

Khodtseva A.O.

Ukrainian academy of banking of the NBU, Ukraine

Medvid O.M.

Sumy state university, Ukraine

BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSE DESIGN: HOW TO MEET EMPLOYERS' EXPECTATIONS

Recent achievements in the process of unification of Europe have made the conditions for social and human growth an increasingly concrete and relevant reality not only for the Union and its citizens, but also for all European countries. The creation of the European higher education area, where national identities and common interests can interact and strengthen each other for the benefit of Europe, its citizens has led to an urgent need to develop new policies concerning language teaching/learning and to improve students language competences. The Commission of the European Community (Brussels, 2013) has defined key areas for action: improving and extending life-long language learning; making foreign language teaching more effective; creating a more language friendly environment.

Ukraine can not neglect the political and cultural importance of these developments or stand aside from the general interactive tendencies in European education. Recognition of the merits of integration into European education structures, and of making our education standards correspond to the European ones, facilitates Ukrainian and European cultural integration, and open broader professional and academic career horizons for university graduates.

The development of an ESP Curriculum (2005) with the approval of the Ministry of Education and Science was a response to these international developments with an aim to provide benchmarks for teachers and learners in line with the levels identified in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and to provide a standardised basis for course and syllabus design by teachers of English at the faculty level in universities throughout Ukraine.

The National ESP Curriculum states, that the overall aim of an ESP course is to develop learners' professional language competences, enabling them to function effectively in culturally diverse academic and professional environments (1, 33). As our students are majoring in Banking and Finance we tried to analyse these markets with an aim to identify employers expectations in this sector and to tailor Business English course we run to meet them. Thus, the article will focus firstly, on job requirements in this sector and, secondly, on the approaches which can be applied to design an ESP course.

The financial world in Ukraine is going through a period of profound change: banking institutions are restructuring; recruiting and training policies are being modi-

tioned in view of the need to reduce the size of the workforce; new technologies are affecting working methods; competition between sectors is increasing. This has made it difficult for universities to react rapidly to these changes and to incorporate them in teaching/learning process.

When you say the words 'banking and finance' to students, few of them have any notion of what it really means. More over, many of bank employees whom I spoke to about their profession said « I'd no idea what would be involved ». «I'd seldom given banking or finance a thought», « I was never any good at maths». But here they are , people from different backgrounds, all coping with and enjoying the work. Some had been drawn to it because it seemed to promise security and attractive fringe benefits, others liked the team work and customer contact, and those in career posts welcomed the intellectual challenge, the responsibility they shouldered, the opportunities for promotion on merit, not on length of service. A lesson should be learnt from this situation by University teachers to equip students with competencies and strategies needed to succeed in their job and as a result to facilitate their mobility and competitiveness in this particular area in the job market. To this end a close cooperation between educational and financial institutions seem to be very useful.

The analysis of the job market shows that the employers seek a range of skills and qualities from graduate applicants, which are often referred to as transferable or core skills. A recent survey into skills sought by graduate recruiters listed the top of these as:

- willingness to learn(commitment to life-long learning);
- dependability/reliability;
- team work/co-operation;
- communication skills (oral and written);
- drive/energy;
- self-management;
- desire to achieve/motivation;
- problem-solving ability;
- adaptability and flexibility.

The work in finance also calls for a methodical approach, accuracy and attention to detail. Intense competition in the financial sector is leading individual banks to look for marketing and sales staff who have commercial awareness and who are able to think creatively. All staff, whether or not they deal directly with the public, are expected to identify opportunities to sell products and services, and those who are in the front line will find that selling is an integral part of their job.

Most important of all are the character traits needed for specialists in Banking and Finance. They will be handling peoples money and be privy to a lot of confidential information. All staff have to be honest, trustworthy and discreet and to demonstrate a sense of responsibility- in other words, possess complete professional integrity.(3,p.11-12; 2) Graduates are given responsibility early in their careers and must, therefore, be

equal to tough negotiating, high-level client contact, and contact with other professionals such as lawyers and accountants. Some branches of the work, eg. corporate finance, generate a lot of paperwork and call for the ability to grasp essentials and get the details right. Imagination, diligence and flexibility are important quality in any candidate, and fluency in foreign languages is an asset.

Thus, the courses which universities provide, should give students an opportunity to develop qualities and competencies needed to be effective in their job, to facilitate their individual adaptability and competitiveness in the job market. As English language proficiency is viewed to be one of the essential ingredients of professional competence for students majoring in Business, before designing our own Business English course, we carried out a thorough needs analysis to be sure that the requirements and characteristics of a particular specialism were met.

The objectives of the Curriculum acted as a resource for us, they are compatible with those of the Common European Framework of Reference and those determined by Ukrainian National Education Qualification Standards. Assessment of the end-of-course learning outcomes were based on the same Curriculum objectives, after having been adapted to the specific academic and/or professional environments in the university to meet our learners' specific needs and employers expectations. Let us have a closer look at the ESP Syllabus which is designed for students of Economics and Business with B1+ proficiency level on entry. Taking into account international practices in language education at tertiary level, and the number of hours allotted to an ESP course, the syllabus states that the minimal acceptable English proficiency level to qualify for a Bachelor's degree is B2 (Independent User).

The 'benchmarks' for this ESP syllabus level are based on the descriptors, introduced by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001); requirements of the educational and qualification characteristics of graduates adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine; specific job descriptors developed and validated by businesses, and organisations and findings of the National ESP Curriculum for Universities (2005).

The aims of the syllabus are derived from the ESP Core Curriculum and adjusted to the needs of the specialism. The Syllabus may be realized through the following set of aims:

- Practical: to develop students' general and professionally – oriented communicative language competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic) in Business English to enable them to communicate effectively in their academic and professional environment.
- Cognitive: to expose students to academic activities that draw on and further develop the full range of their cognitive abilities.
- Educational: to foster the ability to self-evaluate and a capacity for autonomous learning which will enable students to continue to learn in academic and professional situations before and beyond graduation.
- Developmental: to help students form general competences to develop their personal motivation (values, ideals, etc.); to foster students' confidence as users of

the language and their positive attitudes and feelings towards learning the target language for professional communication.

- Social: to facilitate and develop students' critical self-awareness and interpersonal skills and to contribute meaningfully to the changing international environment.
- Socio-cultural: to develop a broad understanding of important and different international socio-cultural issues in order to operate appropriately in culturally diverse professional and academic environment.

Objectives for the development of students language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), study skills, socio-linguistic and pragmatic competence were also formulated in compliance with the ESP Curriculum.

As can be seen from the above specified objectives, language policy of the Ukrainian Academy of Banking of the NBU is in line with the European one. The compulsory syllabuses include a two-year course of Business English, German or French with 5 credits of general duration of study and cover the main generic job-related skills. They are followed by elective courses covering different modules based on students' needs and preferences in particular areas. The order and balance of modules in the course is arranged according to the students' needs and can be the following:

- Establishing Business Contacts
- Telephoning
- Effective Presentations
- Reading for Professional/Academic Purposes
- Written Communication for Business
- Effective Meetings
- Effective Negotiations
- Career in Business, etc.

We hope that this approach to course organization can increase students' motivation and facilitate their mobility and competitiveness in the job market.

This ESP syllabus encourages life-long learning and autonomy. It is obvious that learning a foreign language, especially in the European context, reaches far beyond compulsory education. The active use of procedural knowledge ('learning to learn') is the basis for efficient and autonomous life-long learning of languages after academy. So the development of this procedural knowledge is an essential objective of the developers of this syllabus. We intend to work with the European Language Portfolio for economists (3) within the framework of hours allotted to individual work. The Portfolio has been successfully piloted by some teachers of our department and its practical effectiveness was demonstrated. The pedagogic function of it is to make the language learning process more transparent for students to help them develop their capacity for reflection and self-assessment, and thus enable them gradually to assume more responsibility for their own learning.

The European Language Portfolio for economists has been developed according to the recommendations of the Education Committee of the Council of Europe on modern language learning, teaching and assessment, the requirements of educational and qualification characteristics of economists adopted by Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and on the basis of a survey carried out among professional economists, teachers of higher educational institutions and students of economic departments. It is a set of documents which assists students (the owners of the Portfolio) to collect, systematize their own achievements and present their own target language proficiency. It contains examples of completed tasks and certificates awarded.

Information in the European Language Portfolio for economists is intended not only for the owner of the Portfolio and teachers, as it shows students progress in language learning, but also for employers, if the owner of the Portfolio is being considered for a job.

To sum up, the above mentioned approaches to the ESR course design demonstrate the responsiveness of higher education institutions to changing job market and environment. Initiatives are largely based on strong perceptions of the need for professionals, who are able to work in a co-operative context with people from different national and cultural backgrounds, be effective in their job and competitive in the job market. To this end a close cooperation between educational and financial institutions seem to be very useful.

Literature

1. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) National Curriculum for Universities. Колектив авторів: Г. Є. Бакаєва, О.А.Борисенко, І.І. Зуєнок, В.О. Івагішчева, Л.І. Клименко, Т.І. Козимирська, С.І. Кострицька, Т.І. Скришник, Н.Ю. Тодорова, А.О. Ходцева. – К.: Ленвіт, 2005 – 119 с.
2. The University of Nottingham Business School: MBA Programmes, Course Guide-2013. – 219 p.
3. Snelgar, David. Careers in Banking and Finance. -Kogan Page: Careers series, 1995 -112p.
4. Європейський Мовний Портфель для економістів. Укладач П.В. Ягельська. -К.: Ленвіт, 2004.-56с.
5. Brieger N. and J. Comfort. Developing Business Contacts.- Prentice Hall International English Language Teaching, 1993-185p.
6. Comfort, Jeremy (1997) Effective Presentations. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997-213p.