

Communicative-Linguistic Barriers In English Language Training Of Students At Higher Educational Institutions: Psychological Factors And Solutions

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Abstract

The article reveals the essence, content and structure of the concept of "communicative-linguistic barriers" in the context of modern higher education on the basis of the psychological and pedagogical literature analysis, identifies psychological and socio-cultural components, determinates the reasons, causing discomfort of students in the ELT classroom, defines the psychological conditions and conditions for the teacher's activity, necessary for the successful overcoming of psychological barriers by students. The language barrier is a serious obstacle for establishing efficient business cooperation and human relations. The study demonstrates the existence of different kinds of language difficulties in communication that actually negatively affect students' emotional state and cause the unwillingness to learn and use a foreign language as a way of communicating with non-native speakers. The paper offers solutions to enhance students' motivation for learning a foreign language and create favorable conditions for developing students' communication skills and understanding how foreign language learning can be beneficial for them.

Kommunikativ-sprachliche Barrieren bei der Englischausbildung von Studenten an der Hochschuleinrichtungen: Psychologische Faktoren und Lösungen

Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel zeigt das Wesen, den Inhalt und die Struktur des Konzepts der "kommunikativ-sprachlichen Barrieren" im Kontext der modernen Hochschulbildung auf der Grundlage der psychologischen und pädagogischen Literaturanalyse auf, identifiziert psychologische und soziokulturelle Komponenten, ermittelt die Ursachen, verursacht Beschwerden von Schülern im ELT-Klassenzimmer, definiert die psychologischen Bedingungen und Bedingungen für die Aktivität des Lehrers, die für die erfolgreiche Überwindung psychologischer Barrieren durch Schüler erforderlich sind. Die Sprachbarriere ist ein ernstes Hindernis für den Aufbau einer effizienten geschäftlichen Zusammenarbeit und menschlicher Beziehungen. Die Studie zeigt, dass es in der Kommunikation verschiedene Arten von Sprachschwierigkeiten gibt, die sich negativ auf den emotionalen Zustand der Schüler auswirken und die mangelnde Bereitschaft zum Erlernen und Verwenden einer Fremdsprache für die Kommunikation mit Nicht-Muttersprachlern verursachen. Der Artikel bietet Lösungen, um die Motivation der Schüler zum Erlernen einer Fremdsprache zu verbessern und günstige Bedingungen für die Entwicklung der Kommunikationsfähigkeiten der Schüler zu schaffen und zu verstehen, wie das Erlernen von Fremdsprachen für sie von Vorteil sein kann.

Keywords:
Psychological Barrier

Schlüsselwörter:
Psychologische Barriere

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Language Competence
 Communicative-Linguistic Barrier
 motivation
 communication skills

Sprachkompetenz
 Kommunikativ-Sprachliche Barriere
 Motivation
 Kommunikationsfähigkeit

Formulation of the problem. The global changes that have taken place in Ukraine over the past few years require a reform of the education system at all levels. This primarily concerns higher education, because it provides the society with highly professional specialists in various areas. Ukrainian higher education should contribute to ensuring the participation of our state in the formation of the Western European educational space, and the expansion of cooperation with other states as regards education. Modern higher education is intended to provide students with not only theoretical knowledge but also to teach them to accomplish tasks in practice, in specific professional, business, scientific areas according to the characteristics of professional thinking.

Professional communication requires good foreign language skills, since it contributes to the international mobility of students and is a key element for the successful career.

Important building blocks related to professional communication of future specialists are knowledge of foreign languages, promoting students' mobility in the international educational space and are the cornerstone of successful future career. Thanks to foreign language-proficiency, specialists have the opportunity to share experiences and challenges, to benefit from demonstrated best practices to pool resources, to seek or to receive and consider information from foreign scientific and academic sources.

Analysis of the latest research works. The foreign language training process in the system education is complex and multifaceted. There is increasing emphasis on oral communications skills as listening and speaking in modern curricula of higher educational establishments as it will ensure the success of fully-fledged international contacts in science, technology and in all spheres of social life. There are, however, a number of problems, affecting the intensive mastery of the foreign language by students. Gaining sufficient language knowledge and skills, a student is not always able to put them into practice: to be proficient in reading comprehension and speaking on given topics, maintaining dialogues. Some psychological blocks, related to students' being prepared to learn and apply foreign language, their abilities to cope with stereotyped attitudes and clear grasp of their capacities, may prevent the effectiveness of learning process at all levels. Many studies have focused on psychological characteristics of foreign language learning by students of high school. Fundamental works belong to such teachers and psychologists as I. M. Berman, I. L. Bim, M.A. Davydova, I. A. Zimnyaya, G. A. Kitajgorodskaya, A. A. Leont'ev, M. V. Lyahovickij, B.V. Belyaev, V. A. Artemov, B. A. Benediktov, A. A. Alhazishvili, E. P. Shubin, E. I. Passov, V. G. Tylec, V. L. Skalkin, Z. I. Klychnikova, G. M. Burdenyuk, and O. P. Kryukovaaddress.

Such a psychological problem, which is generally called "psychological barriers" in science, has been studied by many foreign and Ukrainian researchers. Psychological barriers are also the subject of the study for the following contemporary authors: E. V. Andrienko, Y. I. Atvater, I. A. Zimnyaya, A. A. Leont'ev, A. K. Markova, V. M. Celujko, E. V. Tsukanova.

A great number of scientists from European countries in the area of teaching methodology and psychology, for example J. Henderson, C. Rogers, E. Nosenko, E. Dadayan, A. Maslow, L. Litvinova, N. Yakovleva, J. and L. Soars, highlight that the efficiency of foreign language learning considerably depends on not only the student's psychological readiness or self-interest to learn and apply a foreign language on a practical level but also their will to believe in their own competence to speak a foreign language. If a student hesitates to use a foreign language, it is because of "communication barriers of both linguistic and psychological origin" [2, p.41-43]. According to the researches, the main goal for teachers of a foreign language is to understand the relationship between students, their motivation and attitude toward foreign language learning and both psychological and sociological context in which this language is learned. The awareness of the necessity to modify teaching approaches has beneficial impact on students' communicative competence development.

Extensive research projects on the language barrier problem have been carried out by highly competent foreign and Ukrainian experts in the area of teaching methodology and psychology, demonstrating the greatest significance of this issue for teachers and scientists all over the world. These studies attested to the fact that it is first necessary to take into consideration students' psychological characteristics and psychological conditions of teaching and training activity. Considering all these components, teachers of English will be able to assist their students in overcoming language barriers, easing exchange of information and effective communication.

The literature overview assures that the issues relevant to forecasting, preventing and eliminating of the psychological barriers and acquiring efficient technologies which ensure successful foreign language learning at higher educational establishment require further research.

The aim of this article is to disclose what language barriers EFL (English foreign language) students have and suggest the ways to prevent and eliminate these barriers. The work provides a brief description of techniques and methods, which appeared to be helpful in seeking to overcome difficulties in learning, applying in practice the foreign language by future specialists. The article focuses upon showing the influence of language barriers on the process of foreign language learning and communication skills development in particular. The study highlights the pivotal role of students' psychological state and positive attitude towards the training process for achieving successful results in foreign language mastering and thereby expanding areas of synergy.

Presentation of the main material. In the learning process of a foreign language, it is necessary not only to give students a firm grounding in basic essential foreign language learning skills, but also to develop communicative flexibility, proficiency of cognitive processes, psychological tranquillity and emotional inclusion in training process. The signs of increasing effectiveness and efficiency of academic activity of students include their abilities to cope with unforeseen circumstances as well as difficulties, resulting in the process of achieving educational purposes. As a rule, impediments which can neutralize effectiveness of foreign language learning in higher education are psychological barriers, scientists consider them as a mental state, hampering students' mental processes, by preventing them from demonstrating their potential, applying the new knowledge and skills acquired. Mental states, which are integrated structures consisting of various thoughts, emotions, motives and others, cause psychological barriers, adversely affecting the achievement of students, in particular, effective learning of a foreign language at higher educational establishments. Due to high anxiety, fear of failure, insufficient self-esteem, the students experience difficulties in the process of autonomous decision-making, sharply respond to unforeseen developments, cannot communicate in a meaningful way, to manage collaboration, conflict and coordination for productive ends [2, p. 6].

In the process of academic activity, students may show the state, which rendered it unable to prove themselves completely as individuals; hindered initiative, which is implemented not only in intellectual arena but also in practice; prevented creative self-expression, which is reflected in frustration and disappointment with the training process as well as loss of productivity and efficiency of vocational training. Some researchers define the concept "psychological barrier" as "a psychological state, manifesting in inappropriate inaction, blocking the implementation of certain operations" [1, p. 90]. Psychological barrier is a negative emotional experience in a particular situation. A student has an unfavourable failure of foreign language learning process. Within the psychological context, the concept "language barrier" in the foreign language learning process is considered as a "person's inability to apply foreign language knowledge gained in the process of communication" [4, c. 85].

The researchers identify some components of communicative-language barriers:

1. The first component is expressed in students' behaviour. They cannot or can barely comprehend and react to a communicator spontaneously, even if they have necessary linguistic means [4, c. 85].

2. High emotional tension of students is another important factor language constraint. This may be reflected in the fact exactly what lexical units are applied by students and how they build phrases (grammar shapelessness of verbal planning), consequently, language becomes stereotyping, vocabulary becomes monotonous, logic nature and development of certain statements are disrupted, and consequently there are misunderstandings between communicants [6, c. 139].

3. Students can sense fear to express their opinion in a foreign language incorrectly. The subjects of such concerns are impossibility of purposes of communication process and solution of certain problems, and besides, possible decline in their status because of errors committed [3, c. 98].

4. Learning process of a foreign language is based not only on external motivation of students (driven by their needs to pass a test or an exam, to get a job, requiring English proficiency and so on) but also on internal motivation of students (which is associated with the development of students' personal values (enhancing the social status and self-esteem, opening up new prospects for their career development, expansion of an outlook and an increase of the cultural level, meaningful communication and so on), which appear under the influence of social values [6, p. 132].

Some researchers highlight sociocultural components of communicative-linguistic barriers. Determining intercultural barriers in the process of communication, they propose their following features:

1. "Natural ethnocentrism" of students is promoted as a key contribution to the emergence of intercultural barriers, since students from the viewpoint of their own culture perceive other culture. It is therefore

considered that intercultural communication can hardly develop independently; it should be trained on purpose [8, p. 136].

2. According to the theory of the Institute for Research on Intercultural Cooperation (Geert Hofstede), the main reasons for cross-cultural differences determination are individualism, power distance, gender perspective, attitude toward definiteness and continuity of focus on relationships and activities [9, p. 131].

3. In addition to separating function, intercultural barriers serve as the adjustment components. Constructive function of intercultural barriers is primarily to maintain national identity in the present context of globalization and to improve interest in a foreign culture, as disequilibrium of cognitive object is generally existed, in case there is no interference [7, p. 204].

In the learning process an intercultural barrier is most likely to be sparked by the imbalance in the levels of students' psychological readiness and requirements of higher education curriculum, students' inability to achieve their training goals. Successful educational activity of a student is dependent on his/her attitude to training process, his/her motives; some difficulties that he/she might face in the learning process. The discrepancy between the need for foreign-language knowledge and insufficient leadership of students of technical institution forces teachers to find new and more efficient techniques and methods to overcome the psychological barriers.

As a general matter, the reasons for an uncomfortable condition of science and engineering students at English classes dominate the following items: insufficient cognitive motivation, lack of preparation for autonomous learning activities, shortage of self-monitoring and self-examination skills, unsatisfactory organization of the learning process, presence of cultural and ethnic stereotypes, difficulties encountered in the adaptation process and social communication. Students can demonstrate insufficient self-control and lack of imagination, imperfection of mental and cognitive processes, low self-esteem, there is a shortage of foreign-language knowledge, skills and abilities. Communicative-linguistic barriers are created when certain character traits are present, including impulsivity and emotional changeableness; students can express the lack of confidence and hesitation associated with the fear of failure in the face of a teacher or other students. If they have to be undertaken in communication with a communicator, who has a higher level of English language proficiency, they may feel discomfort and inability to take advantage of the skills learned in communicative situations.

Objective and timely assessment of the general mood of an academic group or mental state of an individual student will prevent and eliminate the psychological barriers. Specific mental processes have a direct bearing on the emergence of any form of a mental state, they manifest as a reflection of the external and internal environments, affecting the personality. Character of an individual's psychological condition (acceptable, stressful, depressed) depends upon his/her inner state, the environmental impact and his/her specific needs [5, p. 5].

Some psychological conditions, needed to be created in English classes in higher technical educational institutions with the aim to successfully overcome the psychological barriers, arising during the learning process, can be highlighted, including the following:

- Intensification of cognitive and practical activities, based on the defined preference of students, their interests and abilities.
- Manifestation of self-reflection as a factor of academic factor in the training process.
- Overcoming the discomfort in English language classes, building of a new social partnership in institutions of technical higher education.

Based on the review of psychological and educational works, the conditions for language teachers' activities, which provide an enabling environment for overcoming communicative-linguistic barriers of engineering students, can be defined as follows:

- to organize successful experiences which can make students play an active role in the training process;
- to take into consideration the interests of students in the process of defining the subject matter and different forms of presentations, reference papers or projects;
- not to make students respond immediately;
- to engage students in participation in various forms of creative activity;
- to prepare individual curricula, individual programmes and individual methods of teaching, considering different work pace, personal characteristics of students;
- to carry out a detailed analysis of creative works of students;
- to implement challenging situations in the training process;
- to organize courses as a discussion;

- to support and encourage students by extra credits for studying additional training information independently and to implement more complex tasks;
- to motivate students to take part in conferences, discussions, competitions.

Conclusions and perspectives of further research. Thus, based on the principles outlined above, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. A communicative-linguistic barrier consists of two components: individual psychological, related to specific characteristics of a communicator, and sociocultural, related to specific features of communicative-language environment. They have various causes - «fear of communication» and «ingenerate ethnocentrism» formed on the basis of different elements, defined as «emotional discomfort» and «adjusting to different languages and cultures» and have disparate roles (deconstructive and controlling), but in practice they must be seen as a whole. In the process of communication, communicative-linguistic barrier consists of individual psychological and sociocultural elements, but their proportion is probably different. For instance, in English class sociocultural component is present in small quantities, could take a latent form as a conceptual block. In the training process, for example, in a foreign university sociocultural barrier plays a key role.

2. Individual psychological component of communicative-linguistic barrier can be explained by the following factors:

- unsatisfactory level of general education of students, which is expressed above all in their lack of overall development (inadequate independent thinking, poor vocabulary, low erudition) as well as the inability to express themselves clearly in their native language, inactive oral speech and strong skills of writing, etc.);
- certain natural mental capacity of students, that prevents them from learning English efficiently;
- poor motivation of students not only in the learning process of English but also in prospects for its further application in future professional activities.

The definition of the nature, structure and causes of communicative-linguistic barriers of students studying at higher education establishments in the training process of English is a prerequisite to create conditions for overcoming these barriers in the educational process. All of the foregoing allows us to adapt the positive experience of overcoming communicative-linguistic barriers for effective English learning in higher educational institutions of Ukraine. These issues should be promising in further research.

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