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ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ТРЕБОВАНИЙ РАБОТОДАТЕЛЕЙ КАК СПОСОБ ПОВЫШЕНИЯ ВНУТРЕННЕЙ МОТИВАЦИИ СТУДЕНТОВ

Аннотация. Изучение иностранных языков – неотъемлемая часть учебного процесса любого высшего учебного заведения. Несмотря на сомнения студентов в отношении необходимости знания иностранного языка и его последующего применения, компании по подбору персонала утверждают, что специалисты со средним и высоким уровнем владения иностранным языком более востребованы на рынке труда и получают более высокие предложения по заработной плате уже на этапе устройства на работу. Эта информация должна быть донесена до студентов, особенно тех, кто не хочет изучать иностранный язык. Отношение студентов к изучению языка улучшится, если он будет восприниматься как требование работодателей и конкурентное преимущество при поиске работы. Кроме того, помимо необходимости сдать экзамен появится внутренняя мотивация.

Ключевые слова: иностранный язык, мотивация, карьерный рост, коммуникация, социальные навыки, учебный процесс.

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STUDYING EMPLOYERS' REQUIREMENTS: A WAY TO INCREASE INTRINSIC MOTIVATION OF STUDENTS

Abstract. The study of foreign languages is an integral part of the learning process in any higher educational institution. Despite students' uncertainty about the need and further applicability of foreign language knowledge, recruitment companies assure that specialists with an average or high level of foreign language competence are more in demand in the labour market and have a better salary already at the stage of employment. These facts should be communicated to students, especially those unwilling to learn a foreign language. Viewed as a requirement of employers and a competitive advantage for finding a better job, foreign languages will be more appreciated by students. Moreover, intrinsic motivation will appear in addition to the necessity to pass an exam.

Keywords: foreign language, motivation, career building, communication, soft skills, learning process.

Introduction

For centuries foreign languages have been an intrinsic part of education. Speaking different languages enabled people to communicate with humans belonging to other cultures, to share knowledge, and to get access to information unavailable in their mother tongues.

Back in the Middle Ages most scientific papers, philosophical treatises, literary works,

theological writings and law codes were written in Latin, a language that was native for nobody. To be able to write serious texts for educated readers people had to study Latin. In many educational institutions curricula also included ancient Greek.

Since then, foreign languages are taught worldwide both in schools and in universities. They may differ in different regions depending on the largest neighboring countries and government policies. However, the modern

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lingua franca is English, as soon as this language combines several distinct advantages.

Firstly, it is the official language of the UK and the USA, the countries that have been dominating in global politics and economy for decades. Moreover, about 30 % of the citizens of India (former British colony), the most populated country of the world, speak English as the associate official language.

Secondly, it is an analytic language with no grammatical genders. This fact considerably facilitates the learning process as students do not have to memorize genders, cases, form-building affixes, etc.

Thirdly, English is widely used in education, especially in universities, and a lot of English textbooks meant for teaching people of any nationality have been published. On the Internet you can find a lot of free and paid resources, including video courses, on English. Furthermore, as of January 2024, 52 % of all websites available had content in the English language. Spanish, being the closest challenger, was used in materials of only 5.5 % of websites¹.

However, nowadays teachers of English (and other foreign languages) in non-linguistic universities face a number of challenges.

¹ Petrosyan A. Common languages used for web content 2024, by share of websites. *Statista* (global data and business intelligence). 2024. February 19. URL: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262946/most-common-languages-on-the-internet/> (accessed 14.04.2024).

One of them is fast-paced development of text processing software, including programs for translation of written and spoken texts. Besides, the new advancements in the field of generative artificial intelligence foster an illusion that you can not only easily translate your own text into the desired language, but you can simply generate a text on any topic directly in the language you need. Another argument against the foreign language studies is the absence of need for this knowledge for one's future career. Many students claim that they are going to work in Russia for Russian companies that do not require or even expect any foreign language speaking skills from their employees.

The purpose of this study is to find the ways to persuade students that a foreign language can be a competitive advantage in the modern labour market despite fast technology development.

Materials and methods

To conduct the research, we analyzed a number of theoretical papers of scientists and educators related to foreign languages learning, in particular, to motivation, importance of language proficiency for future employment and revision of curricula to meet requirements of employers and labor market. To obtain the information about the labour market situation, online resources of recruiting companies and vacancy sections of corporate websites were studied. Special attention was paid to *Rosatom* since it is one of few Russian construction and technology companies that has been working in foreign markets for decades without business interruption.

Literature Review

Most researchers who study foreign language learning and teaching are interested in

methodology, language pedagogy, and even psychological aspects, while significance of a foreign language for career in any field, in particular in industry and commerce, is neglected. Brian Bloch [1] was one of the scholars who directed attention to this issue. He underlines the "binary" aspect of language skills, as most employers looking for job applicants fluent in foreign languages are naturally interested not in linguists, but in professionals in specific industries who are able to communicate, take part in negotiations, maintain correspondence, read and write all sorts of business, legal or technical documents in other languages in accordance with their job responsibilities.

As global commerce developed, the need for foreign language as a means of communication between economic agents became more and more evident. Since employers wanted staff able to solve relevant business problems, the university curricula were revised. The focus of foreign language teaching in universities shifted to industry-specific processes. Much attention was paid to terminology as the basis of speaking and comprehension skills [2; 3].

On the other hand, researchers admit that many students still do not realize how important a foreign language may be for their career [4; 5]. Many of them consider it to show one's cultural background and the level of comprehensive education. Nevertheless, they doubt it has any practical value for career development [6].

Results

Any language is primarily a means of communication. Speaking several languages allows you to share experiences and knowledge with people from many different locations, moreover, you will be able to establish international relations, to develop foreign trade and encour-

age effective economic and political cooperation [7–9].

Nowadays specialists in many fields need to work with great amounts of information to remain up to date with all modern developments. Internet is the main source of readily available data, however, much of it is provided in English [10; 11].

What is even more important for young people just starting their careers, proficiency in a foreign language will often be viewed as a competitive advantage by your potential employer [12]. At present many companies have clients, suppliers or partners in other countries. If you are an employee of a company that works with a particular country, knowledge of the local language will be an obvious advantage. If your work suggests having projects in different countries and maybe even on different continents, it is next to impossible to learn all local languages you will encounter. So, you will need a lingua franca, that is presently English, with regional predomination of French and Spanish in some areas.

To show the importance of foreign languages in our life, universities hold annual conferences. However, they are meant for students who have no doubt about the issue. To make others reconsider their opinion, we can start with discussing this issue in class. Detailed analysis of all arguments both for and against can contribute to better understanding.

Overreliance on software and AI should be addressed specifically. It is a good idea to brainstorm the situations when they can fail or be of no help, such as finding oneself in areas with poor or no Internet connection, loss of phone, dead battery, software failure, etc. It is advisable to deliberately test translating capabilities of the software to show students that technologies may be unable to grasp the meaning of the sentence. As for the wording in Russian, it often leaves much to be desired.

However, modern technologies should not be ignored. It is recommended to give tasks involving their use with further oral presentation of final results. During the presentation students should be able to speak coherently and meaningfully on the topic. Additionally, discussion of the presented issues or answering questions that all participants of the educational process may have after or during the presentation can ensure that the students know the topic and can discuss it and provide relevant information when requested. Thus, being addressed wisely, this challenge can contribute to improvement of teaching practices and encourage collaboration of teachers and students contributing greatly to the learning process and mutual understanding [13; 14].

When teaching at a non-linguistic university, teachers often make use of corporate websites of companies working in the respective industry. These resources provide a lot of industry-specific information that textbooks do not contain. However, we usually refer to foreign websites of the companies with headquarters in the countries where the foreign language we are teaching is the official one. The main reasons are extensive vocabulary, authentic texts and absence of blunders. To solve the motivation problem, in particular the frequent excuse of decreased need for proficiency in foreign languages it can be useful to change the focus and to refer to websites of Russian companies and online recruiting platforms like HH or SuperJob.

To test this idea, we engaged students who were interested in the topic. They have performed online research, analyzed and summarized the obtained data. According to their findings, nowadays, a lot of prestigious organizations require knowing at least one language. Moreover, the employee should have at least B2 level or higher.

Russian State Federal Information Agency (TASS Russian News Agency) claims that the

average annual growth rate of vacancies with the mandatory requirement of English over 5 years was 22 %¹. According to statistics, the largest number of resumes with knowledge of a foreign language was posted in such spheres as management, procurement, information technology, marketing, art and consulting. Candidates speaking a foreign language claim a salary of 60,000 rubles, while people without knowledge of the second language consider offers starting with 43,000 rubles².

HeadHunter (Russian online recruiting platform) has compiled the top foreign languages that are in demand among Russian employers³. English predictably headed the list followed by Chinese, German, French, Spanish and Italian.

As for the construction sector, the languages that are in the greatest demand in Russia are:

- English that ensures interaction of the parties in international projects and communications irrespective of native languages of project participants;
- Chinese is important because of the active construction market in China and the growing economic ties with Russia;
- French can be useful when working with French architectural standards.

Also, a number of African countries have French as their official language. It has a simple historical explanation as many of them

were colonies of France. That list includes such countries as Guinea, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Madagascar, Cameroon and so on. Africa's potential in the field of renewable energy sources (RES) is especially great: according to the African Energy Commission (AFREC), the hydropower potential of Congo, just one country on the black continent, is estimated at 13 % of the global total⁴ and they need experienced engineers to successfully use these natural resources for the benefit of their population. Having established friendly relations with many African governments, Russia is going to build a number of facilities on this continent⁵.

It should also be noted that Russia possesses advanced nuclear technologies. *Rosatom* is a Russian company that is engaged in this business. It builds nuclear power plants both in Russia and abroad. With over 30 years of experience, this company is the market leader and many nations entrust construction of the most sophisticated facilities of their energy sector – NPS – to its specialists. The company has completed projects in China, Turkey, Egypt, and Bangladesh. At present, there are power plants under construction in China, India, Turkey, Bangladesh, Iran and Belarus.

The students engaged in the project found the requirements to foreign language proficiency of *Rosatom* employees on the corporate website¹. These may be different for differ-

¹ Research: English-speaking applicants are asked for interviews 27 % more often. TASS: *Russian News Agency*. 2024. February 21. URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/20043311> (accessed 14.04.2024). (In Russian).

² Ibid.

³ Svyatitskaya I. Russian labour market for young professionals. 2019. August 14. *HeadHunter* [Website]. URL: https://hhcdn.ru/file/16811100.pdf?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic (accessed 14.04.2024). (In Russian).

⁴ Pennisi E. Congo's Hydropower Potential. *Global EDGE*. 2012. February 24. URL: <https://globaledge.msu.edu/blog/post/1243/congos-hydropower-potential> (accessed 14.04.2024).

⁵ Largest economic projects of Russia in Africa TASS: *Russian News Agency*. 2023. July 27. URL: <https://tass.ru/info/18377785> (accessed 14.04.2024). (In Russian).

ent positions and fields in which specialists work. However, they can be summarized as follows:

1) most positions require at least B2 English proficiency according to CEFR. Employees in managerial positions, especially those involved in negotiations and contacts with foreign partners, may need to have C1 level;

2) employees who have a good command of other foreign languages, e. g., Chinese, French or Spanish, might have competitive advantages when chosen for certain positions;

3) some jobs assume ability to translate or interpret; maintenance of business correspondence is also an important issue;

4) employees engaged in international projects should be aware of the culture of the country where the project is implemented as well as certain rules of conduct, legal issues and common business practices;

5) for some jobs it may be highly desirable to know the nuclear energy, machinery and construction related terms in a foreign language.

Changes in students' motivation have not been specifically studied and cannot be backed up by a relevant sociological research. However, empirical observation shows that appeals to such excuse as "no practical need" became less frequent.

Another important aspect of any university graduate's career being permanent improvement and maintenance of one's proficiency in the field where he works, knowledge of a foreign language can help to find information about latest achievements in the industry abroad and use it in his professional career. For a young specialist to be able to take re-

sponsibility for his self-development and life-long education, he should know where and how he can find the required data.

Conclusion

To conclude, studying requirements of the labour market in terms of language proficiency was an engaging task for a group of students. At the same time, detailed discussion of this topic with justifications from reliable sources enabled those who had doubts and even those who were convinced of irrelevance of language learning to get a new angle on the problem. By all means, their position cannot be revised immediately as generating motivation is a long-term process that takes place gradually. However, since language proficiency was presented as a factor facilitating achievement of the main purpose – successful employment, the denial of the necessity to study a foreign language became less vigorous. The next stage should be creation of intrinsic motivation associated with something a person finds genuinely important for his future career.

Since globalization has changed approach of business owners to recruiting, the demand for translators and interpreters has decreased despite rapid growth of international cooperation due to emergence of a significant number of job applicants speaking fluent English and a number of other languages. Students should be explained on the examples of Russian companies that for some positions B1-B2 English has become a prerequisite. Chinese is also becoming more and more popular among employers' requirements though most Chinese businessmen interacting with foreign partners speak English.

¹ Vacancies. Rosatom [Website]. URL: <https://rosatom-career.ru/vacancies> (accessed 10.04.2024) (In Russian).

As for the construction industry, students who consider taking part in international projects after graduation should invest time into learning foreign languages paying special attention to respective industry-specific terminology. In Russia, it is advisable not to restrict oneself to English, since many projects are located in African countries where

French is spoken more widely. Improving commercial ties with China, Turkey and Arab countries contribute to growing demand for construction specialists fluent in their respective languages. Language proficiency can become one's competitive advantage in grasping employment opportunities.

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