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## TO THE ISSUE OF FUTURE MANAGERS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING

**Abstract.** In the paper we have examined the current state and analyzed the features of future managers' foreign language training in the People's Republic of China. It has been substantiated that the rapid economic growth of this country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the significant strengthening of its business partnerships with various countries of the world have led to a significant demand for specialists in the economic sector with a high level of foreign language proficiency. Therefore, a foreign language, usually English, is perceived by university students as an integral part of their professional education.

We have ascertained that teaching a foreign language to students of economic specialties, in general, and to future managers, in particular, has its own features, determined both by the specifics of the field and modern teaching conditions. Creating appropriate organizational and pedagogical conditions in the learning process, such as professional orientation and digitalization of foreign language training can greatly contribute to increasing the productivity of future managers' foreign language teaching.

The implementation of the first condition is based on the principles of competency-based and communicative approaches. We have detected that the study of English by future managers in Chinese universities consists of three stages, namely: 1) a course in everyday language communication; 2) a course in business language communication; 3) a course in professional language communication.

Teaching professional discourse includes the selection of universal language tools; professionally oriented teaching of the specialty's conceptual apparatus; modeling professionally relevant communicative tasks. Professionalization of future managers' training of foreign language communication is ensured by such elements as thematic composition, terminological composition, and lexical minimum for each thematic section.

Bringing into practice the second pedagogical condition – the digitalization of foreign language education – allows for the creation of unique opportunities for personalized and accessible language learning. We have considered the most widespread areas of modern digital technologies integration into the language training

process of future managers in the PRC, including virtual reality technologies and artificial intelligence.

The prospects for the development of higher education, including foreign language training, in China are connected with the introduction of an innovative “social method” and a more effective endonormative model of teaching a foreign language, taking into account the peculiarities of its acquisition in the Chinese-speaking linguistic and cultural space, which allows students to master English without losing their national identity.

We think that the creatively rethought pedagogically valuable experience of Chinese universities in teaching foreign languages can be introduced into the Ukrainian system of future managers’ foreign language training.

**Keywords:** the PRC, higher economic education, foreign language training, managers, organizational and pedagogical conditions, competency-based approach.

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## ДО ПИТАННЯ ІНШОМОВНОЇ ПІДГОТОВКИ МАЙБУТНІХ МЕНЕДЖЕРІВ

**Анотація.** У статті розглянуто сучасний стан та проаналізовано особливості іншомовної підготовки майбутніх менеджерів у КНР. Обґрунтовано, що стрімке економічне зростання Китаю у XXI столітті та значне зміцнення ділового партнерства КНР з різними країнами світу зумовило значний попит на фахівців економічної галузі з високим рівнем іншомовних знань, умінь та навичок. Тому іноземна мова, зазвичай англійська, сприймається здобувачами як невід’ємна складова їхньої професійної освіти.

Встановлено, що викладання іноземної мови студентам економічних спеціальностей, і зокрема майбутнім менеджерам, має свої особливості, зумовлені як специфікою галузі, так і сучасними умовами викладання. Успішному вирішенню завдань щодо ефективної іншомовної підготовки майбутніх менеджерів сприяє створення в процесі навчання відповідних організаційно-педагогічних умов, зокрема: професійна спрямованість навчання іноземних мов та цифровізація іншомовної освіти.

Реалізація першої педумови ґрунтується на засадах компетентнісного та комунікативного підходів.

З’ясовано, що вивчення англійської мови майбутніми менеджерами в китайському ЗВО передбачає три етапи, а саме: 1) курс мови повсякденного спілкування; 2) курс мови ділового спілкування; 3) курс мови професійного спілкування.

Навчання професійного дискурсу включає добір універсальних мовних засобів; професійно орієнтоване навчання поняттєвого апарату спеціальності; моделювання професійно значущих комунікативних завдань. Професіоналізація навчання майбутніх менеджерів іншомовного спілкування забезпечується за рахунок таких елементів, як тематичний склад, термінологічний склад, лексичний мінімум для кожного тематичного розділу.

Реалізація другої педагогічної умови – цифровізація іншомовної освіти – дозволяє створити унікальні можливості для персоналізованого та доступного навчання мов.

Розглянуто найбільш розповсюджені в КНР напрями інтеграції сучасних цифрових технологій у процес мовної підготовки майбутніх менеджерів, серед яких: технології віртуальної реальності та штучний інтелект.

Перспективи розвитку вищої, у тому числі й іншомовної освіти, в Китаї пов'язані з упровадженням інноваційного «соціального методу» та більш ефективної ендонормативної моделі викладання іноземної мови з урахуванням особливостей її засвоєння в китайськомовному лінгвокультурному просторі, що дозволяє здобувачам оволодіти англійською мовою, не втрачаючи своєї національної ідентичності.

Вважаємо, що творчо переосмислений педагогічно цінний досвід університетів Китаю щодо навчання іноземних мов може бути впроваджений у вітчизняну систему іншомовної підготовки майбутніх менеджерів.

**Ключові слова:** КНР, вища економічна освіта, іншомовна підготовка, менеджери, організаційно-педагогічні умови, компетентнісний підхід.

**Problem statement.** Rapid economic growth of China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century causes great interest to this country. In 2014, it was declared the second largest economy in the world. One of the directions of Deng Xiaoping's reform program and the key factor influencing the People's Republic of China's economic progress was the education system modernization. The government consistently and systematically takes measures to optimize higher education and ensure its competitiveness in the global market of educational services.

Increasing integration processes into the world community, trade and economic relations as well as strengthening of the PRC's business partnerships with other countries have led not only to changes in the requirements for the personal and business qualities of managers, but also to higher demands for foreign language proficiency. Students of economic universities in the PRC consider English as an integral part of their professional education, since a good command of it is a prerequisite for success in their future career.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Issues concerning the organization of future managers' foreign language training are in focus both among Ukrainian (V. Berezhna, Yu. Deiak, O. Melnyk, V. Shpak) and foreign (T. Hutchison, P. Lengrand, H. B. Long, P. Robinson, A. Waters) researchers.

A large number of works by modern scientists are devoted to various aspects of learning and teaching a professionally oriented foreign language.

In particular, the problem of integrating business English into the future managers' training is reflected in the publications by K. Baisha, T. Les, N. Stetsenko; the peculiarities of forming foreign language communicative competence as a crucial component of their instruction are considered by D. Beheka, M. Kovbatiuk, R. Kravets, K. Taranenko, V. Shevchuk; the development of managerial skills in students who are able to organize an effective foreign language communication process in their professional sphere (S. Bodnar, L. Maksymenko).

Ukrainian scholars take an in-depth look at the experience of other countries in foreign language training of students (S. Virotschenko, E. Isakova, Yu. Lakhmotova, Yu. Lushchyk, O. Maksymenko, Yu. Shevchenko), including those majoring in economic specialties (O. Kulazhenko, O. Maksymenko, T. Mykal, S. Redko, K. Tsytsiura).

Chinese academics have also greatly contributed to the problem of teaching university students foreign languages. For example, Rao Z. has carried out a retrospective analysis of teaching English as a foreign language; Hu G., Lei C., Zhu Qi., Zhang H. have considered the current state of foreign language education in China based on a critical analysis of foreign languages; Wang Sh., Hu W., Yang L. have outlined the ways of developing linguistic education in the PRC.

Nevertheless, despite a wide variety of publications by modern scientists in the field of foreign language training of university students, there is still a lack of research on the issues related to teaching a career oriented foreign language to future managers at universities in China, as an important component of the further PRC's getting into the global economic space.

**The purpose of the article** is to analyze the current state, as well as consider the features and distinctive features of future managers' English language training in the PRC.

**Presentation of the main material.** Today, the PRC dominates global political and economic processes, as well as intercultural interactions. Therefore, learning foreign languages is encouraged and language proficiency is a key to success in the labor market and rapid career advancement. In modern China, the number of those learning and speaking English makes up 400 million people, which exceeds the total population of countries where English is the native language [1, p. 13]. Furthermore, there are over 1 million English teachers in China. According to British Council statistics, the English language teaching market was valued at \$12.3 billion as far back as in 2016 [2]. At the same time, China cannot boast of a high level of English proficiency among university students. One of the reasons for this is the incorrect priority setting in learning process, namely, teachers constantly train students for English language exams, which are held twice a year. The most important tests for university students are CET4 and CET6 (College English Test), which were developed and launched by the Ministry of Education of the PRC as long ago as in 1987.

This test consists of 80% short written tasks and 20% listening. It evaluates vocabulary and interpreting skills. Therefore, one can successfully complete the exam only by memorizing the necessary words and understanding grammar rules. In so doing, teachers do not pay due attention to speaking and correct pronunciation – the main challenge that Chinese students face when learning English.

As a result, in practice, students, who succeeded in the exam, lack the skills to be fully engaged in a real dialogue with native speakers. Most of Chinese university graduates have certain difficulties when applying for jobs in international companies, while studying at foreign universities, during job interviews and presenting the results of their scientific research at international conferences, as well as in communicating with foreign colleagues [3, p. 17].

The Chinese government is consistently and systematically taking measures to optimize higher foreign language education and ensure its competitiveness in the global market of educational services. The government officially supports citizens' interest in learning foreign languages. Experts at Chinese Ministry of Education believe that the most important and pressing goals, that teachers-linguists currently face, are as follows:

- improving the quality of education for foreign language specialists;
- developing their practical skills;
- expanding their range of activities [4, p. 21].

We can illustrate the level of English language teaching by the educational programs at University of International Business and Economics (UIBE), located in Beijing. This university is recognized by the Chinese government and Ministry of Education as a leading university in most academic programs. This university offers such courses in English for undergraduates as Economics, International Trade, Finance and Logistics; and for master's students – Applied Economics, International Business, and MBA.

At present, the system of English language training has various professional focus areas. It is obvious that teaching a foreign language to students majoring in Economics, and particularly to future managers, has its own unique features, stipulated by both the specifics of the field and modern teaching conditions, characterized by the widespread use of practice-oriented and information-communication technologies, as well as by high demands on the quality of English language instruction. The tasks of future managers' effective foreign language training can be successfully solved through the creation and implementation of appropriate organizational and pedagogical conditions in the learning process.

The first condition – the professional focus of foreign language teaching – is determined by using the potential of the “ESL” discipline to enable students to acquire career relevant knowledge and skills. Taking into account the goals and objectives of foreign language teaching Management students in China, we can sort out the key methodological approaches that underlie the implementation of this pedagogical condition.

The competency-based approach strengthens the practical focus of foreign language teaching and emphasizes the need to gain experience in foreign language activities and the ability to apply language knowledge in practice. The competency-based approach aims to:

- develop free and creative thinking among those directly involved in the learning process;
- enrich knowledge and skills that prepare university graduates for social life;
- foster autonomous information acquisition and develop leadership qualities.

The competency-based approach acts as a link between employers and the educational process. Thus, in accordance with the National Program for the Reform and Development of Higher Education, regulatory documents, among the main strategic goals that determined the education sector development, indicated the need to provide the rapidly developing Chinese economy with highly qualified personnel and to improve the quality of specialist training by constant expanding the interconnection of education, economy and industry [5].

It was proposed to strengthen the integration between production, business, education and scientific research. Such cooperation of economic educational institutions with transnational and international corporations, for example, such as Philips, became an impetus for stimulating the motivation of students, including those majoring in Economics, to study English in depth.

It is important to say that Chinese education system is mainly based on a knowledge-based paradigm. The ability to memorize large volumes of learning information and mindlessly repeat material several times over, including learning foreign languages, is highly appreciated. All assignments, including exams, are completed in written form. After checking current tasks, students correct mistakes, usually under the teacher's supervision.

Written work is the primary form of assessment not only in Chinese schools but also in universities. Practical classes consist of numerous written exercises focused on practicing new grammar skills, rather than concentrating on using grammatical structures in spoken language. The usual and traditional algorithm for Chinese teachers normally sticks to the traditional algorithm of presenting the learning material to students, namely:

- 1) New material (grammar, vocabulary, speech structures) is generalized in the form of models, diagrams, and tables.
- 2) Information must be visualized with mandatory comments and explanations.
- 3) All material must be provided verbally in class (in off- or online mode).
- 4) Important information must be duplicated in writing and sent to students for analysis and memorization.

Such method of presenting educational material is widely applied because the use of hieroglyphic writing has led the Chinese to a specific, symbolic mental process. That is why, when working with students, teachers take full advantage of all forms of visual aids. If a Chinese student is unable to see, visualize, or imagine something,

he/she understands it either poorly or cannot comprehend at all. Another feature of Chinese university education is the authoritarian style of communication with students, which usually results in a persistent fear of any teacher. There is even an expression, “师道尊严” (dignity of teachers), which refers to the teacher’s unquestionable and absolute dominance and blind worship of his/her personality.

Teacher-student interaction is based on such principles as

- 1) Emotional restraint;
- 2) Respect for hierarchy (the teacher’s indisputable authority);
- 3) Students’ “saving face” (for every Chinese citizen, the key principle of communication is the rule of saving face for yourself and your interlocutor. “Face” is a synonym for “honor”);
- 4) Students’ independence.

On the one hand, the above-mentioned principles ensure a high level of discipline and the utmost respect for the teacher. On the other hand, they significantly complicate the learning process in terms of forming speaking skills, as Chinese students are accustomed to listening only to lectures (monologues) from the teacher and are reluctant to engage in dialogue with them.

This is because students are afraid of making a grammatical or speech error (especially when responding orally, which slows the pace of the class) as this will lead to “losing face” in their peers’ eyes.

However, it is unquestionable that future managers must be able to engage in professional oral communication in a foreign language which includes arranging meetings, holding negotiations and presentations, establishing contacts with partners, and carrying out international cooperation. In view of this, it is relevant to use a communicative approach in foreign language training, which is one of the most effective methods for gaining a high level of foreign language communicative competence that is defined as the preparedness and ability to communicate with native speakers in a foreign language in everyday and professional settings, both directly and indirectly.

The core principles of the communicative approach are the principle of speech practice and an emphasis on speech activity, which contributes to the development of verbal skills. Students are gradually introduced to the context of career oriented educational communication in a foreign language: critical reflection on the material being studied, participation in debates is encouraged, and role-playing speech situations are created that are comfortable for engaging in dialogic interaction.

At the initial stage of training, reproductive tasks are often used, such as composing a mini-text based on a model on a given topic, memorizing and then reproducing it, and learning speech structures and then using them in dialogues. Subsequently, the creation of short videos is proposed, which are then shown to the audience. This type of assignment minimizes psychological discomfort before public speaking and bit by bit prepares future managers for professional communication without relying on the devices, which modern students are accustomed to.

The main feature of Business English and its vocabulary is a linkage to a certain industry. Many terms and expressions in Business English lexicon are based on professional knowledge, which is essential for their correct interpretation. Therefore, the thorough acquisition of Business English terms and expressions is feasible primarily while taking the course in specialty. This facilitates students' immersion in English terminology within the Management program.

Another feature of Business English is that, to successfully master Business English vocabulary, students must first and foremost know vocabulary and possess general communication skills.

Business English is just a specific set of phrases and concepts that serve as a superstructure for general English [6, p. 76-77]. To use and understand English business vocabulary, one needs to be able to perceive oral English speech by and to construct correct sentences.

Future managers' English language training at Chinese universities consists of three stages, namely:

- 1) Everyday Language Course;
- 2) Business Language Course;
- 3) Professional Language Course.

At the first stage, there is an intensive accumulation of linguistic and regional knowledge and the formation and development of skills in all types of speech activity based on material of a general focus (education, travel, personality, language learning, etc.). The second stage (academic course), which encompasses gaining business and professional knowledge, is the basic component. At this stage primarily professionally focused materials are utilized, e.g. management theory and practice, business communication, project implementation stages, etc. Each stage requires a reasonable balance of general and professional discourse, with the latter gradually becoming dominant at this stage. Teaching professional discourse (stage 3) is a complex linguodidactic phenomenon that includes

- 1) Selection of universal linguistic means;
- 2) Career oriented instruction of the specialty's conceptual apparatus;
- 3) Modeling of professionally relevant communicative tasks.

Professional focus is designed so that students' proactive position at classes is driven by the professional needs of managers, such as the need to build communication process, demonstrate leadership in interaction, and the need for supervisory activities. After completing the course, students can confidently find and effectively apply the necessary language information in the most optimal way [7, p. 590].

Professionalization of future managers' foreign language communication teaching is ensured by the following training components:

- 1) Subject matter (the course content contains themes of practical value for developing the relevant subject-language competencies necessary for managers to effectively perform professional activities in foreign language communication situations);

2) Terminology or conceptual framework (the course content provides mastery of a set of fundamental concepts (definitions) for a given professional field);

3) Minimum vocabulary (for each thematic section, a number of lexical units (expressions) is developed, the use of which is necessary in solving communication problems).

Mastering the terminology and vocabulary, as well as the semantic-functional, structural-functional, morphological-syntactic, functional-stylistic, textual, and other features of professional language, is crucial for specialists in this profession. Students are supposed to master not only the passive vocabulary to understand the speech of their interlocutors, but also the active vocabulary to organize their speech according to professional communication situations.

Anticipating possible communication situations should stimulate students to analyze available linguistic resources, and in some cases, lead to the need to memorize speech clichés and etiquette formulas.

The corpus of problem situations for the English language course is a set of mini-cases selected depending on thematic focus, vocabulary content, and professional relevance for this area of study.

Within the course, management students learn to analyze problem situations, i.e. they detect the problem, propose solutions, analyze the opportunities and risks of proposed solutions, and justify their choice of solution.

Thus, compliance with the first pedagogical condition, “professional focus of foreign language teaching”, allows training future managers for the practical application of acquired knowledge within their specialty in a short period of time. The second pedagogical condition aimed at increasing the effectiveness of foreign language acquisition by future managers is the digitalization of foreign language training, as in the era of rapid digital transformation, technology has become an integral part of the educational process, drastically changing traditional approaches to teaching foreign languages.

The necessity of this pedagogical condition can also be explained by the fact that the digital economy presupposes a multitude of conceptual and categorical meanings that, due to the impossibility of translation, are adopted from English and applied in their original lexical form in the native language (e.g. futures, consulting, outsourcing, broker, blockchain, cryptocurrency, mining, etc.), while digitalization processes create unique opportunities for more effective, personalized, and accessible language training.

In modern China, they are constantly developing various innovative training methods to help students of all fields master the aspects of English that are most relevant to their future careers. These include methods aimed at learning or reviewing new vocabulary and grammar, as well as platforms designed for practicing live communication online and offline. The range of auxiliary programs of this kind is expanding due to the possibility of asynchronous (in different time periods) activities of the teacher and students [8].

One of the most promising areas for further integrating digital technologies into language training is the wide use of virtual reality technology in developing future managers' relevant competencies. In the context of linguistic education, virtual reality can be defined as a space created by ICT that reproduces the sociocultural environment of the countries where this particular language is spoken. Studying in such a space enables students to directly participate in various cultural, sociocultural, and communicative situations.

Through the lens of foreign language learning, two features of virtual reality are important, namely the ability to transmit information not only visually but also through auditory and tactile channels; and the facilitation of direct, active interaction between participants in the educational process.

In view of the aforesaid characteristics, the use of virtual reality in foreign language learning allows future professionals to overcome language barriers more quickly. Working in a virtual space, they more effectively acquire professional foreign language vocabulary. This is achieved through maximum immersion in foreign language communication situations that imitate real-life situations. Nowadays, artificial intelligence (AI) and adaptive English language learning are revolutionizing language education, radically transforming traditional teaching methods.

For example, by order of the Ministry of Education, even primary school students must work with AI for at least 6 hours a week. This approach is based on the use of advanced technological solutions that can personalize and optimize the English language learning process. The latest artificial intelligence-based systems analyze the individual characteristics of each student with unprecedented depth and accuracy. Machine learning algorithms can instantly track the student's knowledge level, pace of learning, and identify their strengths and weaknesses, creating a highly personalized educational trajectory. A key advantage of AI systems is their ability to continuously adapt and adjust learning content.

While traditional teaching methods have a uniform approach, intelligent systems create a unique learning path for each user. For example, if the student is struggling with the Past Perfect Tense, the system will automatically increase the number of exercises specifically on this topic, using various methodological approaches. Speech recognition and natural language processing technologies enable the creation of interactive dialogue systems that simulate real-life communication. Virtual language assistants can hold full-fledged conversations, instantly analyzing pronunciation, grammar, and context.

Neural networks and deep learning algorithms enable the creation of intelligent language platforms, such as Elsa Speak, that optimize pronunciation and analyze the smallest intonation and phonetic nuances. We can single out the key mechanisms of implementing AI-based adaptive learning, which are as follows:

- Systems use predictive analytics to forecast learning outcomes.
- They generate content that best suits the user's individual cognitive characteristics.

- They provide instant feedback, which is crucial for fruitful language learning.

Today, the PRC is a dominant power in global political and economic processes, as well as in intercultural interaction. Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China and President of the People's Republic of China has pointed out that in the context of globalization and internationalization, higher education development must not only align with international trends but also preserve its national characteristics, specifically:

- Disseminating Chinese values, pursuing its own path, serving the Chinese people and the country's development.

- Promoting the progress of humanity.

In line with this policy, the Party has proposed a new English language teaching paradigm in accordance with the new demand for presenting China's image and its cultural values in the world.

Critical opinions are often expressed regarding the use of British and American standards of English in the educational process. Teachers are also skeptical of the communicative teaching method. The main arguments of opponents of this method are that, firstly, teaching English based on the normative British model cannot truly correspond to the actual interests and needs of students, no matter how persistently its proponents advocate it, because students' real-life situations and demands differ greatly from the speech situations of native speakers; secondly, the intercultural interaction, that communicative English language training strives for, actually stipulates a discursive system that dictates the rules of linguistic behavior and disregards the sociolinguistic realities of other countries [9, p. 112-114].

To avoid cultural conflicts between learners and native speakers, on the one hand, and to preserve the communicative function of language, on the other, Chinese scholars propose a "social method" focused on interaction between teachers and learners based on the rules of speech behavior adopted in China. The goal of this teaching is to enable learners to master English without losing their national identity. To achieve this goal, according to Li Shaohua and other researchers [10], a number of tasks must be accomplished.

They are as follows:

- To develop teaching materials relevant to the students' real-life conditions and based on their historical culture.

- To elaborate a more effective endonormative model of language teaching, taking into account the specifics of language acquisition in the Chinese-speaking linguacultural space.

- To work out an assessment system with an emphasis on students' self-expression and communicative competence in daily communication in compliance with the rules of their ethnolinguistic community [11].

In this case, the other extreme is quite possible, namely the behavior of Chinese communicants may differ from the behavioral and speech norms of other ethnic groups/cultures, which in turn will lead to tension in interaction.

These issues will likely be addressed by a new reform of foreign language education in China, aimed at cultivating a new generation of talented people with excellent linguistic skills. Such specialists will understand the dialogue of cultures and the differences in ways of thinking within their own country and abroad, be able not only to speak but also to think in a foreign language, be able to quickly adapt to the challenges of economic and social globalization, possess refined intercultural communication skills, and have high moral and ethical qualities. All the above is particularly important for developing China's competitiveness and its cooperation with other countries.

**Conclusions.** Growing demand in the Chinese economy for specialists being able not only to speak a foreign language but also to solve professional problems using a foreign language explains the fact that today future managers' foreign language training occupies an important place in the structure of their education. It is possible to complete the tasks of effective foreign language training of university students by implementing specific organizational and pedagogical conditions in the learning process. Career orientation of foreign language teaching is based on the principles of competency-based and communicative approaches and involves using the potential of the discipline "ESL" for students to acquire professionally important knowledge, skills and abilities.

The second pedagogical condition – the digitalization of foreign language training – allows for a radical transformation of traditional approaches to teaching foreign languages through the use of virtual reality technology and AI, which enables the personalization and optimization of the English language learning process.

At present, in accordance with the new demand for presenting China's image and its cultural values in the world, a new English teaching policy is being actively developed, which directs the learning vector so that students can master English without losing their national identity.

In our opinion, the pedagogically valuable experience and best practices of Chinese universities in teaching foreign languages to future managers can be creatively rethought and introduced into the Ukrainian system of foreign language training, which will contribute to increasing its ranking in the global educational space.

We see prospects for further research in comparing foreign language education systems in economic universities in Ukraine and China.

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