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THE SWEDISH EXPERIENCE OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS' ORAL PROFICIENCY IN VOCATIONALLY ORIENTED ENGLISH

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The article surveys Sweden's experience in developing pupils' oral proficiency in the process of vocational training. The didactic and psycholinguistic principles of the communicative approach lie in the basis of methodology of vocational foreign language learning (equal development of pupils' skills in all kinds of communication: listening, reading, writing and speaking, thematic and situational organization of the study process). The content of communicative competence and oral proficiency as its constituent is defined. National syllabi for foreign languages are composed on the principles of the communicative approach, The Common European Framework of Reference for languages: teaching, learning and assessment, with priority of English. Foreign language teaching comprises 7 stages, which provide detailed goal description and expected results. The priority of English in the content of education results in achieving a much higher level of communicative competence and oral proficiency of vocational pupils when compared with other foreign languages. The stress is put on the practical English language use for professional activity and further education. Various forms, methods and approaches to the development of pupils' oral proficiency in English and other foreign languages are applied. Amongst them joint projects, discussions, presentations, problem-based learning, teaching vocational subjects by means of English (content-and language integrated learning). This method promotes pupils' motivation to learning English and productive ways of communicative activity, developing oral proficiency.

The ways of certain improvements in the system of vocational language learning of Ukraine are defined: implementation of teaching vocational subject content through the medium of English; optimization of teachers' training; creating artificial close to natural English language environment through translation of English films and programs in the original.

The upcoming reforms in vocational education of Ukraine are aimed at conformity of its organization and structure with those of the advanced European countries. The integrity of the content of education implies developing vocationally oriented communicative competence in foreign languages (FL) of school leavers and students. In this context, the study of the progressive international experience plays the major role showing Ukraine possible adequate ways to follow. Sweden is considered to be among the leading countries in Europe providing high level of educational quality and ranks the second among in Europe regarding the level of communicative competence in English among its citizens.

The aim of the study is to consider the Swedish experience of developing oral proficiency of students through vocational English language learning in Sweden.

Theoretical framework and research methods. The Council of Europe put forward the idea of developing a communicative competence in foreign languages at all stages of education including vocational to meet the demands of the international labour market. Therefore this issue has been tackled and scrutinized in numerous scientific works (J. Van Ekk, D. Hymes, J. Trimm, B. Spolsky, T. Lindblad, P. Malmberg, J. Svartvik, D. Taylor

and others). For instance the concept of communicative competence was first introduced by D. Hymes and developed by B. Spolsky, R. Quirk, J. Richards, J. Svartvik and others. Oral proficiency in foreign languages was considered by E. Shohamy, A. Stenström, S. Sundh, R. Wardhaugh and others.

In the article we will speak about vocationally oriented foreign language learning (VOLL) which is provided at upper secondary school (gymnasieskola), on the stage of professional/vocational education and training at vocational colleges and higher educational establishments.

Results. During the last decades, scientific research has been made in the concept of communicative competence. This concept first appeared in the 1980s as the ultimate goal of foreign language learning and teaching FLL. The Common European Framework of References: teaching, learning and assessment (CEFR) differentiates the following types of communicative competence: lexical, grammatical, semantic, pragmatic and functional [45, p. 13]. To our mind, the concept of communicative competence is more implicated into the outcome of FLL, since linked to emotional attitude towards the world through mastering and communicating in a FL. Oral communication is the most important type

of communication as it enacts all communicative strategies: cooperative, non-verbal, linguistic. In other words, oral proficiency in a FL is the complex of linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge, skills and abilities to interact to understand or make oneself understood when producing an oral utterance or speech [1, p. 48].

The domineering concept of FLL in Sweden is the communicative approach. Since 1950, the Swedish education has undergone a chain of reforms aimed at internationalization of education. This system with slight changes exists up to now. The 9-year compulsory schooling was introduced with English as an obligatory basic subject. Upper-secondary schools named *gymnasieskola* (voluntary schooling) encompass vocational and academic education and training. In the flow of these reforms utmost attention was paid to the role of FL in the content of education and the role of English was prioritized according to the multilingual policy of the country predetermined by a huge influx of immigrants from other countries. Thus, Swedish is the official language of the country, English is the obligatory foreign language at all stages of education, the national minorities can obtain education in a mother tongue and Swedish is taught as the second language. It produced a great impact of the content of VOLL as through mastering of FL and especially English Sweden intended to occupy the leading positions at the global market. It was explained by the low use of Swedish in the world and the necessity to be active in all societal, economic and political domains and offer its citizens better chances for employment all over the world [3, p. 75].

The educational reforms were aimed at the improvement of the quality of education, raising the learners' proficiency and competitiveness at the international labour market. The reform of 1994 introduced English course A general for all 17 national vocational and academic programs and more specific course B for those who intend to enter universities and a more advanced course C offered for those who will major in the subject of English or other FL at the university [3].

The syllabus for English at upper secondary school (*gymnasieskola*) differentiates between the aim of the subject (the minimum of necessary knowledge and skills) and the goals to strive towards [5] which imply motivating pupils to achieve higher results.

The goals of learning English differ from the goals of learning other FL. In the syllabus for the subject of English for the compulsory school it is said that "the school in its teaching English should ensure that pupils

- develop their ability to use English to communicate in speech and writing,
- deepen their understanding of spoken English in different situations and contexts,
- develop their ability to actively take part in discussions and written communication, express their own thoughts in English, as well as understand the views and experiences of others,
- develop their ability to use English orally in different contexts in order to relate, describe and explain, as well as give reasons for their views" [3, p. 94 - 95].

The peculiar feature of FLL in Sweden is the absence of lexical and grammatical minima for the pupils to master, which we consider as a drawback. However, the development of oral proficiency is achieved through interaction of integrated speaking skills according to real communicative situations, development of situational thinking which results in forming discursive, strategic, pragmatic and intercultural competencies.

Following the integrity of education at its all levels the goals and objectives of vocationally oriented English learning (VOEL) at upper secondary school imply deepening and developing knowledge, skills and abilities already obtained at the compulsory stage. Thus, "The Goals to Strive Towards" feature the ultimate objective of forming oral proficiency in English for all levels (A, B i C):

- develop the skills and abilities to communicate in orally and in writing;
- deepen the knowledge and develop skills of understanding different variants of English speech;
- take part in conversations, discussions and negotiations, and express the thoughts with high level of accuracy;
- use correct grammar, words and phonetics in relevant and adequate to the subject of communication situations.
- develop the ability in cooperation with other pupils or a teacher and alone to plan and perform the tasks and assess the communication skills [5].

Our research shows that Swedish national syllabi for English for upper secondary school are oriented at the CEFR [2], but the

requirements to the command of English in Sweden are higher than those proposed by CEFR, which testifies to the importance and wide use of this language in Sweden. With the respect to English in Sweden is regarded to be bilingual due to high presence of this language in all social domains, its profound learning especially at upper-secondary school and colleges or universities.

In Sweden there is a 7-stage of FLL (see

table 1). The first 4 stages are meant for the compulsory 9-year schooling and stages 5, 6, 7 are meant for grades 10, 11 and 12 respectively. They differ not only by the depth of theoretical knowledge but by vocational orientation of the content. As we see from the goals of VOEL at upper secondary school, they focus mostly on oral proficiency in English, as school must prepare pupils for further education or work abroad.

Table 1

Requirements to the proficiency in English at upper secondary school in Sweden

Grade		Requirements
5	10 th form	Upper-secondary school
This stage includes the elements of vocationally oriented FL. Pupils raise the variability of oral and written speech. They must adjust their language to different purposes of communication, situations and audience, possess such linguistic and speech tools which would enable them to study their professional sphere by means of a FL more in depth, as well as to read for professional purposes, search for professional information etc.		
6	11 th form	
The pupils should raise their lexical, grammatical and phonetic competency, widen their language knowledge; improve their skills in reading, listening, speaking and writing on the vocationally oriented materials. This course has more analytic orientation.		Upper-secondary school
7	12 th form	
The course prepares the pupils to professional activity both in Sweden and abroad or further university education. Vocationally oriented foreign language oral communication is performed on the professional materials in the chosen specialty. The pupils must develop the skills and abilities of business communication in a FL both orally and in writing during project work in cooperation with specialists: be able to set the goals of the project and tasks, explain the choice of forms and methods, compose the working program, discuss, explain, criticize and argue some statements and produce presentations.		

Another problem arising from everything mentioned above is assessing pupils' oral proficiency in English taking into account practical goals of teaching.

R. Phillipson differentiates 6 factors of oral proficiency in English:

- 1) fluency (building sentences into larger and more complex units),
- 2) accuracy (using grammar and vocabulary correctly),
- 3) variety (extending the range and the use of idioms),
- 4) intelligibility (using intonation with more expressiveness),
- 5) pronunciation (standard British or American English),
- 6) speed (talking with ease and confidence) [8, p. 74].

These six criteria were used to create the national system of certification of professional foreign language competence [9, p. 33]. C. Alderson proposed a classification of tasks of ascending difficulty [4]. The easiest tasks include the static tasks like descriptions of

pictures, diagrams; more difficult are dynamic tasks like telling a story, an episode. The abstract tasks are considered the most difficult ones as they include giving one's own opinion [9, p. 39]. Developing oral proficiency of pupils is a very complex task as it encompasses all aspects of speaker's communicative competence: listening comprehension, speaking, pronunciation, intonation, grammar and vocabulary [9].

C. Weir proposed the most useful tasks for developing and checking oral proficiency in a FL. To them refer the following:

- 1) verbal essay (student is asked to speak on one or more specified or general topics);
- 2) oral presentation when a student gives a talk on prepared by him presentation;
- 3) the free unprepared interview (no procedures are done beforehand);
- 4) the controlled interview (a conversation with determined procedures and prepared questions);
- 5) information transfer (questions on a single picture about its content, the thoughts

and attitude, future developments);

6) interaction with information gap between two students and a specialist in a professional sphere or a teacher, completion of missing information in a diagram, a set of notes;

7) role play between two students or a student and a teacher [10, p. 74 - 80].

These oral interactions are possible at later stages of FLL as they call for both high level of lexical skills complicated grammar and program specific knowledge. All these activities are part of professional interaction and pupils must be prepared for them already at school.

The Education Agency of Sweden issued numerous publications of teachers on applying content-and-language intergrated (in Swedish abbreviation SPRINT (Språk-ochinnehållsintegrerad inläring och undervisning)). This was greatly influenced by the Canadian immersion programs of teaching and learning non-language subjects by means of a FL. In Sweden SPRINT is widely practiced at upper-secondary schools, although compulsory schools are increasingly implementing this method as well. According to M. Falk, SPRINT in Sweden is an umbrella term that encompasses immersion learning, bilingual education and teaching non-language subjects by means of a FL [6, p. 3]. Unlike the Canadian immersion programs, the launch of SPRINT in Sweden was not aimed at achieving a high level of language proficiency close to that of a native speaker, but mastering the FL at a high functional level, i.e., achieving a high level of communicative competence. It meant developing pupils' abilities to apply various language strategies and styles according to the situation [6, p.6]. Another reason of launching SPRINT was the optimization of FLL, a shift from traditional methods and raising pupils' motivation to master a FL [6, p. 11].

SPRINT proved to be effective in developing pupils' oral proficiency in a FL, as they have to communicate at lessons of natural science, social science, business and administration, medicine etc. in English. It implies work over various projects, searching for the information in English, discussing the goals and strategies, probable outcome, negotiating various options, giving argumentations, expressing and supporting opinions. According to the analysis conducted by J. Nixon, the most frequently SPRINT-affected vocational subjects are history, maths,

social science, psychology, economics. A closer analysis of some of the subjects being offered is possible by looking at the courses affected by SPRINT within the different subjects. The core course, Social Science A, is mentioned 28 times in the source material, while Social Science B and C are only mentioned 19 times each. Certain core courses are more likely to be affected by SPRINT than other courses in the same subjects. In particular, the Natural Science A is more than twice as commonly affected by SPRINT than Natural Science B. This probably reflects the fact that Natural Science A is offered in both Social science and Natural Science programs, but Natural Science B is only available to Social Science students [7, p. 26]. In most cases, the A and B courses are studied as part of the economics specialisation on Social science Program [7, p. 27].

Before the reforms in upper secondary system mathematics was considered to be the most adaptable and easy to teaching through English, and even some compulsory schools started SPRINT. Mathematics has a relatively small technical vocabulary and it was fairly simple to find foreign teaching material which could be adapted to the requirements of the Swedish curriculum. Following the reforms, however, it became much more difficult to adapt textbooks designed for foreign curriculums to the requirements of the 5 Swedish courses. In particular, the C course in math's, was felt most problematic [8, p. 29].

Despite the increasing use of SPRINT and apparently greater exposition of pupils to English, teachers admit that they do not speak English all the time during lessons, for there are some concepts or problems that seem difficult to clarify by means of a FL. Still, upper-school pupils are eager to speak English during the lesson because they are more motivated with the prospect of future employment and current demands. SPRINT implies involvement of all types of oral communication: listening (to explanations) and speaking (monologues and dialogues). Pupils are fully engaged in the process of perception of the subject content through the medium of English, whereas English becomes a tool of knowledge acquisition. Pupils are supposed to take part in discussions, ask questions, support their opinions and give arguments, make speeches and presentations, oral essays, descriptions etc. It means their total involvement into communicative interaction, applying various

language tools with reference to the situation and in various contexts determined by the subject content.

Among the reasons upper-secondary school pupils get more and more exposed in SPRINT are the overall process of internationalization, a higher level of oral proficiency in a FL, better chances for employment and education abroad, students' demand and appreciation, local demand, better course material available in English than in Swedish, a higher challenge and ambition [7, p. 41].

Here we would point out the restricted use of FL by vocational students while searching for professional or educational information on foreign sites and apply the world's informational stock to enrich their knowledge. In Ukraine, mainly teachers of FL use FL Internet sites to prepare teaching materials. In most cases it is explained by teachers' low proficiency in English and lack of motivation. Therefore, proper teachers' training for teaching subject content through a medium of a FL is of the major importance. As we know, vocational education is both an ultimate and an intermediate stage of education, as it trains future junior specialists who can either start work or continue their education at universities. It is at this stage that pupils acquire the initial professional knowledge. If they are restricted only to the sites in their mother tongue, there is little possibility that their knowledge is sufficient enough to be competitive at the global labor market. Moreover, they are deprived of using the most updated information from foreign sources, being unable to perform in conformity to the international standards. In this respect great responsibility lies on teachers who should introduce them to these sources, get them to use them in their preparation for the lessons. Like anywhere else teachers are required to have a good command in both subject content and a foreign language. As we know students' exchange programs like Tempus, Erasmus Mundus and others offer a wide range of opportunities for improving FL skills, especially in oral communication [3].

The peculiar feature of Sweden's educational system is a multidisciplinary teachers' training, which enables them to teach several subjects. This is mainly practiced in compulsory schools up to the grade 7. The material in upper-secondary school becoming

more complicated, it is necessary for a teacher to have a rather good command of the subject content. Therefore, syllabi for teachers' training combine close disciplines in the following way:

- 1) arts, English and French (270 credits);
- 2) household and technologies, English and French (270 credits);
- 3) law, English and geography (270 credits);
- 4) Swedish, English and Swedish as the second language (270 credits);
- 5) Spanish, math's and Swedish as a FL (270 credits) [3, p. 118].

To develop pupils' oral proficiency in English the method of problem-based teaching is used. It implies solving by students various offered by a teacher or in a textbook through the medium of English. First, every problem presents a different situation and a context, which calls for using various verbal and non-verbal means, intonation, pronunciation, improves pupils' pragmatic, discursive and intercultural competence. The problems proposed mostly tackle professional sphere and require the use of subject specific professional terminology, thus develop pupils' professional communicative competence. To other interactive types of developing students' oral proficiency in vocationally oriented English we can refer group and project work, seminars, lectures and oral exams. These forms are very effective at this stage as pupils have already acquired some knowledge and skills in this language and can interact with one other, noticing mistakes of their interlocutors, possibly correcting them.

According to J. Nixon, SPRINT proved to have both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, pupils, studying by SPRINT are more motivated, show better concentration and involvement as they are more exposed to English, which is in such a setting is both the tool of knowledge acquisition and the content of the subject. On the other hand, they don't acquire the material to such extent as they could do in their mother tongue, they comprehend and master the FL better [7, p. 27-30]. Moreover, Sweden in all ways prioritizes the role of English. It exists in all societal domains: business, science, technologies, education and entertainment. There are a lot of English and American films, TV and Radio programs broadcast in the original.

Conclusions. VOEL is inseparable part of professional education and oral proficiency

in English is part of professional communicative competence of a future specialist. Sweden prioritizes English in the content of education giving its citizens better employment chances in Sweden and abroad and thus, increasing its competitiveness in the global world. Oral proficiency in English is emphasized in all national syllabi for English and other FL for compulsory and upper-secondary schools. It is achieved through

various strategies including class work, content- and language-integrated learning, problem-based teaching, teachers' training in English and 1-2 vocational subjects, exchange programs for students and teachers, close to natural English language environment. This experience in our opinion should be considered in Ukraine. English in vocational education should be used as the means of obtaining and developing professional knowledge.

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Реферат

Досвід Швеції у розвитку в студентів англійського профільно орієнтованого усного мовлення

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КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА:

усне мовлення,
профільна школа,
гімназії, комунікативна
компетентність,
контекстно-мовне
інтегроване навчання

У статті розглядається досвід Швеції у розвитку усного мовлення під час допрофесійної та професійної підготовки учнів. Методологічну основу навчання іноземних мов у загальноосвітніх навчальних закладах Швеції складають дидактичні та психолінгвістичні положення комунікативного методу (рівноправне формування умінь і навичок в усіх видах мовленнєвої діяльності, тематико-ситуативна організація навчального матеріалу). З'ясовано зміст іншомовної комунікативної компетентності та усного мовлення як її складової. Навчальні програми з іноземних мов укладені з урахуванням комунікативного підходу, викладеного у змісті ЗСР, та з означенням пріоритетності іноземних мов. Навчання предмета здійснюється за 7-ступеневою системою, яка забезпечує більш детальне визначення цілей і завдань навчання для кожного ступеня і, відповідно, очікуваних результатів. Навчальні плани пріоритизують англійську мову серед інших іноземних мов, наголошують на її практичному використанні у професійній діяльності та подальшій освіті. У шведських гімназіях застосовуються різні форми, методи та підходи розвитку навичок усного мовлення учнів. До них належать: спільні проекти, диспути, презентації, проблемно-орієнтоване навчання, контекстно-мовне інтегроване навчання. Серед них найпомітнішим є контекстно-мовне інтегроване навчання, тобто навчання немовних предметів профільного циклу засобами

іноземної мови. Завдяки цій методиці учні більш вмотивовані до вивчення англійської мови та показують вищий рівень розвитку навичок усного мовлення.

Виявлено шляхи здійснення певних перетворень у системі профільного навчання іноземних мов в Україні: запровадження контекстно-мовного інтегрованого навчання; оптимізація спеціальної педагогічної підготовки; створення штучного іншомовного середовища в суспільстві завдяки регулярній трансляції оригінальних іншомовних фільмів та телевізійних передач.

Реферат

Опыт Швеции по развитию у студентов английской профильно ориентированной устной речи

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КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ

СЛОВА: устная речь, профильная школа, гимназии, коммуникативная компетентность, контекстно-языковое интегрированное обучение

В статье рассматривается опыт Швеции по развитию устной речи в процессе допрофильной и профильной подготовки. Методологической основой обучения иностранным языкам в общеобразовательных учебных заведениях являются дидактические и психолингвистические положения коммуникативного метода (равноправное формирование умений и навыков учеников во всех видах речевой деятельности, тематико-ситуативная организация учебного процесса). Уточнено содержание иноязычной коммуникативной компетентности и устной речи как ее составляющей. Учебные программы для иностранных языков составлены с учетом коммуникативного подхода, Общеввропейских рекомендаций по языковому образованию, приоритизации английского языка. Обучение предмета осуществляется по 7 ступенчатой системе, которая обеспечивает детальное изложение целей и ожидаемых результатов. Приоритетное место английского языка в содержании образования выражается в более высоком уровне коммуникативной компетентности учеников, в особенности устной речи, в сравнении с другими иностранными языками. Ударение ставится на практическом использовании этого языка в профессиональной деятельности и последующем образовании. В шведских гимназиях используются различные формы, методы и подходы к развитию навыков устной речи учеников. Среди них совместные проекты, диспуты, презентации, проблемное обучение, обучение профильных неязыковых предметов посредством английского языка. Эта методика способствует повышению мотивации учеников к изучению английского языка и продуктивным видам речевой деятельности, развитию устной речи.

Вывявлено пути осуществления некоторых улучшений в системе профильного образования в Украине: внедрение обучения профильных предметов средствами английского языка; оптимизация педагогической подготовки; создание искусственной англоязычной среды путем трансляции оригинальных фильмов и программ.

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