

SPECIALISTS FOR CONTEMPORARY ECONOMY AND BUSINESS: FORMING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES IN FOREIGN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

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Abstract. The paper is devoted to the issues of training would-be specialists in the spheres of contemporary economy and business. Challenges are reviewed of forming professional competencies of students of Economics in the field of foreign economic activities whilst teaching the "Professional foreign language" discipline at non-philological higher education institutions. Competence-active and practice-oriented approaches to molding such competencies and the need for interdisciplinary integration are emphasized. Practices of implementing the given approach are described.

Keywords: professional foreign language, professional competence, foreign economic activities, competence-active approach, practice-oriented approach, interdisciplinary integration.

Contemporary realities are putting forward far-going requirements for the education system in general and for higher professional education in particular, the main task being to train competitive specialists who are able to quickly adapt to changing conditions of the labor market. The need for competent, mobile and highly qualified specialists can be met through improving the quality of education. Therefore, modernization of the education system involves finding the best ways to improve training and education through flexibility and efficiency as well as to focus on the personality of the learner and on the development of his/her activity and creativity. When solving such large-scale tasks, we inevitably draw our attention to changes in the methodologies and technologies of training at all its stages as well as to individualization of the learning process. In order to successfully implement the tasks set, it is necessary to offer a wide range of variable disciplines within the frameworks of any specific direction and specialization of training and education.

Modernization of contemporary education is primarily practice-oriented. According to many researchers in the field of the theory and methodology of higher professional education, it is the competence-active approach that is a priority in achieving meaningful results. This approach is based on mastering a certain set of competences by a would-be

specialist; therefore, mastering the contents of training should be practice-oriented in the professional context.

The Federal state educational standard of higher education stipulates training specialists with general cultural and specific professional competences. The competences formed are to be multifunctional and interdisciplinary. Accordingly, modernization of education affects all educational areas, including the teaching of foreign languages. Professional communication in foreign languages is currently the competence that must be formed in the learning process. With due regard to this, special requirements are imposed on improving the methodology of teaching foreign languages for special (professional) purposes.

In compliance with the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education of the "Economics" major, the emphasis is made on the practice-oriented, professional component of education, i.e., graduates should be able to use a foreign language in their professional activities. At the same time, from the start, the student is put in the position in which his/her potential is realized, knowledge being acquired and skills being mastered in the context of simulated professional situations. The theory of contextual learning is presented in the writings by L.N. Bazir [1], V.I. Baidenko [2], A.A. Verbitsky [3; 4], I.A. Zimnaya [5] and others. Accord-

ing to A.A. Verbitsky, contextual learning is necessary, wherein three basic forms are identified. First, academic activities suppose gaining theoretical knowledge related to the professional context. Second, quasi-professional activities assume simulation models, when learning becomes more professional and practice-oriented. Finally, while performing academic and quasi-professional activities, the student is engaged in genuine research and practices. Here, we can observe a maximum convergence of academic and practical professional activities; in this context, all the knowledge and skills acquired during the previous stages of learning are integrated into a single whole, the learning activity being transformed into professional [3; 4; 6].

A distinctive feature of teaching foreign languages to students of economics at the English language department of the Siberian transport university (STU) is its practical and interdisciplinary target, which integrates knowledge gained while studying specialized professional disciplines as well as knowledge and skills generated while studying foreign languages. An example of such integration is teaching the "Professional Foreign Language" discipline to the bachelor degree students of economics at the "International business and law" faculty of the Siberian transport university [7].

Since tailoring the model of professional training is to comply with the requirements of the labor market, employers' opinion should necessarily be monitored and analyzed. In order to study the needs of the labor market as well as to improve teaching methodologies in general and the quality of teaching foreign languages in particular, within the frameworks of the above-mentioned discipline, the English language department at the STU conducted a survey of potential employers in the field of foreign economic activities. They were asked to assess skills and abilities (competences) necessary for the relevant employment from the practical point of view. The same survey was organized for students of the

STU of the "Economics" major at the "International business and law" specialization.

Over half of the questionnaire entries are directly related to the fundamentals of foreign economic activities, including the preparation and conclusion of foreign trade contracts. The other questions concern such areas as telephone conversations, business correspondence practices, participation in negotiations and processing professional information in foreign languages, i.e., the skills and competencies that always accompany foreign economic activities [7; 8].

The analysis of the potential employers' responses (representatives of state-owned and privately owned enterprises) reveals that 58.7% of employers admit the need to possess the skills of making and translating sales contracts, the skills being one of the most important in foreign trade activities. The results of the analysis of students' responses show an even higher level of the need to master contractual skills (78.6%) [9].

The ability to read, systematize and discuss professional information in foreign languages, which is connected with international trade and the contents of the standard sales contract, as well as the ability to conduct export and import transactions, an integral part of which being the preparation and translation of contracts, are competences in demand of both employers and would-be specialists in the field [7; 8].

The "Professional foreign language" discipline is aimed at forming the following professional competencies: proficiency in foreign languages as a means of business intercultural communication when conducting export-import operations, knowledge of the relevant terminology and ability to work with professional information in foreign languages.

The competences in question can become well-established within the frameworks of the interdisciplinary integration between departments of foreign languages and specialized departments in order to achieve the common goal of improving the educational process.

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СПЕЦИАЛИСТЫ ДЛЯ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ ЭКОНОМИКИ И БИЗНЕСА: ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНЫХ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЙ В СФЕРЕ ВНЕШНЕЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена вопросам обучения будущих специалистов в области современной экономики и бизнеса. Рассматриваются проблемы формирования профессиональных компетенций у студентов-экономистов в сфере внешнеэкономической деятельности на занятиях по дисциплине «Профессиональный иностранный язык» в неязыковых высших учебных заведениях. Подчеркиваются компетентностно-деятельный, практико-ориентированный подход к формированию компетенций и необходимость междисциплинарной интеграции. Описывается практический опыт использования данного подхода.

Ключевые слова: профессиональный иностранный язык, профессиональная компетенция, внешнеэкономическая деятельность, компетентностно - деятельный подход, практико-ориентированный подход, междисциплинарная интеграция.