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ПРОБЛЕМИ НАВЧАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ СТУДЕНТІВ ІТ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТЕЙ

МОРОЗ Людмила Володимирівна, ЯСНОГУРСЬКА Людмила Михайлівна, ДАНІЛОВА Наталія Романівна. ПРОБЛЕМИ НАВЧАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ СТУДЕНТІВ ІТ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТЕЙ

У статті розглядаються проблеми навчання англійської мови студентів ІТ спеціальностей, які набувають особливої актуальності у зв'язку із зростаючою роллю англомовного спілкування у професійний діяльності спеціалістів в галузі інформаційних технологій. Вивчення англійської мови як другої або іноземної мови має свої особливості, відбувається у груповому або індивідуальному форматах, у групах з різним рівнем мовленнєвої готовності студентів, тому викладачам потрібно знайти добре сплановані та організовані способи, щоб полегшити процес навчання та викладання.

Ключові слова: професійно-зорієнтоване навчання, професійні компетентності, професійна комунікація, методи і стратегії навчання англійської мови.

MOROZ Liudmyla Volodymyrivna, YASNOHURSKA Liudmyla Mykhailivna, DANILOVA Nataliia Romanivna. PROBLEMS OF LEARNING ENGLISH FOR IT STUDENTS

The article examines the problems of learning English faced by students of IT specialties, which are becoming increasingly relevant due to the growing role of English-language communication in the professional activities of information technology specialists. Learning English as a foreign language has its own specific features and may take place in group or individual formats, in groups with different levels of students' language readiness. The refore, teachers need to find well-planned and well-organized ways to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Researchers have conducted a significant number of studies to address these issues and help teachers overcome their difficulties. This article provides a brief overview of teaching English as a foreign language and the

reasons why IT students should be motivated to learn English, particularly through the development of critical thinking skills using discussion-based teaching methods.

The article discusses the importance of professionally oriented instruction and offers strategies and methods that teachers can apply as tools to improve English-language learning among IT students. This can contribute to developing learners' ability to use a foreign language to achieve specific functional goals depending on the characteristics of social and professional interaction: the situation, the status of interlocutors and the addressee, the language, and other factors related to the pragmatics of business communication.

Attention is paid to developing students' ability to correctly identify their audience by studying its needs, as well as understanding the purpose of IT communication, which involves analyzing the content, context, and expected outcomes of communication. The article also emphasizes the importance of fostering students' self-directed learning skills, which are an essential component of a successful educational process, since they help learners not only to better absorb material but also to develop the ability to make independent decisions.

Keywords: *professionally oriented instruction, professional competencies, professional communication, methods and strategies of teaching English.*

Formulation and justification of the relevance of the problem. In Ukraine, state policy in the field of education is actively evolving: learning outcome requirements are being updated, curricula are being improved, and domestic and international experience is being integrated through European-level projects, academic mobility programs, and professional partnerships.

All these changes respond to the processes of globalization in the economy and labor market. Representatives of various industrial sectors are seriously concerned that young specialists – graduates of technical universities – lack sufficient social and professional compe-tencies required for successful communi-cation, as well as teamwork and problem-solving skills. Learning English, which is based on up-to-date information resources and active com-munication in groups using authentic audio and video mate-rials, is viewed as an effective means of develo-ping these competencies among IT students.

According to statistical data, more than 75% of software development orders received by domestic specialists come from foreign clients, and almost all of them prefer communication in English. For this reason, every IT specialist must possess an adequate level of English proficiency. The following arguments support the claim that English occupies a key place in the education of IT students:

Most programming languages are based on English keywords. By mastering them, students gain the ability to understand essential terminology.

Reading technical documentation. Nearly all reference materials and technical specifica-tions (including orders from abroad) are writ-ten in English.

Studying professional literature. The latest books and articles in the IT field are published in English. Programmers must stay up to date with new developments and updates; therefore, learning English is essential.

Using software development tools. Many development environments and tools provide interfaces exclusively in English.

Attending online courses and webinars. Modern educational service providers offer remote learning programs delivered by leading programming experts, whose certificates are a strong advantage in a CV (Curriculum Vitae). However, these courses are often conducted in English.

Employment opportunities in international companies. Nearly all global IT giants are located in the United States and regularly seek qualified specialists. To communicate effectively with colleagues and management, knowledge of English is indispensable.

Communication with clients. Numerous foreign companies actively cooperate with Uk-rainian IT professionals, and understanding client needs accurately requires strong English pro-ficiency.

Searching for solutions online. In their professional practice, future IT specialists fre-quently encounter complex tasks and challenges, solutions to which are often available only in English-language online resources.

Analysis of recent research and publi-cation. Teaching English as a foreign language is a widely discussed issue that attracts the attention of both domestic and international researchers. They argue that one of the main reasons for conducting studies in this field is the search for ways to facilitate language teaching [5, p. 338] and to identify effective learning strategies, defined as «specific thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help students comprehend, learn, or retain new information» [5, p. 385]. P. Lightbown notes that although scholars believe that much research on language acquisition is beneficial for language teaching,

the application of such strategies must be approached with caution [4, p. 385].

Researcher R. Wardhaugh [8, p. 432] notes that the teaching process is often dominated by instructors, who act as «the sage on the stage», with all learning flowing from them. In other words, he emphasized that this situation must be changed, as students should complete tasks independently, while instructors should function primarily as facilitators.

Since English language instruction is a multifaceted process, teachers should devote adequate attention to all types of students' language activities, including reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Various teaching strategies have been proposed by researchers on the basis of their studies [6, pp. 20–23; 7, pp. 245–260], covering all key skills. For example, H. Nassaji argues that there is a close connection between teaching and research, meaning that instructors and researchers continually learn from one another [5, p. 385].

Researchers G. Crookes [1, pp. 6–10] and A. Jenkins [2, pp. 325–351] conducted several studies confirming the interaction between research and teaching and proposed useful strategies for facilitating the learning process. Teachers may analyze teaching methods by observing their effects on students. As noted by researcher R. Oxford [6, pp. 20–23], English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction can be seen as a «tapestry». This instructional tapestry is woven from numerous components, such as teacher characteristics, learner characteristics, the learning environment, and the languages involved (that is, English and the learners' and teachers' native languages). All these components are interconnected; teachers cannot ignore one element or give disproportionate attention to another. They must not isolate language skills – for example, teaching grammar as a separate component removed from context. Therefore, R. Oxford proposed two types of integrated instruction: *content-based instruction* and *task-based instruction*. Content-based instruction emphasizes the acquisition of information through language; in other words, language serves as a tool for learning, where content is primary and language is secondary. In contrast, task-based instruction focuses on completing tasks that require the use of language for communication. In content-based instruction, students practice all language skills while studying various topics, whereas in task-based instruction they participate in communicative situations conducted in English [6, pp. 20–23].

English is a global language. Learning English enhances an individual's social status and opens opportunities in education, technology, international trade, and business. Moreover, English plays a crucial role as a channel of communication. English language teaching is a significant challenge for instructors in Ukraine, as in other countries where English is not the native language, and it remains a difficult task for learners who cannot apply English in real-life contexts, being limited instead to sentence patterns from textbooks rather than authentic environments. Consequently, teachers must constantly seek effective strategies to reduce students' difficulties in learning English, as they face numerous challenges and often raise questions concerning optimal methods for teaching students of IT specialties in particular.

In Ukraine, the professionally oriented approach to teaching English in technical higher education institutions is gaining special relevance. This approach aims to develop students' ability to communicate in a foreign language within specific professional, business, and scientific contexts, taking into account the characteristics of professional thinking. In this context, the objective of the course «Foreign Language» is to teach professionally oriented communication in English, which sets several tasks for instructors.

Presentation of the main research material. According to the English language curriculum at the State University of Telecommunications, the following objectives are defined: to develop students' general and professionally oriented communicative competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic) in order to ensure effective communication in academic and professional contexts; to cultivate students' learning skills aimed at fostering personal motivation, values, and ideals; to promote learners' capacity for self-assessment and autonomous work, allowing them to continue learning in academic and professional settings both during their university studies and after obtaining a degree; to engage students in academic activities that activate and develop the full range of their cognitive abilities; to strengthen students' confidence as language users and their positive attitude towards language learning; and to support the development of critical self-awareness, communication skills, and the ability to contribute meaningfully to an ever-changing international environment by fostering broad understanding of complex international socio-cultural issues and enabling appropriate behavior within the cultural diversity of academic and professional situations.

The curriculum specifies domains of communicative activity, themes, and situations that reflect the professional orientation of students, such as «Working in the IT Industry», «Hardware and Software», «Website Development», «Databases», «E-commerce», «Network

Systems», «Technical Support», «Internet Security», «Telecommunications», «Mobile Systems and Networks», among others. It also outlines linguistic materials (phonetic, lexical, grammatical, orthographic), rules for their application, and the skills needed to work with them; as well as a set of specialized (linguistic) competences that define the level of students' practical mastery of English as a means of communication, including in professional and business contexts and during collaborative industrial or scientific activity.

To increase students' interest in learning English, we widely employ innovative technologies, particularly discussion-based instructional methods such as brainstorming, round-table discussions, and Oxford-style debates. These approaches help develop critical thinking and enhance learners' cognitive activity by encouraging the generation of ideas during the resolution of complex problems and non-standard situations. They also help students learn to defend their positions using persuasive arguments. Gamification also plays a significant role, as we incorporate game-based practices and mechanisms into non-game contexts to engage students in problem-solving. QR-code generation and decoding, quizzes, quests, puzzles, crosswords, and competitions are consistently integrated into lesson plans.

Although the mentioned teaching methods help learners actively acquire English by encouraging its use in real-life situations, it is also necessary to consider the needs and language proficiency levels of individual students, creating a comfortable learning environment for them. First-year students commonly experience several difficulties in learning English, which we have grouped as follows:

Insufficient knowledge of grammar. Technical texts typically contain complex terminology but very simple grammatical structures, so students often fail to pay adequate attention to grammar. This problem is resolved through targeted study of grammatical structures and practical exercises.

Language barrier. This is caused by a lack of speaking practice in secondary school. Continuous practice in situational speaking helps address this issue.

Listening barrier. Students rarely had opportunities to perceive spoken English during their previous studies, which may lead to difficulties in understanding interlocutors. Working with audio and video materials helps eliminate this deficiency.

In our view, for IT professionals – and therefore for students preparing for this field – the two most important components of communication are the audience, that is, the recipient of the message, and the purpose, which determines the choice of vocabulary, the expected behavior of the speaker, and the desired outcome.

What, then, is IT communication? The Society for Technical Communication defines it as follows: «Technical communication involves transmitting clear, consistent, and factual information – often involving complex concepts – for safe and effective use and comprehension by end users. Technical communication is a user-centered approach to delivering the right information, in the right way, at the right time, to make the user's life more productive. The value that technical communicators bring is twofold: they make information more accessible and comprehensible to those who need it, and they contribute to the success of the companies and organizations that employ them» [3, pp. 1–4]. The emphasis here is on the usability of technical content for end users.

In many IT contexts, especially in software development, the audience does not actually *read* what is created but rather *consumes* the content (similar to how users watch YouTube videos in automatic mode). This resembles how we interact with applications on our devices – we consume, engage with, or interact with content. When drawing students' attention, for example, to the words *consume, engage, interact*, and *read*, it is essential for them to have a clear understanding of each term, the similarities among them, and the distinctions in their usage. Since English is not the students' native language, they may try translating each of these terms into Ukrainian and comparing them to gain a deeper understanding of how they are used.

The nature of IT communication means that types of audiences vary significantly, and nearly everyone becomes an IT audience at some point. It is well known that not all people share the same level of experience and knowledge regarding IT tools and systems. Different groups generally demonstrate different levels of expertise. Audiences also consume technical content and read technical information for a variety of reasons. Knowing the audience one addresses helps analyze their specific needs and meet them appropriately. An important task for instructors teaching English to IT students is to develop their ability to analyze the language they plan to use in oral or written communication: Which key verbs should be chosen? Which communicative goals do they serve best? Students should be encouraged to consider the consequences of failing to convey their message accurately.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. In summary, it should be noted that at the current stage of societal development,

knowledge of foreign languages, particularly English, is essential for an educated individual, and IT students are no exception. Proficiency in English provides them with a wide range of opportunities – from simple communication with friends and accessing professionally relevant information on the Internet to potential employment in prestigious and well-paid positions – since it is impossible to become a competent IT specialist without knowledge of the English language.

The practical significance of our study lies in the fact that the proposed recommendations for teaching English to IT students can be applied in classroom practice. They will contribute to a faster and more effective acquisition of technical translation skills for professionally oriented texts, as well as to improving the basic level of English language proficiency among future IT specialists.

Prospects for further research may focus on enhancing innovative tools for teaching English to IT students, developing new pedagogical approaches and strategies, as well as examining the effectiveness of artificial intelligence in English language learning and in the development of technical communication skills among students.

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