MOTIVATING FUTURE SOCIAL ASSISTANTS IN LEARNING SPECIAL TERMINOLOGY

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Rezumat: Schimbările politice, economice şi sociale esenţiale care au avut loc în societate pe parcursul ultimelor trei decenii au urgentat reprezentanţii mai multor profesii să studieze şi să cunoască cel puţin o limbă străină. Astăzi un asistent social calificat trebuie să fie apt să opereze cu terminologia specială, să susţină o convorbire pe teme legate de specialitatea sa, să se facă înţeles în cercurile profesionale, aşa cum asistenţa socială a devenit în ultimii ani o problemă globală, care presupune, în primul rînd, colaborare într-o echipă multinaţională.

În articolul dat am făcut o încercare de a defini vocabularul specializat din domeniul asistenţei sociale, am examinat succint obiectivele predării terminologiei speciale, am scos în evidenţă unele principii, precum şi factorii şi strategiile ce pot contribui la sporirea eficacităţii procesului de predare - învăţare.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Posedarea terminologiei, obiectivele de predare a terminologiei, motivare continuă, motivare internă, motivare externă, consolidarea motivării, principii generale de comunicare, conştiinţă pragmatică, eficacitatea învăţării şi predării, comunicare interlingvistică.*

Abstract: Essential political, economic and social changes that occurred in the society during the last three decades have urged representatives of many professions to master a foreign language. Nowadays a skilled social assistant is supposed to operate with special terminology in at least one international language, as social welfare has become a global issue involving collaboration within a multinational team.

During our research we have made an attempt to define specialized vocabulary as well as briefly examine the objectives of teaching special terminology, some principles that should be taken into account both by teachers and learners, as well as considering specific factors and employing strategies in order to raise motivation in university students.

Keywords: *terminology acquisition, objectives of special terminology teaching, continuous motivation, internal motivation, external motivation, motivation reinforcement, general principles of communication, pragmatic awareness, teaching and learning effectiveness, inter-linguistic communication.*

In every society there have always been people who are vulnerable because of age, illness, or disability. Nowadays even more suffer from the effects of natural disasters, economic crises or civil conflicts. Our society is in urgent need of specialists in the field of social assistance who will become engaged in programs designed to assist the most vulnerable individuals, households and communities to meet the subsistence floor and to improve their quality of life. These programs encompass all forms of public actions – government or non-government – which very often necessitate mastering a foreign language, obviously not at the level of the ordinary user. Moreover, it has become imperative for social assistants to acquire a corpus of special terms in the target language in order to be able to hold a conversation with a professssional in this field or merely to translate some important documents as the situation requires. Knowledge of special terminology is what can make collaboration more efficient and its outcome more productive.

The interest of the investigators in the process and methods of social assistance terminology acquisition is due mainly to the growing interest, during the last decades, in the profession of the social assistant. On the one hand, they are professionals whose primary goal is to provide help to certain groups of people in society. On the other hand, they must be able to operate with social assistance terminology in order to understand one another in the social welfare circles. Nowadays social assistance programs and projects supported by foreign governments don't employ people that merely have a good command of English, assuming that it is rather insufficient or even amateurish; they look for professionals in the respective field that can do without an interpreter in any difficult situation. A skilled social assistant should operate with special terminology in at least one international language, as social welfare has become a global issue involving collaboration within a multinational team.

During our research we have made an attempt to classify the specialized vocabulary as well as briefly examine the objectives of teaching special terminology, some principles that should be taken into account both by teachers and learners, as well as considering specific motivational factors and employing strategies in order to stimulate students.

Thus, our task is manifold, which in broad terms can be accomplished if we find the answer to the questions of categorization of special vocabulary which eventually must help both researchers and learners get a clearer picture of the bulk of social assistance terms. Can practitioners enhance motivation in students at each stage of the teaching process?

The first issue that needs thorough attention is the definition and categorization of specialized vocabulary. The latter task appears to be rather complex in different respects. On a more detailed analysis of social assistance terminology we became aware of its diversity and heterogeneous nature. Specialized vocabulary is meant for conversation in the field of practical and theoretical social assistance. According to some studies made in the field of terminology classification and definition there is a social assistance meta-language, a very complex system that consists of several sub-systems and specialized components that comprise lexical elements with specific use: specialized terms, nomenclature, systemic terms, etc. (Bazel, L. 2006: 47) Also, specialized vocabulary should be subdivided into oral and written, special scientific lexis, and general scientific lexis. Obviously, special terminology is a narrower notion; it comprises only special terms, i. e. „special words or expressions with a particular meaning, used for a specific subject or type of language" (Longman Online Dictionary).

In its turn, the special scientific lexis includes special social assistance terminology. Still, we find that this issue has not been researched to the proper degree. The main difficulty occurs because of the lack of specialized dictionaries or any glossaries of social assistance terms. Teaching special terminology has a

haphazard character - teachers usually take social assistance related texts at random from newspapers, different social assistance regulations, laws, etc. Then, they try to sort out the terminology that seems more relevant which is a time-consuming task. A bilingual specialized dictionary or a social assistance terminology glossary could certainly help classify the core terms most relevant for effective teaching.

Nevertheless, in the process of teaching special terminology, the teacher's goal is not to train future social assistance specialists as terminologists or documentation professionals, but rather as language mediators whose job is to facilitate inter-linguistic communication. Students should thus learn how to carry out descriptive terminological work oriented towards producing a suitable target text which means developing specific strategies as well as learn how to use available resources with a view to producing optimal translations.

The overall goals of teaching special terminology have been formulated as follows - the students must be taught in such a way that they feel „the taste and the temperature „of the target language so as to become eager to use it, to understand that it is useful to them and perhaps, less commonly, to study with the pure enjoyment of exploring new things. They also should become competent in self-assessment and feel free to further communicate in the foreign language on topics related to their future profession. They must be aware that language is a changing system and special vocabulary is no exception. Special terminology is the stem part of specialized vocabulary that they should possess, and around which students can build new patterns.

In order to achieve the learning objectives both teachers and students should have an adequate representation of changes and innovations that occur in the special terminology of the target language in the first place and subsequently to realize how they are reflected in their native language. (Акопянц, А.М. 2008: 5). Thus, it is essential that **the principle of constant development of the target language** in general and of the special terminology in particular should be observed. During the last three decades the English language has undergone considerable change, as a result of political, social and economic development quite a large number of new words emerged; these are reflected in the newest editions of general dictionaries: Oxford Dictionary of English, Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Collins English Dictionary, etc. The changes in the political and social activity of the society gave rise to new words, phrases and collocations in the specialized vocabulary as well. In this respect it is fundamental that texts should be taken from the most recent original sources and that the latest editions of specialized dictionaries should be consulted. The implication is that constant research and observation should be carried out in order to stay up-to-date with the evolving lexicon.

The principle of pragmatic communicative activity is another issue that seems relevant in the process of raising motivation for terminology acquisition by students. It is generally accepted that a university student should be aware of different functional styles of a foreign language. (Акопянц, А.М. 2008: 7) Quite often the literary language is the only one that they can hold a conversation. Students express their thoughts making use of phrases and clichés that are uncommon to spoken language; they don't take into consideration the tonality of the conversation (formal, neutral informal). The pragmatic principle is even more relevant in learning terminology as the students must be aware of many issues, i.e. How/ when/ where/ why to use terminology? Which term is preferred over another in a specific speech situation? What terms are outdated and sound odd? What terms out of a large corpus do not fit into a speech situation for various reasons? Do people speaking two different languages use the same terms for the same notions? Are polysemantic/ homonymic/ synonymic relations common for this specific layer of vocabulary? Is irony possible with specialized vocabulary? Is metaphor, metonymy, etc, possible in specialized vocabulary as well? Thus, pragmatic awareness is quite often synonymous with the use of neologisms, abbreviations, transformations and colloquialisms (that non-native speakers usually do not use) as a way of better intercultural interaction at different levels. (Акопянц, 2008: 9)

Enhancing motivational processes has long been in the focus of such researchers as Akulina N. N., Rogov M.D., Milman V. E, Piaget J., Slama-Cazacu T., etc. These researchers assert, though, that it is not an easy task to make the students become motivated, given the fact that they have little capacity for internal motivation and they believe that for quite a time the teachers have to motivate them externally, through incentives. The use of incentives is based on the principle that learning occurs more effectively when the student experiences feelings of satisfaction. It is also commonly believed that in a general learning situation, self-motivation without rewards will not succeed. Praising and encouraging students may be efficient for a time - the teacher must choose the incentive that is more likely to motivate them. This philosophy is supported by W. McKeachie: „Extrinsic rewards may be particularly useful when intrinsic motivation is lacking...." (McKeachie 2002: 4) Still teachers should use praise and support with much caution as it may be followed by a decline in internal motivation.

Motivation in foreign language acquisition was the object of specialized study of numerous researchers in Russia as well. Thus, Milman B.E., Rogova G.V., Nikitenco Z.N. were primarily concerned with the impact that success in learning a foreign language had on the students' degree of motivation. Whether the future specialists wish for professional success, or simply to be able to discuss some issues with a visiting colleague, they have to be motivated and committed to succeed. But none of the techniques will produce continuous motivation unless the goals are realistic for the learner. „The basic learning principle involved is that success is more predictably motivating than failure. Ordinarily, students will choose activities of intermediate uncertainty rather than those that are difficult (little likelihood of success) or easy (high probability of success). There is less tendency to choose more difficult conditions. Having students assist in defining goals increases the probability that they will understand them and want to reach them." (Weller, 2005: 14) However, students sometimes have unrealistic notions about what they can accomplish. Possibly they do not understand the precision with which a skill must be carried out or have the depth of knowledge to master some material. To identify realistic goals, teachers must be skilled in assessing student's readiness or student's progress toward goals.

The influence of the teacher-student relationship and teacher's professional skills on the degree of motivation was the object of study of such researchers as Keller J.M., Onhas S.L., and Iakunin I.A.. „Motivation is enhanced by the way in which the instructional material is organized. In general, the best organized material makes the information meaningful to the individual." (Weller, 2005: 17) One method of organization includes relating new tasks to those already known. Other ways to relay meaning are to determine whether the students realize the final outcome and instruct them to compare and contrast ideas.

The problems of cognitive interests of the students have been analyzed in Moldova by M. Şevciuc and A. Ştefîrţă. Burdeniuc G.M., Prigorski I., Cincilei C. also studied the motivation problems that occur in the process of studying a foreign language. They believe that internal motivation comes with time; it depends on several factors, which differ from person to person. The teacher's role is to encourage and to show from personal example the importance or necessity to study the target language.

Still, there is not much research that would reveal the pedagogical preconditions of motive development in the learning process with university students. There is also little information regarding the degree of student's involvement in the learning process or the dynamics of the modification of motives or motivational factors during the process of foreign language acquisition which might be a challenge for researchers and will probably reveal the nature of motive development.

Considering the learning process we could divide it into three stages, or periods - the beginning, the main period and the end. The relevant thing is that motivation factors vary from one period to another. When students begin learning target vocabulary, their attitudes toward the learning environment, the teacher, the subject matter and even themselves, as well as their basic needs appear as motivational factors. At this stage the teacher's role is central: he or she must create a comfortable learning environment, reduce elements that lead to fear or failure, and positively confront the possibly erroneous beliefs, expectations that may trigger a learner's positive attitude.

When students are involved in the body or main period of the learning process, stimulation and affect, i.e. the emotional experience of the learner while learning, are of major importance. (Cashin: 1979: 53) The teacher has to change the style and the contents of the learning activity; make student's reaction and involvement essential parts of the learning process, i.e., problem solving, role playing, simulation, to use learner concerns to organize content and to develop themes and teaching procedures.

When students are completing the learning process the main motivational factors are competence and reinforcement. Among the strategies that enhance motivation must be providing consistent feedback regarding mastery of learning and acknowledgement of student's responsibility in completing the learning task. Many of the motivational techniques discussed in the literature use learning experiences that stimulate student interests and student success through feedback, curiosity, conflicting motives, achievement expectancy, enthusiasm, verbal and nonverbal communication, establishing specific challenging goals and students' analysis of their own strengths and weaknesses. (Hynd, 2000:23-58)

It is generally acknowledged that internal motivation is longer lasting and more self-directive than external motivation. Thus, the teacher's primary goal is to balance these two types of motivation in students so that they feel eager to study. Learning is most effective when an individual is ready to learn, that is, when one wants to know something. Sometimes the student's readiness to learn comes with time, and the teacher's role is to encourage its development.

The existing body of research on student motivation in terminology acquisition suggests that this process must become a fundamental issue for university teachers, as they are responsible for preparing the future specialists in the field of social assistance and that teacher skills in motivating learners combined with student awareness are fundamental for teaching and learning effectiveness.

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