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WAYS TO DEVELOP FUTURE SEAFARERS' SOFT SKILLS AT ESP CLASSES

The paper is aimed to explore the available resources that a foreign language teacher can apply daily to meet higher education standards and develop soft skills as an integral part of the professional education of modern experts, and as a consequence, a tool for globalization and entry of the country the world stage.

We conducted a theoretical analysis of the relevant resources and studied the requirements for modern specialists in terms of mastering soft skills. This led us to a symbiotic inclusion of linguistic approach to texts, vocabulary related to the field of future professionals, as well as skill formation approach to achieve the goals of professional education. We try to include the development of cooperation, motivation, decision making, prioritizing and self-development. Thus, we see that foreign languages are a good platform for the development of not only hard skills but also soft skills.

The ability to discuss in English, express and prove your point of view, successfully address international issues are a powerful advantage in the competitive selection of specialists in any field in the labour market today. Active listening and critical thinking together with communication skills are the must-have abilities during English classes in a high educational establishment.

Keywords: soft skills, maritime education, seafarers, flexibility, critical thinking.

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СПОСОБИ РОЗВИТКУ ГНУЧКИХ НАВИЧОК МАЙБУТНІХ МОРЯКІВ НА ЗАНЯТТЯХ З АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЗА ПРОФЕСІЙНИМ СПРЯМУВАННЯМ

Стаття спрямована на вивчення ресурсів, які викладач іноземної мови може використовувати у щоденній роботі для досягнення стандартів вищої освіти та розвитку гнучких навичок як невід'ємної складової професійної освіти сучасних фахівців, і, як наслідок, формування фахівця глобального рівня, який легко адаптується до сучасних вимог суспільства та відповідає складним, мінливим умовам ринку, незалежно від країни працевлаштування.

Проведено теоретичний аналіз відповідної літератури та досліджено вимоги до сучасних спеціалістів щодо оволодіння гнучкими навичками. Це привело нас до симбіотичного включення лінгвістичного підходу до текстів, лексики, пов'язаної зі сферою майбутніх фахівців, а також підходу формування навичок для досягнення цілей професійної освіти. Ми намагаємося мотивувати та розвивати навички співпраці, критичного мислення, прийняття рішень, визначення пріоритетів та самовдосконалення. Таким чином, ми бачимо, що іноземні мови є гарною платформою для розвитку не лише професійних навичок, а й досягнення навичок кращої соціальної взаємодії.

Вміння дискутувати англійською мовою, відстоювати свою точку зору, успішно вирішувати міжособистісні та міжкультурні питання – це потужна перевага при конкурентному відборі фахівців будь-якої сфери на ринку праці сьогодні. Активне слухання та критичне мислення разом із комунікативними навичками є обов'язковими навичками під час занять з англійської мови у вищому навчальному закладі.

Особливу увагу приділено важливості розвитку гнучких навичок під час навчання майбутніх моряків, адже для представників цієї професії критично необхідно вміти працювати у команді, приймати швидкі рішення у надзвичайних ситуаціях та вміти адаптуватись швидко.

Ключові слова: гнучкі навички, морська освіта, моряки, гнучкість, критичне мислення.

Taking into account the strategic goals and objectives of society and Ukraine in particular and strengthening of our country in the globalization system, education is of utmost importance to achieve these goals. It must be taken to a new level and follow the requirements of the modern world in teaching students.

Most often, when we talk about skills, we mean professional knowledge and abilities. But the level of success has long ceased to depend only on how well you perform your immediate duties. To be an efficient expert, you need to develop soft skills, unique

non-professional qualities that help people interact in a team regardless of the field of activity. Soft skills help employers adapt faster to changes in the labour market, see not problems in these changes, but opportunities for growth and development.

The article aims to identify the term “soft skills”, to analyse which soft skills are of the highest priority by employers in the field of the maritime industry and define how English language resources enable the teacher to develop soft skills of the students at foreign language classes.

Soft skills research is relatively new in our country, but it tells us a lot about the importance of the application of these skills to succeed in leadership. Nowadays many foreign researchers such as D. Goleman, T. Peterson, P. Blackmore, R. Kramer, T. Hill and others pay much attention to soft skills studies. According to R. Kramer and T. Hill, soft skills are competencies used to perform hard skills and aptitudes that involve personality and behaviour (Kramer R., Hill T., 2011). Among Ukrainian researchers, K. Koval, N. Dluhunovych, Y. Lavrysh studied the issue of soft skills development in higher education. The Cambridge dictionary defines soft skills as people’s abilities to communicate with each other and work well together. The Collins English Dictionary suggests a little wider definition of the term “soft skills” and determines it as desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude. International Bureau of Education states that soft skills include empathy, leadership, sense of responsibility, integrity, self-esteem, self-management, motivation, flexibility, sociability, time management and making decisions. Employers in the maritime industry consider soft skills a reliable indicator to understand if the candidate meets the basic values and requirements of the crewing company and ship owner and if he is a good team player to join the crew and establish effective cooperation.

Maritime education in Ukraine has a long tradition and extensive experience in training young generations of seafarers. In today’s dynamic world the requirements for the qualification of seafarers have changed significantly. The functions of seafarers are constantly becoming more complex, which determines the significant expansion and renewal of the requirements for their professional qualifications. Powerful changes in the content of modern maritime education require the ability to work in a team, to persuade or compromise, to make fast and correct decisions which is now a part of soft skills. Changes in society and technology pose major challenges for education. In the age of digital and global change, teaching and learning are changing. All the life experiences that students receive during their studies should help in solving any difficult situations in the future.

Soft skills provide such important aspects for the crew work as:

- effective cooperation
- productive processes
- fast decision making
- results-oriented communication

The main soft skills future seafarers should develop are:

Communication

This term covers many routine processes at sea: the way a person communicates with others, the way a person delegates tasks, feedback, etc. These processes develop effective cooperation. They determine how the crew perceive a particular crew member in the team. Well-established communication gives all team members a clear understanding of the state of affairs in general and every crew member in particular. It outlines who, what, when, where, why and how of each process. This, in turn, allows us to predict certain outcomes.

Flexibility

Flexibility is the ability to adapt to existing conditions despite possible obstacles. Things do not always follow your plan. Something unpredictable may happen. Actually, the ability to adapt to existing conditions and keep everything under control is crucial in such situations. There are some examples seafarers are required to be flexible: an unusual task that goes beyond the competence, work with strangers, work aloft must be done in short term because of an imminent storm, work under emotionally stressful conditions (while storm, piracy attack, etc.), a reworking of someone else’s work, etc.

This skill cannot be tested in advance and needs constant improvement.

A key factor in mastering “flexibility” is the so-called can-do approach, which means developing the ability to clearly formulate tasks and outline deadlines. Another important factor is the ability to handle management’s expectations depending on the situation. This helps avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. Flexibility also requires mastering the so-called “emotional intelligence” which is the ability to control the emotional state and not to panic under the influence of stress.

Teamwork

Success is the result of all the crew efforts. The crew is one body that consists of interdependent parts. A well-organized team runs like clockwork – everyone does their part of the job when they need to. So, a person needs to understand the specific features of team members and be able to adapt to others. On the other hand, it is necessary to understand what is required of a particular seafarer and how it affects the work of others.

In addition, we should never forget about the human factor. The ability to find common ground between crew members beyond immediate responsibilities helps establish effective collaboration and ensure productive results. This motivates employees and becomes an important element of the employer’s attractiveness to candidates.

Problem Solving

Each task is accompanied by various challenges: insufficient understanding of the task; lack of time; insufficient resources; etc. All these are everyday phenomena in any company. They require effort, but they are not extraordinary.

But sometimes there are difficulties that require going beyond and finding an unusual solution. The ability to handle a difficult situation and find an effective solution is highly valued by the crew and company management. The Can-Do approach and the ability to take responsibility for possible consequences are key factors to develop problem-solving skills. From the company’s point of view, such behaviour demonstrates the motivation and involvement of crew members in the process.

Critical thinking

Critical thinking is a set of techniques that cover information analysis, information quality assessment, interpretation of different indicators depending on the situation, comparison of data from different sources, forming own opinion according to verified facts.

Don’t forget to conduct “gap analysis”. It can also push you in the right direction.

Critical thinking is one of the tools for arranging a constructive work process. For any employee, this skill serves as a safeguard against misunderstandings, conflicts and commonplace mistakes.

Conflict avoidance

In fact, this skill combines flexibility and synergy, but it should be singled out.

All people are different. Not everyone can find common ground with others. The result of this failure is misunderstandings and clashes, which can escalate into serious conflicts over time. This will do no good to either a crew member or the crew as a whole.

The ability to avoid such situations and solve existing situations is highly valued in the team. The latter may also indicate the presence of leadership skills.

It's important to find so-called "points of contact" – common elements between people. These can be personal interests, discussions. The key is to understand what the other sees and the ability to synchronize two different visions.

Responsibility and assertiveness

No skills affect the workflow as much as responsibility and assertiveness. The ability to take responsibility is an important indicator of a seafarer's understanding of functional responsibilities and capabilities. A key factor is a sound assessment of own abilities and available resources. Another important element is the awareness of the possible consequences of certain decisions for both the employee and the company.

On the other hand, assertiveness is a sign of activity and motivation of the employee. The employee does not stand still but tries to develop and find solutions on his own – without a separate instruction.

There are some challenges students can meet when developing soft skills:

- Students don't know where, why and how to develop, vague and fantastic plans;
- Students are not ready to change something in the current study, work and life in general;
- Students do only that works well and are afraid of taking on other new tasks and projects;
- Students are lack of desire to seek and find time to think about their actions and their results;
- Students are lack of interest in feedback on the success of their actions;
- Students fail to find a job at the first attempt and feel disappointed
- Students are afraid of difficulties they meet in the process of interviews and obtaining seafarers' documents;
- Students simply don't believe in success.

When a person realizes what is holding him back, he begins to believe in himself, allows himself to want more, takes responsibility and steps forward.

That's why it is important for students to master the tool which they can use to succeed and earn a profit – receive a promotion, present a project, get relevant information, understand tasks and orders, etc. And the teacher can't ignore the change for the purposes of the learner. Teachers can advance their classes and apply techniques for the development of soft skills. Some of these skills are already developed in the classes – they are communication, teamwork, presentation.

There are some examples of tasks teachers of Maritime English can use to develop soft skills.

Communication

To develop communication skills role cards and taboo cards may be useful.

Student A: You are an interviewer for a shipping position. Ask student B about:

- education and certificates
- experience and job time
- training
- skills

Student B: You are a job applicant. Talk to Student A about your education, previous experience, training and skills.

Students may also practice radio calls such as "May Day Calls", routine communication, etc., emotionally set situations – Your flight was delayed. If you don't get your plane in time, you will miss your voyage. The ship will not wait for you.

The constant introduction of such exercises will gradually remove the language barrier and give students confidence.

Teamwork and leadership

Role cards also prove useful. If students distribute roles on their own, advanced students inevitably become leaders. This can be avoided by using role cards. Teachers can analyse and discuss team roles with the students. After that, they randomly choose their role and must match them when completing the task. To make the task more interesting add the role of a saboteur to positive and neutral roles.

Work in the team – team members have all the necessary stationary. Draw a ship and surrounding area together. Discuss what kind of ship it is, colour, crew members on board, where the ship is situated.

Critical thinking

To develop critical thinking

Answer these questions using creative and constructive ideas. You can use as many details as you like. Try to think of your own "What would happen questions".

What would happen if...

- all electronic equipment suddenly failed onboard a ship?
- all crew members forgot what their duties were?
- all the sea animals could suddenly communicate with you in your language?
- you woke up one morning to discover you and your crew had appeared on a desert island?
- all crew members spoke different languages?
- you activated the EPIRB by mistake?

Presentation

To attract your students to active listening and eventually to prompt subsequent discussions of issues that have been heard is a real challenge for a teacher. To encourage listening creating rubric grades may be very useful. Suggest your students assessing each

other. Choose some evaluation criteria and discuss them with the group before the presentation. These are, for example, topicality – content – grammar – general view. Inadequate, adequate, good, very good may be examples of levels of mastery.

	Topicality	Content	Grammar	General view
Very good				
Good				
Adequate				
Inadequate				

Rubrics are very helpful for the teaching-learning process. This technique will allow your students to think critically and analyse the answers of their groupmates. For teachers, a rubric is not only a tool for assessing students but also helps the teacher plan activities better. It will help avoid a situation where one takes over the speech and the others just wait for their turn.

Job interview

To bring your students' job interview closer to reality at your classes, focus them on the research tactic giving them time to select among the features they would look for in a future employee. Such preparatory work will allow to skip the formalisation and let them inside the evaluating and analyzing process. Being an interviewer, of course, can show students a role model of a real interview in English.

Arrange teamwork of 2 captains (captain of a tanker and captain of a 5-masted sailing vessel) and give them a task: to recruit a crew for your vessel. Their task is to interview people, form their crew and then present it.

Time management

Time management is a crucial thing for everyone, don't be afraid to set strict time limits for completing assignments. Set a timer or display the time while doing the tasks. In teamwork appoint a person responsible for timing in each team. Don't ignore this aspect. Teaching to prioritize tasks and distribute time correctly is not a one-day work.

This is the purpose of practising this flexible skill which is preferable in the organization of the choice-making activity, and as a consequence, the implementation of such skill as self-organization. The developed ability to manage time competently, to find the necessary information quickly is one of the distinctive indicators of a good expert.

There are several problems we face in developing soft skills. First is the difficulty to assess the results achieved. Second is the low level of interaction between teacher and students which is a problem of certification of the future specialist and the general approach to educational programs. The matter of proficiency of a teacher determines a person will to take responsibility for soft skill development because the teacher is to possess them by himself first and to understand how to achieve a result by using effective methods.

Insufficient attention to the development of soft skills during the classes of English, the practical skill of which still belongs to the group of hard skills, can raise many questions related to the fact that this development is the personal responsibility of each student, although much of such skills compose general cultural and professional outcomes of education that are in the competence of any educator.

The problem of suspending the development of soft skills in the English language can occur due to the lack of studies devoted to the subject "Foreign Language" during the entire period of education. In some universities, the subject "Foreign Language" is included in the curriculum only during the first year of study, and the refusal of the subject "English for specific purposes" in educational curricula is a substantial drawback.

Teaching English takes the place of an interdisciplinary subject, as professional English is a course that is implemented in many fields of students' specialization. Thus, the approach to train and implement soft skills can be easily incorporated into the application of various modern educational and interactive technologies aimed to develop effective communicative interaction between students.

English language classes aimed at the parallel formation of soft skills are obvious. If we talk entirely about English, first of all, as a means of communication in the professional activities of the future expert, it is critical to pay more attention to language learning at the university, starting from the first year and throughout all years of study in general.

Develop a personal plan, which sets the goals, determines the algorithm of actions and enlist the activities that lead to the essential skills required to gain the goals set. Your approach in all that you will do as a tutor is to listen first, to seek deep understanding, to identify the challenges and then together find a way to meet challenges head on.

What are your objectives in career growth in 3-5 years?		
What are your objectives in career growth in 6-12 months?		
Competences / Field of Development		
Supervisor's advice		
Assessment		
Own decision		
The objectives of development / Outcomes		
Steps to do (ways to develop, self-development, motivation video, workshops, etc.) – 3 to 5 steps	Support Whose support do you need (supervisor, groupmates, parents, etc.)	Deadlines

To sum up, we can outline some tips for soft skills development:

Make your learning and self-development a continuous process: gain new experience, meet new experts, take on more complex tasks.

- Learn to plan and arrange your development effectively.
- Use different formats of development and learning constantly increasing the level of expertise (videos, books, simulators, etc.)
- Study the processes around you, be interested in innovations and achievements in navigation. Curious people are usually interesting, successful, exciting, fascinating and open!
- Develop skills gradually: choose the areas that really help you succeed in your work or study.
- Develop your personal and professional skills while working, constantly taking on new tasks.
- Find teachers or people you will follow suit.
- Learn to use the feedback you receive effectively (others' attitude to your actions or inactions) and determine its value.
- Attend all useful and interesting workshops, training, seminars, webinars for seafarers. Determine their quality and level of speakers in advance.

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