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Improvement of technical specialty students' foreign language professional skills

The article focuses on the problems of foreign language teaching at a technical university. Due to the integration of the Republic of Kazakhstan into the world community young specialists should effectively use a foreign language in their future profession. Teaching foreign languages in non-linguistic universities has particular relevance since foreign language communication of modern specialists in the professional sphere is becoming closer due to the effect of growing professional, business, scientific contacts of specialists in the world community. The article considers the experience acquired by the Foreign Languages department of Karaganda Technical University in developing undergraduate students' foreign language communicative skills on the basis of the teacher's experience using YouTube channel and also a professional and technical translation course organized in the University. The ways of developing technical specialty students' foreign language skills as well as recommendations for teachers are suggested in the given work. The results of the survey among the students on the problems they face in learning the English language, the practice of interactive methods used for improvement of students' professional foreign language communicative skills and other extra-curricular activities organized by the university foreign language department are also demonstrated.

Keywords: national consciousness, trilingualism, multilingualism, national communication, a majority group, professional career, professional competency, international labour market, integration.

Introduction

The education is considered the most important sector in the development of skilled and professionally oriented competent specialist around the world. Today this field is experiencing a period of significant transformation in Kazakhstan. The State Program for the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025 pays special attention to the development of trilingual education [1]. It is well known that Kazakhstan is a poly-ethnic country, therefore multilingualism is crucial for the proper functioning of the society.

The article focuses on the problems of foreign language teaching at a technical university. Due to the integration of the Republic of Kazakhstan into the world community young specialists should effectively use a foreign language in their future professional activities. Specialists' foreign language knowledge and skills in the modern world is becoming one of the indicators of their professional competency. The purpose of learning a foreign language at technical university is to develop students' foreign language speaking skills to the level enabling them to be active participants in foreign language professional communication at international labour market.

Research methodology

What is the role of specialist's fluency and proficiency in the English language? Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, developing the power of reasoning and judgment and preparing an individual intellectually for mature life and future career.

Bologna declaration (Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education convened in Bologna on 19 June 1999), which is the main guiding document of the Bologna process, proposed the European Higher Education Area, within which graduate and undergraduate students have opportunities to continue their studies in another country using prior qualifications gotten in their home country if they have the proper and profound level of English knowledge.

English as international language is important for successful integration into the global economy. The program of functioning and development of languages for 2020–2025 and cultural program “Trinity of languages” focuses on the specialist's knowledge of English as an international language, which creates many opportunities for the development of country's economics and also career promotion of specialists in international labour market [2].

There are other factors affecting the growing demand for education in foreign languages; they are as follows:

- the processes of globalization: since gaining its independence in 1991 Kazakhstan has been establishing social, cultural, economic, political contacts with foreign countries around the world [3];
- international integration in the sphere of education which results in broad cooperation of Kazakhstani educational institutions with foreign educational centers, the launching of new international projects, active participation of the teaching staff and students in various educational programs.

At the present time, technical specialties students' professionally-oriented study of foreign language acquires special significance. It is a prerequisite for the international professional accreditation of educational programs in the field of engineering and technology.

The study of English at university in technical specialties plays a significant role. Teaching foreign languages in non-linguistic universities has particular relevance since foreign language communication of modern specialists in the professional sphere is becoming closer due to the effect of growing professional, business, scientific contacts of specialists in the world community.

The practice of teaching English to students shows that there is a number of problems that affect organizing the learning process, its content and the final result. Despite the positive change in the organization of educational process, main problem of foreign language learning is the lack of natural language environment, and a limited number of hours for its study. Rather often the task of developing students' foreign language communicative skills is solved by doing a big number of language and speech exercises.

The results of the research

As a practical part of our research problem the survey was conducted among the first year technical university students of such specialties as "Digital aero photography", "Mining", "Geodesy and Cartography". In the framework of the survey students were offered to express their opinion on the problems and difficulties of learning English.

According to the survey, the following questions and types of answers were offered to students:

1. What is your level of English?

- *Elementary;*
- *Pre-Intermediate;*
- *Intermediate.*

2. What kind of difficulties arise in learning English?

- *Language barrier;*
- *Insufficient vocabulary level;*
- *Difficulty of performing the tasks.*

3. Do you think that the success of your future professional work will depend on your knowledge of English?

- *Yes;*
- *No;*
- *I am at a loss to answer.*

4. For what reason do you think the English proficiency is important?

- *For the future work success;*
- *For work at international labour market;*
- *No need.*

As it can be seen from the pie chart, during indicating their level of foreign language knowledge (the 1 question: what is your level of English?), 18 students out of 45 defined it as elementary (can understand sentences and expressions related to areas of most significant issues), 17 students as intermediate (can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.) and 10 students as upper-intermediate (can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical specialty texts and discussions in their field of specialization) (Fig. 1)

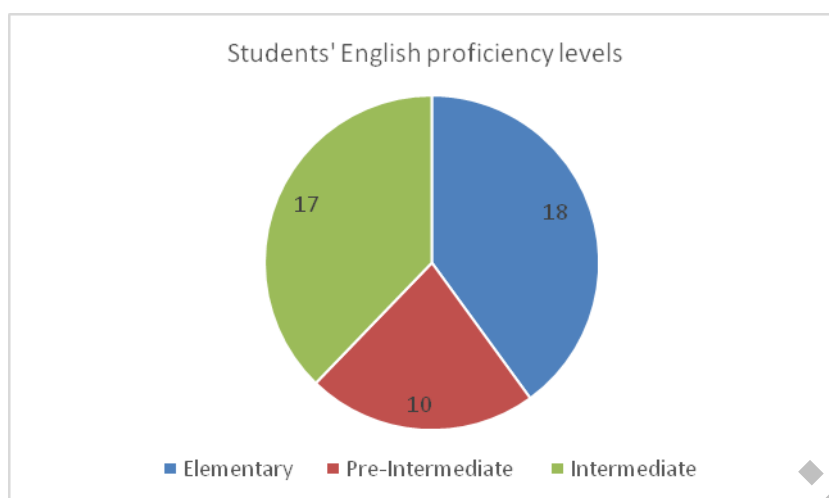


Figure 1

According to students' answers to the 2 question (what kind of difficulties arise in learning English?) most of the students (69.60 %) considered insufficient vocabulary level as difficulty in learning English, 19.60 % emphasized language barrier, and 10.90 % of the students pointed to difficulty of performing the tasks in improvement of English knowledge (Fig. 2).

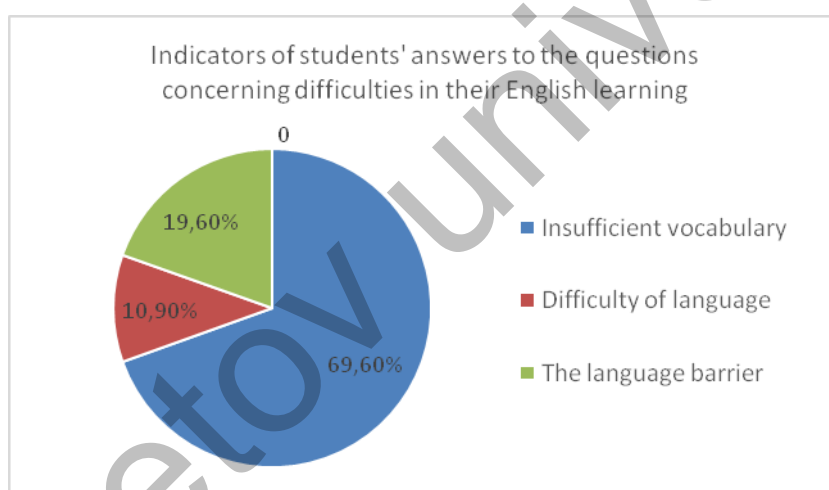


Figure 2

The answers to the 3 question (for what reason is the English proficiency important?) are presented in the pie chart No. 3. They are as follows: 59.1 % of respondents confirm the importance of a foreign language knowledge and skills in their future professional activities, 38,6 % of respondents consider knowledge of a foreign language in their future work desirable, and only 2.3 % of respondents do not see the need for knowledge of a foreign language (Fig. 3).

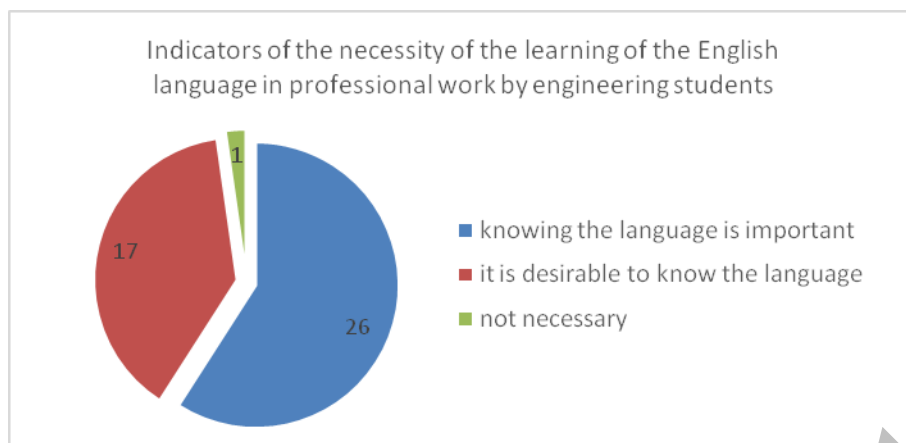


Figure 3

To the 4 question (for what reason do you think the English proficiency is important?) on the necessity of learning English 49,50 % of the students pointed to its importance for the future work career, 33,80 % considered its use for work at international labour market, 16,70 % of the students do not see the necessity of its use.

Discussion

The analysis of the results of the survey conducted among the students of the technical university allows us to conclude that the knowledge of a foreign language is an important condition for a success of a future career of an engineer in the context of globalization processes in all spheres of human life; integration of education, science and economics into the world space. Consequently, it should be admitted that today foreign language learning is one of the necessary components of the professional training of students of engineering specialties.

The survey was mainly attended by the first year students of specialties “Digital aero photography”, “Mining”, “Geodesy and Cartography”. Their level of knowledge of English was poor, which was caused by their background knowledge, i.e., knowledge they got at secondary school.

The first-year students cannot conduct a conversation in English. Their vocabulary is minimal, and they cannot use the available terminology in a conversation. However, the additional number of training hours for students practicing English is not regarded by the curriculum.

The effective ways of professional training of students of engineering specialties are the use of teaching methods and innovative technical tools, which improve cognitive and creative abilities, knowledge, increase their interest and motivation.

We registered in YouTube channel program for varying the work with students, ensuring their motivation and getting feedback from them. The principles of YouTube channel work are convenient for both teachers and students: the video material provides additional visual support and facilitates the perception of foreign language speech. In addition, the video may contain subtitles in the target language. The channel may be used for the solution of the following tasks:

- students’ independent study with professional oriented texts and acquaintance with unknown terminology;
- selection of video material on a specific topic for further discussion in the audience, during which students reflect and monitor their comprehension;
- learners could also search for new content on grammar and lexis;
- work with comments, during which students can refer to the already created comments, and express their point of view by formulating their own answer on a particular topic independently;
- develop the tasks that involve creating one’s own profile on YouTube or making a video in English. Such tasks are the most difficult, but it is worth noting that most students have a desire to get involved in such activities;
- it motivates them and creates conditions for the development of competencies in the framework of learning a foreign language.

It is known that according to the Concept of the Development of Foreign Language Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, upon completion of the university course of a foreign language, the students' level should be equal to B2-C1 [4].

And for the improvement of students' foreign language knowledge and skills the Department of Foreign Languages of KTU continues the work with 1-year students, the department enrolls the students in the professional and technical translation course.

The program of professional and technical translation is intended for students wishing to develop intercultural, business, professional and technical communication skills and who speak English at least at the Pre-Intermediate level.

Advantages of this course are as follows:

- Classes are intensive, held 2 times a week and aimed at enhancement of oral communicative skills of the English language, technical translation and homework.

- The course program includes ongoing workshops for developing and improving the skills and techniques of professional and technical translation, digital platforms.

- Upon completion of the course learners will be able to read specialized English-language literature, attend trainings and seminars conducted by foreign experts, feel confident in interviews with international companies, successfully defend their thesis project in English.

- Learners get a certificate with the qualification “Scientific and technical translator” upon completion of the course.

The duration of the course is 3.5 years (7 semesters).

Modern trends in foreign language education focus on training specialists with developed and advanced foreign language skills, enabling them to be competitive specialists in the world labor market [5]. Undoubtedly, the student's desire and hard work are important for improvement of their English proficiency level. The foreign language proficiency level of university graduates will allow them to realize their potential and professional competency on their future professional work, and establish professional contacts with foreign partners and colleagues.

What should be done on the teacher part involving students in foreign language learning in depth, in particular a professionally oriented language?

In our point of view, interactive activities such as conferences, trainings, and conversations should be held with students in this area, so that learners could realize their capabilities. Thereby the motivation of students can be increased with the help of proficiency in foreign languages, both in our country and abroad.

Conclusion

In technical universities a foreign language is not as obligatory as special disciplines. Therefore, one of the main tasks of a foreign language teacher is to maintain students' interest to the subject, their constant desire to improve. To realize this task the teachers must not only know their subject, but also search for new innovative pedagogical technologies to use for enhancing students in foreign language learning [6].

The analysis of the survey among the first year students of specialties “Digital aero photography”, “Mining”, “Geodesy and Cartography” allows us to conclude that the use of innovative educational technologies, methods and forms of stimulating foreign language learning affects students' motivation for English knowledge and skills improvement. The second survey with the students of the same groups conducted in the beginning of the 2 semester demonstrated that the use of YouTube channel and attendance of University's professional and technical translation course benefits the development of students' foreign language communication skills and abilities, improves their interest and motivation for studying English.

Thereby, as the result of the research the main factor of students' successful learning is motivation, i.e., a positive attitude of students to a foreign language as an academic discipline and their awareness improving their knowledge and skills in this area.

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Техникалық мамандық студенттерінің шет тіліндегі кәсіби дағдыларын дамыту

Мақала техникалық университетте шет тілін оқыту мәселелеріне арналған. Қазақстан Республикасының әлемдік қоғамдастыққа интеграциялануына байланысты жас мамандар өздерінің болашақ мамандықтарында шет тілін тиімді пайдалануы тиіс. Тілдік емес жоғары оқу орындарында шет тілдерін оқытудың ерекше өзектілігі бар, өйткені қазіргі заманғы мамандардың кәсіби саладағы шетелдік қарым-қатынасы әлемдік қауымдастықтағы мамандардың кәсіби, іскерлік және ғылыми байланыстарының өсуіне байланысты тығыз бола түсуде. Мақалада Қарағанды техникалық университетінің шетел тілдері кафедрасы оқытушыларының YouTube арнасын пайдалану тәжірибесі, сондай-ақ университетте ұйымдастырылған кәсіби-техникалық аударма курсы негізінде бакалавриат студенттерінің шетел тіліндегі коммуникативтік дағдыларын дамытудағы тәжірибесі қарастырылды. Авторлар техникалық мамандық студенттерінің шет тілдік дағдыларын дамыту жолдарын, сондай-ақ оқытушыларға арналған ұсыныстар жасаған. Ағылшын тілін үйрену кезінде кездесетін мәселелер жөнінде студенттердің сауалнамасының нәтижелері, студенттердің кәсіби шет тіліндегі коммуникативтік дағдыларын жетілдіру үшін интерактивті әдістерді қолдану тәжірибесі, сондай-ақ университеттің шетел тілдері кафедрасы ұйымдастыратын басқа да сабақтан тыс іс-шаралар ұсынылған.

Кілт сөздер: ұлттық сана, үштілділік, көптілділік, ұлттық қатынас, көпшілік тобы, кәсіби мансап, кәсіби құзыреттілік, халықаралық еңбек нарығы, интеграция.

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Развитие иноязычных профессиональных навыков студентов технических специальностей

Статья посвящена проблемам преподавания иностранного языка в техническом вузе. В связи с интеграцией Республики Казахстан в мировое сообщество молодые специалисты должны эффективно использовать иностранный язык в своей будущей профессии. Преподавание иностранных языков в неязыковых вузах имеет особую актуальность, поскольку иноязычное общение современных специалистов в профессиональной сфере становится все более тесным в связи с эффектом роста профессиональных, деловых, научных контактов специалистов в мировом сообществе. В статье рассмотрен опыт, приобретенный кафедрой иностранных языков Карагандинского технического университета в развитии иноязычных коммуникативных навыков студентов бакалавриата на основе опыта преподавателя, использующего канал YouTube, а также организованного в университете курса профессионально-технического перевода. Авторами статьи предложены пути развития иноязычных навыков студентов технических специальностей, а также рекомендации для преподавателей. Представлены результаты анкетирования студентов о проблемах, с которыми они сталкиваются при изучении английского языка, практика использования интерактивных методов для совершенствования профессиональных иноязычных коммуникативных умений студентов и другие внеурочные мероприятия, организуемые кафедрой иностранных языков университета.

Ключевые слова: национальное сознание, трехязычие, многоязычие, национальное общение, группа большинства, профессиональная карьера, профессиональная компетентность, международный рынок труда, интеграция.

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