THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN A PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT OF KAZAKHSTANI UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

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Abstract

Purpose: The article analyzes the english language in a professional communication environment of Kazakhstani university graduates.

Methodology: The author of the article used such research methods as theoretical analysis and synthesis of foreign scientific literature on pedagogy, methods of teaching foreign languages, empirical methods of pedagogical observation, questionnaire survey, statistical processing of received data.

Result: Each specialist with higher education should be able to speak a foreign language and to communicate in any professionally significant situations and areas of communication. Today communicative competence is considered as an obligatory component of professional skills of specialists not only humanitarian but also technical profile. It is the communicative competence that helps a University graduate being in constant communication with other people, organizing and directing their activities, to fully realize their professional goals.

Applications: This research can be used for the universities, teachers and education students.

Novelty/Originality: In this research, the model of the english language in a professional communication environment of Kazakhstani university graduates is presented in a comprehensive and complete manner.

Keywords: communication, foreign language education, university graduates.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization of the labor market and modernization of language education in Kazakhstan, one of the important tasks is the preparation of competent competitive multilingual specialists for various fields of professional activity. The development and industrial progress of the republic are closely related to the quality of training professionals for these fields of activity, including the lingual one. In Kazakhstan, English speaking specialists are in particular demand. In the national documents: “Strategy “Kazakhstan-2050”, "State program of industrial innovative development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2015-2019" special attention is paid to the need of training highly qualified personnel for different spheres of activity in Kazakhstan. Among the factors hindering development of these spheres the following can be distinguished: insufficient knowledge of foreign progressive technologies, innovations, and languages, including foreign ones, since a large process of modern information comes in a foreign language, often in English. What also affects the awareness of foreign business circles about the possibilities of making investments in these areas.

REVIEW OF MODERN SCHOLARS' ARTICLES ON THE PROBLEM OF RESEARCH

Globalization covers all countries and all spheres of human life. Scholars consider globalization as a complex phenomenon that has both a positive and a negative social impact and encompasses the spheres of economy, culture, politics, and technology, as well as peoples’ identity. The positive factors of globalization are: minimization of time spent and reduction of geographical distances, intensification of trade, communication, and new social relations. However, the adverse effects are as follows: an increase in the role of the English language in society, reduction of ethnic diversity of particular countries, reduction of the role of national languages (Rigg, 2015 and; Kirkpatrick, and 2016; Philipson, 2012).

Foreign scholars note that modern international higher education is also undergoing changes (Coleman, 2016; Rigg, 2015). Students and teachers have more and more options for studying abroad as part of mobility. Most European universities take part in the newly emerging trend of internationalization, which has manifested itself after universities have entered the Bologna process. In the struggle to determine the policies and missions of universities, a new perspective has emerged between autonomous institutions, individual governments, and the educational market. Individual high demands of students and mobility of people reinforce the requirements for vocational-oriented language education.

Within the framework of globalization and internationalization, which affected higher education institutions, English is becoming increasingly important. The main motivational component was the dissemination of study programs: English-Medium Instruction (EMI), English for specific purposes (ESP), vocationally oriented language learning (VOLL) in European universities, which were stimulated by the Bologna Declaration of 1999 (Coleman, 2016). General knowledge of English by a majority of students and teachers guarantees mobility and exchange of academic experience. There
are programs for mobility, for example, Erasmus, according to which about 3 million students and 300,000 teachers have benefited from cross-border education. Students and teachers are more mobile than ever before.

English is gaining more and more Lingua Franca status worldwide. The widespread use of English is promoted through economic, political, strategic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation, and also through the media, through English language and the loss of state language), Russian (Safavi, F. (1997).). They warn that this movement will lead to the adoption of English ways of thinking. “Internationalization has become nothing more than strengthening the English language as an instrument of power and an English-speaking worldview” (Fathi & Dastoori, 2014). This process applies not only to universities in Europe but also to Asia (Selomo & Govender, 2016; Piteira et al, 2018).

In the framework of globalization and internationalization, English language proficiency is a mandatory requirement for employment. The works of English-speaking teachers of the past and present, who have contributed considerable efforts and ideas in promoting the English language and rational methods of teaching this language, are devoted to the issues of providing vocational-oriented language training. These are ESP (English for Specific Purposes) (Braciaj, 2014 ; Javid, 2014; Dmitrievich et al, 2018) and VOLL (vocationally oriented language learning methods. These methods are characterized by professional binding, focus on students’ personality, a practice-oriented approach, integration with disciplines within students’ profiles. However, the process of introducing English worldwide also faces a number of difficulties: the need to train students and teachers in non-English-speaking regions; the ideological objections of scholars arising from the perceived threat to cultural identity and the status of other languages.

Scientists of the world, who are alarming about the emerging primary importance of the English language and the loss of national identity of other national languages and cultures, have begun to pay attention to the issues of multilingualism (Barnar et al, 2011; Safdari et al, 2014). Individual multilingualism and social multilingualism are fundamental principles underlying the policy of modern countries.

In the professional environment, English has been and remains the most widely used language: at European conferences, negotiations, and publications in journals. The most important and valuable characteristics of the concepts developed in the world for teaching English should be taken into account in the process of teaching and training Kazakh specialists in English(Safavi, F. (1997).).

Kazakhstan adopted the idea of trilingualism - the mandatory use of Kazakh (state language), Russian (the language of international communication) and English (the language of the modern world economy and politics) languages in society. Proficiency in English of specialists in various fields of activity in Kazakhstan remains a priority.

Our research is devoted to finding answers to questions:
- How well the English language training goes in non-linguistic specialties of the university;
- What difficulties graduates face when using English in a professional environment.

RESEARCH METHODS

The author of the article used such research methods as theoretical analysis and synthesis of foreign scientific literature on pedagogy, methods of teaching foreign languages, empirical methods of pedagogical observation, questionnaire survey, statistical processing of received data.

Description of the results of the questionnaire survey

In order to improve the English language training for young people at the university, a survey among university graduates was conducted.

We have chosen a questionnaire survey as the most popular and objective technology of sociological research. The method of questioning allows you to identify the views of graduates on the organization of teaching English in high school.

The purpose of the study was to identify gaps and shortcomings in vocationally oriented English language training at a higher education institution in non-linguistic specialties, as well as attitudes of graduates to the level of training and effectiveness of training to optimize the English language training in non-linguistic specialties.

The object of the study were graduates of non-linguistic specialties of Kazakhstani universities that were trained in the English language in the following specialties: “transport, transport equipment, and technologies”, “construction”, “information systems”, "tourism".
The subject of the study was the English language training in a non-linguistic university.

The objectives of the research were to study the properties, problems of graduates already trained, and to find the best ways to optimize vocationally oriented teaching of the English language.

Graduates’ questionnaires consisted of four main blocks of questions. The questions of the first block were aimed at determining the identity of the graduates who were surveyed: age, sex, nationality, place of residence, the mother tongue of the respondent, the language of communication, work experience after graduation, the name of the university where graduates were trained.

The second block of questions was aimed at identifying the level of English proficiency.

The third block of questions was aimed at identifying the graduates’ satisfaction with the level of teaching English at university.

The fourth block of questions was aimed at establishing the use of English in the professional field.

The survey was conducted in the form of an anonymous online survey, in which 100 young professionals (representatives of the transport, tourism, construction industries, and information systems) took part. Particular attention was paid to companies in which university students had work experience with further employment. These companies are: 1) construction companies: BI Development, Astana G, KazAs Capital, Arkhstroyproekt, Leader Story Group; 2) tourist companies: Astana Tour, Aydana Tour, Destinations, Eurasia - Astana, Nur Way; 3) transport companies: Astana Motors, Mercur Auto LTD, Central Asia Partners Company, Green Bus Company, Hyundai Auto Astana, JSC KZT Express; 4) Information Systems Companies: JSC Zerde-Holding, Arte Soft, Metropolitan Group, Microsoft. In addition to these companies, graduates who were employed in obscure companies and organizations by profile also took part in the survey.

During the survey and selection of respondents, the following recommendations were taken into account:

1. To select respondents among those who graduated from a university 3-5 years ago;
2. To refrain from interviewing recent graduates, since their brief experience may carry inaccurate subjective information;
3. To attract the opinion of the part of graduates who currently represent the academic community.

On the introductory questions of the questionnaire, the following information has been received. The average age of the respondents was 28 years old, the sex was mostly female and partially male. The ethnic composition was represented by the majority of representatives of the Kazakh nation, but there were also representatives of Russian, Ukrainian, German, Tatar and Ingush ethnic groups. The respondents were residents of various regions of Kazakhstan and graduates of various universities in the country. 45% of graduates had Kazakh and 55% of graduates had Russian as a basic language of instruction in high school.

On the second block of questions, the following results have been obtained when identifying the respondents’ level of proficiency in English. This block included questions aimed at determining respondents’ possession of linguistic and verbal abilities when using the English language in the domestic and professional spheres.

More than 60% of the graduates surveyed indicated Kazakh as their mother tongue, and Russian as the language of communication in the domestic sphere and at work. Among the foreign languages studied were English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Korean and Chinese. It turned out that the majority (70%) of graduates surveyed learn English. The survey also showed that, on average, the interviewed graduates have been studying English for 10-15 years, which is quite a long time. In the overwhelming majority of cases, English was studied only purposefully, that is, at school, at a university, or at language courses. The same can be said about any other foreign language.

The survey showed that most of the respondents possess good knowledge of the structure and system of the English language, but they had difficulties in oral communication. The survey also revealed that the level of proficiency in other foreign languages is rather low: the respondents have rather low reading and comprehension skills, almost no speaking skills at all. The survey also asked how respondents assess their level of proficiency in English at workplaces in the professional field. The answers were that 60% “speak with difficulty”, 15% “speak fluently”, 25% “do not speak”, 40% “understand fluently”, 50% “understand with difficulties”, 65% “read fluently” and 35% “read with difficulties”. The obtained survey results indicate that for learners, speaking skills are the most difficult to form and quickly lose without constant practice. Skills in listening and reading are not lost as quickly as in speaking. The survey showed the importance of raising the level of teaching English in universities of the country (Phuong, D., Malikova, A., Economics, K. F., Kontseyeva, A., Accounting, Y. L. C., Marketing, G. Z. C.,..., & Huang, Z.).

Unfortunately, respondents almost never use other foreign languages. As a result of the survey, the respondents also identified the need to learn foreign languages, where the most increasing importance was given to the English language.

On the question of the need for language skills in everyday life and in the work sphere, respondents note that English is required in oral form during business negotiations. It is necessary for 50% of respondents, and in writing for...
the preparation of business documentation - for 50% of respondents (Krivoruchko, V. A., Raissova, A. B., Makarikhina, I. M., Yergazinova, G. D., & Kazhmuratova, B. R. (2015)).

Table 1: Level of proficiency in English

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Level of proficiency in English</th>
<th>Speak</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Read</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fluently</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with difficulty</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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A group of questions, regarding the young employees’ satisfaction with the level of vocationally oriented language training at the university, were answered as follows. Regarding the level of teaching English, respondents note the following need: an increase in the number of hours is noted by 90%; setting clear goals and objectives in training, taking into account the modern requirements of the labor market – 70%; teaching the skills of oral communication, discussion on professional topics – 80%; teaching to use professional terminology in speech – 100%; development of high-quality vocationally oriented textbooks – 80%; teaching oral practices using visual (audio, video) materials – 90%, introduction to new written materials, samples of documentation in the specialty – 90%, students’ participation in real communicative projects of the university – 60%; taking into account the needs of the future professional field of the student, based on the current situation, in conducting educational process and designing syllabuses – 90%.

Table 2: Recommendations for teaching English

| Recommendations to teaching English | Need       |%
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<tbody>
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<td>taking into account the needs of the future professional field of the student in conducting educational process</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear goals and objectives in training</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase in the number of training hours</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents’ additional recommendation regarding English classes was the involvement of a native speaker in the teaching process together with the current teacher. The greatest need to improve preparation has English. The emergence of such wishes of graduates can be explained by the ever-increasing need of society for the English language and the lack of an English-speaking language environment in our society (Seitzhanova, A., Plokikh, R., Baiburiev, R., & Tsaregorodtseva, A. (2015)).
Regarding the issue of general graduates' satisfaction with the level of language training in the specialty profile in accordance with the demands of life and the labor market, 50% - “partially satisfied”, 35% - “satisfied”, 15% - “not satisfied”. The satisfaction of graduates with continuity in language training between school, university and the labor market is: 40% - “partially satisfied”, 50% - “satisfied”, 10% - “not satisfied”. On the question of whether graduates are satisfied with the way the professional needs of students were identified during language training at the university, it is noted that: 45% of respondents are “partially satisfied”, 35% are “satisfied”, 20% are “not satisfied”. The question of whether graduates are satisfied with how the actual needs of the market were revealed during language training, received the following answers: 40% of respondents - “partially satisfied”, 35% - “satisfied”, 25% - “not satisfied”. When asked whether the respondents are satisfied with the content of the university language training programs and their consistency and professional orientation, the following figures have been obtained: 40% of respondents are “partially satisfied”, 50% are “satisfied”, and 10% are “not satisfied”. Graduates also note partial satisfaction with their adaptation to the conditions of the labor market in their specialty. These answers demonstrate the need to take into account the state of the current conditions of the labor market, the issues of constant continuity of education between school, university and the labor market, the specifics of students' future profession, and rational ways of organizing production practices (Valeeva, R. A., Baykova, O. V., & Kusainov, A. K. (2016)).

According to the block of questions concerning the use of languages in the professional sphere, respondents note that, the difficulties in using the English language at work are: lack of practice with native speakers - 90%, lack of language practice - 70%, lack of vocabulary - 70%, lack of grammar knowledge - 60%, psychological language barrier in using the language and fear of speaking - 60%, inability to make statements in writing - 70%, inability to independently communicate in language - 70%.

Table 3: Recommendations for teaching English

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of practice with native speakers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of language practice</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of vocabulary</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of grammar knowledge</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>the language and fear of speaking</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to make statements in writing</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to independently communicate</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding proficiency in English, 95% of graduates note the important role and relevance of such competencies as: experience of language practice on the specialty; ability to make presentations and speak at symposia, conferences on the specialty; ability to establish high-quality interpersonal communication with foreign colleagues in the language; knowledge of professional terminology in the language; the ability to adapt freely in changing communicative conditions; the ability to find and use the necessary language information in library and Internet resources. Equally important is the certificate of passing the international exam. When communicating in any language, according to their opinion, the personal qualities of a person is using a language are important: skills of public speaking, interpersonal skills, etc.

Thus, the study conducted by means of a survey of graduates of universities allows drawing some conclusions regarding the level of English language training in a non-linguistic university. The introduction of rational ways and solutions, taking into account modern realities, are required by: the processes of developing English language training programs; methods of organizing the course of studies; the process of preparation of educational-methodical complexes of disciplines and teaching aids.

REFERENCES