

TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO YOUNG ECONOMISTS IN UKRAINE IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Due to the tendency to globalisation, economists all over the world have a strong necessity to master a foreign language. Young generation of future economists needs innovative approaches to language teaching. This article reveals the results of the research into methodological and psychological aspects of teaching a foreign language to students of economic departments in Ukraine and states the essential educational objectives. It also suggests a novel teaching framework whose major goal is to give an advantage to students in their overcoming language, communication and cross-cultural barriers in studying process and which can be regarded as highly integral to the objectives.

Keywords: Educational Framework, Cross-Cultural Communication, Teaching a Foreign Language to Economists, Innovative Approaches

1 INTRODUCTION

Globalisation of the world economy and politics has brought a wider transparency to national borders and English as a means of communication has also won popularity throughout the world for its ease of use. Business people and managers of multinational companies, international funds and banks arrange and conduct their meetings in English in all parts of the world, and they have to take into account the way things are perceived in these various locations. This includes different perceptions of meals, customs, traditions, cultural behaviours, greetings and even facts, which one would think were generally accepted everywhere. All these factors bring about the necessity for students of economic departments to learn English as a foreign language, and for lecturers, to seek new methods and approaches with a view to facilitating the up-to-date studying-teaching process. The article suggests a research into the main factors which impact training young economists, problems which both students and lecturers might encounter on the way and methods to handle them. It is also aimed at developing a framework for teaching a foreign language to future economists and methods which can be applied by lecturers with a view to helping the students to tackle language, communication and cross-cultural barriers while learning.

2 METHODS

The article presents a language teaching framework that draws from this research in order to train students of economic departments. It has to be underlined that management describes what is perhaps the most challenging and difficult of human endeavors. It is the process by which we attempt to attain goals beyond the reach of a single individual. It requires that the lecturers work effectively and efficiently with and through others. It is not a single skill but rather a dynamic body of knowledge with the goal of the fusion of multiple and diverse skills/competences. [1]

It has to be stressed that a broad education preparing the students for managerial roles in business and leadership roles in society. And also we are going to dwell upon the educational objectives. In recent years, an increasing number of the educational objectives have been offered. They are:

- To gain competence in analysis, decision making and evaluation in both public and private organizations.

- To develop and enrich interpersonal skills.
- To develop the competence to manage within the social, economic and international environment of organizations.
- To provide access to the technical skills necessary in each of the major functional areas of organizations with specific emphasis on the core elements of people and production.
- To enhance educational opportunity through the theoretical and applied research and business consulting activities of the faculty and students.
- To encourage intellectual enquiry into the lessons and skills of the past and present so as to be able to affect the future.
- To develop and promote ethical behaviour and social responsibility in future managers.[2]

The mentioned objectives are central to gaining current competences. There is a great need as well as considerable potential in developing them. Our framework can be regarded as highly integral to the objectives.

3 DISCUSSION

In order to train young economists, lecturers have to take into account that their students as future specialists must operate on a number of different premises at any time. These premises arise from their culture in which they are working.

And of course they have to communicate. Effective communication between parties in business is everything. But there are several big problems with communication:

- Negotiators may not be talking to each other in such a way as to be understood or to talk their partner into a more constructive step intensifying national, regional and global cooperation and the sharing of knowledge.
- If you are not hearing what the other side/party is saying, there is no communication and support of concepts, values, methods and policies.[3]
- Another problem is misunderstanding. It is becoming increasingly obvious that misunderstanding can be caused by cultural differences. For example: in American English word “*resume*” means – *a brief account of an applicant’s personal details, education and previous job(s)* and in British English it means – *an abstract or synopsis*.

Cultural information is included in ESL texts and lecturers recognize the importance of the underlying dynamics of a culture in language and communication. Such steps are laudable, but they may fall short of the mark when it comes to actually equipping learners with the cognitive skills they need in a second-culture environment.[4]

In different countries, social taboos, politics, and religious traditions and values differ. These cultural variables need to be respected if students are to benefit from new experiences yet the commercial market today does not seem to have a universally applicable intercultural communication (IC) program or text that is suitable for culturally divergent student populations. [2] To compensate for the lack of IC materials, we often to develop our own IC courses that meet local standards of acceptability. Once we (lecturers, instructors) understand the basic concepts of cultural comparison we can develop appropriate learning materials.

The educational reality is based on the content as dialectics category which means a complex of interactions and changes. Curriculum takes content (from external standards and local goals) and shapes it into a plan for how to conduct effective teaching and learning. It is thus more than a list of topics and lists of key facts and skills (the “input”). It can be called a map of how to achieve the “outputs” of desired student performance, in which appropriate learning activities and assessment are suggested to make it more likely that the students achieve the desired results [4]. This framework is based on the results of empirical research conducted in economic departments of such higher educational establishments in Ukraine as National Technical University of Ukraine “KPI” and National University of Food Technologies.

Lecturers often have difficulties teaching English to students of economic departments because of a frequent discordance between their knowledge of the subject and level of the language. In case the

awareness of the subject outstrips the language skills as it often appears to occur at senior years of studying, the following approaches to teaching can be the solution:

- Content-based instruction
- Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)
- Foreign language immersion [5]

Content-based instruction approach is based on the main principles of the economic area being studied and closely connected with it. It involves mastering extra-linguistic information related to the economic subject. Therefore, applying the approach eliminates the gap between language teaching and subject teaching. There, students' brainstorming and discussions related to professional issues, cases-studies, projects, presentations performed in a foreign language, can be of help.

CLIL approach is related to the mentioned above method, however, it appears to be far wider. It involves any foreign language teaching, as long as the language is considered as a tool for providing extra-linguistic content.

Both of these approaches can be united as integrated studying as they provide integration of language and content. The benefits of integrated studying include growth in students' linguistic competence, their decision-making and problem-solving abilities, more profound vocabulary, grammar and communication skills, a shift from artificial to real and practically significant topics.[6]

The method of immersion considers teaching a university subject or subjects in a foreign language, completely superseding students' mother tongue from the process of studying.

Under the impact of practice demanding perfect knowledge of a foreign language there are reasons for close mutual cooperation between lecturers and students. There is pressure for improvement that is increasing more and more. In addition, there are special job requirements according to which students' needs have changed and the lecturers have good reasons to be concerned about anticipating and meeting the students' changing language wants and needs. It is believed that most students are unlikely to learn everything they need to succeed in a class that meets for only a limited number of hours weekly. Involving students in preparing self-directed projects as home assignment we provide more opportunities for using and interacting in English and help them gain confidence and become independent language learners. In such a way students are engaged in the process of continued learning that even develops better brains. So brain-compatible teaching via self-directed projects as a kind of home assignment is suggested. Projects have to become one of the main components in any program.

Involving students in preparing self-directed projects on cultural differences as home assignment we provide more opportunities for using and interacting in English and help them gain confidence and become independent language learners. In such a way students are engaged in the process of continued learning that even develops better brains. So we suggest brain-compatible teaching via self-directed projects as a kind of home assignment. Projects have to become one of the main components in any program.

Moreover, it is obvious that we are now at a time in human development where digital technologies are making an increasingly significant contribution to language learning in many parts of the world and there are established and high profile journals and conferences where research is presented and discussed. These digital technologies are widely used in teaching and learning foreign languages in Ukraine. One of the ways to aid the process of teaching by means of technologies is computer assisted language learning (CALL). It was applied as an experiment in the studying process in Kyiv Economic Institute of Management. The benefits of this method of learning include interactive framework where each student is involved in the process every moment of the lesson, has an opportunity to work at his/her own tempo and to check individually the mistakes made. However, some drawbacks were also revealed. The method partly eliminates the role of a lecturer which results in students' perplexity in unambiguous situations; students lack real-life practice of speaking and decision-making skills.

On the basis of the research it is possible to state that reading still is the dominant technique in the learning process featuring stable and flexible possibilities for gaining and polishing language and

translation competences. Reading and translation have a high potential to fit students' wants and needs and further push learning efficiencies. Reading as a classic technique is appreciated as an important part of students' development to increase the efficiency on the one hand decrease the number of mistakes in comprehension and translation on the other hand. Based on the kind of text samples, establishment of the general effect of reading and translation is therefore evident. The variety of changes that can be observed in class depends on texts, their structure, style and initial purposes. The changes of values are rather significant.

While working with economic texts students have had prior practice during graded reader work in over such key points as:

- developing knowledge;
- examining alternatives;
- being highly selective in gathering information;
- being critical to each other's ideas;
- seeking expert opinion;
- doing clear analysis of the issue;
- having contingency plan.

With the wide range of support texts as materials, the lecturers are ready to meet with the diverse students' wants and needs in a variety of real life situations that will help them with their own career decisions. It is essential that the students become more independent taking their reading performance seriously and appreciating their academic achievements.

The point of gaining and developing knowledge is closely connected with the students' future as specialists: there is a psychological factor of thinking and deciding in a group but not to be responsible for making a decision. Students can agree with something false in case they are not knowledgeable enough they trust in others' expertise instead of being in doubt. This conclusion gave us the idea that too many decisions are being made nowadays without full understanding some of the major and acute issues under discussion. We would underline the necessity to educate the students in major spheres – scientific, technical, logical, and, of course, financial/ banking and cultural with the help of wide range of thematically arranged texts.[10]

It is right that lecturers are supposed to be encouraged to create conditions within the classroom that make students happy spots to be in and another uphill task is to create a culture of enterprise. In this case subject-specific texts can be used as they can motivate students towards English as a tool for effective learning.

Lecturers need to focus on how language develops students with managerial skills in social interaction: how a student's current performance reflects native speaker competence and how students act upon their linguistic knowledge to achieve meaning in certain predictable social contexts. The process of learning raises the students, their awareness that they are members of a particular culture. Once students know how to talk about their culture, they are ready to discuss values, expectations and traditions of others. Then we can speak about a high degree of intellectual objectivity.

While exploring their own culture, students come up to defining what culture is: "Culture is the total way of life of a group or society".[9] Students also come to conclusion that cultures are formed to meet human needs. For instance, whatever the case, the French do not say no to wine, the Spanish observe their siesta, and the Ukrainians are not likely to give up a bit of soul – searching prior to starting business with a new partner.

Then the lecturers' goal is to instill students the sense that they are members of our culture and their way of life has evolved to meet particular needs. And one more thing is to allow students to become aware that norms of behaviour are culturally defined and varied.

Critical incidents to see how our world views occasionally collide and leave people perplexed and offended are to be discussed and analyzed.

To sum up, students have to be ready for cross-cultural communication. They have to take into account cross-cultural misunderstanding – conflicts of values and expectations. They have to deal with

what cannot be overlooked by any contemporary businessperson – peculiarities of business etiquette in a foreign country.

The success stories of the most famous businessmen around the world are testimony to the fact that it is not only professional knowledge that plays an important role in their conquest, but also the ability to convince people and advocate their ideas. The power of words is not only in their meaning. That is, what a person says, but how they say it. Unfortunately, some businessmen do not pay much attention to the latter aspect. The fact is that a lack of speech culture is one of the reasons for failures in communicating with business partners. [3]

Observing the rules of speech aesthetics has become a part of business etiquette in the business world. To observe these rules is to show respect for yourself and others.

So our job is to help learners by dividing the language into its components, such as sounds, syllables, stress and intonation that assists to gain better knowledge necessary for successful mastering the language as a means of communication providing the harmonious and creative entrance of students in the economic life. In cooperation with learning, social and cultural environment the student becomes a subject, which moves consciously to development, independence and self-realisation.

4 RESULTS

The research presented in the article was conducted in economic departments of three higher educational establishments in Ukraine. As a result, it can be concluded that in the epoch business international integration, businessmen require new skills and competences. Consequently, new teaching objectives for training young economists have arisen. Cross-cultural awareness, communication skills, keeping to business etiquette are becoming more and more demanded in modern business society. Therefore, a greater variety of new methods are being implemented in teaching the economists. The methods vary from content-based instruction at the beginning of studying to full language immersion at senior years. However, the later method is scarce as the majority of non-linguistic departments in Ukraine finish foreign language teaching after three years of studying. Digital technologies are becoming more and more widely used in teaching the language, which assists and facilitates the process both for students and lecturers.

The presented framework gives lecturers practical advice and guidance together with resource ideas and materials for the classroom. As a result the lecturers deliver inspiring and motivating classes. At the same time students' experience is richly varied leading to fueling class discussions/debates; students' English is improved leading to passing exams and boosting their scores and students' lives and career prospects are transformed really for better.

Working over cross-cultural communication with the students of economic departments is therefore an important pathway to language acquiring. It has involved a strategy to create a framework that has turned out to be invaluable sources of background knowledge, reading skills development and provoking discussions in class. Another advantage of the framework is in its flexibility: it can be used as a whole or by parts depending on the number of classroom hours and the level of English language assessment of the students; it can be used as supplementary in the course of providing the students with new competences; it can be complicated in order to meet the demands of the students' future professional orientation. As a result, the framework has been developed for addressing global, interrelated challenges through a set of actionable approaches. The framework provides Ukrainian lecturers and students with access to broader labour markets, but also prepares them for increased competition. While the best way to address such increased competition is to teach students to improve the competitiveness as well as those aspects of the general business environment which is hampering Ukraine's competitiveness.

5 CONCLUSION

The article presents arguments to stimulate a rethinking of the educational objectives and curriculum content taking into account globalisation of the world economy and politics based on effective partnerships that are rarely born out of treating everyone the same. Knowledge and understanding is

essential in order to get along well with partners from other countries. Cultures are so varied and so different throughout the world that management has to take into account differences rather than simply assume similarities. There is growing consensus that efforts to accelerate gaining competences have to address the issue of human development and integration into global value chains.

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