

## BROADENING STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN PROFESSIONAL ENGLISH

*The article deals with the problem of broadening students' communicative competence in the process of teaching professional English. Key components of communicative competence are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Four major types of communicative exercises, which are used for teaching both general and professional English are described in the article. They are personal (cognitive) or social (interactive) and closed or open. It is also stressed that competence in oral communication is best achieved through interaction in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere.*

*In conclusion the confidence factor is highly esteemed by the author. Practice in teaching professional English shows that self-confidence is assumed to have a great influence in successful learning. It can be a crucial factor in the learner's ability to overcome occasional setbacks or minor mistakes in the process of broadening communicative competence in professional English.*

In recent years, there has been a major shift in perspective within the language teaching profession concerning the nature of what is to be taught. In relatively simple terms, there has been a change of emphasis from presenting language as a set of *forms* (grammatical, phonological, lexical) which have to be learned and practiced, to presenting language as a *functional system* which is used to fulfill a range of communicative purposes. This shift in emphasis has largely taken place as a result of fairly convincing arguments, mainly from ethnographers and others who study language in its context of use, that the ability to use a language should be described as *communicative competence*. Key components of communicative competence, as presented by Canale and Swain (1980), are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Given this description of the separate components, we can characterize traditional language teaching methods and materials as concentrating on the development of *grammatical competence*, almost to the exclusion of the other components. Concentration on developing only grammatical competence, however, will not provide the learner with the ability to produce sentences or utterances which are appropriate to the context of use. This ability, called *sociolinguistic competence*, allows the language user to select which utterance form, from any number of possible correct forms, is considered *appropriate* within a language community on a particular interactive occasion. The third component of communicative competence is *strategic competence*: in simple terms, the ability to successfully "get one's message across". The investigation of strategic competence is very much tied to the use of communication strategies which enable language users to organize their utter-

ances as effectively as possible to get their messages across to particular listeners. Such strategies are also considered to be part of the ability to compensate for breakdowns in communication.

The ability to communicate spontaneously in the target language requires the speaker to concentrate almost exclusively on the content of the message being transmitted. Only when meaning, rather than form, becomes the focal point for speakers does actual communication between them take place.

There are four major types of communicative exercises, which are used for teaching both general and professional English. They are: *personal* (cognitive) or *social* (interactive) and *closed* or *open*. A *personal exercise* is one that requires a learner to formulate responses to a fixed question or set of directions, not necessarily requiring consultations with others. A *social exercise*, on the other hand, requires verbal give and take for its completion. A *closed exercise* is one in which there is either one or a very limited number of correct answers to a problem or question that is posed. An *open exercise* is one in which there are many possible answers or solutions. *Social exercises* may be further divided into one way or two way depending upon whether information comes from one member of a group or more than one member.

It should be stressed that communication exists on all proficiency levels except the very lowest. In teaching professional English important are the exercises which involve gathering and evaluation of personal data by a group. Such exercises are based upon what is generally known as the *affective model*. The term, "*affective model*", describes an approach to classroom work which takes into consideration extra-linguistic parameters, such as classroom atmosphere, interest of

the students in the material and the general psychological state of the learners, which can have a positive or negative effect on the learning process. It means that an English teacher must take into account the relations among the students of a certain group, their age and sex, interests and inclinations, public activities and attitude towards future profession. Working on professional lexis the teacher ought to know if the students have already covered the material under consideration in their native language at the lessons on their speciality.

Clearly tied in with the affective model is the *humanistic approach* to learning, which stresses the positive side of the process. For English as a foreign language teaching the basic humanistic premise is that competence in oral communication is best achieved through interaction in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. It is the teacher's task to establish a positive classroom ambience and rapport among the learners, encouraging them to express personal feelings openly and without inhibitions in the target language. By avoiding what is negative, it is felt that communication should be more appealing and easier, leading to a speedier development of oral, writing and comprehending skills in professional English.

How, in what way can the English teacher broaden communicative competence of the students in their future profession? Besides communicative exercises and extra-linguistic parameters, mentioned above, teachers use traditional kinds of class work: dialogues, roleplays, manipulative and controlled exercises. It goes without saying, that basically professionally oriented texts for reading and comprehension are used.

Dialogues are intended to be a representation of actual speech encounters in the real world. Ideally they are an effective means of practicing the normal give-and-take of professional conversation. However, two basic points must be made at the outset of any dialogue work.

First, neither resourceful teachers nor imaginative students can completely neutralize the artificiality of the classroom situation. At the very best, dialogues remain only approximations of the real world. Students do not have the opportunity to use the target language as a natural language until they leave the protective walls of the classroom and are forced to communicate with native speakers in uncontrived circumstances.

Second, dialogues have been used in a wide variety of ways by English teachers. The most rigid approach is to be found in earlier audio-lingual texts, where a complete conversation is usually presented for drilling, memorization and eventual recitation in class.

This type of activity requires learners to commit entire segments of speech to memory in the hope of instilling in them an immediate feeling of accomplishment.

The broader view of language learning which succeeded audio-lingualism allows for more input by the student. No longer is a finished piece of conversation presented for oral practice and memorization. Rather than simply memorizing, learners use their knowledge and imagination in the process of constructing dialogues. They are also encouraged to concentrate on the meaning of the message that they were conveying rather than the form.

Simply put, a roleplay is a game in the target language in which learners act out parts that have been assigned to them in well defined situations. There is actually very little difference between roleplay and the guided dialogues. Both differ from controlled dialogues in that they develop more or less spontaneously and unpredictably within a conversational frame. No pre-fabricated conversations are presented for memorization and no conversation segments are provided as aids. In this sense both roleplay and guided dialogues approximate natural language.

Every speech situation, professionally directed as well, consists of speakers, location, and topic, with purpose or function as an added dimension. While the speakers, location, and topic of a conversation are the normal framework for general dialogue practice, functions such as greetings, questioning and apologizing provide a particularly effective focus for roleplay.

For professionally aimed roleplay activities to be successful, at least two things are necessary. First, there should be no professional or personal impediments to prevent the members of the class from playing their roles. Cultural sensitivities as well as individual interests and ambitions should be taken into account when assigning roles to students. They should also understand the general pattern of behavior expected of them. Second, the pace of the class should be lively and spirited. The general atmosphere should be positive and friendly. The teacher should circulate among the students to encourage them and to check on the progress of the activities.

In conclusion, we can't help mentioning the confidence factor. Our practice in teaching professional English shows that self-confidence is assumed to have a great influence in successful learning. We are sure that self-esteem may be a crucial factor in the learner's ability to overcome occasional setbacks or minor mistakes in the process of broadening of students' communicative competence both in general and professional English.

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## **РОЗШИРЕННЯ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНЦІЇ СТУДЕНТІВ З ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ**

*У статті йдеться про розширення комунікативної компетенції студентів у процесі навчання професійної англійської мови. Ключовими компонентами комунікативної компетенції є граматична, соціолінгвістична та стратегічна компетенції. В статті описано чотири головні типи комунікативних вправ, які використовуються для навчання як загальної, так і професійної англійської мови. Це особистісні (пізнавальні) чи суспільні (інтерактивні) та закриті чи відкриті вправи. Підкреслюється, що компетенція в усному спілкуванні найбільш результативно формується в процесі співпраці в дружній релаксованій атмосфері.*

*У висновках автором високо оцінюється роль самооцінки та формування у студентів впевненості в собі. Практика навчання професійно спрямованої англійської мови свідчить, що впевненість в собі може стати вирішальним фактором в опануванні іноземної мови*