

WAYS OF UPGRADING THE COGNITIVE COMPETENCY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASS FOR INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS

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This article is centered on the problem of the development of the cognitive aspect of the professional foreign language communicative competence and includes the systematization of ideas about the essence, structure and ways of upgrading the cognitive competency as its integral component. The major types of cognitive abilities have been outlined with examples of the tasks aimed at developing the cognitive competency in the foreign language classes at a non-linguistic university (by the example of teaching international law students). The conclusion about the benefits of a partial integration of certain types of written assignments offered at international language examinations like IELTS for the development of the students' cognitive competency has been formulated.

Key words: competence-based approach in education; activity-based learning; professional foreign language communicative competence; the essence and structure of the cognitive competency; ways of developing cognitive abilities at a non-linguistic university; mock trial; the debating technology; IELTS.

СПОСОБЫ РАЗВИТИЯ КОГНИТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ НА ЗАНЯТИЯХ ПО АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ ДЛЯ ЮРИСТОВ-МЕЖДУНАРОДНИКОВ

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Статья посвящена проблеме развития когнитивного аспекта профессиональной иноязычной коммуникативной компетенции и включает в себя систематизацию представлений о сущности, структуре и способах развития когнитивной компетенции как её неотъемлемой части. Обозначены основные типы когнитивных способностей, приведены примеры заданий, направленных на развитие когнитивной компетенции на занятиях по иностранному языку в неязыковом вузе (в отношении обучения юристов-международников). Сформулирован вывод о преимуществах частичной интеграции определённых типов письменных заданий, предлагаемых на международных языковых экзаменах, таких как *IELTS*, для развития когнитивной компетенции студентов.

Ключевые слова: компетентностный подход в образовании; профессиональная иноязычная коммуникативная компетенция; сущность и структура когнитивной компетенции; способы развития когнитивных способностей в неязыковом вузе; инсценированный судебный процесс; дебатная технология.

In the light of the increasing integration of the Republic of Belarus into the Bologna process, the current stage of preparing specialists with a higher education is marked by the leading role of the competence-based approach in teaching all kinds of disciplines. In its turn, this is reflected in the educational standards being developed for both: the subjects of the social and humanitarian cycle and natural sciences, thus creating the preconditions for the development of a new, student-oriented paradigm [see 1]. In this article, the word *competency* denotes a cluster of specific skills and abilities for doing particular types of tasks. In contrast, *competence* is understood as the general level of abilities or qualifications demonstrated by a person, in other words, the result of mastering competencies (D. Kuhn) [3, pp. 95 – 96].

With regard to teaching a foreign language, the development of the integrative foreign language communicative competence in the unity of its components (linguistic, conversational, socio-cultural, compensatory and educational-cognitive) has been designated as the leading goal by Belarusian methodologists [5, p. 84]. At the same time, for the students of non-linguistic profiles, the professional component of the communicative competence is of paramount importance: in other words, mastering the language of professional communication becomes a priority [2, p. 120]. This is especially true with respect to preparing future international lawyers.

This article is focused on the pursuit of optimum ways of the development of the cognitive aspect of the mentioned above complex communicative competence in the foreign language class for the speciality «International Law». It has to be mentioned that the cognitive competency was included on the list of the «Key Competencies for Europe», which underlines its utmost importance in modern reality [4, pp. 49 – 50]. In fact, the skills and abilities of educational and cognitive activity create the prerequisites for mastering other components of the integrated communicative foreign language competency.

It should be noted that at present there is no consensus regarding the essence and structure of the cognitive competency among the scholars. For example, N.A. Patov and L.A. Osipova, who are

believed to be recognized experts in this field, consider it appropriate to apply the description of the cognitive competency recommended by the European Commission. In accordance with it, it includes the ability and readiness of a person to independently carry out various types of cognitive activities, the determination to learn throughout life, to grow personally and professionally, and to actualize one's potential. In other words, *knowing about* something is not the same as *knowing how* to do something, which emphasizes the importance of the practical application of knowledge [4, p. 49 – 51].

According to N. P. Tayurskaya, certain general and specific educational skills and abilities, as well as methods and techniques of independent learning of foreign languages and cultures, including the use of information technologies, are of utmost importance for mastering the cognitive competency in the study of a foreign language [5, p. 85]. Other authors in this field emphasize the need for systematic independent educational and cognitive student work. In other words, competence-based approach in education is intertwined with an activity-based approach in learning.

In terms of the structure of the cognitive competency, N. A. Patov and L. A. Osipova highlight such important components as value-motivational, cognitive-practical and emotional-volitional. The authors agree with the opinion of M. A. Holodnaya that the prerequisites for the development of the cognitive competency are the formed abilities to analyze, synthesize, generalize, systematize, search for cause-and-effect relationships, build evidence, draw up argumentation and generate new ideas, necessary for problem-solving in the educational environment [4, p. 52].

It should be noted that in the Faculty of International Relations of the Belarusian State University the training of the professional foreign language communicative competence is carried out taking into account the latest achievements in the field of teaching methods and linguodidactics. For example, the Department of the English Language for the Humanities is actively integrating case technology into the educational process: every year mock trials are organized for the students of legal specialities. These mock trials reflect the realities of the common-law system which dominates in the Commonwealth countries [2, p. 121].

It is obvious that active participation in such an event increases the motivation for learning a foreign language in general and the language of professional communication (or ESP: English for specific purposes) in particular. In turn, this has a positive effect on the development of the cognitive competency, since in addition to the cognitive-and-practical component, the value-motivational and emotional-volitional components are actively engaged. Students do a lot of research work: they study case materials in the foreign language, work on compiling glossaries, explore the speech structures of the prosecution and the defense, and get to know the logic of the trial through their direct involvement in the process.

The application of the debating technology is another way of upgrading the cognitive competency in studying a foreign language. Debates on professional topics are also regularly held. They mostly deal with important current issues in jurisprudence. Preparation for such debates involves extensive research, analysis of well-known precedents, drawing up a line of argumentation, preparing questions for the opposing team, drafting persuasive speeches, etc. Undoubtedly, it contributes to the development of cognitive abilities.

Writing argumentation essays in the foreign language and article rendering also contribute to the development of the cognitive competency, since they involve intensive analytical speech activity. A possible means of increasing motivation for this type of written assignment could be the partial implementation of international language exam standards, such as IELTS [see 7]. Quite a challenging assignment is connected with visual data interpretation: bar charts, line graphs, pie charts, flow charts, etc. In particular, colleagues from Singapore noted the positive impact of using the elements of this test on the growth of the professional foreign language competence of future teachers [6, p. 74]. At the same time, it is obvious that one should avoid thoughtless copying of assignments and commensurate their expediency with the curriculum and the educational standard in the speciality.

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