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BUSINESS COMMUNICATION SKILLS BUILD-UP AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF MGIMO STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

Abstract: In this article, the authors share their experience in teaching foreign language business communication at the English Department No. 4 of MGIMO University. The article contains the description of a number of course books and training aids developed at the English Department No. 4 of MGIMO along with the methods of teaching business communication used by the teachers of this department. The article presents examples of exercises that contribute to the formation and development of business communication skills as part of the professional competencies of international students. The article emphasizes that the combination of interactive, reproductive and productive methods of teaching English within the subject of "business communication", along with the use of both paper and electronic text-books and training aids, leads to good results in mastering the programme material.

Keywords: business communication, professional competencies, professional language training, educational environment, reproductive and productive teaching methods

In a rapidly changing world and, accordingly, tightening requirements for the level of professionalism of labor market participants, higher education is to handle the training and shaping of competitive specialists who are ready in the best way possible to use their professional competencies while performing their employment duties. Professional language training is an integral part of the characteristics that determine the credentials of a specialist (for example, an international economist).

In this regard, MGIMO University as an institution of international education has been actively creating a favorable educational environment for many years, which makes it possible to apply a variety of educational algorithms, build individualized personal trajectories for the education of students, flexibly combine learning on online platforms with courses on paper, and introduce programmes of professional language propaedeutics for international economists.

Interactive, reproductive and productive teaching methods are used as part of the business communication teaching programme at the English Department No. 4 of MGIMO, which allows students not only to get an idea of the peculiarities of different cultures that should be taken into account when communicating, the

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correct interpretation of the cultural signs of a communicant - a representative of another culture, but also to form translation skills (translating dialogues based on a text, oral consecutive interpretation of dialogues), to form a foreign language communicative professional competence (performing creative tasks that require application of acquired knowledge in the field the students major).

The course book “The Practice of Translating Business Communication Dialogues. A Practical Course in Business Dialogue Translation and Interpretation” under the general editorship of Desyatova O.V. is a good example of the mentioned above practice. The first part of this course book presents dialogues for mastering the translation skills. The training is based on the use of previously studied materials, in other words, a reproductive teaching method is used. The application of the acquired knowledge in the interpreting dialogues of the economic content forms and develops new skills and competencies that are necessary for international economists in the implementation of their professional activities. The fact that the dialogues have a "mirror" version makes it easier to study independently and consolidate the material.

The second part of the course book is a set of tasks that are close to a productive teaching method. For example, there are tasks to communicate, explain or find out from their communicant some information, and the student can practically translate the information itself, presented in the task. For example: “Ask who can competently answer your questions on the terms of delivery ...”, “Answer that you know about this issue and have the authority to conduct preliminary negotiations ...” But there are also purely productive tasks when students are to formulate their thoughts using their own resources.

For example, “Offer a form of payment”, “Explain why this form is more convenient than any other”, or “Take time to think about the issue”.

In the second part of the mentioned above course book, one general task is given: “Choose the wording you think most appropriate to render the following dialogues. You may add some extra details where necessary.”

Further, before each dialogue, information about the interlocutors is given (for example: Interlocutor A is a supplier, Interlocutor B is a potential customer), and a communicative goal is determined for each communicant.

For example: The communicative goal of Interlocutor A is to provide a potential buyer with information about the terms of delivery and to get a vis-à-vis interested in a personal meeting. The communicative goal of Interlocutor B is to have a telephone conversation with the supplier to clarify the terms of delivery. Then

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communication steps are defined so that the trainees have specific instructions on how to build a conversation. By completing such productive assignments, students benefit from the accumulated experience of consecutive interpreting, which they mastered while completing the assignments in the first part of the study guide.

As an example, the following tasks can be given: “Report when the answer to the request was sent”; “Express regret that no response was received and look for a possible explanation”; "Offer to meet at the supplier's office for negotiations"; “Agree to the negotiations and agree on a date”; “Express readiness to provide a discount on certain conditions”; “Pull your time a little by talking about market fluctuations”; “Politely express surprise”; “Doubt whether to include this clause in the contract”; “Express disapproval of the non-constructive behavior of another supplier”; “End the conversation”.

The appendix outlines the mechanisms of oral consecutive interpretation, review questions of theoretical linguistics, adapted for understanding by students. For this, a special Glossary is attached as a separate part.

The combination of two methodological approaches in teaching international business communication to international economists-students shows good results in the acquisition of the educational material.

Another example is a two year online programme on the Moodle platform for the 3rd and 4th year students, developed by teachers of the English Department No. 4 Guseva T.S., Maltseva A.M. and Kuptsova E.Yu. The programme enables the students to access the materials at any time convenient (listen to the necessary dialogue or watch a presentation on the topic being studied at the moment), which is very convenient. The course also provides for writing tests after the theme has been studied, and the teacher can view mistakes made by the students during the test, which allows to immediately see challenging for the students moments and to evaluate on how well the theme was acquired. Each block has tasks aimed at practicing and memorizing various terms, drilling grammar structures that are characteristic of the style of business communication, and training prepositions. There are also tasks for performing a two-way interpretation of dialogues, writing letters on the proposed situations, summarizing the information contained in the correspondence.

For example: students are offered a series of letters as part of business correspondence, followed by a summary of information (read, discuss and translate the following letters)...; summing up: What terms of payment are discussed in letters 1-3? What is the position of the Buyer? Why? What is the position of the

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Seller? Why? What terms of the L/C are put forward by the Seller? Why? What shipping documents are required by the Buyer?) or you are invited to write your own answer to the proposed letter (Read, discuss, translate & write a reply).

Dear Sirs

You inquired after the methods of payment for the order that offer protection to both parties. In our case we would recommend Documentary Collection. It is a relatively low-cost method of payment where the Exporter gives instructions to his bank as to the utilization of the supplied shipping documents, i.e.:

Release the documents to the Importer after payment - D/P -documents against payment;

Release the documents against acceptance of the draft - D/A -documents against acceptance.

On accepting the draft at, say, 30 days, the Importer undertakes to pay as scheduled and gets title to the goods that he can sell and only after that honors the draft.

As you can see, this method of payment is beneficial for you as Importer. Documentary Collection is also acceptable to us as Exporter because the bank protects our title to the goods until the draft is accepted.

We hope that our offer suits you.

Respectfully yours,

…….

Another example of a productive task: FIND YOUR VOICE: Make dialogues basing on the above letters. You might invite an interpreter.

Such tasks help to evaluate on the acquisition of a given theme and are performed by students after studying the section, writing and analyzing tests and quizzes.

Thus, all conditions for the students to be able to do as much independent work as possible, relying on adequate methodological tools, and improving their professional competencies, have been created.

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