

ARTICLES

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ANXIETY FACTORS OF STUDENTS' EMOTIONAL DISPOSITION TO PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Abstract. The article deals with the problem of the development of personality's psychological disposition to professional foreign languages communication. The present research aims to define the concept of personality's emotional and volitional disposition and reveal its essence and study the formation features of the above mentioned disposition of students of different specialties. The study focuses on the causes and dynamics of the students' emotional and volitional disposition to professional communication in foreign languages. Emotional disposition is viewed as personality's ability to adjust his/her behavior and activity in any professional situations by means of foreign language communication. The research results revealed certain difficulties, and therefore the students' negative experiences in foreign languages communication, which are determined by a high degree of speech fluency, difficulty in understanding spoken language and grasping the meaning of an utterance. The article introduces the reasons for the development of a special program to form students' emotional and volitional disposition to professional communication in foreign languages. The program is to contain a set of lessons, assignments and trainings aimed at developing the appropriate volitional qualities, psychic self-regulation skills of a personality.

Keywords: *psychological disposition, emotional and volitional disposition, anxiety factors, student, foreign languages, professional communication, development.*

Бучацька Світлана. Тривожність як фактор емоційної готовності студентів до професійного спілкування іноземними мовами

Анотація. У статті розглядаються проблеми розвитку психологічної готовності особистості до професійного спілкування іноземними мовами. Завданням дослідження є уточнити поняття «емоційно-вольова готовність особистості до професійного спілкування іноземними мовами» та розкрити її сутність, а також вивчити особливості формування згаданої готовності студентів різних спеціальностей. У статті особлива увага приділяється чинникам та динаміці розвитку у студентів емоційно-вольової готовності до професійного спілкування іноземними мовами. Емоційно-вольова готовність особистості розглядається як здатність особистості свідомо регулювати свою поведінку, дії в будь-яких ситуаціях професійного за змістом спілкування іноземною мовою. За результатами тестування виявлені певні труднощі, а відповідно і негативні переживання студентів при спілкуванні іноземними мовами, які зумовлені високим темпом мовлення, труднощами сприйняття усного мовлення, розумінням змісту сказаного, тощо. У статті обґрунтовано необхідність розробки спеціальної програми з формування емоційно-вольової готовності студентів до професійного спілкування іноземними мовами. Програма передбачає комплекс занять, вправ, тренінгів, спрямованих на розвиток необхідних особистості вольових якостей, навичок психічної саморегуляції.

Ключові слова: *психологічна готовність, емоційно-вольова готовність, фактори тривожності, студент, іноземні мови, професійне спілкування, розвиток.*

Бучацкая Светлана. Тревожность как фактор эмоциональной готовности студентов к профессиональному общению на иностранных языках

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются проблемы развития психологической готовности личности к профессиональному общению на иностранных языках. Задачей исследования является уточнить понятие «эмоционально-волевая готовность личности к профессиональному общению на иностранных языках» и раскрыть ее сущность, а также изучить особенности формирования упомянутой готовности студентов разных специальностей. В статье особое внимание уделяется факторам и динамике развития у студентов эмоционально-волевой готовности к профессиональному общению на иностранных языках. Эмоционально-волевая готовность личности рассматривается как способность личности сознательно регулировать свое поведение, действия в любых ситуациях профессионального по содержанию общения на иностранном языке. По результатам тестирования выявлены определенные трудности, а соответственно и негативные переживания студентов при общении на иностранных языках, обусловленные высоким темпом речи, проблемами восприятия устной речи и смысла сказанного. В статье обоснована необходимость разработки специальной программы по формированию эмоционально-волевой готовности студентов к профессиональному общению на иностранных языках. Программой предусмотрено комплекс занятий, упражнений, тренингов, направленных на развитие необходимых личностных волевых качеств, навыков психической саморегуляции.

Ключевые слова: *психологическая готовность, эмоционально-волевая готовность, факторы тревожности, студент, иностранные языки, профессиональное общение, развитие.*

Introduction

The overall practice of foreign languages teaching at higher educational institutions of Ukraine affirms that graduates have low foreign language proficiency, feel the lack of professional communication skills and have serious psychological barriers to discuss and exchange opinions and take professional decisions. Thus they display uncertainty being unable to control their emotions, anxiety and inability to function effectively in the professional situations they encounter. That is, the larger part of students are characterized by a low level of emotional and volitional disposition to professional communication in a foreign language.

The problem studied doesn't refer only to the formation of emotional disposition as an important component but also covers general personality's psychological disposition to professional communication in a foreign language. Emotional and volitional regulation of personality's learning strategy has been investigated in educational psychology by the number of Ukrainian psychologists including A. Bondarenko, O. Chebykin, N. Chepeleva, T. Yatsenko and others. The relationship between foreign language learning and language anxiety has been studied by P. MacIntyre, R. Gardner, E. Horwitz. However, studies of personality's emotional and volitional disposition to professional communication in foreign languages so far remained unresearched by scholars.

The present research aims to define the concept of personality's emotional and volitional disposition to professional communication in foreign languages and reveal its essence and study the formation features of the above mentioned disposition among students of different specialties. The study focuses on the causes and dynamics of the students' emotional and volitional disposition to professional communication in foreign languages.

Methods

A number of self-developed questionnaires and the adapted A. M. Prykhozhan's (Prykhozhan 1987) methodology to measure school pupils' anxiety were used within the study. The latter was applied to determine students' anxiety caused by foreign language learning and foreign language communication specificity (see Appendices A, B).

The study

Personality's emotional disposition to professional communication in foreign languages is one of the most important components of the psychological disposition model. Emotional disposition is viewed as personality's ability to adjust his/her behavior and activity in any professional situations by means of foreign language communication.

According to O. Pavlyk (2004) emotional states that occur in students in the process of foreign language acquisition are different in power, modality, direction and stability. Therefore to restrain and strengthen the above states can be realized through the development of volitional qualities. Mastering foreign languages is a challenging emotiogenic activity related to the constant overcoming difficulties, negative mental states (fear, anxiety etc). To reduce the above it is required to form future specialists' ability of emotional and mental self-regulation. The most common manifestations of negative emotional states in foreign languages learning and communication, as set by the study, are frustration, fear, anxiety, despondency, stress and others.

Among the factors to be focused at is anxiety which as personality's mental state often accompanies students' learning activity. Such a state is indicated by mental balance disorders, appearance of groundless threat and anxiety. The level of the above anxiety, which is mostly often so-called socio-situational anxiety of a personality, is defined by both the objective situation the student has occurred in and student's individual typological qualities.

Anxiety is investigated in terms of two perspectives: trait anxiety which is defined as anxiety on the level of fear and situation specific anxiety, on the other hand which can arise in situations of insufficient or contradictory information about the risks between the individual settings and the perception level of the situation. Anxiety on the level of fear is defined as individual's intention to establish anxiety causes and specific factors of dangerous situation (Gardner et al. 1997). The basis of fear is formed by complex instinctive mechanisms (self-preservation, defense) which therefore in terms of learning activity restrict some essential training speech operations and actions.

Another factor to be mentioned is frustration which as a mental condition becomes apparent more often in the case of a protracted conflict between personality's objectives and real opportunities to achieve them. Such difficulties are accompanied by strong emotional experience in university students and often occur as states of frustration, irritation, despair. These states may be caused by too high objectives as well as overestimated level of personality's claims in foreign language acquisition.

Discussion

In the previously conducted research (Buchatska 2008) the suggested structure of students’ psychological disposition to professional communication in foreign languages represents the unity and a high correlation between motivational, cognitive, operational and emotional dispositions. Within the structure the motivational disposition is considered to be a system of internal motives that enforce a person to learning professional language and using it in professional communication with others. Cognitive disposition is a system of personal knowledge of any foreign language: vocabulary, grammar competence, phonetics and others which is developed and improved in the learning process by enhancing student’s mental functions such as perception, thinking, memory and development of phonological listening abilities. Operational disposition is characterized by a system of speech abilities and skills, person’s ability to use obtained knowledge of the language in oral or written communication. Emotional component defines students’ ability to conscious regulation of their behavior and actions within professional foreign languages communication.

It has been reported that there is a high correlation between motivational, cognitive, operational and emotional dispositions (Buchatska 2008). It follows that such negative mental states of the individual as anxiety, fear, constraint, depression, etc. that occur in the process of students’ communication at foreign language lessons, substantially reduce the efficiency and effectiveness of the formation of their foreign language proficiency, acquiring abilities and skills. The above results were used to investigate the causes of students’ negative emotional states and anxiety at foreign language lessons, their content and features. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Determinants identifying students’ negative mental states in professional foreign language communication

Factors that cause students’ anxiety	Students Category				
	Philology	Economics	History	Physics and Mathematics	Psychologists
The lack of vocabulary	65,7	48,5	59,5	50,0	55,0
Inability to speak a foreign language	42,9	33,3	35,7	37,8	30,0
High fluency in foreign languages communication	5,7	9,1	19,0	21,6	30,0
Difficulty in transition from native language to foreign	17,1	21,2	14,3	16,2	20,0
Failure to understand other language appropriately	8,6	9,1	14,3	16,2	25,0
Other factors	5,7	0	0	0	0

The results show that foreign language anxiety is characteristic of 62.2 % of the students. Those showing enthusiasm and pleasure of foreign language learning constitute only 12.2 %; interest, cognitive concern –64.4 % of respondents; enchainment, timidity –17.6 %, fear –5.9 %, indifference –4.3 %, despondency – 3.7 %. The data suggest that even a number of students with a fairly high level of cognitive concern to foreign languages learning, experience negative emotional states, which therefore result in dissatisfaction with their needs in learning, low effectiveness of mastering other languages.

Negative emotional states in students within their foreign language communication are caused by both objective and subjective factors. The most important of them are presented in Table 1.

It was also established that students are sufficiently aware of their problems in learning and communicating in a foreign language, they are trying to find solutions. More than every other student experiences strong negative emotions because of insufficient vocabulary or lack of it therefore they have low foreign language proficiency. This feature is characteristic of students representing different specialities and areas of training. The second place is occupied by students' negative mental states caused by the lack of essential skills and abilities to use vocabulary and knowledge in a live professional communication in foreign language. The above problem was manifested by every third student.

In our opinion, the number of such students would greatly increase if professional communication in a foreign language at the university would be carried out by native speakers, professionals from other countries. This may be explained by the fact that philology students, who are involved in the process of communication which is the basis of their professional activity, the percentage of those who admit that their negative mental states are caused by insufficient vocabulary and knowledge is higher than of the representatives of other specialties. They suffer more frequently than students of other specialties from negative language interference. This is caused by the situation when substantial native language learning may suppress successful mastering of a second (foreign) language.

Certain difficulties, as stated by S. Teteruk (2006), and therefore the students' negative experiences in foreign languages communication, are determined by a high degree of speech fluency, difficulty in understanding spoken language and grasping the meaning of an utterance.

As the conducted correlation analysis showed, the failure to understand a foreign language speaker adequately, is mainly related to the lack of vocabulary and low skills in expressing opinions. Scientific and practical research aimed to study the display of negative mental states in undergraduate students within their foreign languages communication. It has been conducted on the basis of the study of language anxiety dynamics and is presented in Tables 2, 3, 4.

Table 2

Students' anxiety caused by foreign language acquisition

Year of study	Students' anxiety levels (%)		
	High	Medium	Low
First	10.0	58.0	32.0
Second	17.2	55.2	27.6
Third	26.5	47.1	26.4
Fourth	37.5	41.7	20.8

Table 3

Students' anxiety caused by foreign language communication

Year of study	Students' anxiety levels (%)		
	High	Medium	Low
First	12.0	54.0	34.0
Second	10.3	51.7	38.0
Third	23.5	58.8	17.7
Fourth	29.2	58.3	12.5

Table 4

Students' anxiety caused by negative evaluation of foreign language abilities

Year of study	Students' anxiety levels (%)		
	High	Medium	Low
First	12.0	66.0	22.0
Second	13.8	44.8	41.4
Third	29.4	61.8	9.8
Fourth	29.2	50.0	20.8

Results

On the whole students' anxiety can be caused by many factors. In our experiment we have identified three of the most typical ones, namely "anxiety caused by foreign language acquisition", "anxiety determined by foreign language communication" and "anxiety, which is caused by negative evaluation of language abilities by other students.

Each of these types of anxiety are represented in tables 2.1-2.3 respectively. The identified students' anxiety types are mainly caused by terms and content of previous language training and education. According to Table 2.1, a slight increase

in anxiety level of second year students, comparing with those of the first year, is probably caused by complexity of the assignments they perform in the foreign languages classes: considerably increased requirements to grammar competence, improvement of speech fluency, foreign language teachers' demands on the development of students' writing skills, etc. The similar anxiety increase is caused by the process of foreign languages communication.

It should be noted that completion of foreign language learning, according to the curriculum of most specialties and non-use of it in further educational process and communication during the third and fourth years lead to increasing of students' anxiety level in the situations of occasional foreign language use. Gradual loss of communication skills of the third and fourth year students since professional language is not used in the learning process has a negative effect not only on foreign language, but also on students' special training. Therefore curricula and foreign language syllabi need to be seriously reviewed to improve students' continuous foreign languages training and professional communication throughout their period of study at the university.

As seen from the above tables, almost 3/4 of students suffer high and medium anxiety levels in foreign languages learning and communication. It has been established that a high anxiety level that students experience affects not only their success of foreign languages training, but also other disciplines. The prolonged manifestation of being anxious can transform into persistent negative personality's trait defined as anxiety. The latter usually leads not only to mental disorders, but may result in psychosomatic diseases of students.

The results of students' testing allowed to conclude that in the foreign languages learning in the first and second years no significant changes in students' anxiety can be traced. Anxiety increases mostly because of assignments' complexity in the second year, that is, as can be seen from Table 2.1, not related to foreign languages communication, speech skills evaluation but rather to the actual content and learning process.

In addition, we have found out that students' involvement in foreign languages learning and their language practice improvement significantly reduce anxiety, excitation and self-distrust. According to a survey 50.6% of students admitted the fact.

It was also discovered that students feel better and communicate more effectively in situations when their speech abilities are not evaluated by others (as 55 % stated), when they are not laughed at (30 %). The students agreed that foreign languages communication can be effective only in case when they are psychologically disposed to it (22.5 % of the respondents supported this idea).

The results of students questionnaire constituted that 33.3 % of them believe that in foreign languages communication they are required to form skills and abilities of psychic self-regulation, manage their feelings and emotions through the will, special methods and techniques. Almost 45 % of students are convinced that these skills are not completely acquired therefore they need the help of psychologists. Thus, it can be concluded that about 75 % of students claimed about the problems connected with the control, self-regulation of their own negative

emotions, feelings while communicating with foreigners and at foreign language lessons.

Conclusions

The above analysis requires the development of a special program to form students' emotional and volitional disposition to professional communication in foreign languages. Such a program should include a set of lessons, assignments and trainings aimed at developing the appropriate volitional qualities, psychic self-regulation skills of a personality.

Thus we can conclude that by the results of stating experiment we have revealed the problems of the development of students' emotional and volitional disposition to communication in foreign languages and it points to the necessity of finding psychological and pedagogical means of educational process improvement.

Appendix A

Questionnaire to identify the level of students' emotional and volitional disposition to professional communication in foreign languages

1. Do you get anxious and worried when communicating in a foreign language?
a) yes b) no.
2. Why do you think you get anxious in professional foreign language communication?
a) the lack of foreign vocabulary and professional notions,
b) the lack of skills to build grammatically correct sentences and express opinions,
c) fail to follow the speech fluency,
d) it takes much time to formulate opinion in native and then transform it into foreign language,
e) difficult to understand a foreign speaker's questions and his opinion,
f) other variants (write).
3. Point out which of the measures given below would help to improve your confidence in foreign language communication.
a) if I spoke a foreign language to someone on a regular basis,
b) if meetings with foreigners were often held,
c) it required to go self-improving in foreign languages,
d) if there were much more strict demands from foreign language teachers,
e) if they were extraclass activities, special workshops and clubs in foreign languages,
f) other (add).
4. In foreign languages learning your anxiety of communicating in foreign languages:
a) increased, b) decreased, c) has not changed.
5. What feelings and emotions are common and frequent to you at foreign language classes?
a) joy, satisfaction, b) interest, c) apathy, d) enchainment, e) depression, f) fear g) other (write).
6. You better communicate with a foreign language speaker when...
a) there are no other people, b) when your foreign language abilities are not evaluated, c) when your foreign language abilities are not laughed at, d) you are psychologically disposed to such communication, e) other variants (write).
7. In foreign language communication you feel the lack of abilities and skills of psychic self-regulation (self-control, etc.):
a) yes, I really feel the lack of them, b) they have not been formed, c) I can manage my emotions and never lose self-control in foreign languages communication.

Appendix B

Methodology aimed at revealing students' anxiety caused by foreign language acquisition

Below are the situations you often face. Some of them may be unpleasant for you and cause some emotions of anxiety and fear.

Please read each sentence and put down numbers 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, depending on the anxiety caused by either of the situation.

- If the situation does not cause any anxiety – put down number 0.
- If you are slightly worried – number 1.
- If the situation is quite alarming, disturbs you – put down number 2.
- If the situation mentioned is quite unpleasant for you – number 3 or 4.

Your task is to imagine every situation clearly and frankly put down the appropriate number.

I get anxious and worried:

1. When speak foreign language to others.
2. When it is necessary to make the text in a foreign language.
3. When doing grammar exercises in a foreign language.
4. When I have to interact and respond in a foreign language in front of group students.
5. When I have to speak a foreign language fluently.
6. When I am afraid of negative evaluation in a foreign language.
7. When someone evaluates my foreign language abilities.
8. When I feel the lack of words in foreign language communication and hear my group students' laughter.
9. When I have to respond in front of my group at foreign language lessons.
10. When you assess the level of your knowledge and skills in a foreign language by yourself.
11. When you must write an essay in a foreign language.
12. When your abilities and skills in a foreign language are evaluated by your groupmates.
13. When you have to translate from Ukrainian into a foreign language.
14. When you need to communicate with native speakers in their own language.
15. When your foreign language skills are assessed by native speakers.

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