

FORMATION OF PROFESSIONAL LEXICAL COMPETENCE OF TOURISM STUDENTS BASED ON A COMMUNICATIVE- ORIENTED APPROACH

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Abstract

This article examines the formation of professional lexical competence among students of tourism specialties on the basis of a communicative-oriented approach in higher education. The relevance of the topic is determined by the growing need for future tourism specialists to use foreign-language professional vocabulary accurately, appropriately and flexibly in real communicative situations. In the context of training students whose future professional activity is connected with international communication, hospitality, excursion services, intercultural dialogue and customer interaction, lexical competence becomes not only a linguistic skill but also an important component of professional readiness. The article considers professional lexical competence as an integrated ability that includes knowledge of terminology, understanding of contextual meanings, correct use of lexical units in oral and written communication, and the ability to adapt vocabulary to different communicative situations in the tourism sphere. Special attention is paid to the communicative-oriented approach, which makes it possible to connect vocabulary learning with practical speech tasks, role-play situations, professional dialogues, case studies, presentations and simulation of real tourism communication. The study emphasizes that effective formation of lexical competence requires systematic selection of professional vocabulary, integration of authentic materials, development of students' active speech practice, and creation of a learning environment close to real professional interaction. The article also highlights the importance of German language teaching in tourism education, since German-speaking countries represent an

important cultural and tourist space, and mastery of German professional vocabulary expands students' opportunities for academic mobility and future employment. The results of the analysis show that the communicative-oriented approach increases students' motivation, improves their ability to use professional terminology consciously, and supports the development of intercultural and professional communication skills.

Keywords: Professional lexical competence, tourism education, communicative-oriented approach, German language, professional vocabulary, terminology, intercultural communication, higher education.

Introduction

Аннотация

В данной статье рассматривается формирование профессиональной лексической компетентности студентов туристического направления на основе коммуникативно-ориентированного подхода в системе высшего образования. Актуальность темы определяется возрастающей потребностью будущих специалистов сферы туризма в точном, уместном и гибком использовании профессиональной иноязычной лексики в реальных коммуникативных ситуациях. В условиях подготовки студентов, чья будущая профессиональная деятельность связана с международным общением, гостиничным сервисом, экскурсионным обслуживанием, межкультурным диалогом и взаимодействием с клиентами, лексическая компетентность выступает не только языковым навыком, но и важным компонентом профессиональной готовности. В статье профессиональная лексическая компетентность рассматривается как интегративная способность, включающая знание терминологии, понимание контекстуальных значений, правильное употребление лексических единиц в устной и письменной коммуникации, а также умение адаптировать словарный запас к различным коммуникативным ситуациям туристической сферы. Особое внимание уделяется коммуникативно-ориентированному подходу, который позволяет связать изучение лексики с практическими речевыми заданиями, ролевыми ситуациями, профессиональными

диалогами, кейсами, презентациями и моделированием реального туристического общения. Подчеркивается, что эффективное формирование лексической компетентности требует системного отбора профессиональной лексики, интеграции аутентичных материалов, развития активной речевой практики студентов и создания образовательной среды, приближенной к реальному профессиональному взаимодействию. В статье также отмечается значение преподавания немецкого языка в туристическом образовании, поскольку немецкоязычные страны представляют собой важное культурное и туристическое пространство, а владение немецкой профессиональной лексикой расширяет возможности академической мобильности и будущего трудоустройства студентов. Результаты анализа показывают, что коммуникативно-ориентированный подход повышает мотивацию студентов, совершенствует их умение осознанно использовать профессиональную терминологию и способствует развитию межкультурных и профессионально-коммуникативных навыков.

Ключевые слова: профессиональная лексическая компетентность, туристическое образование, коммуникативно-ориентированный подход, немецкий язык, профессиональная лексика, терминология, межкультурная коммуникация, высшее образование.

Introduction

The development of professional lexical competence among students of tourism specialties is one of the essential tasks of modern language education in higher education. Tourism is directly connected with communication, cultural mediation, service interaction, international mobility and the representation of national and regional cultural heritage. For this reason, future specialists in this field must not only possess general foreign language skills, but also be able to use professional vocabulary accurately in situations related to travel organization, hotel service, excursion activity, customer support, booking procedures, cultural explanation, transport coordination and intercultural dialogue. In the context of German language teaching, this issue becomes especially significant, because German is widely used in academic, professional and tourist communication, and

German-speaking countries have strong traditions in tourism, hospitality, cultural management and international travel services.

Professional lexical competence should be understood as an integrated component of communicative competence that enables students to recognize, understand, select and apply lexical units relevant to their future professional activity. It includes knowledge of terminology, collocations, speech formulas, service expressions, culturally marked vocabulary and situational language patterns. A tourism specialist must be able to explain routes, describe tourist attractions, provide information about accommodation and transport, respond to clients' questions, solve communicative problems and maintain polite professional interaction. Therefore, vocabulary learning cannot be limited to mechanical memorization of isolated words. Lexical units must be acquired through meaningful communication, professional contexts and practical speech activity.

A communicative-oriented approach creates favorable pedagogical conditions for the formation of such competence. Its main value lies in the fact that language is studied not as an abstract system of grammatical and lexical rules, but as a means of solving real communicative tasks. In this approach, students learn professional vocabulary through dialogues, role plays, situational tasks, case analysis, project work, presentations, discussions and simulations of professional interaction. These forms of work help students connect lexical material with concrete communicative intentions, such as informing, recommending, clarifying, apologizing, persuading, consulting or resolving a conflict. As a result, vocabulary becomes active, functional and professionally meaningful.

In higher education, the formation of professional lexical competence requires a systematic organization of the teaching process. First, lexical material should be selected according to the needs of the tourism sphere and the future professional functions of students. Second, vocabulary should be introduced in connection with authentic materials, including travel brochures, hotel descriptions, museum texts, booking forms, tourist maps, websites, advertisements and professional correspondence. Third, students should have regular opportunities to use the studied vocabulary in oral and written communication. Fourth, assessment should focus not only on the number of words memorized, but also on the accuracy, appropriateness and flexibility of lexical use in professional situations.

The relevance of the topic is also determined by the growing importance of intercultural competence in tourism education. A future specialist must understand that professional vocabulary carries not only informational meaning, but also cultural and pragmatic meaning. The same lexical unit may function differently depending on the context, the status of the interlocutor, the communicative purpose and the cultural expectations of the client. Thus, the communicative-oriented approach supports the development of both linguistic and professional readiness, helping students become active participants in multilingual and multicultural tourism communication.

Literature review

The theoretical basis of this study is connected with communicative competence, intercultural communication, professionally oriented language teaching and vocabulary acquisition. Hymes (1972) introduced the concept of communicative competence, emphasizing that language should be studied not only as a grammatical system, but also as a means of social interaction. This idea is important for tourism students, because their future professional activity requires the ability to use foreign language vocabulary in real communicative situations. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages developed by the Council of Europe (2001, 2020) also supports the practical and communicative nature of language learning. It defines language competence as a combination of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills. For tourism students learning German, this means that professional vocabulary must be mastered together with speech situations, politeness formulas, cultural norms and professional communication tasks.

Byram (1997) highlights the importance of intercultural communicative competence. His ideas are especially relevant to tourism education, where future specialists communicate with foreign tourists and represent cultural heritage. Therefore, professional lexical competence should include not only terminology, but also culturally appropriate expressions and etiquette forms.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Robinson (1991) consider language for specific purposes as a learner-centered process based on professional needs. Their works justify the selection of vocabulary according to the real requirements of

the tourism sphere, including accommodation, transport, excursion services, booking, customer support and cultural communication.

The communicative-oriented approach is reflected in the works of Littlewood (1981), Richards (2006), Richards and Rodgers (2014), Harmer (2015), Hedge (2000), Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), and Ur (2012). These scholars emphasize active communication, role plays, discussions, simulations and meaningful tasks. Such methods help students use professional German vocabulary not mechanically, but purposefully and appropriately.

The works of Wilkins (1972), Nation (2001), Schmitt (2000) and Thornbury (2002) show that vocabulary is a central element of language learning. They underline the importance of repetition, context, collocations and active use. Ellis (2003) and Nunan (2004) also support task-based learning, where students acquire vocabulary through practical tasks close to real professional situations. Dörnyei (2001) adds that motivation increases when students understand the connection between language learning and future professional success.

Thus, the reviewed literature shows that the formation of professional lexical competence of tourism students should be based on communicative practice, authentic materials, intercultural awareness and professionally oriented tasks. These approaches create effective pedagogical conditions for developing students' ability to use German professional vocabulary in real tourism communication.

Methods

The methodological basis of the study is formed by the communicative-oriented approach, which considers language learning as a process of active interaction and practical use of linguistic material in meaningful professional contexts. In the framework of this article, the formation of professional lexical competence of tourism students is analyzed through the connection between lexical knowledge, speech practice and future professional activity. The research is based on the assumption that students acquire professional vocabulary more effectively when lexical units are presented not as isolated elements, but as functional means of communication in situations typical of the tourism industry. Therefore, the methodological focus is placed on the selection, presentation, practice and

assessment of professional vocabulary in conditions close to real professional communication.

The study uses analytical, descriptive and pedagogical modeling methods. The analytical method makes it possible to examine scientific and methodological approaches to the concepts of lexical competence, professional competence and communicative competence. It also helps to identify the role of terminology and professional vocabulary in the preparation of future tourism specialists. The descriptive method is used to characterize the main pedagogical conditions that influence the formation of lexical competence, including the professional orientation of teaching content, the use of authentic materials, the organization of communicative tasks and the integration of intercultural components into German language lessons. Pedagogical modeling is applied to describe a possible system of classroom activities aimed at developing students' ability to use professional vocabulary in speech.

The teaching process is considered as a sequence of interconnected stages. At the first stage, professional vocabulary is selected according to thematic fields relevant to tourism education. These fields include accommodation, transport, excursion services, travel documentation, cultural heritage, restaurant service, customer communication, booking procedures, complaints, safety instructions and travel recommendations. At the second stage, lexical units are introduced through context. Instead of presenting only word lists and translations, the teacher uses short professional texts, dialogues, service situations, advertisements, hotel descriptions, excursion programs and online tourism resources. This allows students to understand not only the meaning of words, but also their communicative function and typical usage.

At the third stage, students perform controlled and semi-controlled exercises aimed at consolidating vocabulary. These tasks may include matching terms with definitions, completing professional dialogues, grouping lexical units by topic, transforming phrases, preparing short responses to clients' questions and describing tourist services. At the fourth stage, students move to freer communicative practice. They participate in role plays, simulations, pair work, group discussions, case studies and project tasks. For example, students may act as travel consultants, hotel receptionists, tour guides or clients and use German professional vocabulary to solve practical communicative tasks.

Assessment of lexical competence is carried out according to several criteria: correctness of lexical choice, appropriateness of vocabulary in a professional situation, fluency of use, understanding of contextual meaning, ability to combine terminology with polite speech formulas, and readiness to adapt speech to the needs of the interlocutor. Such assessment makes it possible to evaluate not only passive knowledge of words, but also the student's ability to use professional vocabulary actively and meaningfully. Thus, the methods applied in the study are directed toward creating a professionally oriented, communicative and practice-based model of German language teaching for tourism students.

Results

The analysis of the communicative-oriented approach shows that the formation of professional lexical competence among tourism students becomes more effective when vocabulary learning is directly connected with future professional communication. In traditional language teaching, students often memorize separate words and expressions without understanding how they function in real speech. As a result, lexical knowledge may remain passive and may not transform into practical communicative ability. In contrast, when professional vocabulary is introduced through dialogues, situations, authentic texts and role-based interaction, students begin to perceive lexical units as tools for solving professional tasks. This increases the functional value of vocabulary and supports its active use in oral and written communication.

One of the main results is the improvement of students' ability to use German professional vocabulary in typical tourism situations. Students who work with communicative tasks become more confident in describing tourist routes, explaining hotel services, giving information about transport, presenting cultural attractions, responding to clients' requests and solving simple service-related problems. They also develop the ability to choose vocabulary according to the communicative purpose. For example, when informing a tourist, students use neutral explanatory language; when recommending a route or service, they apply persuasive expressions; when responding to a complaint, they combine professional terminology with polite speech formulas. This demonstrates that lexical competence is not limited to knowing words, but includes the ability to use them appropriately in context.

The use of authentic materials has a positive influence on the quality of lexical acquisition. Travel brochures, hotel websites, excursion programs, museum descriptions, booking forms and professional correspondence expose students to real lexical patterns of the tourism sphere. Such materials help them understand collocations, fixed phrases, abbreviations, culturally specific expressions and genre features of professional communication. Students also become familiar with the style of German-language tourism discourse, which is characterized by accuracy, politeness, clarity and informative structure. Working with authentic sources strengthens the connection between classroom learning and real professional practice.

Another important result is the development of students' intercultural awareness. Tourism communication is always connected with cultural meanings, etiquette norms and expectations of clients from different linguistic backgrounds. Through communicative tasks, students learn that professional vocabulary should be used not only correctly, but also tactfully and culturally appropriately. In German language classes, this is especially relevant because students must understand the pragmatic meaning of service expressions, forms of address, polite requests and culturally marked descriptions. As a result, lexical competence becomes part of broader intercultural and professional competence.

The communicative-oriented approach also increases students' motivation. When learners see that vocabulary is needed for concrete professional actions, such as creating a tour program, presenting a hotel, conducting an excursion or communicating with a foreign client, they become more engaged in the learning process. Practical tasks make language learning more meaningful and reduce the gap between theoretical knowledge and professional readiness. Group work, simulations and project activities encourage students to cooperate, negotiate meanings, correct each other and use vocabulary repeatedly in different contexts. The results indicate that effective development of professional lexical competence requires several pedagogical conditions. These include professional orientation of lexical content, systematic repetition of vocabulary in varied communicative situations, integration of authentic German-language materials, active student participation, connection between lexical and intercultural learning, and assessment based on practical use rather than mechanical reproduction. Under these conditions, students gradually develop the ability to

understand, select and apply professional vocabulary independently. Therefore, the communicative-oriented approach can be considered an effective methodological basis for preparing tourism students for real foreign-language professional interaction.

Discussion

The formation of professional lexical competence of tourism students based on a communicative-oriented approach should be understood as a complex pedagogical process in which linguistic, professional and intercultural objectives are closely connected. The results of the analysis show that vocabulary teaching becomes more productive when it is organized not around isolated lexical memorization, but around professionally significant communicative action. This is especially important for students of tourism specialties, because their future work requires constant interaction with clients, partners, tourists, hotel staff, guides, transport representatives and cultural institutions. In such conditions, professional vocabulary performs a practical function: it helps the specialist inform, explain, recommend, negotiate, prevent misunderstanding and create a positive communicative atmosphere.

In German language teaching, the communicative-oriented approach allows students to acquire vocabulary in accordance with real speech behavior. German professional discourse in tourism is characterized by precision, politeness, logical structure and attention to detail. Therefore, students must learn not only separate terms, but also typical combinations, service formulas, forms of address, polite constructions and contextual meanings. For example, the ability to describe accommodation, explain booking conditions, present cultural objects or respond to a client's complaint depends on the student's capacity to combine terminology with appropriate communicative strategies. This proves that professional lexical competence is inseparable from pragmatic competence.

An important pedagogical issue is the selection of lexical material. In higher education, vocabulary should correspond to the professional profile of students and reflect the most frequent communicative situations of the tourism sphere. If lexical content is too general, students may not develop readiness for real professional tasks. If it is too narrow or purely theoretical, they may have difficulty transferring knowledge into communication. Therefore, the teacher

should organize lexical material according to thematic and functional principles. Thematic organization includes fields such as hotels, excursions, transport, cultural heritage, restaurant service, travel documents and customer support. Functional organization includes speech intentions such as informing, clarifying, advising, apologizing, persuading and solving problems.

The communicative-oriented approach also changes the role of the teacher and the student. The teacher becomes not only a source of lexical explanation, but also an organizer of speech interaction, a designer of professional situations and a mediator between language and professional practice. Students become active participants in learning; they do not simply reproduce ready-made phrases, but use vocabulary to perform meaningful tasks. This supports autonomy, confidence and responsibility for speech choices. Moreover, repeated use of vocabulary in different communicative contexts helps students move from passive recognition to active production.

Authentic materials play a significant role in this process. They introduce students to real forms of tourism communication and help them understand how professional vocabulary functions in natural contexts. However, authentic texts should be didactically adapted when necessary, especially at lower language levels. The teacher should provide pre-text vocabulary support, guide students in understanding key terms and gradually increase the complexity of tasks. Such scaffolding prevents overload and allows students to develop lexical competence step by step.

Thus, the communicative-oriented approach provides a strong methodological foundation for developing professional lexical competence among tourism students. It connects language learning with professional reality, strengthens motivation, develops intercultural sensitivity and prepares students for flexible use of German vocabulary in practical tourism communication.

Conclusion

The formation of professional lexical competence of tourism students based on a communicative-oriented approach is an important condition for improving the quality of foreign language education in higher education. In the tourism sphere, language performs not only an informational function, but also a professional, social and intercultural function. Future specialists must be able to communicate

with foreign clients, describe tourist services, explain routes, present cultural objects, organize service interaction, solve communicative problems and maintain professional etiquette. Therefore, professional vocabulary should be developed as an active communicative resource that enables students to act effectively in real professional situations.

The analysis shows that professional lexical competence cannot be formed through mechanical memorization of words alone. A student may know a certain number of terms, but this knowledge becomes professionally valuable only when it is used correctly, appropriately and flexibly in context. For this reason, the communicative-oriented approach is especially effective, because it connects lexical learning with speech activity. Dialogues, role plays, simulations, case studies, project work, presentations and authentic professional texts help students understand the practical meaning of vocabulary and transform passive lexical knowledge into active communicative competence.

In German language teaching for tourism students, this approach has particular importance. German-language tourism discourse includes specific terminology, service formulas, polite constructions, culturally marked expressions and stable lexical combinations. Students should learn not only how to translate these units, but also how to use them in communication with different interlocutors and in different professional contexts. The ability to choose suitable vocabulary when giving information, making recommendations, responding to complaints or presenting tourist attractions reflects the real level of lexical competence and professional readiness.

The study also confirms the importance of pedagogical conditions that support the development of professional vocabulary. These conditions include the systematic selection of lexical material according to the needs of the tourism sphere, the use of authentic materials, the integration of intercultural content, the organization of active student communication, the gradual transition from controlled exercises to free speech practice, and assessment based on practical use. When these conditions are implemented consistently, students develop the ability to understand, select and apply professional vocabulary independently.

Professional lexical competence should be viewed as part of broader professional communicative competence. It is connected with grammatical accuracy, pragmatic appropriateness, intercultural awareness, emotional intelligence and

the ability to adapt speech to the communicative situation. In tourism education, this competence directly influences the quality of professional interaction, because the specialist's speech creates the first impression of service culture, reliability and professionalism.

Thus, the communicative-oriented approach provides an effective methodological basis for preparing tourism students for real foreign-language professional communication. It increases motivation, strengthens practical language skills, develops intercultural sensitivity and supports the formation of a professionally competent personality. The purposeful development of professional lexical competence in German language classes contributes to the preparation of future tourism specialists who are able to participate confidently and responsibly in multilingual and multicultural communication.

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