

## WAYS TO OPTIMIZE TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR STUDENTS OF THE SPECIALTY "HOTEL, RESTAURANTS AND CATERING"

### ШЛЯХИ ОПТИМІЗАЦІЇ ВИКЛАДАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ ДЛЯ ЗДОБУВАЧІВ ОСВІТИ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТІ «ГОТЕЛЬНО-РЕСТОРАННА СПРАВА ТА КЕЙТЕРИНГ»

Nowadays, a high level of foreign language proficiency belongs to key factors in successful professional realization in the field of hotel and restaurant business and catering. Dynamic changes in the hospitality industry have a direct impact on the labor market, imposing new requirements for the process of professional training of future highly qualified specialists. This determines the need to study the ways to optimize learning a foreign language for professional purposes, the possibilities of combining and improving available teaching approaches along with developing new ones. That is why it is recommended that effective teaching of a foreign language to students of the specialty under study is based on an integrated, interdisciplinary approach that will contribute to developing a combination of language, cultural, and professional knowledge. Its key components should include professional orientation of educational content, applying communicative methodology as a dominant learning strategy, integration of digital tools into the learning process, developing intercultural communicative competence, implementation of systematic formative assessment, considering the specifics of catering services. It means that the significance of using up-to-date digital technologies, the awareness of cultural diversity, along with the need for practical foreign language proficiency should be taken into account. During the research process, a number of effective communicatively-oriented methods of teaching, namely case study, role-playing games, use of authentic materials and integrated technologies that simulate a real professional communication environment have been identified. In the process of mastering a foreign language for professional purposes, a significant role is also played by reflection, which allows students to better understand their strengths and weaknesses, develop self-learning and adaptation skills. Since working in hotel and restaurant business and catering involves daily interaction with representatives of different nationalities, which requires the ability to adapt language behavior to cultural norms and expectations of communication partners, particular attention should be paid to the development of intercultural communicative competence.

**Key words:** foreign language for professional purposes, professionally oriented educational content, interactive forms of learning, intercultural communicative competence, digitalization, formative assessment.

Сьогодні високий рівень володіння іноземною мовою належить до ключових чинни-

ків успішної професійної реалізації у сфері готельно-ресторанної справи та кейтерингу. Динамічні зміни в індустрії гостинності безпосередньо впливають на ринок праці, висуваючи нові вимоги до процесу професійної підготовки майбутніх висококваліфікованих спеціалістів. Це детермінує необхідність дослідження шляхів оптимізації вивчення іноземної мови професійного спрямування, можливостей поєднання та вдосконалення наявних підходів до навчання, а також розробки нових. Саме тому рекомендовано, щоб ефективне викладання іноземної мови студентам досліджуваної спеціальності базувалося на інтегрованому, міждисциплінарному підході, який сприятиме розвитку поєднання мовних, культурних та професійних знань. Його ключовими компонентами повинні бути професійна спрямованість змісту, застосування комунікативної методики як домінуючої стратегії навчання, інтеграція цифрових інструментів у навчальний процес, розвиток міжкультурної комунікативної компетентності, впровадження систематичного формувального оцінювання, врахування специфіки кейтерингових послуг. Це означає, що слід враховувати важливість використання сучасних цифрових технологій, усвідомлення культурного різноманіття, а також необхідність практичного володіння іноземною мовою. У процесі дослідження було визначено низку ефективних комунікативно-орієнтованих методів навчання, а саме: вивчення кейсів, рольові ігри, застосування автентичних матеріалів та інтегрованих технологій, що імітують реальне середовище професійного спілкування. У процесі опанування іноземною мовою професійного спрямування значну роль відіграє також рефлексія, яка дозволяє студентам краще зрозуміти свої сильні та слабкі сторони, розвинути навички самостійного навчання та адаптації. Оскільки робота в готельно-ресторанному бізнесі та кейтерингу передбачає повсякденну взаємодію з представниками різних національностей, що вимагає вміння пристосовувати мовну поведінку до культурних норм та очікувань партнерів по спілкуванню, окрему увагу варто приділяти розвитку міжкультурної комунікативної компетентності.

**Ключові слова:** іноземна мова професійного спрямування, фахово орієнтований зміст навчання, інтерактивні форми навчання, міжкультурна комунікативна компетентність, цифровізація, формувальне оцінювання.

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**Problem statement.** In the modern system of higher education, there has been a growing emphasis on the importance of teaching a foreign language for

professional purposes. It is determined by the fact that the ability to communicate in multiple languages has become a crucial skill for career success. One of

key benefits of learning a foreign language in higher education is the development of cognitive skills, as it exercises the brain and can lead to improved problem-solving abilities, increased memory retention, and enhanced critical thinking skills. This is beneficial for students in their formative years. In addition, it can provide better career development opportunities. In both the domestic and international job market, employers are increasingly seeking individuals who are proficient in multiple languages. This is of particular importance for professional advancement in the hospitality industry and its branches such as tourism, hotel and restaurant business, catering. Moreover, mastering a foreign language goes beyond just learning new vocabulary and grammar rules. Through language learning, students gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of different cultures, their customs and ways of thinking. This cultural awareness fosters empathy and better understanding, which are regarded as essential qualities in today's globalized social environment.

Thus, in modern social and working conditions, proficiency in a foreign language belongs to key factors in successful professional realization in the field of hotel and restaurant business and catering. Intercultural interaction and international mobility along with digitalization of the service industry determine the need for professionally oriented foreign language teaching, which takes into account the peculiarities of the industry under study.

#### **Analysis of recent research and publications.**

The results of research analysis show that there has been a high level of interest in the issue of developing new approaches to enhance teaching a foreign language for professional purposes in recent decades. According to T. Hutchinson and A. Waters, the needs of each separate professional field should be taken into account, which fully meets the requirements for training specialists in the hospitality industry, in particular, hotel and restaurant business and catering [7, p. 19]. In the book «Developing Materials for Language Teaching», significant emphasis is placed on the importance of authentic materials in teaching a foreign language. This is considered to be a helpful means to increase students' motivation and promote the development of communicative competence [12]. In his turn, R. Ellis notes the effectiveness of task-based learning. The researcher also points out the feasibility of using blended learning and interactive technologies to stimulate improving the level of students' foreign language proficiency [4]. In other works by foreign researchers analyzed during the study, attention is drawn to developing classroom activities for teaching English for specific purposes [6], communicative language teaching [10], as well as to the approaches of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and intercultural communicative competence [8]. At the same time, there has been the

growing role of English medium instruction in higher education, which is defined as «... the use of English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English» [9, p. 37].

Social development generates new challenges to optimize teaching foreign languages for professional purposes. That is why the issue under study is widely discussed in the works by Ukrainian researchers. In particular, N. D. Skibun emphasize the importance of developing sociocultural competence of future professionals in tourism and hospitality, including students' knowledge about the theory of language units, as well as the national and cultural component, the semantics of language units and the ability to use them according to social and communication situation [16, p. 198]. In the publication by V. O. Danyliuk, it is noted that «... teaching a foreign language traditionally, relying only on a thorough study of grammar, reading and translation of professional texts, consolidating the course material by doing exercises on grammar and vocabulary has become insufficient» [14, p. 125]. In her opinion, future specialists in hotel and restaurant business should not only have certain knowledge of professional disciplines, but also be able to convey professional information to a foreign language speaking communication partner, describe concepts, explain facts, and give opinions in a foreign language [14, p. 124]. At the same time, future prospects of professional training in higher education show the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) to improve personalized learning capabilities and instant feedback mechanisms, generate content for educational components from the block of disciplines «foreign language for professional purposes», promote application of AI technologies by teaching staff, contribute to developing innovative interdisciplinary courses [13, p. 1036]. According to V. Kozhevnikova and M. Shepel, teaching a foreign language to future specialists of hotel and restaurant business should be focused on communication and intercultural interaction. It is recommended to combine traditional and innovative teaching methods, along with improving intercultural communication skills, while special attention should be paid to interaction with native speakers, in particular, when participating in academic mobility programs, international internships, or using online resources [15].

**Identification of previously unresolved aspects of the general problem.** Given the dynamic changes in the hospitality industry in general and in the field of hotel and restaurant business and catering in particular, new challenges determined by the current political, social, and economic situation in Ukraine have a direct impact on the labor market and impose new requirements for the process of professional training of future highly qualified specialists, which

leads to revision of existing educational standards. Therefore, there is the need to study the ways to optimize learning a foreign language for professional purposes, the possibilities of combining and improving available teaching approaches along with developing new ones. In addition, a comprehensive analysis of the process of mastering a foreign language by students of the specialty under study is relevant as well.

**The purpose of the research.** The purpose of the study is to identify effective approaches to teaching a foreign language to students of the specialty «Hotel, restaurants and catering», taking into account the professional orientation of educational programs and the intercultural features of communication within the above-mentioned branch.

Hence, the research objectives include:

- analyzing modern scientific approaches to teaching a foreign language in the hospitality industry;
- establishing the specifics of using a foreign language in professional activities in hotel and restaurant business and catering;
- identifying effective methods and means of teaching a foreign language to students of the above-mentioned specialty;
- substantiating the role of intercultural communicative competence in the process of learning a foreign language by future specialists to increase their competitiveness in the modern job market.

**Research methodology.** To achieve the research objectives, the following methods have been applied:

- analysis of scientific publications – to summarize key theoretical principles of teaching a foreign language for professional purposes;
- comparative method – to single out common and distinctive features in the methods of teaching a foreign language for different branches of hospitality industry;
- descriptive method along with the method of synthesis – to provide a comprehensive characteristic of teaching practices feasible to be applied for training qualified professionals in the field under study;
- modelling method – to develop relevant examples of professional communication in hotel and restaurant business and catering.

**Presentation of the main material.** Both general and professional language training of students of the specialty «Hotel, restaurants and catering» should be carried out through modelling real situations of professional communication, working with authentic materials and applying elements of blended learning. This corresponds to the approach of teaching a foreign language for specific purposes, which can be defined as training based on particular needs of students in the field of their professional activity [7, p. 19].

The results of the study have shown that effective foreign language teaching in hospitality should be based on a flexible combination of professional

orientation, interactivity, intercultural component and content authenticity. Therefore, the main components of this approach include: – professional orientation of educational content; – applying communicative methodology as a dominant learning strategy; – integration of digital tools into the learning process; – developing intercultural communicative competence; – implementation of systematic formative assessment; – taking into account the specifics of catering services.

Professionally oriented learning involves the use of materials, terminology and lexical structures that are directly related to activities in the hotel and restaurant sector. This approach allows students not only to master a foreign language, but also to adapt it to their future professional environment [1, p. 74]. In particular, professional orientation of educational content refers to:

- vocabulary related to room reservations, guest service, restaurant menus, organization of banquets, catering events etc.;
- conversations between employees and customers (e.g., reception, dealing with complaints, ordering meals or services, payment procedures, giving recommendations);
- different types of professional documents (such as CV, formal letters, e-mails, enquiries).

Learning, which is focused on the context of professional activity, contributes to the formation of functional literacy. The latter is especially important for the practical use of a foreign language [2, p. 47].

It should be noted that it is the implementation of realistic tasks that stimulates the active use of the material studied and contributes to its deeper understanding [4, p. 105]. The communicative approach remains a powerful tool at teaching foreign languages in professional contexts where the ability to react quickly and efficiently is required. It involves:

- imitation of real-life communication situations (check-in/check-out procedures, resolving conflicts with guests etc.);
- role-playing games that simulate the interaction in professional environment;
- group work on discussing and studying cases;
- oral practice in the form of presentations (e.g., giving description of certain hotel or restaurant services).

The realism of the situations increases the level of involvement and allows students to form language behavior in conditions close to professional ones [3, p. 140].

Interactive exercises, role-playing games, simulations, and case study are an integral part of successful training of future specialists in hotel and restaurant business and catering. It should be noted that the relevance of this methodology is confirmed by the results of research on innovations in teaching English language by D. R. Hall and A. Hewings [5].

At the same time, the effectiveness of various digital platforms as tools for learning a foreign language for professional purposes is emphasized in the work by B. Tomlinson, where the author notes the importance of authentic, multimodal resources to ensure an effective learning process and formation of high-level communication skills [12, p. 161].

In our opinion, the following types of digital platforms and multimedia resources can be applied to improve learning outcomes for the specialty under study:

- mobile applications focused on professional vocabulary;
- online platforms for language learning with the possibility to make interactive tests, create video tasks, give presentations;
- real-life videos with demonstrations of work in hotels, restaurants, at conferences as a means to develop listening and cultural adaptation;
- virtual excursions or VR-simulators for hotel staff.

Thanks to gamified learning platforms, students better master vocabulary, develop listening skills and improve pronunciation. The use of video content (e.g., hotel or restaurant tours) allows students to understand real service standards and cultural specifics.

Working in the hospitality industry involves daily interaction with representatives of different nationalities, which requires the ability to adapt language behavior to cultural norms and expectations of your guests. Since language is a part of culture, and not just a means of communication, its study should be contextualized, covering both linguistic and sociocultural patterns [8, p. 49]. Therefore, one of the key components in teaching a foreign language to students of the specialty «Hotel, restaurants and catering» is simultaneous study of cultural peculiarities.

That is why in the learning process attention should be paid to:

- studying the common etiquette practices in different countries;
- modelling conflict situations that may arise due to cultural misunderstanding;
- analyzing cross-cultural differences in food traditions, service, communication etc.;
- using printed or video materials that illustrate cultural customs and traditions.

We believe that it is particularly useful for future professional activity, because students who are able to interpret non-verbal signals and feel the contexts of cultural communication, demonstrate a higher level of service competence.

In the process of mastering a foreign language for professional purposes, a significant role is also played by reflection. Systematic formative assessment

contributes to the development of students' metacognitive skills and increases autonomy in learning [11].

To ensure the gradual development of communication proficiency, it is advisable to use formative assessment tools, in particular:

- portfolio of language progress;
- self-assessment and peer-assessment during classwork;
- regular reflection with analysis of mistakes;
- digital testing tools with regular feedback.

This allows students to better understand their strengths and weaknesses, develop self-learning and adaptation skills.

Catering as a segment of hotel and restaurant business has its own distinctive features, such as mobility of services, working at various types of events, rapid changes in communication context. Therefore, it is advisable to:

- include tasks for planning event services;
- simulate situations of negotiating with customers;
- develop skills in presenting services and brands;
- practice projects on menuing and event logistics.

In our opinion, the above-mentioned structure of the learning process may contribute to the development of comprehensive professional foreign language proficiency.

**Conclusions.** The results of the study allow us to state that effective teaching of a foreign language to students of the specialty «Hotel, restaurants and catering» should be based on an integrated, interdisciplinary approach that contributes to developing a combination of language, cultural, and professional knowledge. Besides, it is recommended to take into consideration the peculiarities of the hospitality industry, the significance of using up-to-date digital technologies, the awareness of cultural diversity, along with the need for practical foreign language proficiency. During the research process, a number of effective communicatively-oriented methods of teaching, namely case study, role-playing games, use of authentic materials and integrated technologies that simulate a real professional communication environment have been identified.

In our opinion, particular attention should be paid to the development of intercultural communicative competence, since job duties of hospitality specialists include interacting with partners and customers with different cultural backgrounds. That is why a high level of socio-cultural competence at dealing with this category of speakers ensures the relevant quality of service, promoting a positive image of a certain accommodation or eating establishment. We believe that further research of the issue under study should focus on the development of educational and methodological complexes adapted to specific professional contexts.

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