - does not know how to improvise during the task.
Average (45-60 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - insufficient skills related to the knowledge of structure and organization of oral/written presentation; - poorly developed ability to systematize and synthesize information from different sources; - slight difficulties in the stage of audience analysis and presentation of the material; - knows how to provoke the interest and create a favorable atmosphere; - quite competently selects the material for visualization;

-
- does not possess certain necessary stable phrases and clichéd formulas of speech etiquette/business communication;
 - has little difficulty in exploiting the possibilities of his voice and finding a compromise in communication;
 - experiences little confusion during paired/group work and does not always know how to concede others/defend personal point of view;
 - is not always capable of improvisation during the task.
 - well developed skills related to the knowledge of structure and organization of oral/written presentation;
 - well developed ability to systematize and synthesize information from various sources;
 - no difficulties at the stage of audience analysis and presentation of the material;
 - knows how to provoke the interest and create a favorable atmosphere;
 - competently selects the material for visualization;
- High
(60-75 points)
- possesses all necessary stable phrases and clichéd formulas of speech etiquette/business communication;
 - has no difficulty in using the possibilities of his voice and finding a compromise in communication;
 - self-confident and capable of improvisation during the task;
 - there is an independent and conscious planning of activities, ability to self-reflection, ability to work in a team.
-

7. Conclusion

To summarize the above, it can be said with confidence that communication, cooperation, critical thinking and creativity are the main personal skills required in the modern labour market, which also form and develop the key quality of a modern student – self-confidence, confidence in both professional and personal abilities and skills.

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