

**METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO ELIMINATING DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING  
ENGLISH IN SPECIAL TYPES OF AUDIENCES SUCH AS MANAGERIAL STAFF**

(Recibido el 16-06-2017. Aprobado el 07-09-2017)

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**Abstract.** Today the continuation of successful professional activity without mastering the English language is perfectly unthinkable. That is why over the past decades professional training is gaining more and more popularity in Russia making necessary new, special types of courses to master a foreign, mainly English, language by perfecting specialists. The purpose of the article is an exploration of new approaches to methods of teaching of English to this particular type of audience, on the example of the Russian President Executives and Managers Training Program. The authors make an effort to eliminate such a negative factor in the task of making these adults master the language as a big gap in the difference between their abilities for language and the acquired in some periods of their lives skills and ability to speak English. The essence of the methodological research addressed to this type of an English language course is the scientifically substantiated solution of the main methodological problems under the influence of the above mentioned difficulty. Theoretically, as a result of the study, the specifics of this type of an English language course were determined, as a result of the system interaction of learning conditions, personal and psychological characteristics of trainees, their initial level of language knowledge, and the average abilities for its potential increase. As a result of studying the problem, we can come to the conclusion that it is necessary to continue the methodological investigation undertaken here in terms of verifying the experience described by us and possibly transferring it to other audiences.

**Keywords:** university education, professional training, English language teaching, methodology, managers training program, learning conditions, abilities.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Professional training is gaining more and more popularity in Russia over the past decades, making necessary new, special types of courses to master a foreign, mainly English, language by perfecting specialists. This also characterizes the President Executives and Managers Training Program, which has been held on the territory of whole Russia and in the city of Kazan its history of existence has been for already almost twenty years. Participants of the Program are executives, managers or business people, on average, aged 25-40 years, who graduated sometime from any, whether technical, financial, economic, or humanities high schools.

The main goal of the Program is to introduce this contingent the latest achievements in the specialty in management, commerce and finance, and the second goal is mastering a foreign language, usually English, because the participants give the preference exactly to this language. A considerable number of hours is devoted to learning a foreign language within the framework of a one-year program, of which 180 are classroom lessons. At the same time, often the interest in mastering the English language in minds of students, of their superiors at place of work and the managers of the Program not only is not inferior to the importance of the first goal, but is also considered by many involved in this process people even as more important.

Since the continuation of successful professional activity today without mastering the English language is perfectly unthinkable – specialists very soon may be deprived of the opportunity to continue their work or to get career promotion. Companies create conditions for employees where they can be trained on the Program in parallel with work, and therefore, at the same time, there are no obstacles to mastering the language, as well as there is no insufficient motivation for their training activities and, speaking directly, no poor training conditions. This circumstance gives the right to call learning a foreign language (English) in this audience highly motivated and provided with positive and favourable learning conditions.

It should be noted that the audience and the task are characterized by three factors, of which two are positive and one is negative. The positives ones are high motivation of such students and excellent learning conditions. The negative one is a big gap in the difference between their abilities for language and the acquired, or rather, unrequited skills and

ability to speak English, since most participants studied English at universities a long time ago and not always effectively. The authors of this article, being teachers of the Program, have made in their many years of work maximum efforts to use the first two factors in order to eliminate the third one.

## 2. METHODS

The tasks of our research were solved by the following methods: critical analysis of the literature on the problems of the study, organized observation of the educational process for ten years, interviewing, questioning, experiential training and experiment.

The authors of this study checked the following provisions:

- The subject-content of the course should also reflect the sphere of personal contacts with business partners-foreigners (meeting a partner, arranging a hotel, having a casual conversation at a table, etc.), which can be designated as “near-special” communication.

- An important component of the training course should be a grammatical structure that directly integrates the lexical-thematic material.

- Since none of the arguments against non-communicative exercises are true about this audience, they should occupy a significant and inalienable place in the formation of skills, provided they are optimized.

- The dynamics of the complication of the process of mastering the language should provide for the maximum allowable number of short periods of repetition of the acquired, as well as return to elementary stages of education and use of speech and language units. The line of complication should be of a zigzag character.

- It is inappropriate to refuse from the exercises of translation from their native language.

The proposed solutions of these provisions form the basis of the specifics used by the authors of the article methodology for teaching English to students of the Managers Training Program.

### 3. RESULTS

As a theoretical basis for the study, high motivation for teaching a foreign language to this audience was chosen in the treatment of that branch of psychology, which was called the “psychology of personality”, since in this particular case, it is the common orientation of the personalities of our trainees that is the main equalizing factor (Antsiferova, 1978). We agree with the statement that the meaning-forming motive is formed in the intensive social practice, permeated by a certain activity by reality, on the basis of which the emerging new needs would be recognized by man as extremely necessary, whose satisfaction is inalienable for his “picture of the future” to become a reality. Our corresponding survey over the past two years has shown that almost all students of the Program called mastering English the most important task, since they coped easily with all other subjects and could “even manage independently”.

Such researchers as (Rubinshtein, 1986), (Leontiev, 1992), (Bozhovich, 1979), (Antsiferova, 1978), (Osmolov, 1996), (Gubaidullina, Ilyasova, & Khakimzyanova, 2015), (Kadyrova, & Valeev, 2016), (Kolesnikova, Kamasheva, & Fakhrutdinova, 2015), (Fakhrutdinova, Fakhrutdinova, Yagudin, & Vishnjakov, 2015), (Ilyasova, Khakimzyanova, & Gubaidullina, 2016) and others carried out numerous studies, and they did not deny the value of individual characteristics, they also studied another, in principle, also variable feature of our consciousness – the level of discursiveness of our intellectual activity, by this meaning the ability of a person to perform logical rule-like actions in the mind, and, at the same time, the ability to reason and regulate one’s behavior in accordance with this considerations.

The level of discursiveness of such an age and professional group as the students of the Managers Training Program is quite high, and roughly the same.

Insufficient level of other gifts (memory, attention, phonetic hearing, imitation) can be compensated by discursiveness and will, which again depends on the students; intense awareness of their personal orientation.

### 4. DISCUSSION

It should be pointed out that there is a fundamental feature of the methodology for teaching a foreign language to the students of the Program, which

consists in significantly reducing the “gap” between learned in exercises and used in communication. It is hardly possible to dispute the fact that such students have an increased level of ability to clearly plan not only their activities, but also actions and behaviours aimed at achieving results with a foreign partner. Such people are characterized by the ability to parallel and intertwine development of various lines of thinking, both in deeper strategic intent and in more concrete nearby designs.

Many years of working experience with businessmen has shown that this contingent rarely has a frequent occurrence in others, when the trainee unerringly performs non-speech exercises and makes many mistakes in a given linguistic phenomenon in communication. It is not for nothing that a number of theorists link the definition of the level of ability to master a foreign language with the student’s ability to quickly, easily, correctly and, in part, consciously build his or her speech according to the rules. A significant part of such students in this respect, apparently, therefore acquires a grammatically correct speech faster, because to them such ability is directly imposed by their profession.

Aspect-directed exercises, grammatically and lexically, do not lose their effectiveness. The specificity of intelligence of students-managers is such that they do not hinder to make the notorious transfer of skills from non-communicative exercises to speech. It must be understood that this audience is not completely uncritical, on the contrary, they are endowed with a clear and quick weighing mind and one amusement of exercises does not attract them.

The above mentioned theoretical arguments formed the basis for the decision to impart to the course taught by us such an organizational structure in which sections and subsections are mainly determined in the basic role of the grammatical structure of the English language as its basis. Significant reinforcement of this idea was the conclusions and specially conducted surveys of the students of the Program aimed at elucidating their previous training activities in English. In total, about 200 participants turned out to be questioned for a number of years and, we must say, the answers of the respondents were not a surprise for us. To one of the central questions connected with the explanation of the previous failure in mastering the English language, the respondents, one way or another, spoke about grammatical difficulties, emphasized the differently formulated “dissimilarity” in the grammar of the Russian language. The selection of

lexical material, conducted in parallel, was very essential. Let us now try to generalize the treatment of vocabulary and grammar for speech, which is implemented within the framework of the Program. It consisted of the following provisions:

- leaving aside the question of the types of exercises, it is necessary as a fundamental principle of the course construction to carefully think over the preparedness of the audience for any exercise, its feasibility and, generally, diagnosing the preparedness of each member of the group (usually of 10-15 people) for the ongoing process. At the same time, it is necessary to remember difficulties in mastering the language that have moved from the past experience and the problems that have already arisen in the current teaching are inevitable and can only be eliminated by the slow pace of studying of the material, including both preparatory exercises and hints and supports in the current exercises, as well as planning and performing not more complex steps, but easier ones. In practice, this means that, with sufficient periodicity, so called "recreation areas" should be provided, when suddenly for the students they return to something as if assimilated a long time ago, but in fact, unevenly assimilated by one student, then by another, in one respect or in another. Examples may be more difficult grammatical phenomena, multi-parted by a set of rules, when everyone of a sudden expects exercises to deploy some situational preconditions in half-phrases, and instead a review of the past tense is suggested, starting with an elementary review of the rule.

- The course is considered as a single whole and this is no less significant than what was said in the previous paragraph. This is a constant control of the presence of two correspondences, namely, whether a sufficiently frequent and complete "turning" of the lexicon is provided not only through all topics in which a word can be used, but through all the grammatical phenomena to which the vocabulary belongs.

- The problem of communicative and non-communicative exercises receives specific interpretation.

## 5. SUMMARY

We can note that the main arguments put forward against the use of non-speech grammatical and lexical exercises, applied to a specific audience, are not very convincing. On the other hand, there is no reason to use all the attempts of methodical

literature and authors to optimize non-communicative exercises, or rather from opposing non-opposing non-communicative to communicative ones, in the conditions of training at the Program, to move, on the contrary, to their rapprochement. In this regard, it can be said that the optimization of non-speech exercises can be recommended in those directions, with the exception of non-speech exercises, in which a jump-like change of subject is called to complicate the load. It is desirable to strive in non-speech exercises too, for example, in translation from the native language, to observe the meaningful connection between individual sentences, to use non-communicative exercises for their primary purpose, i.e. to work out the rule-based actions; to strive to attach to non-communicative exercises the nature of specific preparatory to the subsequent communication exercises in such a way that the flow of training assignments is a series of pre-planned communicative "peaks" and non-verbal concrete-preparatory assignments. Experience has shown that the addition of an entertaining character is a separate line of optimization for non-communicative exercises.

Once again we come to the conclusion that especially in cases where it is necessary to teach people with bad preparation in the English language, thoroughness and thorough methodical reasoning are an indispensable condition for this event. It is not by accident that 94% of respondents in a survey of more than 100 participants at the beginning of the study about the reasons why they once abandoned the English language, called the difficulty of English grammar. There is reason to believe that in the course developed by us, a specific variant of balancing between the two extremes – purely common and specialized – in learning a foreign language was found.

Of course, for each specialty the solution will be specific. It is important, however, within the framework of this course, to conduct a search of a balance, a competent combination and transition from common material, or one which approaches to the specialty to a more specialized one.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

One can be sure, firstly, that automation of the basic English grammar structures cannot take place outside everyday environment of the trainees, and in its turn, that if communication on a specialty is not mutually related to everyday topics, the study of the

latter will be as boring and inefficient, as it possibly was sometime at school.

In our work, we have paid a lot of attention to other basic problems of teaching the structure of English speech in such courses. Observing how, for example, so called non-communicative grammatical exercises were performed and how effective they were in spite of the predictions of supporters of the communicative method. It is hardly possible to give an ambiguous answer that the reason is here – the specificity of the audience, and not another factor – the optimization of non-communicative exercises. We tried to apply exercises that involved constructing, adding, transforming, etc., and suitable for subsequent communication. Textbooks of such authors as (Brook-Hart, 2006), (Cotton, Falvey, & Kent, 2010), (Hollett, 2002) have proved to be very useful in this respect.

Almost all these exercises were correlated with the subsequent speech practice of the trainees and were equipped with such a methodical apparatus that enables more accurate than usual dosing of difficulties.

From all that has been said above, it can be concluded that it is promising to continue the methodological investigation undertaken here in terms of verifying the experience described by us and possibly transferring it to other audiences. With or without modifications, completely or partially, at particular stages of training or permanently, it can be useful for achieving the goals set out in these audiences.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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