

Душунч Ханна Андрійівна,
Candidate at the Department of Management and Public Administration, teacher of the Department of Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes, Chernihiv National University of Technology, 14027, Chernihiv, Str. T. Shevchenko, 95, tel.: 0462 665 117, e-mail: anyahaidai@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-4240-5391

Дивнич Ганна Андріївна,
здобувач кафедри менеджменту та державного управління, викладач кафедри іноземних мов професійного спрямування, Чернігівський національний технологічний університет, 14027, м. Чернігів, вул. Т. Шевченка, 95, тел.: 0462 665 117, e-mail: anyahaidai@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-4240-5391

Дивнич Анна Андреевна,
соискатель кафедры менеджмента и государственного управления, преподаватель кафедры иностранных языков профессионального направления, Черниговский национальный технологический университет, 14027, г. Чернигов, ул. Т. Шевченко, 95, тел.: 0462 665 117, e-mail: anyahaidai@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-4240-5391



PROGRAMS AND METHODS OF IMPROVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPETENCE OF CIVIL SERVANTS OF UKRAINE

Abstract. This article studies the available opportunities for improving the level of English language competence of civil servants of Ukraine. In particular, the programs offered in the system of higher education and post-graduate training, as well as English-language courses for civil servants of non-governmental organizations are considered. Separate proposals for further steps in the direction of improving English language competence among civil service officers are given.

Keywords: English language competence, civil servants, educational programs, methods of training, post-graduate training.

ПРОГРАМИ ТА МЕТОДИ ПІДВИЩЕННЯ АНГЛОМОВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ ДЕРЖАВНИХ СЛУЖБОВЦІВ УКРАЇНИ

Анотація. У статті розглядаються наявні можливості щодо підвищення рівня англійської мовної компетентності державних службовців України. Зокрема,

розглядаються програми, наявні у системі вищої освіти та післядипломної підготовки, а також курси недержавних організацій, які пропонують відповідні освітні послуги для фахівців у сфері державного управління. Виокремлені пропозиції щодо подальших кроків у напрямі покращення англомовної підготовки працівників державної служби.

Ключові слова: англомовна компетентність, державні службовці, програми навчання, методи навчання, післядипломна освіта.

ПРОГРАММЫ И МЕТОДЫ ПОВЫШЕНИЯ АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТИ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ СЛУЖАЩИХ УКРАИНЫ

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются существующие возможности для повышения уровня англоязычной компетентности государственных служащих Украины. В частности, рассматриваются программы, предлагаемые в системе высшего образования и последипломной подготовки, а также курсы негосударственных организаций, которые предоставляют соответствующие образовательные услуги для специалистов в сфере государственного управления. Выделены предложения касательно дальнейших шагов в направлении улучшения англоязычной подготовки сотрудников государственной службы.

Ключевые слова: англоязычная компетентность, государственные служащие, программы обучения, методы обучения, последипломное образование.

Target setting. Ukraine's accession to the European political, economic and social space promotes reforms in a number of spheres of our lives, and in governmental structures in particular. Today we are talking about a qualitatively new approach to the formation and functioning of the civil service of Ukraine. The professional qualifications of civil servants are of particular importance and weight in the view of their functions in implementing new laws and norms.

Analysis of basic research and publication. The need for English language competence among the qualification requirements of civil servants was

the subject of a number of scientific studies. Thus, Kolisnichenko N. M. indicates the link between the modernization of the civil service and the use of European civil service experience of the increasing involvement of civil servants from EU member states to an interaction with European institutions and relations within the EU, as well as the need to rethink the essence of the workforce that does not meet the needs of a modern management system. [1] Derbeniova L. V. stressed the importance of taking into account language trends in European political institutions in the formation of domestic public policy institutes, explaining the concept of

“Euro-English” language (Eurospeak). [2] In her turn, Amosova L. V. advocates the need for an intensive foreign language training course for specialists in the field of public administration [3, p. 305].

At the same time, a single comprehensive program of English language training for civil servants, which would meet the current needs of the civil service of Ukraine, is not agreed upon. The network of educational institutions for civil servants training offers classes in English based on the principle of residuality, separately from each other. In addition, there are non-governmental organizations that offer English language courses for people of different levels of education and age. Their place in the system of civil servants training is uncertain. Moreover, the concept of English language competence in relation to civil servants is not used.

The purpose of the article is to study the existing opportunities for the development of English language competence for civil servants, both in the higher education system and in the system of postgraduate education and self-education, and to formulate proposals on the necessary steps in this area.

The statement of basic materials. By the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine of 07.08.15, № 855 “On Amendments to the Typical Curricula of General Educational Institutions”, hours for the study of a foreign language have been increased at the expense of the variable component: 1) from 2 to 3 per week in 6th to 9th grades of schools with Ukrainian language training (according to the new standard); 2) from 2 to 3 in a week in the 8th grade of schools with a Ukrainian lan-

guage of instruction (according to the previous standard); 3) 3 to 3,5 hours in 10th–11th grades of general educational institutions with Ukrainian language training (universal profile). [4] This process is integrated into the general educational system, continues in higher educational institutions of different levels of accreditation, as well as within postgraduate education. According to Alioshyna O. M., the need of our state in highly qualified specialists who are able to establish business contacts and business cooperation with foreign partners, specialists who speak a foreign language at a professional level, is reflected in the working training programs of the country’s higher educational institutions. In most higher educational institutions, students learn at least two foreign languages. The researcher also points out the fact that, unfortunately, in teaching practice, foreign language teachers often use time-tested standard teaching methods. Sometimes the language teaching process continues to be a “somewhat modernized variant” of a grammar-translation method, the essence of which is learning how to read and translate. Nevertheless, the reform of the educational process in Ukrainian universities has already begun in accordance with the European requirements for the quality of education: informatization of educational space, integration processes in modern national education, the establishment of Ukrainian higher educational institutions cooperation with European educational institutions in the field of educational and scientific activities, student international exchanges, the possibility of obtaining a second higher education and studying in master’s

programs abroad. In the conditions of the reform of higher education, educational technologies of foreign languages teaching must obviously change as well. Language education itself is also gradually being modernized through the introduction of modular-rating system of teaching foreign languages, interdisciplinary integration, democratization and economization of education [5, p. 242–243].

Innovative methods of teaching foreign languages, based on humanistic approach, are aimed at the development and cultivation of the individual, the disclosure of reserve capacity and creativity, creating conditions for effective improvement of the educational process in higher education. The basic principles of modern methods are: the movement from the whole to the individual, learner-centered lessons, focus and content of classes, their focus on the achievement of social interaction in the presence of faith in the teacher in the success of his/her students, the integration of language and learning it using knowledge from other branches of science [6, p. 111].

The aim of teaching a foreign language at a higher school at the present stage is to master students' communicative competences, which will enable them to realize their knowledge, skills for solving concrete communication issues in real life situations. Foreign language acts as a means of communication, interaction with representatives of other nations [5, p. 243].

The use of the above mentioned techniques is an excellent way of building English language competence to achieve maximum results, but it is not always possible due to inadequate qua-

lifications of the teachers or lack of motivation among them to apply the latest techniques. Taking into account the different motivation among students, the level of proficiency in English language competence of future civil servants after graduation significantly differs and needs further improvement.

In accordance with the philosophy of lifelong learning, institutes of postgraduate education also offer courses in foreign languages. For example, the Educational-Scientific Institute of Administration and Postgraduate Education of the National University "Lviv Polytechnic" enrolls groups of students for foreign language courses: English, German, French, Polish, which last 3,5 months. In the Institute of Innovation and Postgraduate Education of the Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University advanced training courses are held for psychologists, doctors and medical staff with secondary specialized education in the direction of a foreign language in the field of European and Euro-Atlantic integration (English).

In the National Academy for Public Administration under the President of Ukraine, the study of a foreign language is provided to persons studying in pre-diploma education, within the framework of an optional discipline "Foreign language in professional activities" — English, French, German, where the main forms of educational work are practical classes in a small group (no more than 14 listeners) and independent work. At the same time, in the web-site of the Institute for Advanced Training of Managing Personnel of the NAPA under the President of Ukraine, the direction of studying foreign languages is not singled out.

There is a professional program in the curriculum, without its detailed disclosure, as well as thematic seminars. Among them: “Personnel management and personnel technologies in the government bodies. The introduction of the criterion of necessary knowledge of English when admitting to the civil service”, “Management of educational innovations in the system of professional development. New standards for English language teaching and assessment (CEFR)”. From this we can conclude that the issue of studying English language is studied by civil servants from the theoretical point of view, but it is not clear whether the appropriate practical course has been introduced into the professional qualification program.

Having reviewed the web-sites of local and regional training centers that offer relevant programs for civil servants, we have found that courses for the study of a foreign language and English in particular are available at many of them. For example, the Kyiv City Center for Retraining and Raising Qualification of Employees of Governmental Bodies, Local Governments, State Enterprises, Institutions and Organizations offers its students a specialized short-term language training course (English language) – relevant information on the availability of courses and recruited groups is available on the web-site of the center. On the web-site of the Siverskyi Center for Postgraduate Education (Chernihiv), there is a notice about the beginning of training under the professional English language training program. Not all the civil servants, but only specialists of the apparatus, departments and subdivisions of the oblast state admin-

istration, region state administrations and local councils, which are responsible for issues of European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation, can take part in the classes. Materials from the English language classes by their content are related to the professional activities of the mentioned civil servants. Rivne Oblast Center for Retraining and Raising Qualification of Employees of Governmental Bodies, Local Governments, State Enterprises, Institutions and Organizations offers a specialized short-term training course “Business English” for all employees of state authorities and local self-government. On the web-site of the Ivano-Frankivsk Regional Center for Retraining and Raising Qualification of Employees of Governmental Bodies, Local Governments, State Enterprises, Institutions and Organizations there are links to a number of resources of the global network calling for independent study of a foreign language. At the same time, the thematic permanent workshop “English language” was included in the schedule of training for civil servants and officials of local self-government in 2016. Thus, the study of English is available in the system of postgraduate education for motivated civil servants.

In addition to government agencies, there is a number of private and foreign organizations that offer English language courses and programs for those wishing to study a foreign language in Ukraine. Here are some of them. English courses for adults are available on a regular basis, as well as free online courses (MOOS). International Language Centre – the first in Ukraine international English language learning center offers the appropriate courses for

listeners of all ages. The language center of BOYAR in Lviv offers different forms of English language learning for different age groups and different levels of knowledge, even from scratch. The London School of English in Odessa offers, among other things, an English course for beginners and for those who want to improve their English language skills, as well as a separate course for adults.

By the end of March 2016, the British Council had been conducting courses on professional English language for civil servants in Ukraine. On the website of the British Council in Ukraine, it was noted on this issue that in February and March 2012, 330 public officials participated in the pilot phase of the project. The second phase of the project began in September 2012 and, by March 2013, 780 civil servants were involved in the project. The project was implemented in Kyiv and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (in the cities of Simferopol and Sevastopol). Eight government agencies joined the project consistently from December 2013 to March 2014, and in September 2014 three more government agencies joined. During this period, 224 hours of training were carried out by a group of highly trained teachers for 300 civil servants. The third phase of the project ended in March 2015. April 2015 – March 2016 was defined as the fourth stage of the project. In April 2015, 16 teachers were already working with 400 civil servants. In November 2015 more than 100 public servants of the Presidential Administration joined the project, and the number of teachers increased up to 22 [7].

The Internet provides information on web-sites for distance learning of

English for those who do not have the time and money to attend on-the-job training. For example, editorship of the web-site Ocbira.ua made the following selection with links and explanations: Distance English for beginners, Distance English for intermediate level, Distance course “Business English”, Distance English for advanced level, Distance English course for children [8]. There is also a list of 10 free resources for studying English such as: BBC Learning English – the opportunity to study British English from lower intermediate level (below average); Livemocha – a social network for learning foreign languages, where community members help each other to learn; Bussu – contains plenty of lessons to memorize vocabulary, pronunciation and other aspects of language learning; LinguaLeo – a huge library of video, audio and text materials, contains thematic courses, personal vocabulary with voice acting and a set of trainings; Duolingo – offers numerous written lessons and dictations; ESLPod – Lively American English; Lang8 – allows you to publish any material for checking by the registered native speakers; Engvid – English video tutorials; Exam English – site for those who are preparing for international language exams IELTS, TOEFL and others; Loy-albooks – a web-site with free audio-books in English [9]. These web-sites, of course, do not exhaust the list of available resources, but allow us to imagine the amount of available resources open to those who want to learn English.

More and more popular is becoming the project Lingva.Skills: “Skills Academy” which offers innovative online foreign languages learning tech-

nology, which goal is to improve the knowledge and skills of foreign language proficiency among civil servants in accordance with EU standards. The training is free. Applications are accepted from government agencies that appoint contact persons for organizational moments that may arise in the process of collaborating with the platform, as well as indicate the number of people who want to undergo appropriate training. The course includes an introductory information webinar, first testing to determine the present level of knowledge of English and further tasks. Individuals who successfully complete 80 % of the tasks and complete a test, receive a certificate confirming their English language proficiency. The website states that employees of 14 state institutions are studying according to the program, such as the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, the Ministry of Agrarian Policy of Ukraine, the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, the State Employment Service of Ukraine, the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine, Kyiv state administration, Lviv regional state administration and others [10].

With payment, distance English learning courses are offered by: "FREE WAY online school" (Kyiv), language academy AmES (offices in Lviv, Uzhhorod, Khmelnytsky etc.), the BEST foreign language school (Vyshneve city) and many other organizations throughout Ukraine.

Thus, any one who wants can choose something appropriate, according to financial possibilities, convenience of studying and comfort of using materials.

Conclusions. So, the study of English is included in the programs of general secondary and higher education, as well as offered by many institutions of postgraduate education, which aim to improve the English language competence. In addition, English courses are taught by non-government agencies and are available on the Internet (including free ones). Some of these courses are specially prepared for civil servants, which increases the effectiveness of learning. Professionals who seek to improve their knowledge of a foreign language and English in particular, have a wide range of options. The training process can take place simultaneously in governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as with the inclusion of online courses for studying English at universities and centers of postgraduate education. In recent years, according to available statistics, several thousand of civil servants have completed some English courses.

In our opinion, in connection with such a wide network of organizations and institutions for the training of civil servants, it is important to coordinate them in terms of content and teaching methods so that the study of a foreign language was a logically related process from the moment of enrollment of a potential civil servant to the university and in the future in the system of postgraduate education. A useful resource for interested persons may also be an information page on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, or on another Internet platform with constantly updated information on existing courses and programs for the study of English for civil ser-

vants specially from state and non-state institutions.

In view of this, it is also necessary to assess the effectiveness of existing educational programs in the state educational system. The most indicative source of assessment is the level of English language competence among civil servants. Evaluation of civil servants on this issue can be a starting point for improving the existing system of their preparation, as well as for developing recommendations for the most effective step-by-step process of English language acquisition for use in the civil service. In order to achieve objective results, it is important to involve professionals, including foreign ones, in this process, who can provide an appropriate strategic plan to improve the situation in the field of English competence of civil servants.

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