PRESENTING TEACHING POINTS OF BUSINESS FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS THROUGH THE USE OF COMPANY′S FINANCIAL MATERIALS

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Key words and phrases: annual reports; authentic material; company-specific materials; communicative skills; foreign language of business; job area; pre-experience learners; teaching points.

Abstract: The problem of development communicative skills making use of company′s specific financial materials in teaching Professional Foreign Language is considered. The sample pattern of applying functional, structural and vocabulary language components for organizing the message is given.

In the last decades, Business English has attracted increasing interest and awareness. Business English must be seen in the context of Language for Specific Purposes (**LSP**), as it shares the important elements which are common to all fields of work in LSP. Business English implies the definition of a specific language corpus and emphasis on particular kinds of communication in a specific context.

However, Business English differs from other varieties of LSP as it is a mix of specific content relating to a particular job area or industry, and general content relating to general ability to communicate in business situations.

People around the world conduct business meetings in English even though English may be a foreign language to all present.

The most important characteristic of exchanges in the context of business meetings, telephone calls and discussion is a sense of purpose. Language is used to achieve some goal and its successful use is seen in terms of a successful outcome to the business event. Users of BE need to speak English primarily to achieve more in their jobs. Business is competitive; competition exists between companies, within companies, between employees striving to develop their careers.

We think it is important to put the learner in the centre of the teaching process. Students of colleges and universities gain their knowledge of business largely from books as a result such knowledge can be theoretical rather than practical. Surely they will have an interest in business topics which can be very valuable as a motive in the language learning classroom. Pre-experience learners have two kinds of needs: reading textbooks in English or following lectures in English, that means the development of strong reading and listening skills, the vocabulary of the subject, and, on the other hand, their needs may focuse on the future life in business. In other words the required skills will include commercial correspondence, participating in meetings, presenting information or social interaction with regard to the kind of jobs they are preparing for.

In Business English course some structures areas may require more attention than the compound tenses or knowledge of idioms and so on. For example, conditionals in negotiating, or modality for expressing possibility or politeness. The syllabus is likely to be defined primarily in relation to business performance skills such as meetings, presentations, socializing, describing changes and trends, quality, procedures, strategy. These concepts can be subdivided into a number of functional areas such as comparing and contrasting, expressing cause and effect, recommending and agreeing. The language defined in the syllabus may include grammatical and lexical items, elements of spoken or written discourse, as well as organizational features as signaling a new topic. Up to now, there is no single description of what a business English syllabus might consist of.

In any learning situation two kinds of motivation are distinguished: extrinsic (imposed from outside) and intrinsic (the learner is interested in the language and culture for its own sake). Among university students (pre-experience learners) the extrinsic motivation stems from the need to pass examinations and gain qualifications. Many students are not able to see the relevance of doing language courses. Even when they know they will need English in their future jobs, the need seems to be a distant one. So the students are not often ready and eager to devote their time and energy to language. Therefore perhaps the main task for the trainer is to find out the special interests of the course members and kinds of activities they will best respond to. In this way the trainer can stimulate interest and increase the motivation.

The work area and type of job that learners are prepared to get after graduation determine what kind of materials will be most relevant. It goes without saying that students whose future job will be banking should be provided with language practice withing a defined job area: banking, import-export, accounting. These materials are intended not only to develop general language skills in a systematic way but to provide some of the target language useful in these specific fields. They are to cover special vocabulary and provide reading and thought-provoking practice in a relevant context. They may also include speaking and writing tasks and functional or structural language practice. When looking for materials in a specific job area, it is important to consider the level of knowledge that the students already have and what they need to develop.

A piece of material that meets the target objective and all the criteria relating to the group of students may still be inadequate if it fails to motivate the class. Materials designed for specific job area must represent the subject that those students are familiar with. They should contain the up-to-date information and data, and, certainly, be attractive for students.

Framework materials (usually diagrammatic) represent the example of materials which can be used to generate language and encourage the user to organize his/her ideas. Some of them represent concepts for example, describing cause and effect (Fig.1), others encourage interaction, or guide learners in expressing ideas, giving short explanations, describing situations.
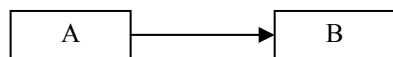
a) Framework 1. One cause and one effect
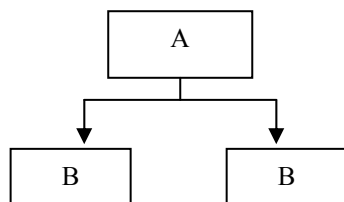
b) Framework 2. One cause → two effects (describing a cause-effect relationship where a single cause can produce two or more effects)

Fig. 1

Frameworks can also be used to build dialogues and conversations and should be designed to prompt the production of language but they do not present language itself. Some frameworks may be constructed to practice a grammatical point (say conditionals) some may practice functional language such as making an invitation and accepting or refusing an invitation. Moreover, such kind of teaching materials can be easily modified to meet the needs of individual group, and be developed for a great variety of purposes.

Now it is time to turn to the problem of authentic materials. Authentic material is any kind of material taken from the real world and not specifically created for the purpose of language teaching. It can be text, visuals; or audio material; it can be realia such as tickets; means; maps; or it can be objects; products; equipment; components or models. The authentic material that is most useful for the purposes of Professional Language training is produced by companies for use of their employees, for client information, or for general publicity.

There are several reasons why a trainer should use authentic material. First, authentic materials have a number of features that are often lacking in texts and dialogues created for learning language of proficiency. They exemplify the particular area to which they belong and often contain specific terminology, jargon and typical organizational features and sentence pattern. The language used reflects the genuine purpose for which the material was created. In short, authentic text includes the type of language which the learner may need to be exposed to, to develop skills for understanding and even to produce.

Second, the material provides information about real-life situations or events. It is also very relevant to the learners' special interests. Authentic material may provide a core to develop skills for reading instructions, contracts or financial reports, to develop letter-writing or report-writing skills. Moreover, there are a lot of ways of using authentic materials as a realistic context for a role-play, report, stimulate debate, provide information for a project or presentation, practice the skills of describing, explaining; instructing and exchanging information.

Company-specific materials such as the annual reports, product information, correspondence, contracts are the sources of authentic materials appropriate for Professional Foreign Language teaching.

When selecting materials to use it is very important to keep in mind the three key questions:

1 Who is it for?
2 What is the training purpose?
3 How can the material be exploited?

Ways of exploiting material depend on the type and content of the material and a successful exploitation has to relate to the needs of the learners in terms of skill requirements; language requirements level and interests.

Company materials in our particular case-annual reports, are most likely to be interesting for pre-experience learners preparing for their future jobs. They are especially useful for finance and accounting learners, whose job will involve assessing companies from an investment point of view, or just for being able to present his or her own company.

Language activities which involve using annual reports are as follows:

Skills

1) information exchange; 2) talking about accounts; 3) understanding financial reports; 4) making presentations.

Language

1) members; 2) accounting/finance vocabulary; 3) describing trends; 4) company structure; 5) tenses (mainly past and present perfect); 6) forecasting.

Activities

1) pair/group work; 2) presenting accounts; graphs; diagrams; 3) information transfer; 4) completing text; 5) comparing accounting systems.

Balance sheet as well as profit and loss statement are constituent parts of the annual report and can be highly favorable for the development of a number of performance areas: meeting and discussions; giving information; participating and co-operating.

To start with, a checklist of key functions involved in each area should be given as well as notes for selecting appropriate language from a brod corpus.

Language functions relating to the above mentioned areas can be identified in the following way:

- expressing opinions (ideas)
- supporting an argument
- agreeing; disagreeing
- adding new points
- balancing points of view
- expressing advantages/disadvantages
- making suggestions
- calling attention
- giving background information
- stating purpose
- clarifying and checking
- asking for explanations
- confirming
- concluding

Functions for expressing ideas and organizing the message are numerous and many folded. Here is the list of suggested structural and vocabulary components:

Function	Structures	Vocabulary
describing structure		"consists of", "divided into", "whole", "parts"
describing function		"is used to…", "is used for –ing"
describing process	present tenses, active/passive, sequence markers	
expressing time	verb tenses, adverbials, time prepositions	
expressing condition	conditionals	
describing location, movement, and direction	prepositions, adverbials	
describing change/trends	verb tenses	"increase", "decrease"
giving reasons, expressing cause and effect		connectors: "because", "as a result of", "therefore"
expressing similarity and difference		"the same as", "similar to", "like/unlike"
comparing and contrasting	-er and –est forms	"more", "most", "least"
expressing possibility, probability, and certainty	modal verbs sentence construction	"could", "may", "might" "it is likely that…", "we are likely to…"
expressing intention	"will"/"going to"	

Functions and linguistic skills for organizing the message:

Function	Language
Showing sequence	Sequence markers: "first", "second", etc.
Marking boundaries	*Oral*: "right", "OK", use of pauses, stress, intonation *Written:* headings, subheadings, paragraphs, sentences boundaries
Marking new/given information	*Oral*: stress and intonation *Written*: use of articles, demonstratives, pronouns *Both*: choice of vocabulary, giving definitions
Referring to what went before or comes later	Use of appropriate expressions: "as I said", "the above-mentioned …"
Linking and showing the relationship between ideas	Connecting words and phrases: "however", "as a result", "for example"
Referring to visuals or to things outside the text	*Oral*: "as you can see …" *Written*: "as is shown in Fig. 8 …"

One of the great problems of the language training is to create enough recognizable context in the classroom for the learners to produce exchanges which are relevant, not hampered by embarrassment and lack of something meaningful to say. The pre-setting the idea is an attempt to overcome this problem. It helps greatly to create sufficient context for the task to be meaningful. Before starting a dialogue the setting box asks them to decide who they are; where they are; what they are going to talk about; who with and why. It asks them to think of what they want to achieve, what their business objectives for this specific language exchange are, and what their communicative objectives are (e.g. asking for clarification or making suggestion).

The following setting box can be used in a wide variety of circumstances:
- Who am I?
- What am I talking about?
- Where am I?
- Who are my audience?

A major trend in teaching Business Language is a growing awareness of the importance of teacher development. The BL environment is far-ranging and eclectic. So it is not surprising that one can find every kind of methodology in the field of teaching BL. There is no one "best" methodology. Any teaching situation is an interaction between the learner; the trainer and the activity itself. One particular approach may work well with the particular group but fail to work with the another. Thus, we can come to conclusion that the major question is "what is right for this group, or this individual"? There may be several good choices, but there may be only one which is right for the particular mix of learners.

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Характерные особенности обучения деловому иностранному языку для развития навыков общения с использованием финансовой отчетности организации

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Ключевые слова и фразы: аутентичный материал; годовой отчет о хозяйственной деятельности; иностранный язык делового общения; навыки общения; обучаемые, не имеющие опыта работы по специальности; специфическая документация организации; сфера профессиональной деятельности; цели обучения.

Аннотация: Рассматривается проблема использования специфической финансовой документации организации в целях развития навыков языкового общения на иностранном языке в сфере профессиональной деятельности у обучаемых. Приводится примерная модель использования функциональных и структурных языковых единиц для построения сообщения.

Charakteristische Besonderheiten der Ausbildung der geschäftlichen Fremdsprache für die Entwicklung der Kommunikationsfehigkeiten mit der Nutzung des Finanzberichtswesens der Organisation

Zusammenfassung: Es wird das Problem der Nutzung der spezifischen Finanzdokumentation der Organisation zwecks der Entwicklung der Fehigkeiten der sprachlichen Kommunikation auf der Fremdsprache in der Sphäre der professionellen Tätigkeit bei den Ausgebildenden betrachtet. Es wird das ungefähre Modell der Nutzung der funktionalen und strukturellen sprachlichen Einheiten für die Konstruktion der Mitteilung angeführt.

Particularités caractériques de l'enseignement de la langue étrangère des affaires pour le développement de la pratique de la communication avec l'emploi des documents de justification

Résumé: Est examiné le problème de l'emploi des documents de justification d'une organisation dans les buts du développement de la pratique de la communication professionnelle des étudiants. Est donné le modèle d'exemple de l'emploi des unités linguistiques fonctionnelles et structurelles pour la construction de l'énonciation.