

IMPROVING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY SKILLS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BY MEANS OF LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO

ВДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ МОВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ УНІВЕРСИТЕТІВ ЗАСОБАМИ МОВНОГО ПОРТФЕЛЯ

The article deals with the problem of language proficiency skills formation of university students majoring in Economics. On the grounds of the theoretical sources analysis Language Portfolio is suggested as a method of communicative language competence formation of future economists. The main components and parts of Language Portfolio are examined.

The necessity to implement a large-scale reform of education in Ukraine requires the introduction of a new approach to the process of preparation of higher education institutions graduates. The new state European integration policy of Ukraine into European economic, political and educational structures involves the training of competitive specialists capable of successfully implementing the process of cooperation between Ukraine and Europe and the rest of the world. One of the most important conditions for the successful accomplishment of this task is to teach young specialists the necessary skills for professional communication in a foreign language, conducting business negotiations, reading and understanding professional literature. Teaching such skills to university students is an essential component in achieving the main goal of teaching a foreign language in higher education institutions – mastering a foreign language as a means of professional communication.

The aim of the article is to analyze the formation of language proficiency skills of future economists. It should be emphasized that the formation of language competence itself does not guarantee an increase in educational efficiency of students who major in Economics. Effective use of language portfolio in the process of learning a foreign language is possible under the following pedagogical conditions: the consistent and systematic introduction of this method for four types of speech activity, taking into account the level of communicative competence of students, improvement of IT training of teachers and reasonable application of self-study activities. The portfolio method, together with traditional educational technologies, can be an effective mechanism for motivating and developing education at university.

Key words: language proficiency, language portfolio, higher educational establishment, English language teaching, speech activity.

Стаття присвячена актуальній проблемі формування мовної компетентності у студентів університетів з використанням

мовного портфеля. Проаналізовано різні підходи до визначення мовної компетентності студентів університетів, зокрема студентів економічних спеціальностей. На основі аналізу теоретичних джерел запропоновано використання Мовного Портфеля як методу формування комунікативної мовної компетенції майбутнього фахівця. Розглянуті основні компоненти і розділи Мовного Портфеля.

Необхідність проведення масштабної реформи освіти в Україні вимагає впровадження нового підходу до процесу підготовки випускників вищих навчальних закладів. Нова державна політика інтеграції України в європейські економічні, політичні та освітні структури передбачає підготовку конкурентоспроможних спеціалістів, здатних успішно впроваджувати процес співпраці між Україною, Європою та світом. Однією з найважливіших умов успішного виконання цього завдання є навчання молодих спеціалістів необхідних навичок професійного спілкування іноземною мовою, проведення ділових переговорів, читання та розуміння фахової літератури. Надбання таких навичок студентами університету є найважливішим компонентом у досягненні основної мети викладання іноземної мови у вищих навчальних закладах – оволодінні іноземною мовою як засобом професійного спілкування.

Мета цієї статті – проаналізувати формування навичок володіння мовою майбутніх економістів. Слід підкреслити, що лише формування мовної компетентності не гарантує підвищення ефективності навчання студентів, що спеціалізуються на економіці. Ефективне використання мовного портфоліо в процесі вивчення іноземної мови можливе за таких педагогічних умов: послідовне та систематичне впровадження цього методу до чотирьох видів мовленнєвої діяльності з урахуванням рівня комунікативної компетентності учнів, вдосконалення ІТ підготовки викладачів та розумне застосування самостійної роботи студентів. Метод портфоліо разом із традиційними освітніми технологіями може бути ефективним механізмом мотивації та розвитку освіти в університеті.

Ключові слова: мовна компетентність, мовний портфель, заклад вищої освіти, викладання англійської мови, мовленнєва діяльність.

УДК 378.147.228

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32843/2663-6085-2019-18-3-13>

Lunina O.M.,

Senior Lecturer in Pedagogy,
foreign philology and translation
Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National
University of Economics

Problem statement. The main goal of teaching foreign languages at university is to use a foreign language for professional communication, which is one of the areas of modern methodological science, particularly “English for Specific Purposes”. European Language Portfolio was suggested as a method of language teaching in the European recommendations on language education [9]. The Language portfolio is necessary for a detailed reflection of learning experience, acquired language skills and the con-

tent of language courses, stimulating self-education and the process of learning foreign languages. The globalization of the world economy and a growing demand for competent English-speaking professionals in the job market have been placing a greater emphasis on English language teaching in Ukraine. The universities emphasize developing English skills for professional communication. English is one of the core subjects in universities and it is essential that students' language proficiency corresponds to up-to-

date job requirements. Great efforts have been made to improve language training at all education levels. [2]. Due to the processes of globalization there are new requirements of employers for foreign language proficiency of future economists.

One of such requirements is that they can search the Internet for professional specific information in a foreign language. The worldwide network is constantly used by students outside the classroom, while working on assignments, essays in foreign languages. The Internet contains an infinite and inexhaustible number of sources for teaching a foreign language, makes it possible to communicate in virtual space using e-mail, chat rooms, forums, blogs. One of the main components of improving the learning process efficiency is the student's motivation for cognitive activity and personal achievement.

Overview of recent researches and publications. The Language portfolio (LP) has been used in educational institutions at various levels in more than fifteen member countries of the European Union since the beginning of the 90s. In 2004 Nikolaeva S.Yu. and Yagelskaya N.V. developed a professionally oriented language portfolio for higher educational institutions of Economics in Ukraine [4. p. 9-12]. Students should become active subjects of the educational process, they should be given the opportunity to tell about what they have already studied, what interests them, what they want to study, what is more difficult for them. If students think about the course of their learning process, this helps to increase motivation, develop their educational competence, provides students with the desire to learn throughout their lives, as noted in the materials on piloting the LP in different countries [5. p. 25].

According to Nikolaeva S.Yu. and Yagelskaya N.V. [4. p. 9–12], the Portfolio for economists is efficient in universities, since it better corresponds to the active involvement of students in independent work on a foreign language, providing them with means to determine the level of foreign language proficiency. The Portfolio method is considered the most adequate according to modern requirements, but its implementation is impossible without the widespread use of new information technologies. The rapid development of the information society over the past two decades has led to the transformation of the model of education. The main purpose of training was not only the acquisition of a certain amount of abstract knowledge, but also the education of an educated, active and open-minded member of modern society.

The ability to work with modern information technologies is considered as mandatory and necessary for each specialist, especially for the specialist in economics. One of the main components of increasing the effectiveness of the educational process is the student's motivation for cognitive activity and personal achievements. The cognitive activity of students is successful only when their independence develops.

Tarnopolsky O.B. and Kozhushko S.P. consider that in order to teach a foreign language to students of economic faculties it is necessary to introduce autonomy of creative educational activity [7], in which students independently solve problematic creative tasks by means of a foreign language. Therefore, the student himself has complete autonomy in conducting his own cognitive activities, which, however, does not exclude the advice and assistance of the teacher and other students, if necessary.

It should be noted that most freshmen have a clear motivation. It is very important not only to stimulate this motivation in the educational process, but also not to reduce it only to the desire to get a diploma. The student must understand why he needs certain knowledge and skills, how his personal achievements will be reflected in his future life, professional activity, employment, career. Several types of assignments are used for self-study activity of students: preparation of essays, presentations, reports in a foreign language. Presentation of the abstract is performed in PowerPoint in front of students. Such a learning technology contributes to the development of students' communication skills, critical thinking, self-presentation, the ability to conduct discussions, uphold and argue their point of view, synthesize the material studied and present it to the audience in a quality manner. The student can use the best abstract or presentation in his language portfolio to demonstrate his ability to work with authentic sources, to compile information in a foreign language [8].

A language portfolio is an effective way to motivate students and develop personality-oriented education. The term "portfolio" is used in modern education not only as a language portfolio. Portfolio is a combination of educational and professional achievements, their presentation. There is a portfolio of managers, specialists, departments, universities. Typically, a portfolio represents the self-presentation of student learning achievements, which he independently and quickly captures; work on the portfolio motivates the student to obtain maximum results in studies, research activities. A diploma with portfolio can be an instrument that demonstrates to the employer the achievements and abilities of a young specialist, including his level of foreign language proficiency.

The aim of the article is to analyze the language proficiency skills formation of university students using Language Portfolio method. Teaching effective communication skills must be the cornerstone for any university curriculum. A student who can't communicate effectively in English will not be able to compete in the modern world and to apply his professional knowledge.

Results. Social, economic, political and cultural changes in Ukraine, its integration into the world educational environment, implementation of the EU recommendations as for the competent specialist training are impossible without personal and professional

development of a specialist who is able to adapt to multicultural, multilingual environment for the realization of personal and professional needs. This is impossible without achieving a high level of foreign language proficiency. In the strategic documents such as: the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" (2014), the "National Education Development Strategy for the period 2012-2021", the "The Concept of Ukraine Education Development during 2015-2025" it is emphasized that competitive specialists in Economics must be able to speak fluently in a foreign language, to conduct business negotiations with foreign partners, to prepare financial documents, to make financial agreements/reports, to discuss financial and economic issues taking into account current trends of economic development and to improve professional knowledge by means of reading professional literature in a foreign language [4].

Communication is an important skill for every modern student to master. With massive online social media usage changing how the world communicates, it's no wonder some struggle to properly communicate their thoughts and feelings and tailor them to the right audience. Advances in digital media, changing career environment and greater competition in colleges and workplaces makes improving student communication skills a must. Cramming tips the night before a job interview won't do the trick if students are trying to make an impression in the collaborative workplaces of the future.

How to develop communication or speaking skills? Just like any other skill set, communication is one that needs practice. There are different strategies to enhance students' speaking abilities. 1) One of the most common is to offer group presentations and assignments. Team-building exercises can also help students sharpen both oral and written communication skills. Not only does it offer students the chance to work in small groups, thereby reducing some of the pressure, but it also gives them the opportunity to debate their opinions, take turns, and work together towards a common goal. 2) Ask open-ended questions. Because they require more than a one- or two-word response, open-ended questions are vital for inspiring discussion and demonstrating that there are multiple ways to perceive and answer a question. Introduce short informal conversations and challenge students to use open-ended questions. 3) Use tasks and activities that foster critical thinking. Another task-based method for improving student communication skills is through critical thinking exercises. These can be done verbally or through written assignments that give students the chance to answer questions creatively using their own words and expressions. It is important to teach many communication skills, for example summarizing a discussion. Students need to know what a summary is. They may also need some sentence stems to structure summarizing a discussion ("The main points you

raised were...", "In summary, we talked about..."). They may also need practice judging when it's useful to summarize a discussion [8].

To sum it up, making students speak more English in class is not only a matter of "forcing" them to speak. This requires thorough preparation of proper teaching materials. A few tips for teachers in general: 1) reduce your "Teacher Talking Time" in the classroom, by giving simple and clear instructions. Being a teacher of English is different from being a lecturer. 2) increase "Student Talking Time", eliciting students' participation. 3) avoid yes/no questions; ask questions that make students speak in order to make themselves clear. 4) be careful how you correct students. 5) When students are having fluency practice (for instance, free conversation), which is totally different from pronunciation or grammar practice, never correct them, unless something really serious happens. Let them feel that they can communicate in English despite their mistakes in pronunciation, grammar etc. Praise them for speaking and show satisfaction. 8) don't forget that participating/speaking is what really matters in this situation, and when a student participates (answering questions, clarifying, helping other in English, arguing etc) accept that as something good, otherwise you will make your student shy and quiet (lack of participation). 9) for activities such as group discussion/debate, topics must be of students' interest and, the last but not the least, relevant to their field of study and future profession [5].

The ability to write well is one of the most important skills students can learn for success in the business world. English has emerged as the leading language of business. Today almost two billion people speak English at a useful level. Being able to command the English language has become a valuable professional skill. The most difficult part of professional communication is effectively writing for your audience and expressing complexity in an easy-to-understand way. Business writing is an essential skill for every working professional, yet writing competence in a foreign language tends to be one of the most difficult skills to acquire [5].

For improving language proficiency skills the Language portfolio must meet the following characteristics: universality, accessibility, consistency, manageability [2. p. 24]. The structure of the language portfolio consists of three sections: Language Passport, Language Biography and Dossier. This structure allows to display the current level of foreign language proficiency, to collect valuable information about speech competencies, that is, to attract students to the organization of the educational process, increase the level of responsibility for their work, and intensify the desire for self-improvement. The portfolio of an economist takes various forms: a paper version, an electronic version or a presentation on a website (web portfolio). The paper version of the language portfolio can com-

plement the electronic version. Students' portfolios can be posted on the university website. This will be the best option for self-presentation of graduates and the university itself.

Conclusions. The web portfolio offers students great opportunities in terms of designing personal pages on the Internet, presenting their success, academic results and achievements. In contrast to the traditional resume, which is provided when applying for a job, the portfolio allows you to represent and evaluate the personal and professional competencies of a person in a more innovative and sophisticated way [10]. What is a student web portfolio? Portfolio is self-promotion, where a young specialist presents all his best achievements, language skills particularly. Thus, the student's portfolio performs the following functions: self-presentation, employment, motivation, development of personal and professional competencies. After completing studies at the university, the student's portfolio goes to the graduate's portfolio site section, where he can present his career growth, postgraduate achievements in professional activities [4, p. 10]. The vast majority of techniques for working with a language portfolio includes involving students in discussions, explanations, presentations, and ensures the development of both communication skills and improving language proficiency.

In conclusion it should be noted that the portfolio method together with traditional educational techniques can be an effective mechanism for motivating students, focused on improving professional competence and skills. The most challenging teaching problems can be successfully solved by applying different strategies and innovative methods.

REFERENCES:

1. Гапонова В.М. Принципи та функції педагогічного тестового контролю // Зб. наук. праць № 20. Частина II. Хмельницький : Вид. академії ПВУ, 2002. С. 91–96.
2. Європейський Мовний Портфель для економістів (проект) // Укладач Н.В. Ягельська. К. : Ленвіт, 2004. 56 с.
3. Загальноєвропейські Рекомендації з мовної освіти: вивчення, викладання, оцінювання // Науковий редактор українського видання С.Ю. Ніколаєва. К. : Ленвіт, 2003. 273 с.
4. Ніколаєва С.Ю., Ягельська Н.В. Європейський Мовний Портфель для економістів // Іноземні мови. 2004. № 2. С. 9–12.
5. Ніколаєва С.Ю. Практикум з методики тестування іншомовної лексичної компетенції (на матеріалі англійської мови) : Навчальний посібник. К. : ІЗМН, 1996. 311 с.
6. Саєнко Н.С. Теоретичні аспекти контролю у навчанні іншомовного професійного спілкування // Вісник Нац. тех. унів. України «Київський політехнічний інститут». Філософія. Психологія. Педагогіка. № 1 (16), 2006. С. 74–78.
7. Тарнопольский О.Б., Кожушко С.П. Методика обучения английскому языку для делового общения : Учебное пособие. К. : Ленвит, 2004. 100 с.
8. Ягельська Н.В. Прийоми використання «Європейського Мовного Портфеля для економістів» у самостійній роботі з іноземної мови // Іноземні мови. 2004. № 4. С. 3–8.
9. Common European Framework of Reference. URL: <http://www.coe.int>.
10. Rogers P. Thoughts on Portfolio Assessment in TESOL. ESP World, Issue 2 (28), Volume 9, 2010 // URL: <http://esp-world.info>.