



# CURRENT PROBLEMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AT A NON-PHILOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY AND THEIR POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

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## ANNOTATION

*The article attempts to consider the main problems of modern teaching of foreign languages. Particular attention is paid to the situation in non-linguistic universities, where the role of learning foreign languages is often downplayed due to the dominant role of special disciplines and the limited opportunities of educational institutions.*

**KEYWORDS:** *teaching, foreign language, professionalism, motivation, learning process, efficiency*

## АКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ ОБУЧЕНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ В НЕФИЛОЛОГИЧЕСКОМ ВУЗЕ И ВОЗМОЖНЫЕ ИХ РЕШЕНИЯ

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## Аннотация

*В статье предпринимается попытка рассмотреть основные проблемы современного преподавания иностранных языков. Особое внимание уделяется ситуации в неязыковых вузах, где роль изучения иностранных языков часто принижается в силу главенствующей роли специальных дисциплин и ограниченности возможностей учебных заведений.*

**Ключевые слова:** *преподавание, иностранный язык, профессионализм, мотивация, процесс обучения, эффективность*

## INTRODUCTION

Obviously, the educational process performs one of the fundamental functions in the formation and development of any society. Not only the fate of each individual person depends on the success of training, but also the prospects for progress in the area in which this person will work in the future, applying the acquired knowledge in practice, embodying theoretical ideas in reality. Underestimation of the importance of the education process and its results inevitably leads to a drop in many indicators of the quality of life of the population and the functioning of a complex branched structure of state mechanisms.

The optimization of the educational process is urgent, and our society must solve all the accumulated problems in education as soon as possible in order to avoid serious socio-cultural consequences. The educational environment regularly requires updates and improvements in tools, methods and approaches to meet the ever-changing needs of an evolving society. At the same time, any lag in the modernization of the educational process immediately becomes noticeable and causes significant damage in various spheres of society.

In the age of globalization and international integration, a special place is occupied by training aimed at creating, maintaining and strengthening ties between countries and peoples in order to exchange knowledge and experience, create common interethnic



projects, mutually beneficial conditions for cooperation between different states. Teaching foreign languages, national and cultural characteristics of different countries becomes extremely important.

### Three sides of the problem

Like any other complex, strategically important for society and constantly improving process, teaching foreign languages has a number of features that, if ignored, turn into problems. In our opinion, the roots of these problems and ways to overcome them should be sought in each of the three key participants in the educational process: the teacher, the student and the educational environment (by which we mean the education system in general and individual educational institutions in particular). Let us consider the main problems of teaching foreign languages on the example of a modern non-linguistic university from the perspective of the three parties involved.

### The role of the teacher in teaching foreign languages

High demands are placed on modern specialists in all fields of knowledge, dictated by the need to comply with international standards, allowing professionals in their field to remain competitive and successfully implement the experience of foreign colleagues. High demands should also be placed on teachers who train these specialists, in particular, on teachers of foreign languages, who, ideally, help to build this very "bridge of continuity" of the experience of countries and nationalities, to establish a dialogue of cultures.

Every university teacher must be a professional. Under the professionalism of a teacher of higher education L.I. Gu-rye understands "a high level of psychological-pedagogical and scientific-subject knowledge and skills, combined with an appropriate cultural and moral character, which in practice provides socially demanded training for future specialists"; the professional competence of a university teacher is presented in the form of interrelated blocks: pedagogical activity, pedagogical communication, the personality of the teacher, the level of training and development of students; the structure of activity - gnostic, design, constructive, organizational and communication skills [1].

Unfortunately, in reality, understanding the professionalism of a teacher often comes down to his actual knowledge of the subject. The tasks of the teacher should not be limited to the transfer of information: it is important not only the informative content of the discipline being taught, but also how and under what conditions the educational material is presented to students. "Dry" and boring retelling of the text of the textbook or limiting tasks to reading, translating and retelling texts - all these methods have long been in the past. Now the teaching process should be dynamic, creative and diverse. This is the kind of activity that, no matter how trite it may sound, requires "putting your heart into it", experiencing a sincere interest in the results of your work. A true professional teacher should be interested in the success of his students and do everything possible for this. If, due to certain circumstances, the teacher approaches the educational process solely as a job that he is obliged to perform for a certain fee, the probability of his teaching success will most likely tend to zero.

In our opinion, the main factors negatively affecting the improvement of professionalism by teachers themselves are the following: 1) excessive workload, often leading to burnout; 2) significantly underestimated profitability of work; 3) lack of motivation on the part of management; 4) poor organization of conditions for advanced training of teaching staff. Thus, with a huge workload and lack of significant motivation, teachers often do not have internal incentives to improve themselves and improve their skills.

Ideally, every foreign language teacher who claims to be a professional in his field should:

1) constantly "rotate" in the language environment: watch films and read literature in a foreign language; find opportunities to communicate with native speakers; travel abroad to maintain the level of proficiency in a "natural" (rather than bookish) language and familiarization with the culture of the language being taught;

2) regularly get acquainted with new teaching aids; master modern teaching methods; try to develop their own more effective and innovative methods of language teaching;

3) improve their knowledge in the language of the specialty that their students are mastering (for example, if a teacher teaches business English, self-education in the field of economics, communication with colleagues teaching subjects in various economic disciplines can be of great help);

4) contribute to the creation (and maintenance) of a creative, friendly atmosphere in the classroom, which allows you to keep the attention of the audience and bring additional motivation to the assimilation of educational material;

5) practice public speaking skills, learn strategies and ways to influence the audience;

6) have knowledge in the field of pedagogy and psychology;

7) regularly share their knowledge and experience through the publication of scientific and methodological articles, manuals and textbooks that really improve the work with educational material, participate in scientific events (conferences, seminars, round tables).

In the conditions of a modern university, not all teachers of foreign languages meet these, it would seem, obviously necessary requirements. The reasons for this circumstance can be numerous and different: from a banal misunderstanding of the importance of a constant desire to improve the quality of teaching to objective external circumstances, such as working conditions and the economic situation in society.



As the most optimal measures to combat the problem of insufficient and "stagnating" level of professionalism of teachers, the following can be proposed:

1) tightening control over the quality of teaching, accompanied not only (and not so much) by fines (reprimands from management, material deductions, dismissal), but by measures to encourage initiative teachers;

2) creation of permanent scientific seminars on the basis of educational units. The active participation of the author of this article in the work of the scientific seminar held at the Department of Foreign Languages every semester leaves him no doubt that this practice of scientific and methodological meetings significantly contributes to improving the quality of teaching at the department. Scientific seminars provide an opportunity for colleagues to exchange experiences and learn something new for themselves. Given the benefits of such events, I would like to make a proposal to hold them more frequently, for example, 3-6 times a semester. Outside of seminars, colleagues simply do not have time (due to the heavy workload) for the exchange of experience and their own methodological research;

3) popularization of university teacher training programs and motivation to participate in them. Undoubtedly, such programs require additional funding, but even in the face of budgetary austerity, they are a worthwhile investment in the future of the educational institution;

4) establishing close relationships between language departments and departments of other specialties, whose students study a foreign language. In universities, as well as in companies, it is worth developing a corporate culture not only locally, in individual departments, but also at the interfaculty and interdepartmental levels. This will not only rally the team, but also achieve interdisciplinary synergy. In the case of a foreign language, close cooperation between the language department and the faculties it serves will make it possible to bring theory closer to practice, to focus on the truly important aspects in teaching the language of the specialty, to build terminology explanations on real (life) examples from professional practice;

5) the introduction of a competitive component in the management of the educational unit: all teachers should be aware of the professional achievements of their colleagues; the best teachers in the semester or in the academic year should be rewarded, and their experience should be passed on to colleagues.

The teacher should be a model for his students. And not only in terms of extensive knowledge of the subject being taught, but also in terms of moral qualities. In our opinion, a teacher has the right to demand from students a high quality of work with educational material only if he himself demonstrates high-quality teaching, based on his capabilities. And vice versa, a specialist who is negligent in his duties often does not make any high demands on his wards. In fairness, it should be noted that such "indifference" to the quality of one's teaching and its effectiveness can often be associated with external circumstances, which were discussed earlier (burnout, low salaries, lack of incentives, etc.). We'll talk more about this a little later. And now let's look at the problem of modern education from the point of view of a student.

The role of the student's personality and its impact on the quality of education

Speaking about the difficulties and problems of the functioning of the educational environment, one cannot ignore the role of the student. The main, in our opinion, difficulty in involving students in the educational process is the change of generations (the so-called generations "x", "y" and "7") and the change in life priorities and patterns associated with this change. In particular, a large number of students have a significant change in their attitude towards the education they receive - many do not realize (and do not feel) its practical significance, considering a diploma to be only a formality necessary for subsequent employment. With this approach to learning, how can you say about the high motivation of students? Of course, without the proper interest of the student, it is very difficult (if not impossible) to make him master the educational material in a quality manner and learn how to apply the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities in practice. This circumstance greatly complicates the work of the teacher and, sadly, often reduces all his efforts to zero.

So that students do not become "enemies" in the process of transferring knowledge, it is important to make them "allies" in the common business with the teacher - teaching. It is the cooperation of the teacher and students that can lead to the maximum indicators of teaching effectiveness. The detachment of the teacher or students from the effectiveness of the educational process, if not undermining it, then to a large extent slows it down.

The solution to the problem with the motivation of students should be the observance of the following conditions:

1) the use by the teacher of all his professional potential and continuous self-improvement, which was discussed above;

2) establishing contact with the audience and each of the students from the very first lesson, a constant desire to maintain friendly relations of constructive cooperation. Based on our own professional experience, we suggest devoting part of the first lesson with a new group of students to getting to know their interests, personal qualities and characteristics, for example, in the form of their brief self-presentations according to the established algorithm (answers to questions). This simple task not only allows you to learn about some of the interests of the students, but also gives the teacher a first impression of the level of language proficiency and the knowledge and life experience that the audience already has;

3) explaining to students the importance of knowledge of a foreign language and its role in their chosen specialty. This refers not just to an educational conversation on the importance of a foreign language, but to bring specific facts and examples from life experience;



4) a balanced combination of individual and group work of students in the classroom. Ideally, each student should feel that he is individually given equal attention of the teacher with his classmates, but at the same time be aware of himself as part of a group (collective);

5) the interactive nature of learning. In interactive learning, the interaction and cooperation of the teacher and the student, the teacher and the group, students among themselves are

one of the most important elements of the methodological system and the main socio-psychological condition for the success of the educational process [2];

6) constant binding of educational material to the actual realities of life, close and understandable to students, as well as directly related to future professional practice. The student should always understand why he is doing this or that task, how it will help him in the future;

7) development and encouragement of optional language teaching and practice of its use. It is necessary to develop extracurricular forms of communication: clubs, circles, open lectures in foreign languages, scientific societies of interest, where students of different specialties can gather [3];

8) the correct selection of educational material, not only meeting the requirements of the curriculum, but correlated with the actual needs and interests of students. In our opinion, all educational material should, as a result, allow students to apply the acquired knowledge in practice. Any educational material for learning a foreign language should be accompanied by a system of practice-oriented tasks - cases. Cases are an ideal tool for practicing theoretical knowledge in practice, parallel acquaintance of students with the socio-cultural characteristics of native speakers. In addition, this methodological technology significantly increases the motivation of students who like to test their knowledge and skills in situations that are as close as possible to their future work.

9) maximum use of the possibilities of the Internet. Now it is appropriate to talk about the emergence of a new teaching culture in connection with the use of computer technology: "The rapid growth of the Internet over the past few years has made it a magical window to knowledge. In addition to engaging students in various linguistic tasks such as reading, grammar, writing (these are not tasks), the Internet is changing not only the way we live and work, but also the way we think and learn" [4 p. eleven].

Subject to the above conditions, in our opinion, it is possible to achieve the most productive situation, when students themselves motivate themselves to study and willingly go beyond the material provided by the program. In such a situation, the main tasks of the teacher are to direct the internal needs of students to knowledge, create conditions for the practice of applying the knowledge gained and control the results.

The influence of the "system" on the course and results of the educational process

No matter how professional the teacher is and no matter how high the involvement of students in the learning process, the success of learning largely depends on the circumstances and conditions in which it takes place. Oddly enough, the importance of foreign languages is often underestimated in the course of drawing up educational programs. In particular, one of the negative trends of recent years has been the annual reduction in the number of hours for studying a foreign language at a university.

In this case, we have to talk about ... a standard situation in which a foreign language in a non-specialized university is given an average of 3-4 hours a week of classroom lessons and about 1 hour of independent work of students. The effectiveness of the latter requires, in turn, careful and thoughtful organization. Thus, it is obvious that the conditions for teaching a foreign language in terms of the volume of the teaching load also do not fully correspond to its goals [5].

In the development of teaching foreign languages in a non-linguistic university, the development of educational and methodological complexes is of particular importance. "The development of programs and teaching materials based on national pedagogical values, taking into account the best world practices, is of great importance," writes Z.B. Nebaraeva. [6]

In addition, with an increase in the teacher's workload in the form of the number of classroom hours, in our opinion, the increasing workload in the form of preparation for classes is significantly underestimated (ideally, it should take as much time (if not more) to prepare for a lesson as to conduct it) . Thus, the load of 900 hours (which teachers now have) should be divided, for example, into 450 classroom hours and 450 hours for preparation for classes.

To improve the conditions for teaching a foreign language, one should:

1) rethink the importance of a foreign language for the formation of a full-fledged personality of a professional;

2) consider the costs (in the form of a decent salary and bonuses for teachers, the purchase of the latest equipment, renovation of classrooms, etc.) necessary to maintain a satisfactory level of language teaching as promising investments in the future of students and the state;

3) increase the number of classroom hours for language learning and at the same time reduce the actual workload for each individual teacher;

4) do not underestimate the time spent preparing teachers for classes and include this time in the total workload.

## CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, the role of a foreign language in shaping the personality of a specialist should not be underestimated. As soon as all the above problems are taken into account in the tripartite interaction "teacher - student - educational environment", the level and quality of students' knowledge of a foreign language will increase many times over. University graduates will receive



a huge advantage in employment and subsequent promotion; the state will acquire full-fledged professional personnel capable of adopting foreign experience and using it for the benefit of their country.

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