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**TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO FUTURE AGRONOMISTS:
POINTS TO CONSIDER****Holovko I.O.***c.ped.s., senior lecturer*

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Abstract. *The article depicts some approaches of organizing the process of teaching a foreign language to students of the specialty “Agronomy” taking into account the psycholinguistic peculiarities of speech perception, understanding, absorption and communicating in foreign language. To solve the issue the approach of intensive methods should be applied including grouping students according to the level they possess in foreign language, weekly consultations with a teacher to help students organize the independent work and self-control in studying, consideration of their individual abilities, combination of means of studying: textbooks, audiovisual aids, computer and multimedia resources. It is noted that analytical and logical mentality of “Agronomy” specialty students shows the superiority of concrete-figurative and visual perception of the material compared to auditory skills that follows the necessity of teaching vocabulary and grammar using schemes, tables, and patterns. Teaching a foreign language to future agronomists should also consider their difficulty to formulate and express thoughts easily and widely using the whole range of the vocabulary, even though which is known to them. It puts forward the importance of practicing the large number of the receptive-productive and reproducing-productive exercises in communicatively-oriented mini-dialogues. It aims to make students be aware of using language in different real-life situations dealt with their future professional carrier and acquire some level of communicative competence. Special attention should be given to the choice of the context for learning: it must meet students’ requirements for their professional activity in the future.*

Key words: *agronomical specialties students, future agronomists, teaching foreign language, foreign professional and situational communication*

Introduction.

The intensification of intercultural contacts in the modern world, especially in the field of science, technology and business, requires foreign language proficiency in almost all professional fields that significantly increases the workers’ competitiveness and raises demand for them as specialists on the international labor market. So foreign language proficiency has become an integral professional competence requirement to specialists with higher education in various areas that shows the growing role of foreign language learning at higher education institutions.

Main text.

The main goal of the teaching course in the disciplines “Foreign language”, “Foreign language for professional purposes” and “Foreign language for scientific purposes” at non-linguistic higher education institutions is to provide future specialists of various fields of training with practical usage of one of the foreign languages in the scope necessary for using the acquired knowledge in daily-basis work. The final outcome of teaching is to form communicative competence in the spheres of professional and situational communication in oral and written forms, to build up the practical skills of possessing a foreign language in the scope of topics determined by basic, professional, scientific needs, and to develop the ability to

receive and extract the information from the professional foreign sources. However, in the process of teaching foreign language to future agronomists, certain specifics should be taken into account.

The main feature concerns the different, and sometimes insufficient, level of foreign language knowledge and skills that high school graduates come to higher education institutions with. This fact makes it necessary to divide students into subgroups with a threshold, basic and advanced level of knowledge. In this way, within traditional frameworks, the educational process is differentiated, so that individual and differentiated approaches are used in teaching students. It creates the positive motivation within academic groups. The students with insufficient foreign language knowledge do not feel unconfident in their abilities and they overcome the language barrier more easily. At the same time, the students possessing average and advanced level of knowledge do not lose interest to the subject. They improve skills acquired at school and expand the knowledge base of the discipline. In this way, the teacher increases the students' level of motivation to learn a foreign language. The low interest of students-agronomists to the discipline can be explained by some factors: their interest in major disciplines, a lack of faith in the possibility of prospects for using a foreign language in the future, or due to a lack of abilities to foreign philology.

It should also be noted that the short period of the foreign language course and the limited quantity of hours assigned for practical classes cause difficulty to cover the entire range of professionally oriented and basic training. In a certain way, group and individual consultations compensate the lack of practical hours. Consultations with the teacher serve as an additional help to students in mastering the subject, increasing their motivation for cognitive activity and helping better comprehend the educational material. The teacher clarifies theoretical and practical issues, helps to organize students' independent work preparing for the next practical classes, and explains the algorithm while working with optional training textbooks taking into account students' personal inclinations and capabilities.

Students of non-language majors often show the superficial and shallow attitude towards independent work doing homework or mastering additional information of foreign origin compared with leading (professional) disciplines because of low faith in perspective of using it in future. It is important for a teacher to promote students' interest to this type of learning activity: to conduct explanatory and clarifying conversations about the principles of organizing the students' independent work and the effective outcome of this activity succeeding in their future career.

Processing of new material should be followed by doing intermediate tests on the studied themes and topics, which gives students the opportunity to conduct a self-analysis of the fulfilled tasks: adequately assess their level of mastery of the material, identify gaps in the assimilation of information, analyze, and correct mistakes.

Conducting new teaching material, it is necessary to take into account psycholinguistic ability of agronomists to perceive, understand, comprehend the vocabulary and grammar and produce speech in a foreign language. It means the preference of concrete figurative and visual perception above hearing. Predominantly, the analytical and logical mentality requires a concretely figurative presentation of

lexical and grammatical issues in a visual form, schematically, in tables, graphs, models or by grouped or collective notions. As the practice has shown, working with students-agronomists, maximum involvement of all types of memory is important for learning vocabulary, especially terms: visual, auditory, motor and logical. Therefore, teaching material should be provided through the rational use of various types of teaching aids: textbooks, visual aids, audio and video materials, computer tools and multimedia resources both in classes and in providing extracurricular work. The combination of different approaches aimed at comprehending the training material allows modeling a foreign language environment and stimulating communication in foreign language. This forms the ability not only to apply knowledge of a foreign language in a specific type of communication, but also forms ways of interacting with people. At this stage, it is effective to use mini-dialogues with substitute speech samples according to patterns, followed by making up the mini-dialogues by students of their own.

It should also be noted one more specificity inherent to students-agronomists as difficulties in expressing opinions and operating with lexical units easily and naturally. This indicates the peculiarity of the ratio of types of speech activity. Since the future farmer, by his nature, differs in analytical and logical thinking, he thinks more about ‘what to do?’ than ‘what to say?’, which creates the problem of ‘how to say?’ for such students and provokes a certain uncertainty in formulating and expressing thoughts in sentences. This feature should be taken into account when composing method manuals, in which emphasis should be placed on receptive-productive and reproductive-productive exercises for the development of communicative skills.

One more point to consider is the speed of speech and the ability to comprehend language by hearing, i.e. the ability to perceive and understand foreign speech and produce communicating, considering that the tempo of the English language differs from Ukrainian by its fluency, is much more difficult for students-agronomists than for students of humanitarian specialties. Since the subject of work of future agrarians is technology, their perception and ‘decoding’ of lexical-grammatical forms and concepts takes place through sign systems. They are able to ‘read’ diagrams, mentally imagine the process of planting, observe the growth of the plants, choose better options for processes while cultivating, weeding, ploughing, tillage, build hypotheses about the possible ways of increasing the crops’ harvest and mentally scroll through solution options, separating the most likely ones. Therefore, the ability to perform various types of linguistic and mental activities and choose linguistic means occurs slowly for agronomists, when they first “read” information, mentally imagine, build hypotheses, mentally scroll through answer options, and then produce an answer. That is why, while learning foreign language, they need more tasks, which include variants of answers in the form of patterns, sentences, questions with the instructions like: “Match the appropriate answers to the definition/statement”, “Which of the following might be the best solution of the problems?”, “What kind of GM foods do you think have been developed so far?”, “Fill in the correct word from the list, then choose any five and make up sentences using the completed sentences” etc.

The difficulty accompanying the process of forming foreign language communicative competence, which negatively affects and slows down the teaching foreign language, is the insufficient level of communication skills and abilities of agronomists-students in their native language. In order to overcome this drawback, it is necessary to establish inter-subject connections: to involve the reflective processes of mental activity in the process of mastering a foreign language by students, using the skills and abilities acquired in professional subjects. In this way, long-term memory will be involved, which will make it possible to better retain knowledge after a long break between the end of the foreign language course and the possible practical application of the acquired knowledge in professional activity. The reflective process in this context is considered as a mental process aimed at structuring or restructuring experience, problem, knowledge or ideas previously obtained from general education and professional disciplines. It can be implemented starting with short informative messages given by the teacher (later by students) in a foreign language about news in professional field, with further presentation of short instructions or advertising booklets in the field of specialty related to professional topics etc.

Summary and conclusions.

Teaching foreign language to students of “Agronomy” specialty must consider different levels of foreign language training, low level of motivation and a lack of inclination to learn the language, the limited term of the course of teaching the academic discipline “Foreign language”. It puts forward the necessity to intensify the learning process: grouping students according to the level they possess in foreign language, weekly consultations with a teacher to help students organize the independent work and self-control in studying, consideration of their individual abilities, combination of means of studying: textbooks, audiovisual aids, computer and multimedia resources. The teaching should be based on considering the agronomists-students’ psycholinguistic peculiarities of foreign language speech perception, understanding, absorption and communicating. The selection of educational material should be carried out in accordance with the future areas of professional activity of the students. The further research perspective on the topic deals with the application of modern learning means and techniques to agricultural specialties students in the process of forming foreign language communicating.

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