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CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING PROFESSIONALLY ORIENTED TEXTS FOR NON-LINGUISTIC STUDENTS WHEN LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT UNIVERSITY

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Чтение профессиональной литературы – неотъемлемая часть профессиональной деятельности специалиста, что актуализирует важность определения четких критериев отбора иноязычных текстов в контексте профессионально-ориентированного обучения иностранному языку.

Ключевые слова: профессиональная компетентность, коммуникативная компетентность, иноязычное обучение, тексты профессионально-ориентированной тематики, профессионально-ориентированное изучение иностранного языка

Studying professional literature is an integral part of a specialist's professional activity, which actualizes the importance of defining clear criteria for selecting texts in the process within the context of professionally oriented teaching of a foreign language at university

Keywords: professional competence, communicative competence, foreign language learning, reading professionally oriented texts, professionally-oriented teaching of a foreign language

The beginning of the 21st century has been characterized by new business practices and new patterns of employment; as a result, new kinds of employees, with different and diverse competences and skills, are required at the labour market. The formation of a new type of economy has required reconsidering the modern Belarusian society's view on a pattern of a higher school graduate in which core qualifications are combined with social behaviour, the ability to work in a group, initiative, ability to make decisions and be responsible for their consequences in the professional environment. To meet these needs, Educational Standards of Belarus rest upon the principle of the competence-based approach, which defines a system of requirements for the organization of educational process aimed at strengthening its practical

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character, increasing the role of students' independent work in solving problems and situations modeling a number of professional issues, forming ability to act in changing conditions.

The competence-based approach has resulted in a number of changes in the educational process at Universities of Belarus, including:

- revising and updating the contents of all the disciplines studied;
- specifying educational outcomes in the terms of basic professional, specialized and universal competences;
- defining the lists of competences that are to be formed when studying every academic discipline on the curriculum;
- designing the contents and technologies of education that ensure the development of these groups of competences;
- designing appropriate diagnostic and assessment tools and procedures to measure the formation of basic professional, specialized and universal competences.

It's widely held that the competitiveness of a modern specialist often directly depends not only on his / her high qualifications in the professional field, but also on willingness and ability to solve professional problems in the context of foreign language communication. Thus, of particular relevance is a professionally oriented approach to teaching a foreign language at non-linguistic faculties of universities, which provides for the formation of students' ability to communicate in a foreign language in specific professional, business, scientific fields and situations, taking into account the specific features of their future profession or specialty. In this case, a foreign language acts as a means of improving the professional competence and personal and professional development of students being a necessary condition for future successful professional activity of a graduate of a modern higher educational establishment.

The major feature of professionally oriented foreign language teaching is its thematic integration with core disciplines in order to obtain additional professional knowledge and develop significant basic professional and specific competences and personality qualities. One of the ways to provide this kind of integration is thorough selection of texts and other sources of specific (professional) information to be studied, discussed and analyzed at foreign language lessons. Many researchers believe that working with a text (written, audial or graphically presented) and operations for its analysis and interpretation are the basis for organizing the educational process for further mastering all types of speech activity (speaking, listening, writing). A

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university graduate, as a future specialist, should be able not just to read and translate texts written in a foreign language, but rather to comment information on, summarise it, provide its interpretation using a number of analytical tools, undertake a comparative analysis of a number of phenomena studied, and if needed – express his / her point of view on the issue. This, in turn, actualizes the problem of criteria for selecting texts for foreign language professionally oriented reading and comprehension activities, contributing to the formation of professional communicative competence, information culture of students and ensuring management of the teaching-learning process.

It should be stressed, that the module of professional communication (represented by the spheres of educational, professional and industrial communication) is an integral component of the subject-thematic contents of foreign language as an academic discipline studied by all students at Belarusian higher educational establishments. It makes up the necessary foundation for studying diverse topics that correspond to the contents of a number of major (professional) disciplines. Thus, the first step to be undertaken is to conduct a comparative analysis of the curricula of the core subjects studied during the same period when foreign language is, and to make a list of topical issues, professional terms, concepts, etc. to be considered simultaneously. For example, the topics studied at foreign language classes by third-year students of speciality "Business Informatics" at Mogilev State Kuleshov University include "Business office", "Business analytics", "Databases", etc., while second-year sociology students consider the topics "The Founders of Sociology", "Major Social Institutions", "Socialisation", etc., thus corresponding to a number of major subjects taken during the same academic years. Such kind of integration between the issues studied at core subjects and foreign language classes would promote deeper understanding of specific phenomena, and facilitates students' eagerness and ability to search for the information needed using a great number of sources available in a foreign language, including authentic ones. Students' interest, motivation, and engagement are enhanced as they can relate the texts to their personal and professional goals and aspirations.

Besides the thematic integration, the important criteria to be taken into account when selecting professionally oriented texts are: topicality of contents, informativeness and pragmatic value, semantic completeness, problematic nature, authenticity (both compositionally and linguistically). An important characteristic is also taking into account the level of professional and language training of students: texts should be neither too difficult, nor too easy.

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Let's consider some of the criteria listed. The correspondence of the text to the criterion of topicality and relevance contributes, firstly, to the emergence of the greatest interest in the activity, and therefore the activity of students in the perception and analysis of information; secondly, relevant information will help to avoid the isolation of university studies from the upcoming professional activity. Preference should be given to the texts reflecting the state of the issue in recent years, except for those where a retrospective analysis of the phenomenon under consideration is necessary. It is important to provide students with the opportunity to compare the state of the problem in their own and foreign-language professional culture, critically comprehend and thereby enrich their awareness of the professional environment.

Authentic professionally oriented texts expose students to the vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and culture of their chosen profession, which can enhance their communicative competence and intercultural awareness [2, p. 63]. They also prepare students for such professional activities as reading reports, writing emails, giving presentations, making visuals, etc.

The informativeness of a text is the degree of its semantic and meaningful novelty, the ability to extract new and useful information that provides the pragmatic value of the text. Integrity as a characteristic of the text implies the organization of the presentation of information in accordance with the logical and semantic structure, which makes it possible to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the problem. The problematical character of textual information allows students to avoid an unambiguous interpretation of any phenomenon, event or action, helps to include several, even contradictory opinions in the educational material. It contributes to development of critical thinking, comparative analysis, cognitive abilities, and the formation of a conscious attitude to learning a language for specific professional purposes. Besides, the problematical and open nature of the materials studied and analysed enhance students' interaction, collaboration, and feedback, as they can use the texts to communicate and cooperate with their peers, teachers, and experts in classrooms, receive and provide constructive feedback and support, thus training to develop and defend their point of view in a reasoned manner [3, p. 206].

Summing up, professionally oriented foreign language teaching envisages mastering a foreign language for specific professional purposes and combines acquisition of special skills based on professional and linguistic knowledge with development of certain personal qualities and skills that are

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likely to be of need in future professional activity of a University graduate. To contribute to reaching this goal, the selection of professionally-oriented texts for non-linguistic students should rest upon the criteria that include thematic integration, topicality of contents, informativeness and pragmatic value, semantic completeness, problematic nature. In this case, texts for specific purposes would enhance students' relevance, authenticity, and applicability, as they can use the texts to acquire and apply both a foreign language and specific knowledge and skills that are useful and meaningful for their professional field. Thus, thorough selection of texts for specific purposes would contribute to the effective professional activity of future specialists, and meet the needs and goals of teachers and learners and the curriculum.

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