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IN AGRO-TECHNICAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

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ACQUISITION IN AGRO-TECHNICAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

The paper covers the problem of teaching a foreign language and skills of effective communication in the learning environment of an agro-technical institute / university in Ukraine. The current state of the students' language proficiency and communication skills has been found to be insufficient. The importance of obtaining skills of effective communication as a part of agrarian's professional competence has been substantiated. Reinforcement of the students' academic motivation is considered to be essential for learning and practicing skills of effective communication in the process of foreign language acquisition at an agro-technical university. Thus, the main motivational constructs (beliefs / perceptions, goals, values, and intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation) has been related to foreign language acquisition and the effective strategies that lecturers can apply to engage students in an ESL / ESP class has been suggested. They include clear goals to assure the students' communication skills for obtaining professional knowledge and future employability; students-centered classroom environment, proper material content and its professional specification applied together with a communicative language teaching approach.

Keywords: academic motivation; agro-technical higher education institutions; communication skills; foreign language acquisition; future agrarians.

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**РОЛЬ МОТИВАЦІЇ У ФОРМУВАННІ ІНШОМОВНОЇ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ
КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ АГРОТЕХНІЧНИХ ВИЩИХ НАВЧАЛЬНИХ
ЗАКЛАДІВ ОСВІТИ**

У статті розглянуто проблему вивчення іноземної мови і практики умінь ефективної комунікації у навчальному середовищі сучасного агротехнічного інституту чи університету в Україні. Сучасний стан рівня володіння іноземною мовою і комунікативними уміннями студентів агротехнічних закладів освіти виявився не достатнім. Обґрунтовано важливість набуття умінь ефективної комунікації як обов'язкової складової професійної компетентності аграрника. Покращення навчальної мотивації студентів сприяє формуванню комунікативних умінь студентів. Таким чином, досліджено співвідношення основних мотиваційних компонентів (сприйняття, цілі, цінності, внутрішня і зовнішня мотивація) з процесом вивчення іноземної мови і виведено ефективні стратегії формування комунікативних умінь студентів у процесі вивчення загального курсу іноземної мови та іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням в агротехнічних вищих навчальних закладах, а саме: постановка чітких цілей в плані формування комунікативних умінь необхідних для набуття професійних знань і майбутньої професійної діяльності, створення особистісно-спрямованого навчального середовища, предметно-мовне навчання з врахуванням інтересів та потреб відповідної групи студентів.

Ключові слова: навчальна мотивація; агротехнічні вищі навчальні заклади освіти; процес вивчення іноземної мови; комунікативні уміння; майбутні аграрники.

Introduction. Skills of effective communication both in L1 and L2 are considered to be a significant part of an agrarian's professional competence aimed at providing effective performance of their professional tasks, high mobility and flexibility required by modern market conditions, constant

professional development by means of life-long learning and self-education [1]. This is not possible to achieve without deep understanding of human's psychology and the relationship between motivation and its effect on language acquisition. Here, motivation is considered to be one of the most important foundations essential for students' academic development. It is especially significant in the process of engaging adolescents in ESL/ESP class at a technical university, when English is not seen as important to the students' immediate needs, other than to pass exams.

Having investigated recent scientific works by second language acquisition theorists (Shaaban K., Gardner R. and Lambert W, Fufurina T., Bambirra R.), it can be concluded that there are certain motivational constructs (beliefs / perceptions, goals, values, and intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation) and they may differ across the variables of proficiency levels and university majors.

Currently, in Ukrainian agro-technical universities a course of a foreign language consists of two parts ESL (English as a Second Language, that is to say, a course of General English) and ESP (English for Specific Purposes). The curriculum is usually heavy on math, science and technology and very light in English, which results in the fact that teachers focus on deductive lecturing (grammar and vocabulary) and pay insufficient attention to the development and practice of communication skills. In addition, there are some other difficulties connected with teaching communication skills to future agrarians. A ten-year experience shows that students at an agro-technical university are often unaware of the importance of obtaining profound knowledge in humanities, including language courses, and do not see how to use such knowledge and skills in their studies, internships and future professional activity. Every year placement tests taken by freshmen show low level of language proficiency and communication skills, which can be explained by the fact that most of the students who enter agro-technical higher education institutions come from average village and town schools, where the level of English is not up to the desired one. The last but not least is the problem of mixed-ability classes and a large number of students in a group (up to 25 people).

Thus, there is a number of problems that demotivate students in the process of learning and practicing communication skills in ESL/ESP classes and they should be solved.

The research is aimed at finding the ways to reinforce academic motivation of students to learn and practice skills of effective communication in the process of foreign language acquisition at an agro-

technical university. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to relate motivational constructs (components) to second language acquisition and to find the effective strategies lecturers can apply to engage adolescents in ESL / ESP class in the current learning environment of an agro-technical university in Ukraine.

Methodology of Research. Academic motivation is considered to be a complex of natural, social and personal factors that encourage students to be present in classes, follow lecturers' instructions, be engaged in the education process, interact, overcome difficulties and develop their knowledge and skills in the profession chosen [8, 9]. Language methodologists believe that proper development of communication skills is possible on condition that students are well motivated to learn and practice such skills [2; 3; 6: 8; 10; 11].

Here, it is important for lecturers to understand the role of motivational constructs (beliefs / perceptions, goals, values, and intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation) in order to improve their learner's motivation for second language acquisition and communication skills learning and practice.

As for personal beliefs, they include self-efficacy (an individual's personal beliefs in his or her ability to perform and accomplish tasks) [4], autonomy (personal beliefs that individuals have control over their own learning and decision making), and attributional beliefs (how students explain an outcome or their understanding of why certain achievement outcomes happen) [12]. Students with high efficacy expectations take on challenging tasks, put forth efforts, persist when faced with difficulties, and believe that they will succeed in the future [12]. When the autonomy need is met, students tend to be more actively engaged in their learning activities and willingly devote time and energy to learning [9]. When students attribute their academic success or failure to internal and controllable causes such as effort, they will more likely remain positively motivated [4].

In addition, setting specific goals directs students' behavior, helps the individual monitor his or her learning progress, and tends to increase learning and achievement [9].

Furthermore, students' motivation to spend time and effort on an activity depends on how much they value the work, that is whether they perceive the tasks as interesting, important, and useful to them [10].

If lecturers understand these constructs, meet students' needs and provide comfortable, interesting and meaningful learning environment, they can help their students to become intrinsically motivated for learning, that is engage in activities, in the absence

of external incentives (e.g. achieving rewards or avoiding punishments) [9]. Intrinsic motivation is most helpful in achieving goals and lecturers should assist students in progressing from being extrinsically motivated to being less regulated by external conditions and help them enhance academic motivation and academic development [2]. Educators should make a shift from teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered classroom and be careful not to influence motivation negatively by exercising external controls, close supervision and monitoring, and using rewards or punishments following evaluations.

Results. The main factors that contribute to the development of students' intrinsic motivation to study a foreign language and practice communication skills within the learning environment of an agro-technical higher education institution are the following: clear goals to assure students' communication skills for obtaining professional knowledge and future employability, students-centered classroom environment, including feedback and follow-up moves instead of direct correction, proper material content and its professional specification and a communicative language teaching approach, which can make communication skills a core business in teaching and learning. This can engage students in practicing communication skills and they can be satisfied both by the process of learning and by the obtained knowledge and skills and the goals achieved.

Thus, according to the above discussed findings, it can be summed up that it is important to develop a flexible approach to provide learners with quality instruction, input, interaction, and opportunities for meaningful output [6]. It is important to identify students' purposes and needs and to develop proper motivational strategies. Students should understand why they need to make an effort, where to start, what to do and how it will help them. That is, increasing students' motivation is one of the pedagogical conditions of successful foreign language acquisition and communication skills development.

There are some effective strategies to increase adolescents' motivation to language learning, providing students with opportunities to experience success on different kinds of tasks and help students experience mastery of knowledge and skills.

The conducted investigations prove that the necessity of proper communications skills for agrarians' future professional activity can be demonstrated and explained by suggesting a short introductory course consisting of two or three lessons. During these lessons a language teacher may suggest taking a placement test to see the level of language proficiency and communication skills, which is

important for understanding the current state and where to start from both for teachers and students. In order to substantiate the importance of having sufficient communication skills during the introductory course, it is recommended to provide needs analysis and to discuss the specific ways to use communication skills both for studies and for students' internships and future professional activity. It is an effective practice to hold meetings with successful farmers, farm owners, scientists, students who participated in mobility and internship programs abroad and discuss the role of communication skills in the process of obtaining a degree, for internships, agrarian's successful professional activity etc. Such an introductory course contributes to the development of clear goals to assure students' communication skills.

As for creating a student-centered classroom environment, it is very important for lecturers to be aware that a friendly atmosphere in a classroom can help all students feel recognized and valued and a sense of accomplishment is a great factor in motivating students. Giving positive feedback and reinforcement, it is possible to increase students' satisfaction and encourage positive self-evaluation [7]. Here, giving feedback, providing comments and reformulation is better than direct correction. It does not mean that students should be praised all the time, but, according to Jeremy Harmer, lecturers should think about "follow-up moves" rather than think about correction.

In addition, language learners can achieve success by determining their own language needs and setting their own goals and by directing their studies toward their own expectations. Encouraging students to relate their classroom experience to outside interests and activities makes developing language skills more relevant. Here, integrating communication skills into disciplinary curricula, namely introducing CLIL course components (that is to say, learning subject-matter content through the medium of a foreign language, and learning a foreign language by studying subject-matter content [5]), authentic materials and communicative activities and tasks based on 5 Cs approach in ESL/ESP class: choice, collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity, proved to be effective [6, 11].

Students learn by doing, making, writing, designing, creating, and solving. Here, communicative language teaching is a dominant language teaching approach worldwide. It is believed that this approach has strengthened teaching and learning processes because of its focus on the power of communication. Communication is considered as the source of learning, and is the medium of teaching.

According to Edmund Dudley, classroom activities

for teenagers should include traditional tasks with a creative twist or an element of the unexpected. Here, it is to the point to use various gadget-friendly activities, like selfies, memes, photo-contests, ring-tone-person matching, video commenting, picture contrasting etc. [6]. It is significant to offer options and alternatives to choose from and to add some challenge. Competition and teamwork can work well as these learners generally learn through doing-thinking-talking and it helps not only to express their own ideas but also to work cooperatively, which increases class cohesion and, thus, motivation.

Here, context should be as important as communication in teaching and learning processes [11]. When teachers view context, including textbooks, cultures, and learning situations, as being as important as classroom interaction, the overall teaching and learning objectives are achieved. Context is the source of interaction, activities, tasks, assessments, and knowledge. Focusing on context will include an understanding of individual students and their learning needs, wants, and strategies as well as course books, local conditions and the classroom culture [11]. Teachers in communicative language classrooms need to use more authentic materials, which help in the language and teaching processes. Authentic materials refer to texts, photographs, video selections, and other teaching resources that are not specially prepared for pedagogical purposes. Teachers should give their students the possibility to practice grammar and vocabulary through learning valuable context and culture. According to Katherine Stannett the world should be brought to a classroom and a classroom should be brought to life by means of teaching engaging topics, encouraging creativity and problem solving-skills, personalizing the information learnt and encourage independence [11].

Conclusion. The acquiring skills of effective communication for future specialists in the field of agriculture requires reinforcement of students' academic motivation. Thus, according to the main motivational constructs (beliefs / perceptions, goals, values, and intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation), the effective strategies that lecturers can apply to engage students in an ESL / ESP class within the learning environment of agro-technical higher education establishments have been suggested. They include clear goals to assure students' communication skills for obtaining professional knowledge and future employability, students-centered classroom environment, proper material content and its professional specification applied together with a communicative language teaching approach.

Adolescents in agrarian higher education institutions can be one of the most rewarding groups

to teach and the teacher's job is therefore to remain positive supportive, and to generate situations, exchanges, activities from which the learner is able to draw positive conclusions. That is to say, preparation and planning for ESL/ESP classes in agro-technical higher education institutions should involve teen-friendly activities, topics and ideas in order to keep motivation levels high and develop learners' language awareness and skills.

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"Життя полягає не в тому, щоб знайти себе. Життя полягає в тому, щоб створити себе".

*Джордж Бернард Шоу
ірландський драматург і публіцист*

"Немає іншої моралі, окрім тієї, яка заснована на принципах розуму і витікає з природної схильності людини до добра".

*П'єр Бейль
французький філософ*

"Майбутнє повинно бути закладене в сьогодні. Це називається планом. Без нього ніщо у світі не може бути гарним".

*Георг Крістоф Ліхтенберг
німецький вчений*

