

## **TEACHING PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS: REALITY AND NECESSITY**

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**Аннотация:**Статья посвящена проблеме формирования навыков конструирования эффективной профессиональной коммуникации на иностранном языке. Сегодня специалисты как никогда ощущают острую необходимость овладения практическими навыками моделирования коммуникативного пространства, в особенности на английском языке, который является языком международного сотрудничества. В данной статье описаны ключевые коммуникативные форматы и стратегии, которым обучаются студенты, будущая деятельность которых связана с построением профессиональной коммуникации. Курс, обучающий конструированию профессиональной коммуникации, направлен на формирование и совершенствование навыков реализации стратегий убеждения, ведения переговоров, делового этикета, установления контакта и формирования доверия в различных коммуникативных ситуациях.

**Ключевые слова:** профессиональная коммуникация, коммуникативные стратегии, обучение, упражнения.

**Abstract:** The article discusses the issue of honing skills of constructing effective professional communication in a foreign language. The course of Professional Communication is in great demand and need since the landscape of professional communication in the country is evolving and requires improvement. The article offers description of some major communicative strategies and formats taught to student whose future profession is tied with communication and the English language. Professional Communication Course teaches what communicative strategies will ensure success at job interviews, Elevator Pitch, persuasion, negotiation, business etiquette; how to deliver information about yourself in a confident manner whilst establishing rapport with interviewers, etc.

**Key words:** professional communication, communicative strategies, teaching, assignments.

Antony Robins said “The quality of communication is the quality of your life”. And Brian Tracy’s words are “our ability to communicate with others will account for fully 85% of your success in business and in your life”. These are the key ideas that university students majoring in communication-related subjects are taught from the beginning of their course in professional communication. The problem arises that not all of them are aware of the significant impact of communication studies, assuming it’s just a fraction of daily life and has no

relation to success in their future profession. One more pain point revealed is the quality of Belarusian professionals' communication leaves a lot to desire: poor active listening, persuasion skills, lack of basic knowledge of dealing with complaints, conflict and loopholes in fundamental communicative abilities: how to establish contact, build rapport, enter and conduct multinational negotiations, etc. Unfortunately, only several high-profile Belarusian companies provide some type of communication skill training. These major issues triggered designing a course in communicative strategies of professional communication in Minsk State Linguistic University.

This article covers the issue of constructing teaching process in the sphere of professional communication.

The introduction of the course starts with planting an idea into students' heads that communication skills always top the list. The research validates the importance of communication-related skills, including working in teams, teaching others, serving customers, leading, negotiating, working with cultural diversity, interviewing, listening, conducting meetings, and resolving conflicts. The need for communication skills is important in virtually every career, not just those that are traditionally regarded as people-oriented. The importance of communication is not surprising when one considers the staggering amount of time people spend communicating on the job. A study, published in *Business Outlook*, based on responses from over 1000 employers at Fortune 1000 companies found that workers send and receive an average of 1798 messages each day via telephone, email, faxes, papers, and face-to-face communications. Some experts have estimated that the average business executive spends 75 to 80 percent of the time communicating, about 45 minutes of every hour [1].

“Have you ever wondered why some people are more comfortable to be with than others? Well so have a lot of behavioral scientists, and they have discovered a number of specific kinds of behavior that contribute to establishing contact”. This assignment initiates learning contact establishing tactics: name calling, compliment, recognition, remarks on the surrounding, common grounds, appeals to

help, value and uniqueness, references, etc. Students participate in Communicative Contest “The Best Contact”. Students in mini-groups establish contact with each other using various techniques and key phrases under study. The situation are as follows: *You meet your tutor/boss unexpectedly; You meet your friend/relative you haven't seen for a long time; You come to your tutor/boss to have a serious talk; You found yourself in a country. It's late evening and you would like to ask for a night in a villager's house.* A good way to motivate students is to simulate the situation: *You are a new employee in a company. It's your first working day. You understand there is some (much) you do not know about the job. You need a friend to help and support you. You choose a person who you would like to establish contact with.*

The practice shows that students are initially quite skeptical about the impact of communicative strategies. They assume that they are artificially imposed on them and the real professional realm encompasses something different. How to make students believe all the strategies and tactics under study really work and impact people? How to incite them to employ the strategies in their speeches? It wouldn't be a surprise to say that one of the most powerful persuasion tactics is an appeal to authority. “We tend to be more willing to accept persuasion from people whom we respect. We are more likely to buy athletic shoes endorsed by Michael Jordan, for example, than we are if the product were endorsed by the proverbial ninety-pound weakling” [2]. To be encouraged by an authority, students research the stories of success of Steve Jobs, Roosevelt, etc. who are known as exceptional speakers and communicators. As an incentive, students are asked to deliver a short presentation which answers the question *How do you expect the course of “Professional Communication” to help you master these skills?*

One of the key problems for undergraduates is to upskill in a job interview. More than 80% of students are concerned about the touchpoints of an effective job interview. It explains why the course in Communicative Strategies in Professional Communication teaches what communicative strategies will

ensure success at interviews; how to deliver information about yourself in a confident manner whilst establishing rapport with interviewers; how to respond to popular interview questions and distinguish a good answer from a bad one. It provides authentic articles on most efficient answers to the most common interview questions “Tell me about yourself”, “What are your strengths and weaknesses”, etc. students are trained the techniques to design a successful job interview answer. One strategy for preparing for behavioral interviews is to use the SAR Technique, for example:

**Situation (S).***Advertising revenue was falling off for my college newspaper, the Stetson Reporter, and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.***Action (A).***I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits of Reporter circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set-up a special training session for the account executives with a School of Business Administration professor who discussed competitive selling strategies.***Result (R).***We signed contracts with 15 former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by 20 percent [quantities are always good] over the same period last year.*

To upskill, students are involved in diverse roleplays and simulations: *Appoint 3 job interviewers. They are required to get ready with a set of questions for the job aspirants. Job aspirants go to each interviewer offering a specific job and go through an interview. Job interviewers are to select only 1 best person who will take the job offered.*

One of the favourite students’ assignments is Websurfing: *Search for any job (of your choosing) advertisements in the web. Write a letter of application to 2-3 advertisements you liked most. Report about your letters and the response to them to your groupmates.*

It’s common knowledge that an up-to-date communicative format Elevator Pitch is gaining its popularity world-wide. Students are taught what to say if you have just a short amount of time to catch the attention of the person you need in a

winning message; how to structure successful Elevator Pitch; what communicative strategies and tactics to employ to craft a compelling Elevator Pitch. The training starts with introduction: *Imagine you're in an elevator and you suddenly realise that you recognise the man standing next to you – a well-known tycoon. He turns around and introduces himself and asks you “So, what do you do for a living?” You have to think quickly, you have 30 seconds. He is a successful entrepreneur and your elevator stop is near. How do you sell your business in 30 seconds so that the listener (in this case the tycoon) wants to buy what you're offering?*

One of the challenging assignments is to *practice explaining to your communicative partner benefits of investing or cooperating with your start-up, employing you, benefits of cosmetics, package tour, any other product / idea you offer, etc.* It takes time and a lot of efforts because it's really a complicated thing for students to feel benefits and driving forces of an interlocutor. The following assignments are of paramount importance: *Among advertisements of job vacancies choose the position you would like to be employed for. Design elevator pitch for yourself as a job applicant; Study the actual job advertisements. Devise a pitch that you may include in your CV for the company.*

Thus, on passing the course, students have strong written, and oral, business communication skills that will make them more competitive, promotable, and more productive on the job. And the best part of all? Students can develop these skills as a student, before they enter the job market. As Jim Richman put it “If I give any advice, it is that you can never do enough training around your overall communication skills.”

#### Literature:

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