

DIAGNOSING THE PROBLEMS AND THEIR CAUSES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AMONG FUTURE LEADERS

Shakhrizoda Sultonmurotova
shakhrizoda2223@gmail.com
TSUE

Abstract: *This article discusses the problems faced by language learners in the process of teaching English to future leaders studying in the field of economics, the causes of these problems, and recommendations for overcoming them. It also explains how methods used in language teaching can be applied to solve these problems in preparing qualified leaders.*

Keywords: *English language teaching, future leaders, economics students, language learning problems, teaching methods, professional competence, digital literacy, language learners*

Introduction

Throughout all historical stages of social development, there has always been a constant need for highly capable and qualified personnel. In the present era, the process of training specialists for any sphere of production requires the creation of the most favorable conditions for them to become highly qualified, adaptable, and fully developed as individuals. As the competence of specialists is becoming increasingly complex, its importance is also growing. This can be explained by the expansion of social experience, the emergence of new and diverse forms of presenting and processing information, as well as the increasing demand of society for qualified specialists.

Today, the processes of globalization and economic integration require future leaders trained in the higher education system not only to possess theoretical knowledge in their field but also to be prepared for international professional communication. The Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 also identifies the integration of higher education with the needs of economic sectors, the training of competitive personnel, and the development of scientific-innovative activity and international cooperation as priority tasks. This shows that mastering English for future leaders studying in the field of economics should be regarded not merely as linguistic knowledge, but as an integral component of professional competence [1].

Foreign scientific and methodological literature emphasizes that teaching English for Specific Purposes - the ESP approach - should be organized on the basis of analyzing students' future professional needs, their current level of knowledge, and real communicative situations. Studies based on the views of scholars such as Hutchinson and Waters, Dudley-Evans and St John, and Nation and Macalister indicate that needs analysis is a key stage in determining the content of an English course, selecting teaching materials, and developing assessment criteria. Research related to students of economics also shows that English language education should not be limited only to reading or translation, but should develop listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills in integration with professional situations.

Nevertheless, in the current process of English language teaching, the real professional needs of future leaders in the field of economics are not always sufficiently taken into account. In many cases, the teaching process remains based on general grammar, text

translation, and theoretical exercises. Such an approach may form knowledge about the language, but it does not sufficiently develop practical competencies required in leadership activities, such as business negotiations, formal correspondence, accurate use of economic terminology, presenting an investment project or marketing strategy in English, and explaining economic tables and graphs. Foreign studies note that students of economics often face difficulties particularly in speaking and listening skills, and that it is necessary to develop sub-skills such as formal conversation, group discussion, explaining graphical data, and public speaking.

For future economist-leaders, English as a communicative tool is of great importance in international cooperation, investment activities, export-import operations, financial negotiations, defending business plans, corporate correspondence, and presenting managerial decisions. In modern scientific views, professional-communicative competence in a foreign language is regarded as an essential component of the professional training of students in economic higher education. In particular, studies conducted in the context of Uzbekistan also show that developing professional and communicative competence through a foreign language is an important condition for preparing students of economics for an international, intercultural, and mobile professional environment.

In addition, according to the CEFR approach, the language learner is viewed as a socially active agent; communication is assessed not only through grammatical accuracy, but also through reception, production, interaction, and mediation activities. The concept of mediation includes the processes of creating meaning, adapting and explaining information, and ensuring cooperation among representatives of different languages and cultures. This aspect justifies the need to use diagnostic tasks based on real management and business situations, rather than only vocabulary or grammar tests, when assessing future leaders' mastery of English [2].

Thus, diagnosing the problems faced by future leaders studying in the field of economics in mastering English is scientifically and practically relevant. The diagnostic process should be aimed not only at identifying students' general language knowledge, but also at assessing their professional vocabulary, business correspondence skills, oral communication, negotiation skills, presentation abilities, interpretation of economic information, intercultural communication, and digital communication skills. Only in this way can English language education become a needs-oriented, effective pedagogical process that corresponds to the future professional activities of prospective leaders.

From this point of view, the relevance of this study is determined by the need to identify the existing problems in the process of English language acquisition among future economist-leaders, scientifically analyze their causes, and develop diagnostic approaches appropriate to professional needs. The process of teaching English should not be limited to the formation of grammatical knowledge; rather, it should serve to prepare learners for real communicative situations required in leadership activities. Therefore, diagnosing such skills as business meetings, international negotiations, presentations of investment proposals, defense of marketing plans, interpretation of economic reports, and conducting official electronic correspondence is an important methodological condition for improving the professional training of future leaders.

Main Part

Teaching English to future leaders studying in the field of economics is not simply a process of teaching general language, but a special-purpose educational process aimed at

developing professional communicative competence. In the Cambridge Dictionary, ESP - English for Specific Purposes - is explained as teaching English for a specific field of activity, for example, business or science. Therefore, an English course for economist-leaders should not be limited only to general grammar, text translation, or simple conversational topics. It should also include skills related to real business communication, economic terminology, negotiations, presentations, reports, email correspondence, and the use of digital resources.

The first problem to be diagnosed is the lack of professional vocabulary. Students in the field of economics often know general English words, but they have difficulty using them in economic situations. For example, knowing the dictionary meanings of words such as profit, loss, investment, budget, supply, demand, negotiation, stakeholder, revenue, expenditure, management, and sustainability is not enough. A student must be able to use these terms correctly in oral speech, business correspondence, presentations, and economic analysis. The main reasons for this problem are the gap between general English and professional English, the lack of regular work with economic terms, and the insufficient connection of textbooks and exercises with real business situations. In the study by Bashori and co-authors, it was noted that vocabulary deficiency negatively affects students' language performance. It was also found that ASR-based websites can improve vocabulary knowledge, reduce speaking anxiety, and increase interest in language learning. To diagnose this problem, it is advisable to use tasks such as business vocabulary tests, translation of economic terms, using terms in context, mini case-tasks, and explaining an economic situation in English based on a graph or table. As a solution, professional vocabulary should not be taught only as a separate list, but through real situations. For example, students should use terms in the form of sentences, dialogues, emails, and presentations in situations such as “the company's profit decreased,” “an investment project was presented,” “market demand increased,” and “budget allocation was discussed.” In each topic, giving an economic term together with its pronunciation, definition, synonym, collocation, and practical example helps turn professional vocabulary into active competence.

Another common problem is weakness in speaking and fear of oral communication. A future leader should have the ability to express opinions in meetings, negotiate with foreign partners, present projects, answer questions, and persuade a team in professional activity. However, some students are afraid of pronunciation mistakes, feel shy about speaking in public, and cannot fully express their ideas because of anxiety about making grammatical errors. In Özdemir's study, the main factors increasing speaking anxiety were identified as fear of pronunciation mistakes, speaking in front of others, lack of vocabulary, insufficient exposure to English, and unwillingness to speak. To identify this problem, oral interviews, short presentations, role-plays, meeting simulations, negotiation tasks, “company problem solution” assignments, and analysis of audio/video recordings can be used. Diagnosis should not be limited only to counting grammatical errors. It should also assess pronunciation, fluency, use of professional terms, logical organization of ideas, ability to answer questions, and communication with the audience. As a solution, low-pressure speaking exercises, pair conversations, small-group discussions, business role-plays, presentation practice, and a constructive feedback system should be introduced. First, the student speaks using ready-made phrases, then moves to semi-free dialogue, and later performs independent speech close to a real-life situation.

For future leaders studying in economics, another difficult issue is errors in writing and lack of experience in business correspondence. For an economist-leader, writing emails in

English, preparing reports, writing meeting minutes, formal invitations, project descriptions, marketing texts, or short business summaries are important skills. However, students often face difficulties in sentence structure, formal style, linking words, using economic terms in written contexts, and logically beginning and ending a letter. In Özdemir’s study, the factors affecting writing anxiety include difficulty in organizing ideas, lack of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, lack of special terminology, and low general language proficiency. In Srisawat’s study on business English needs, it is emphasized that writing skills are important in the workplace, and both employees and students consider it necessary to write correctly, formally, and appropriately in English. Therefore, in the diagnostic process, it is necessary not to limit assessment to a simple grammar test, but to give tasks such as business email writing, report writing, proposal summary, complaint letter, and meeting follow-up email. As a solution, a genre-based writing approach should be used: first, a sample email or report is analyzed, then its structure is identified, and after that, students write their own text based on that model. For each written work, an assessment rubric should be developed according to the criteria of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, tone, and accuracy.

The next widespread problem is the lack of technical literacy and digital inequality. Some students have difficulty using online dictionaries, video lessons, electronic textbooks, platforms, Cambridge Dictionary, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and other academic resources to independently improve their English. The reason for this is not only lack of language knowledge, but also weak computer and internet skills, lack of a personal computer or quality internet, the cost of mobile internet, lack of technical devices, and limited experience in using online platforms. In the study by Rofiah, Aba Sha’ar, and Waluyo, it was noted that the digital divide affects EFL students’ participation in online education, and that devices, resources, and digital literacy are important factors. The digital divide is not limited only to whether there is access to the internet or not. Today, the digital divide is also connected with the ability to use ICT effectively. Therefore, even if a student has access to the internet, they may have difficulty finding academic articles, working with dictionaries, completing online tests, using learning platforms, uploading electronic files, or effectively using video lessons. To diagnose this problem, a digital literacy questionnaire and practical tasks can be used, for example: “find the definition of a word in Cambridge Dictionary,” “search for an article in ScienceDirect,” “write a report in Google Docs,” “complete an online quiz,” or “prepare notes based on a video lesson.”

As a solution to this problem, a short digital literacy module should be included in the English course. In this module, students learn how to use online dictionaries, search for academic articles, enter electronic platforms, upload files, complete online tests, use artificial intelligence tools responsibly, and evaluate the reliability of online sources. For students who do not have a computer or internet, it is necessary to organize a computer room, Wi-Fi zone, offline materials, PDF textbooks, mobile-friendly tasks, and a small-group technical support system at the university. Studies on online learning have shown that technical problems, internet costs, technological competence, and computer literacy can become barriers to learning English online.

Another difficulty for language learners is listening comprehension and understanding real business speech. An economist-leader should be able to understand the speech of foreign partners, different accents, quick questions in online meetings, business presentations, and economic discussions. However, students are often prepared more for

understanding written texts and work less with real audio or video communication. In Srisawat’s study, listening and reading emails are shown as one of the main means of communication in the workplace. It is also noted that understanding different accents can create difficulties in business communication. To identify this problem, listening tests can be conducted based on business podcasts, meeting audio, customer conversations, short lectures, market news, or company presentations. Students may be required to identify the main idea, understand numerical information, recognize economic terms, determine the speaker’s position, and write a short summary. As a solution, authentic audio-video materials, listening with and without subtitles, working with accents, “listen and summarize,” “listen and respond,” and “meeting note-taking” exercises should be included in lessons.

Conclusion

In general, the problems related to English language acquisition among future economist leaders are not connected only with a lack of grammatical knowledge. They are complex problems related to insufficient knowledge of professional terminology, speaking anxiety, limited experience in business correspondence, weak motivation, the mismatch between course content and professional needs, insufficient needs analysis, low listening skills, as well as digital literacy and technical opportunities. Therefore, the diagnostic process should not be one-sided, but should be organized on the basis of a comprehensive approach. It is necessary not to be limited only to grammar tests, but also to use professional vocabulary tests, questionnaires, interviews, portfolios, case tasks, role-plays, presentations, business email and report writing tasks, as well as methods for assessing digital skills. This helps to determine students’ ability to use English in real economic and managerial situations. In overcoming the existing problems, the ESP approach, that is, English for Specific Purposes, is of great importance. English lessons should not be limited to general grammar and translation, but should be organized on the basis of practical tasks such as business negotiations, investment project presentations, marketing strategies, economic report analysis, formal correspondence, and communication with international partners.

In conclusion, English for future economist leaders should be taught in connection with professional needs, practical communication, digital literacy, and real economic contexts. Only in this way will students develop as competitive specialists who can communicate freely in English in the future, actively participate in international cooperation, and meet the requirements of modern management.

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