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TALABALARNING KASBIY KOMMUNIKATIV KOMPETENSIYASINI “STEP UP” METODOLOGIYASI ORQALI RIVOJLANTIRISH

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada ingliz tili ta'limida talabalarning kasbiy kommunikativ kompetensiyasini rivojlantirishning samarali modeli sifatida “Step Up” metodologiyasi ko'rib chiqiladi. Mazkur metodologiya til va diskurs modellari ustida yo'naltirilgan kuzatishdan boshlab, kasbiy yo'naltirilgan mustaqil muloqotni shakllantirishgacha bo'lgan bosqichma-bosqich rivojlanishni nazarda tutadi. Skafolding (bosqichma-bosqich qo'llab-quvvatlash), kommunikativ til o'qitish va kasbiy ahamiyat tamoyillariga asoslangan ushbu yondashuv o'quvchilarga nutq namunalarini, diskurs tuzilishini hamda pragmatik moslikni bosqichma-bosqich egallash imkonini beradi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatdiki, Step Up metodologiyasi asosida ta'lim olgan talabalar nutq ravonligi, mantiqiy izchilligi va kasbiy mosligi jihatidan sezilarli darajada yaxshilanish ko'rsatdi, shuningdek, muloqot jarayonida ishonch va tashabbuskorlik darajasi oshdi.

Kalit so'zlar: kasbiy kommunikativ kompetensiya, Step Up metodologiyasi, skafolding, o'qitish strategiyalari, kasbiy muloqot, ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'qitish.

РАЗВИТИЕ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОЙ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ СТУДЕНТОВ ПОСРЕДСТВОМ МЕТОДОЛОГИИ «STEP UP»

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается методология «Step Up» как эффективная модель развития профессиональной коммуникативной компетенции студентов в обучении английскому языку. Методология предполагает поэтапный переход от управляемого наблюдения за языковыми и дискурсивными моделями к самостоятельному продуцированию профессионально ориентированной коммуникации. Основанный на принципах скэфолдинга, коммуникативного обучения языку и профессиональной направленности, данный подход способствует постепенному освоению речевых моделей, организации дискурса и прагматической адекватности. Результаты исследования показали, что студенты, обучавшиеся по методологии Step Up, продемонстрировали значительное улучшение беглости речи, связности и профессиональной уместности коммуникации, а также повышение уверенности и инициативности в процессе взаимодействия.

Ключевые слова: профессиональная коммуникативная компетенция, методология Step Up, скэфолдинг, обучающие стратегии, профессиональная коммуникация, преподавание английского языка как иностранного.

DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF STUDENTS THROUGH THE “STEP UP” METHODOLOGY

Abstract. This article examines the “Step Up” methodology as an effective model for developing students’ professional communicative competence in English language instruction. The methodology progresses from guided observation of linguistic and discourse models to independent production of professionally oriented communication. Grounded in the principles of scaffolding, communicative language teaching, and vocational relevance, the approach supports learners in gradually mastering speech patterns, discourse organization, and pragmatic adequacy. The findings of the study indicate that students taught through the Step Up methodology demonstrated significant improvement in fluency, coherence, and professional appropriateness of communication, alongside increased confidence and initiative in interaction.

Keywords: professional communicative competence, Step Up methodology, scaffolding, instructional strategies, professional communication, EFL teaching.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary higher education, the development of professional communicative competence is considered essential, as graduates must not only possess subject knowledge but also express ideas clearly, negotiate meaning, collaborate, and communicate in professional contexts. Traditional language instruction, focused primarily on grammar and vocabulary, often fails to sufficiently prepare students for real workplace communication. Therefore, there is a need for methodological models that support gradual, structured, and profession-oriented skill development.

One such model is the Step Up methodology, which emphasizes progressive transition from guided speech to autonomous communication through staged scaffolding. This approach aligns with the instructional need to support weaker learners while simultaneously extending the communicative potential of stronger learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Professional communicative competence involves not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to use language appropriately in professional contexts (Canale & Swain, 1980). Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory and the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development highlight the importance of structured assistance, where learners perform beyond their current level through guided interaction.

The Step Up methodology is grounded in scaffolding, initially conceptualized by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) as temporary instructional support that is gradually withdrawn as competence increases. Walqui (2006) emphasizes that scaffolding must be dynamic and responsive, enabling learners to internalize communicative patterns.

From a second-language acquisition perspective, the methodology reflects Krashen’s (1985) notion of comprehensible input and Swain’s (2000) output hypothesis, which suggests that learners achieve deeper processing when producing language independently after guided practice.

Thus, Step Up methodology integrates:

- Modeling (input),
- Guided practice (supported output),
- Independent application (autonomous output).

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out at Fergana State University over the course of one academic semester and involved 48 second-year students majoring in economics. Before the instructional intervention, all participants completed a diagnostic speaking assessment designed to measure five components of professional communicative competence: fluency, coherence and cohesion of speech, use of field-specific terminology, interactional skills, and pragmatic appropriateness. Based on the diagnostic scores, students were divided into two groups of similar proficiency levels: an experimental group and a control group.

The instructional process in the experimental group was based on the Step Up methodology, which structures the development of communicative competence through a progressive sequence of four interrelated stages. Instruction began with teacher-led demonstrations of professional communication patterns. These included short dialogues and role-play situations typical of workplace communication, such as presenting a project proposal, negotiating terms, responding to feedback, or participating in team discussions. The aim of this initial phase was to provide students with clear and accessible speech models that illustrated not only linguistic forms, but also tone, communicative purpose, and interactional strategies.

Following the modeling phase, students were guided in reproducing and practicing the demonstrated language patterns through controlled speaking tasks. This stage reduced cognitive load and allowed students to gain confidence as they became familiar with essential functional expressions and discourse structures. Gradually, the learners transitioned to communicative activities that required modifying and adapting the previously practiced patterns to new contexts. For example, they reformulated arguments, altered negotiation strategies, or restated explanations depending on task requirements. The final instructional stage emphasized independent production of professional communication. Students completed tasks such as preparing mini-presentations, leading short discussions, and negotiating solutions to case-based business problems. Teacher scaffolding was gradually reduced to promote autonomy and communicative independence.

In contrast, the control group was taught through a conventional communicative approach without explicit staged modeling or structured scaffolding. Students worked with standard textbook dialogues, discussion questions, and vocabulary exercises, engaging in spontaneous speaking tasks without systematic preparation or guided development of communicative strategies.

Data for the study were collected using pre- and post-intervention speaking tests, classroom observation logs, student reflective questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Speech samples were recorded and evaluated using a five-criteria rubric, with two independent evaluators rating the performances to ensure inter-rater reliability. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data provided a comprehensive view of learners' communicative development.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Analysis of the post-intervention assessment demonstrated that the experimental group showed significantly greater improvement in developing professional communicative competence compared to the control group. Students who received instruction through the Step Up methodology demonstrated clearer speech organization, greater accuracy in using professional terminology, and stronger interactional skills during communicative tasks. Fluency levels increased notably, as learners exhibited fewer pauses, more natural pacing, and greater continuity in expression. In comparison, the control group showed moderate improvement, but their progress was less consistent and less pronounced across the evaluated criteria.

The most substantial gains in the experimental group were found in interactional communication skills. Students more confidently initiated discussion, maintained dialogue through effective questioning, and demonstrated the ability to respond appropriately to their partners' contributions. Additionally, their speech showed improved pragmatic awareness: they selected register and tone according to communicative purpose, expressed disagreement with greater politeness and clarity, and structured arguments more logically. The use of professional terminology increased not only in quantity but also in contextual accuracy, indicating that learners internalized vocabulary as functional communicative tools rather than isolated lexical items.

Classroom observations further confirmed these findings. Students in the experimental group entered communicative situations with visibly greater willingness and reduced hesitation. They gradually shifted from relying on model expressions to adapting them creatively in new contexts, demonstrating that the modeled patterns had been internalized rather than memorized mechanically. By the final weeks of the study, many students independently initiated extended discussions and took leadership roles in collaborative speaking tasks.

Student feedback collected through questionnaires and interviews also highlighted the positive impact of the Step Up methodology. Learners reported that the gradual progression from observation to imitation, adaptation, and independent production helped them overcome fear of speaking and develop confidence in professional communication settings. They emphasized that the staged support allowed them to focus first on understanding communicative patterns and only later on producing their own speech, which reduced anxiety and improved performance quality.

Overall, the results indicate that the Step Up methodology provides an effective and adaptable instructional framework for enhancing students' professional communicative competence, particularly in mixed-level university classrooms.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Step Up methodology meaningfully contributes to the development of students' professional communicative competence, particularly when compared to more traditional communicative instructional practices. The structured progression from modeling to guided practice and then to independent professional communication tasks appears to be a key factor in supporting student growth. This sequencing provided students with both linguistic scaffolding and a cognitive pathway for internalizing

communicative patterns, which aligns with constructivist learning principles suggesting that learners acquire new skills more effectively when complex performance is built gradually upon simpler, supported forms of practice.

The improvement observed in interactional and pragmatic communication skills suggests that professional competence in a foreign language cannot be developed solely through vocabulary acquisition or grammar-focused exercises. Instead, learners benefit from explicit exposure to communicative strategies—such as how to negotiate, clarify, persuade, or respond to feedback in context-specific scenarios. This supports previous research in CLIL and ESP methodologies, which emphasizes that professional language must be integrated with authentic communicative intent in order to develop functional proficiency rather than rote reproduction of terminology.

The results also indicate that modeling plays a central role in shaping learners' communicative behavior. Students who were exposed to clear, meaningful, and contextually appropriate communication models were not only able to imitate these patterns initially but gradually adapted them to new communicative situations. This suggests that the Step Up methodology does not promote mechanical memorization. Instead, it provides students with transferable communicative frameworks that they can modify creatively when participating in new discourse tasks—a key attribute of professional competence.

Another significant point emerging from the data is the reduction of communication anxiety among experimental group students. The gradual increase in task complexity appeared to help students build confidence before engaging in open-ended communication. Interviews showed that students valued being given time to observe, practice, and refine their performance before being expected to produce language independently. This finding resonates with research in affective language learning, which emphasizes that psychological comfort is an essential precondition for active participation in communicative tasks.

CONCLUSION

The Step Up methodology is an effective instructional model for developing professional communicative competence. By offering structured scaffolding and progressive communicative challenges, it allows learners to gain confidence and autonomy in professional communication settings. Implementation of this methodology can significantly enhance the communicative readiness of future specialists.

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