

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

Zulxumorxon Xoliqjonova

Foreign Language and Literature (English) Student of group 22/11

Chirchik State Pedagogical University

Orzigul Ablakulova

Teacher of the Chirchik State Pedagogical University

Abstract

The article examines the formation of professional lexical competence among tourism students through a communicative-oriented approach in English language education. Professional lexical competence is interpreted not only as the ability to memorize tourism-related terminology, but also as the capacity to use lexical units appropriately in real communicative situations connected with travel services, hospitality, intercultural interaction, customer support, destination promotion, and professional documentation. The study emphasizes that tourism students need vocabulary that functions in practical speech contexts, including dialogues with clients, presentations of routes, explanations of services, conflict resolution, and written business communication. The communicative-oriented approach creates conditions for integrating lexical acquisition with professional tasks, role-play activities, problem-based situations, authentic materials, and collaborative interaction. The article highlights the importance of contextual learning, active speech practice, and professionally relevant discourse in developing students' readiness for future tourism-related communication.

Keywords: Professional lexical competence, tourism students, communicative-oriented approach, English language teaching, professional vocabulary, tourism discourse, intercultural communication, communicative skills.

Introduction

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается формирование профессиональной лексической компетенции студентов туристического направления на основе коммуникативно-ориентированного подхода в обучении английскому языку. Профессиональная лексическая компетенция трактуется не только как способность запоминать туристическую терминологию, но и как умение уместно использовать лексические единицы в реальных коммуникативных ситуациях, связанных с туристическими услугами, гостеприимством, межкультурным взаимодействием, обслуживанием клиентов, продвижением туристических направлений и профессиональной документацией. Подчеркивается, что студентам туристической сферы необходима лексика, функционирующая в практическом речевом контексте, включая диалоги с клиентами, презентацию маршрутов, объяснение услуг, разрешение конфликтных ситуаций и деловую письменную коммуникацию. Коммуникативно-ориентированный подход создает условия для интеграции усвоения лексики с профессиональными заданиями, ролевыми играми, проблемными ситуациями, аутентичными материалами и совместным взаимодействием. В статье раскрывается значение контекстного обучения, активной речевой практики и профессионально значимого дискурса в развитии готовности студентов к будущей коммуникации в туристической сфере.

Ключевые слова: профессиональная лексическая компетенция, студенты туристического направления, коммуникативно-ориентированный подход, обучение английскому языку, профессиональная лексика, туристический дискурс, межкультурная коммуникация, коммуникативные навыки.

Introduction

In contemporary higher education, the preparation of tourism students requires not only general linguistic knowledge, but also the ability to operate confidently within professional communicative situations. Tourism as a field is closely connected with international mobility, intercultural dialogue, service quality, hospitality management, destination promotion, customer relations, and the presentation of cultural heritage. For this reason, English language teaching for

tourism students should be directed toward the development of professional lexical competence, since vocabulary becomes the main instrument through which future specialists describe services, communicate with clients, solve practical problems, and participate in professional interaction. Lexical competence in this context cannot be limited to the mechanical memorization of terms. It must include understanding of meaning, correct pronunciation, contextual usage, stylistic appropriateness, collocational accuracy, and the ability to select suitable lexical units according to the communicative purpose.

The relevance of forming professional lexical competence is especially evident in tourism education, where students are expected to use English in realistic situations such as welcoming tourists, explaining travel itineraries, presenting hotel facilities, giving information about transport, describing historical monuments, handling complaints, and maintaining written communication with foreign partners. If students know isolated words but cannot use them in professional speech, their vocabulary remains passive and does not support real communication. Therefore, the educational process should provide opportunities for active lexical practice through meaningful tasks that reflect authentic professional needs. A communicative-oriented approach is particularly valuable in this regard because it connects language learning with interaction, situational practice, and the purposeful use of vocabulary in speech.

The communicative-oriented approach is based on the idea that language is acquired more effectively when learners use it for real or simulated communication. In tourism education, this approach allows students to master professional vocabulary through dialogues, role plays, case studies, presentations, discussions, project work, interviews, and problem-solving activities. Such tasks help students understand how lexical units function in professional discourse and how they change depending on the situation, interlocutor, intention, and cultural context. For example, vocabulary related to accommodation, booking, excursions, catering, safety, travel insurance, and cultural attractions becomes more meaningful when students apply it in communicative scenarios rather than study it only through translation or definition.

In the pedagogical university context, the formation of professional lexical competence also has methodological significance, because future language teachers and specialists need to understand how vocabulary learning can be

organized systematically, practically, and professionally. The process should include the selection of relevant lexical material, gradual introduction of terminology, integration of authentic tourism texts, development of receptive and productive lexical skills, and continuous assessment of students' ability to use vocabulary in oral and written communication. Special attention should be paid to intercultural aspects of tourism discourse, since successful professional communication depends not only on linguistic correctness, but also on politeness, clarity, tolerance, and awareness of cultural differences.

Thus, the study of professional lexical competence among tourism students on the basis of a communicative-oriented approach is important for improving the quality of English language education and strengthening the practical readiness of students for future professional activity. This approach transforms vocabulary learning into an active, contextual, and professionally meaningful process.

Methods

The methodological basis of the study is connected with the analysis of how professional lexical competence can be formed among tourism students through communicative-oriented English language instruction. The research is based on the idea that vocabulary acquisition becomes effective when lexical material is introduced, practiced, and assessed in close connection with real professional communication. Therefore, the methods of teaching professional vocabulary should not be limited to translation, explanation, and memorization, but should include interactive, situational, and practice-oriented forms of learning. The main methodological focus is placed on the integration of tourism-related vocabulary into communicative tasks that imitate authentic professional contexts and encourage students to use lexical units actively in speech.

At the first stage, the selection of lexical material is carried out according to the professional needs of tourism students. The vocabulary includes terms and expressions related to travel agencies, hotel services, booking procedures, customer reception, excursion organization, transport, catering, tourist safety, destination description, cultural heritage, travel documents, and complaint management. In addition to individual terms, attention is given to lexical collocations, polite formulas, functional phrases, and professional speech patterns. This is important because tourism communication usually requires not

only terminological accuracy, but also fluency, courtesy, and pragmatic appropriateness. For example, students should know not only the word reservation, but also expressions such as make a reservation, confirm a booking, cancel a reservation, available rooms, and special request.

At the second stage, the selected vocabulary is introduced through contextual materials. Authentic and adapted texts are used, including travel brochures, hotel descriptions, tour programs, airport announcements, booking forms, online reviews, promotional materials, e-mails, and dialogues between tourists and service providers. These materials allow students to observe how professional vocabulary functions in real discourse. Reading and listening tasks are organized in such a way that students identify key lexical units, analyze their meanings, group them according to professional fields, and determine their communicative functions. This stage helps learners move from passive recognition of vocabulary to conscious understanding of its usage in tourism-related contexts.

At the third stage, communicative practice is organized through role plays, pair work, group discussions, simulations, and problem-based tasks. Students act as travel agents, hotel receptionists, tour guides, clients, interpreters, and managers. They practice professional vocabulary in situations such as meeting tourists at the airport, presenting a city tour, explaining hotel rules, offering travel packages, solving a booking problem, responding to complaints, or giving recommendations about cultural sites. Such activities help students use lexical units naturally and develop confidence in professional communication. They also create opportunities for spontaneous speech, negotiation of meaning, and correction of lexical mistakes.

At the fourth stage, productive tasks are used to strengthen lexical competence. Students prepare oral presentations, write travel itineraries, create advertising texts, compose business e-mails, design tour programs, and present tourist destinations. These tasks require them to select vocabulary independently and apply it according to communicative purpose. Assessment is conducted through observation, lexical tests, oral performance, written assignments, and analysis of students' ability to use professional vocabulary accurately, appropriately, and fluently. Thus, the methodology combines lexical, communicative, contextual, and professional components into a unified teaching process.

Results

The results of the study show that the communicative-oriented approach creates favorable pedagogical conditions for developing professional lexical competence among tourism students, because it connects vocabulary learning with meaningful professional interaction. When lexical units are studied only as isolated terms, students often remember their translation but face difficulties in using them in oral and written communication. However, when the same vocabulary is introduced through dialogues, role plays, authentic texts, and professional situations, students begin to understand not only the meaning of words, but also their communicative function. This means that professional vocabulary gradually becomes an active instrument of speech rather than a passive element of knowledge.

One of the main results is the growth of students' ability to use tourism-related vocabulary in context. Students who work with communicative tasks demonstrate better understanding of lexical compatibility, professional expressions, and situational appropriateness. For example, vocabulary connected with accommodation, reservation, excursion services, transport, catering, and customer support is used more confidently when learners practice it through realistic situations such as booking a hotel room, presenting a tour package, describing local attractions, explaining travel conditions, or responding to a tourist's request. In such tasks, students learn to choose words according to the communicative aim, the role of the interlocutor, and the expected professional result.

Another important result is the development of students' productive lexical skills. Communicative-oriented activities encourage learners to speak, negotiate, ask questions, clarify information, and explain professional content. This process supports the transition from receptive knowledge to productive use of vocabulary. Students become more capable of constructing complete professional statements, not only naming objects or services. For instance, they learn to describe the advantages of a tourist destination, explain the sequence of a travel itinerary, recommend suitable services, apologize for inconvenience, and offer alternative solutions. Such speech actions require the flexible use of professional lexical units and functional phrases.

The study also indicates that authentic materials play a significant role in strengthening lexical competence. Travel brochures, booking forms, hotel descriptions, tourist maps, online reviews, advertisements, and professional e-mails expose students to vocabulary as it is actually used in the tourism sector. As a result, students become familiar with common collocations, service formulas, polite expressions, and genre-specific structures. They understand that professional lexical competence includes not only terminology, but also the ability to use vocabulary according to the norms of tourism discourse. This is especially important for future specialists who will communicate with international clients and partners.

The communicative-oriented approach also contributes to students' motivation. Professional tasks make vocabulary learning more purposeful and practically significant. When students see that the words and expressions they learn can be used in real occupational situations, their interest in English increases. They participate more actively in pair and group activities, try to express their ideas, and become more responsible for the accuracy of their speech. The learning process becomes more dynamic because students are not passive receivers of lexical material, but active participants in professional communication.

The results further show that lexical competence develops more effectively when assessment focuses on actual language use. Traditional vocabulary tests can check recognition and translation, but they do not fully reveal whether students can use vocabulary in professional communication. Therefore, oral presentations, simulated dialogues, written itineraries, business e-mails, and problem-solving tasks provide more reliable evidence of students' lexical progress. Through these forms of assessment, teachers can identify not only the number of words students know, but also their ability to use them correctly, fluently, and appropriately in tourism-related contexts.

Discussion

The formation of professional lexical competence among tourism students requires a systematic pedagogical approach in which vocabulary is not separated from communication, professional identity, and intercultural awareness. In traditional language teaching practice, vocabulary is often presented as a list of terms with translations and definitions. Although this method can help students

recognize basic lexical units, it does not ensure their ability to use vocabulary in real speech. Tourism communication is dynamic, situational, and client-oriented; therefore, students must learn not only what a term means, but also how, when, and why it should be used. The communicative-oriented approach responds to this need by placing lexical learning within practical interaction and professionally relevant discourse.

One of the key advantages of this approach is that it transforms professional vocabulary into a functional component of speech. Tourism students need to communicate in situations where clarity, politeness, accuracy, and cultural sensitivity are essential. For instance, when explaining a travel route, receiving a guest, solving a complaint, presenting a national cultural site, or writing an e-mail to a partner organization, students must select lexical units according to the communicative task. This means that professional lexical competence includes several interconnected abilities: understanding the semantic meaning of words, using them in correct grammatical forms, combining them with appropriate collocations, and adapting them to formal or informal professional contexts.

The communicative-oriented approach also strengthens the link between language education and future professional activity. In tourism, English is not only a subject of study, but also a practical tool for service, cooperation, promotion, and intercultural dialogue. When students perform role plays as tour guides, hotel administrators, travel consultants, or clients, they begin to perceive vocabulary as part of their professional behavior. This has an important motivational effect. Learners understand the practical value of lexical material and become more interested in mastering expressions that may be needed in their future work. As a result, vocabulary learning becomes meaningful rather than mechanical.

Another important issue is the role of authentic materials. Tourism discourse is rich in special lexical patterns, persuasive language, polite formulas, service-related expressions, and culturally marked vocabulary. Authentic materials help students become familiar with this discourse and develop sensitivity to its structure. Travel advertisements teach students how destinations are promoted; hotel descriptions show how services and facilities are presented; customer reviews demonstrate evaluative vocabulary; business correspondence develops formal lexical patterns. Through such materials, students learn that professional

vocabulary is not limited to terminology, but includes phrases and expressions that support real communication.

However, the effectiveness of the communicative-oriented approach depends on careful methodological organization. Teachers should select vocabulary according to students' level, professional specialization, and communicative needs. Tasks should move from controlled practice to freer communication, because students first need support and then opportunities for independent lexical use. Assessment should also be communicative in nature. It is not enough to check whether students can translate words correctly; it is necessary to evaluate whether they can use professional vocabulary in dialogues, presentations, written texts, and problem-solving situations.

Thus, professional lexical competence in tourism education should be developed as an integrated ability combining vocabulary knowledge, communicative performance, professional relevance, and intercultural appropriateness. The communicative-oriented approach provides the most suitable conditions for this process because it connects lexical learning with real speech activity and prepares students for practical professional communication.

Conclusion

The formation of professional lexical competence of tourism students based on a communicative-oriented approach is an essential condition for improving the quality of English language education in professionally directed higher education. Tourism is a sphere in which language performs not only an informative function, but also a social, cultural, organizational, and service-oriented function. Future specialists must be able to communicate with tourists, explain services, describe destinations, present routes, respond to requests, solve practical problems, and maintain professional contact with foreign partners. Therefore, professional vocabulary should be mastered not as a separate set of lexical units, but as a functional resource for real communication.

The communicative-oriented approach makes it possible to connect lexical learning with professional speech situations. It helps students understand vocabulary through use, context, interaction, and practical tasks. In this process, professional lexical competence includes several important components: knowledge of tourism terminology, understanding of lexical meanings, correct

use of collocations, ability to apply functional phrases, awareness of stylistic norms, and readiness to choose appropriate expressions according to the communicative situation. Such competence cannot be formed effectively through memorization alone. It requires systematic work with authentic materials, role plays, dialogues, simulations, presentations, case studies, and written professional assignments.

The study shows that communicative-oriented teaching increases students' lexical activity and develops their ability to use professional vocabulary in oral and written speech. When students participate in situations connected with hotel booking, excursion planning, tourist reception, destination description, customer service, complaint handling, and business correspondence, they gradually transform passive vocabulary into active speech practice. This process strengthens their confidence, fluency, and professional readiness. It also develops their ability to communicate politely and appropriately in intercultural contexts, which is especially important for the tourism sector.

Another important conclusion is that professional lexical competence should be developed gradually and systematically. At the initial stage, students need to become familiar with basic tourism vocabulary and common expressions. At the next stage, they should learn to use lexical units in controlled communicative exercises. Later, they should apply vocabulary independently in more complex professional tasks. Such gradual movement from recognition to active use allows students to master vocabulary more deeply and consciously. The teacher's role is to select relevant lexical material, organize meaningful communicative practice, provide feedback, and assess not only lexical knowledge, but also the ability to use vocabulary appropriately in professional discourse.

In the context of pedagogical higher education, this issue also has broader methodological significance. The communicative-oriented approach develops not only linguistic competence, but also professional thinking, intercultural sensitivity, and practical communicative behavior. It prepares students to act as competent participants in tourism-related communication and to respond effectively to the needs of international clients. Consequently, the formation of professional lexical competence should be considered a priority direction in English language teaching for tourism students. Its successful implementation contributes to the development of competitive, communicatively competent, and

professionally prepared specialists who are able to use English as an effective tool of professional activity.

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