

PBL AS A TOOL OF DEVELOPING 'HARD' AND 'SOFT' SKILLS WHEN TEACHING SECURITY AND DEFENSE SECTOR SPECIALISTS IN UKRAINE

ПРОЕКТНЕ НАВЧАННЯ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ РОЗВИТКУ «ЖОРСТКИХ» І «М'ЯКИХ» НАВИЧОК ПІД ЧАС НАВЧАННЯ ФАХІВЦІВ СЕКТОРУ БЕЗПЕКИ І ОБОРОНИ В УКРАЇНІ

UDC [378.147-057.36:811](045)
DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2663-6085/2023/58.1.30>

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Project-based learning (PBL) has been increasingly recognized as an effective approach to develop both 'hard' and 'soft' skills in various fields of education. However, little research has been done to investigate its impact specifically in foreign language training for military personnel. This article aims to fill this gap by examining the role of PBL in the development of 'hard' and 'soft' skills in foreign language training within military institutions of the security and defense sector of Ukraine. Through analysis of existing publications, the researchers found that project-based learning not only enhances language proficiency but also significantly improves development of critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration skills, and teamwork abilities. These skills were developed through various project-based activities, such as group projects and role-playing exercises. Furthermore, the study found that project-based teaching is particularly effective in developing critical thinking skills and enhancing cadets' ability to analyze complex information. The authors believe that project-based learning can be an effective pedagogical approach and tool for learning a foreign language in military institutions, as it engages learners in meaningful and relevant tasks by providing a realistic and immersive learning environment that simulates real-world scenarios and prepares them for the job requirements of the 21st century. The article highlights the importance of incorporating project-based learning in language courses for military personnel to improve their language proficiency and overall performance. The findings have significant implications for language educators and military institutions looking for opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of language learning programs. The results of this study have important implications for language teaching in military institutions and can ensure development of effective language training programs. Development of creativity, critical thinking and other 'soft' and 'hard' skills provides more possibilities in the future career of the security and defense sector specialists.

Key words: project-based learning, 'hard' and 'soft' skills, security and defense sector specialists, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration.

Проектне навчання (PBL) все більше визнається ефективним підходом до розвитку як 'жорстких', так і 'м'яких' навичок у різних

сферах освіти. Проте було проведено мало досліджень, щоб дослідити його вплив саме на навчання іноземним мовам військовослужбовців. Ця стаття має на меті заповнити цю прогалину, досліджуючи роль PBL у розвитку 'жорстких' і 'м'яких' навичок під час вивчення іноземних мов у військових навчальних закладах сектору безпеки і оборони України. Проаналізувавши наявні публікації, дослідники виявили, що проектне навчання не тільки покращує знання мови, але й значно покращує розвиток критичного мислення, розв'язання проблем, навичок спілкування, співпраці та командної роботи. Ці навички розвивалися за допомогою різноманітних проектних заходів, таких як групові проекти та рольові вправи. Крім того, дослідження виявило, що проектне навчання є особливо ефективним для розвитку навичок критичного мислення та підвищення здатності курсантів аналізувати складну інформацію. Автори вважають, що проектне навчання може бути ефективним педагогічним підходом і інструментом для вивчення іноземної мови у військових закладах, оскільки воно залучає курсантів до виконання значущих і актуальних завдань, забезпечуючи реалістичне та захоплююче навчальне середовище, яке імітує реальні ситуації та готує до виконання вимог для роботи у 21 столітті. У статті наголошується на важливості включення проектного навчання в мовні курси для військовослужбовців для покращення їх володіння мовою та загальної продуктивності. Отримані результати мають значне значення для викладачів мов і військових установ, які шукають можливості підвищити ефективність програм вивчення мови. Результати цього дослідження мають важливе значення для навчання мов у військових закладах і можуть забезпечити розробку ефективних програм мовної підготовки. Розвиток креативності, критичного мислення та інших 'м'яких' і 'жорстких' навичок надає більше можливостей у майбутній кар'єрі фахівців сектору безпеки та оборони.

Ключові слова: проектне навчання, 'жорсткі' та 'м'які' навички, фахівці сектору безпеки і оборони, критичне мислення, креативність, співпраця.

Formulation of the problem. At the stage of reforming both the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military units of the security and defense sector and their transition to a professional basis, increased requirements are being put forward for language training of personnel [1]. Recently, training cadets in foreign languages has become especially important in the system of military educational institutions, the

requirements for professional knowledge, abilities and skills of higher military educational institutions graduates are growing significantly. Nowadays, we can witness everyday demand for military specialists of all ranks with sufficient level of English proficiency as they take active part in professional training abroad. The knowledge of foreign languages acquires special importance, which becomes a necessary condition

for the readiness of military personnel to perform any tasks. Ukraine has declared a strong desire to join NATO, which requires following standards in equipment, armament, all spheres of military life including compatibility in language command. Thus, according to the concepts of foreign language training in military institutions, all graduates need to have a sufficient level of English, which corresponds to level 2 according to NATO STANAG 6001 [2]. However, one of the main problems in foreign language training is the insufficient level of skills and abilities in oral communication among cadets. As a result, military specialists in practice encounter circumstances when they cannot confidently exchange information in a foreign language with representatives of other countries.

Innovative processes taking place in the system of higher education in general and military education in particular require a transition in education from the traditional passive accumulation of a sum of knowledge by cadets to motivated assimilation of methods of obtaining scientific information and the ability to implement their knowledge in professional activities. In this regard, the educational process in a modern higher educational institution should be aimed at training a comprehensively formed specialist, mobile in the labor market, multilingual, and computer literate.

Requirements to modern specialists both civilian and military are similar and include development of 'hard' and 'soft' skills. On the one hand, we believe that the majority of cadets acquire their professional skills and abilities, i.e. 'hard' skills. On the other hand, they need to demonstrate such 'soft' skills as critical thinking, creativity, team work, effective communication, consolidation, and collaboration [3, 157-158]. The article considers the role of project-based learning in the process of developing 'hard' and 'soft' skills when training security and defense sector specialists in the military institutions.

Publications analyses. The methodology of the research includes analysis of the related articles, reports, thesis, relevant literature concerning development of 'hard' and 'soft' skills, and project-based learning. Not so long ago the topic of developing 'hard' and 'soft' skills was hardly ever discussed by scholars but in recent years it is becoming more and more popular because, in our opinion, we need to consider such skills as vital for future labor market in our country and successful development of the security and defense sector of Ukraine. 'Soft' skills are defined as "desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude" [4]. After analysis of domestic scientific and methodological works on this issue by K. O. Koval, O. V. Abashkina, A. I. Ivo-nina, O. L. Chulanova, S. A. Nakhod, N. V. Zhadko, M. A. Churkina, and others, who studied different

aspects of 'soft' skills development, we can state that this topic demands further consideration, especially in the sphere of military education. As a tool quite effective for developing both 'hard' and 'soft' skills we consider project-based learning.

Effective from this point of view is the method of problem-based learning, which makes it possible to activate the cadets' ability to think independently, become professional, and develop communicative competences in the system of psychological conditions for learning knowledge. Many scientists and practitioners are engaged in the development of certain aspects of project-based learning and problem-based learning as a concept in general: M. N. Skatkin, I. Ya. Lerner, V. Okon, N. A. Menchynska, M. A. Danilov, Yu. K. Babanskyi, M. I. Makhmutov, A. M. Matyushkin, A. V. Khutorsky and others. The method of problem-based learning involves modeling life situations, using role-playing games, joint problem solving, and the dominance of any participant in the educational process or any idea is excluded. Various researches proved the effects of project-based learning on the development of second language 'hard' (such as vocabulary acquisition and grammar proficiency) and 'soft' skills (such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking). The authors found that project-based learning can improve 'hard' skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, as well as 'soft' skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, leadership, and creativity. Moreover, project-based learning can influence such 'hard' skills as language proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, as well as such 'soft' skills as critical thinking, creativity, and intercultural competence.

The considered articles demonstrate that project-based teaching can be an effective way to develop both 'hard' and 'soft' skills in foreign language learners. The benefits of project-based learning include improved language proficiency, critical thinking, problem-solving, and intercultural competence.

Formulating the goals of the article. The objective of this article is to overview and analyze the necessity of 'hard' and 'soft' skills training for military specialists of security and defense sector of Ukraine; evaluate the possibilities of project-based learning as one of the helpful methods and tools in teaching foreign languages in military institutions, as well as consider its implementation in development of cadets' communicative competence and 'soft' skills.

Presentation of the main material of the study. According to employers' requirements, the most successful IT-specialists need to know blockchain, understand cloud computing, artificial intelligence functioning, etc. As to 'soft' skills they include creativity, team work, communication, flexibility, and emotional intelligence. Thus, we need to develop such a curriculum and syllabus for students of military institutions,

which combine development of both 'hard' and 'soft' skills, i.e. theory, practical training, and motivation. After COVID-19 pandemic, when a huge amount of employees had to work remotely, and especially now, during the wartime, such skills as collaboration and teamwork are becoming more vital even in virtual reality and virtual collaboration. We all need to be able to adapt to the current situation, to changes in work conditions, and to apply both 'hard' and 'soft' skills to achieve our life and professional goals. Concerning training of security and defense sector specialists, we suggest including project-based learning and teaching in teaching foreign language as a component of learner-centered approach. In our opinion, its application will greatly influence the development of both 'hard' and 'soft' skills.

Let us consider them in more detail in order to analyze and prove their influence on training specialists for the security and defense sector of Ukraine. Firstly, all professional competencies can be divided into 'hard' and 'soft' skills. 'Hard' skills are defined as personal abilities to deal with and, moreover, solve professional tasks. "Hard" skills are specific trained abilities and knowledge, which can be tested and proved by certificates and diplomas. They are subject matter expertise, Math and Statistics knowledge, and Data and Technical skills [5, c. 2]. Among the features of 'hard' skills we can mention the presence of logic, intelligence and a high IQ, possibility to ensure these qualities development with the help of tests, exams, and certification. They are constant, independent of external conditions or other people; new skills are acquired when studying new material and analyzing information; they demonstrate a person's competence in a certain area. 'Hard' skills are: rule based; technological and scientific; industrial; specialized; related to tools and techniques; procedural and methodical; replicable; predictable; tangible [6, c. 200-202]. 'Hard' skills are formed during training at military institutions, at advanced training courses, trainings, exercises, online courses to develop those skills and acquire knowledge necessary for further promotion, to achieve goals in the career.

Both 'hard' and 'soft' skills are vitally important for specialists of the security and defense sector of Ukraine. The role of 'soft' skills was first mentioned in the US Armed Forces when they noticed that management, collaboration, communication skills and teamwork influenced the success of military operations, training and exercises more than professional training and ability to use equipment. That is why, the American Armed Forces spent more budget on 'soft' skills development rather than military exercises. Moreover, researchers stated that 'soft' skills provide 85% of professional success and only 15% – 'hard' skills. Consequently, experts recommend universities include programs of developing 'soft' skills in their curriculum. As we can see now, most modern

universities, including military institutions, are still teaching theory from definite disciplines or 'hard' skills necessary for future jobs. However, nowadays, when information technologies are developing very fast and university knowledge is getting outdated, the concept of life-long learning can improve employees' skills and provide them with new job opportunities, high salaries and perspectives. These skills are required for military specialists as well, and it can be proved by the experience of servicemen attained during the Russian-Ukrainian war, when military personnel need to be trained fast, acquire new knowledge, and practice new types of equipment and armament.

Concerning 'soft' skills, we can distinguish the following features: they are related to personality; they are not part of formal education. All of them can be divided into two kinds: thinking or personal skills and social or interpersonal skills [7, c. 4-5]. These issues have been discussed now and the following 'soft' skills necessary for a successful professional environment are determined by stakeholders: time management, negotiating skills, stress management, creative thinking, presentation skills, effective communication, resilience, assertiveness, influencing skills, and organizational skills [8]. When we talk about specialists of the security and defense sector, we would definitely add to the list problem-solving, teamwork and critical thinking as vital skills for performing tasks in a military environment. Nowadays, due to total digitalisation in all spheres of our life the employees with highly developed communication and analytical skills are required as they have to analyze and solve difficult tasks, collaborate with other people, be flexible, i.e. keep balance between 'hard' and 'soft' skills. We believe that our changing world requires competent communicators. In order to achieve success in professional activities, performing various military tasks, it is necessary to combine 'hard' and 'soft' skills, they should complement each other.

In the modern world we can find any information we need, but the problem is that a huge amount of it is false, we read a lot of fake news and tons of information, which we need to check in more reliable sources. Thus, it is vital and sometimes even life-saving to teach cadets to think critically, analyze received information, have debates on specific topics where cadets can share their ideas, exchange opinions, argue and defend their point of view. Creativity of military students is based on the knowledge they have already had combined with their own ideas, vision, analysis, research, and their conclusions. In our opinion, the final result of creativity is development of something new: either devices, equipment, programs, weapons, or exploration of unknown issues. In most cases we can speak about scientific and technical creativity when our cadets participate in scientific conferences, Hackathons, contests and other events demonstrating their foreign language proficiency as well.

Specific feature of modeling professionally-oriented communicative situations is that the teacher should create educational situations that have professional significance for the cadets, correspond to their cognitive interests in the professional training, and also make it possible to reveal and implement foreign language communicative abilities necessary in the activities of military specialists. We mean their ability to conduct a conversation, correctly express and argue their views on this or that problem, learn about the opinion of the interlocutor, inquire about information, clarify facts or data, ask for help in something or offer their help, etc. Undoubtedly, the use of problem tasks ensures the formation of appropriate types of speech activity, helps to implement the main function of foreign language learning at the military institution.

The problem today is to provide teachers with a methodology and techniques for choosing and a mechanism for implementing the content of education selected by scientists in the real educational process, taking into account the interests and abilities of cadets, as well as their personal creative individuality. Individual forms and methods of education should yield to integral pedagogical technologies in general and learning technologies. The choice of educational technology is always a choice of strategy, priorities, system of interaction, teaching tactics and the style of work of teachers with cadets.

One of the important methods of training cadets in oral professional oriented communication is discussion. It arises where and when there is a problematic situation that causes a difference of opinion, encourages discussion, generates interesting ideas, personal assessments, analysis of factual material, own point of view, etc. Discussion statements take the form of both dialogues and monologues. While exchanging their own thoughts, cadets use elements of reading, in particular, citations, audio and visual supports (tables, graphs, posters, etc.). The content of such discussions can be professionally oriented problems related to the future specialty of the cadets, with the mandatory use of professional vocabulary.

Cadets are also interested in discussing the problems of real life: justifying their own choice of profession, plans for the future, relations with parents, environmental protection, etc. Conducting a debate is effective in teaching oral professional speech, because it is practically oriented and can be implemented during the professional activities of military institutions cadets. Thus, the main condition for learning foreign language communication is to ensure the possibility of using the acquired professional knowledge in communicative situations, creating a language environment that is as close as possible to real foreign language professional communication.

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Project-based teaching is not a fundamentally new technology. The project method originated in the 20s of the last century in the USA. At first, it was called the "problem method" and was developed within the humanistic direction in philosophy and education. It contained the ideas of building learning on an active basis, through the purposeful activity of the student, in relation to his personal interest in this knowledge. One of the effective ways of organizing language interaction, which is studied in English classes, is the project method. The project method is a special type of intellectual activity, the distinguishing feature of which is perspective orientation, practically oriented research.

Project methodology is one of the methods of communicative learning, the purpose of which has four functions: cognitive, regulatory, value-oriented, etiquette. Key characteristics of projects: they are highly communicative; involve cadets into expressing their own opinions, feelings, in real activities; ensure cadets' personal responsibility for the progress in learning; foreign language is used as an independent means of reception of new information; enrich vocabulary; expand linguistic knowledge and their application in new areas of the professional environment.

The project method is a pedagogical technology oriented not on the integration of actual knowledge, but on its application and acquisition of new ones (often through self-education). The active inclusion of learners in the content of these or other projects provides an opportunity to learn new ways of human activity in the sociocultural environment. In the context of learning a foreign language, a project is cadets' activity during which various aspects of language proficiency are developed, i.e. listening, reading, writing, dialogue and monologue speech are integrated. In addition, one of the principles of the communicative method in learning a foreign language is applied here – the main attention is paid not to the form, but to the essence.

Collaboration is often described as a key skill for 21st century education that is why development of the ability to cooperate occupies an important place. Some advantages of cooperation over individual

problem-solving are efficient division of tasks to be performed; using information from many sources, perspectives and experiences; higher levels of creativity and better quality of solutions. When people interact with each other, they not only exchange information, but also support each other in collective thinking. Such joint interaction allows participants to achieve more than they can do alone.

Different researchers, among which are Tan, Thomas, Brown, Lee, Bell, consider several criteria of PBL, among which are:

- - it is central to the curriculum;
- - focused on questions and problems of the main issues of the discipline;
- - involves learners in a constructive research;
- - it is realistic or very close to real-life situations;
- - it is learners' driven, i.e. they decide what and how to do to achieve their goals;
- - it is learner-centered;
- - very communicative because learners need to communicate a lot to solve the problem and present the results of their joint work;
- - it is contextual;
- - it develops learners' 'soft' skills [10].

All these criteria can be successfully applied to foreign language learning in military institutions.

The benefits of PBL in developing 'soft' skills are obvious since they demonstrate cadets importance of their collaboration and teamwork in problem-solving tasks. Consequently, 'soft' skills developed by PBL increase cadets' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and activate their communication skills and background knowledge, encourage cadets solve complex problems they might deal with in the real world, and, finally, make both the process of learning and teaching more interesting and enjoyable for cadets and teachers. While using PBL we can speak about integrated skills when cadets are required to develop their listening, reading, writing and speaking skills during all stages of their work on a project: listening and clarifying instructions, brainstorming ideas, decision-making, collecting and processing information, group-discussions and note-taking, and, finally, presenting their projects. We can also ask cadets to develop their assessment criteria and discuss them as a whole group in order to be able to evaluate their group mates' project and to reflect on the projects replacing teachers or playing the role of a teacher [9, c. 126].

Implementation of PBL has become faster and more convenient due to the advances in information and communication technologies as they allow us to access much more resources for projects in a very short time. Moreover, when cadets search for necessary information they deal with a large amount of authentic material that is quite valuable, they develop their content knowledge to be applied across the disciplines and in lifelong perspectives and professional

training. Taking part in projects, cadets meet the following challenges: teamwork, independent learning, communication skills; problem-solving skills, interdisciplinary learning; information-mining skills, and higher-order thinking skills [9, c. 127; 11].

In teaching English, the project method can be used in close contact with the curriculum and syllabus. It should be noted that the topic of the project should not only fit into the general context of language learning, but also be interesting enough for cadets because it can determine the success and influence the effectiveness of the project as a whole. The choice of topic for the project may be related both to the country of the studied language and the country of residence, cadets are focused on comparing and contrasting events, phenomena, facts from the history and life of people from different countries, their armed forces and military training. The problem offered to cadets is formulated in such a way as to orient them to the involvement of facts from related fields of knowledge and a variety of sources of information, i.e. applying their background knowledge.

It is necessary to involve all cadets in the work, offering each of them tasks taking into account their level of language proficiency. The main objectives of the introduction of the project method are to show the skills of an individual cadet or group of cadets; to use the research experience acquired at university; to realize their interest in the subject of research, to increase their knowledge about it; to demonstrate the level of foreign language; to achieve a higher level of education, development and social maturity. Our experience shows that in the development of interest in the subject, we can not rely only on the content of the material studied. If cadets are not involved in active learning, any meaningful material will arouse their contemplative interest in the subject, which will not be a cognitive interest. In order to awaken active engagement of cadets, they need to be offered a problem that is interesting and meaningful. The project method allows learners to move from the assimilation of ready-made knowledge to its conscious acquisition. The novelty of the approach is that cadets are given the opportunity to construct the content of communication themselves, starting with the first project session.

When we consider cadets' creativity during foreign language acquisition, one of the efficient methods to develop creativity, collaboration, communication, leadership skills, critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork in our opinion is project-based learning which emphasizes student-centered and inquiry-based learning. Having familiarized ourselves with the researches of domestic and foreign educators, we came to the conclusion that at this stage of human development, problem-based learning is simply necessary, as it forms a harmoniously developed creative person, able to think logically, find solutions in

various problem situations, able to systematize and accumulate knowledge capable of high self-analysis, self-development and self-correction. The constant presentation of problematic situations to the cadets leads to the fact that they can find solutions to problems, they need to think outside the box, open their minds to new ideas, updated information, possibilities and opportunities, build relationships in their groups, thus we are dealing with creative individuals who are always ready to search.

For interdisciplinary learning we would suggest creation of course modules based on PBL with the definite input, e.g. to study 4-5 articles on the topic "History of NATO" and prepare a report or a presentation comparing different issues of the given problem. This approach differs from traditional lecturing and may cause resistance both from teachers and cadets, but we suppose that active involvement of cadets in the process of searching and processing information and later its further application in practice will contribute greatly to increasing cadets' interest and motivation. Examples of final products can be: an album with works and illustrations; written report; interactive post or newspaper; thematic podcasts prepared by cadets; audio or video program; Website; video film; interactive exhibition; magazine; multimedia presentation; publication; a series of illustrations or anime; a lapbook, etc.

We can consider the project as a cadets' opportunity to express their personal ideas in a creative form convenient for them: making collages, posters, newspapers, holding exhibitions, giving presentations, etc. In the process of project work, the responsibility for learning falls on the cadet himself as an individual and as a member of the project group. The main thing is that the cadet, not the teacher, determines what information the project will have, in what form its presentation will take place. The project method is a comprehensive educational method that allows individualization of the educational process, gives cadets the opportunity to show independence in planning, organizing and controlling their activities. Thus, project-based learning can be determined as one of the most suitable techniques of the learner-centered approach. It allows us to apply modern teaching methods, pedagogical support and socializing, and increase cadets' motivation to learn both general and professionally-oriented foreign languages. Cadets working on projects receive unique opportunities to demonstrate their skills and abilities despite their language level, develop such 'soft' skills as collaboration, creative and critical thinking, leadership qualities, social responsibilities, analysis and evaluation, presentation skills, self and peer evaluation.

Conclusions. Thus, innovative technologies for teaching foreign languages in military institutions of the security and defense sector of Ukraine consist of a combination of traditional and intensive teaching

methods based on the functional-communicative language-didactic model of language, and the development of a holistic system of training cadets in language communication on professional topics. Problem-based and project-based learning are both inquiry-based methods the essence of which is active engagement of learners in critical thinking processes. Thus, at present, problem-based learning is not so much a pedagogical technology as a method or even an approach to learning, and depending on the level of one or another of its components, it can serve different purposes and be organically applied in various existing pedagogical technologies. The main task of problem-based learning is not to inform the future specialist of a certain amount of knowledge, but to implement the methods of independent acquisition and solving practical tasks in his specialty. This is the main difference between problem-based and traditional learning.

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The authors suggest that the use of PBL in foreign language training can lead to more engaged and motivated students, as well as better development of both 'hard' and 'soft' skills. The study highlights the importance of integrating project-based learning into foreign language curriculum to enhance cadets' language proficiency. Overall, the study discusses the potential benefits of project-based teaching for developing 'hard' and 'soft' skills in military educational institutions, and provides insights into how these skills can be developed in a foreign language learning context. The authors suggest that further research is needed to explore the optimal design of project-based teaching programs, and to assess their effectiveness in the military, educational and professional settings.

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