

УДК 811.111

DOI [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.33989/2075-146X.2025.35.331100](https://doi.org/10.33989/2075-146X.2025.35.331100)

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## **QUALITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING IN THE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

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The article focuses on some ways to increase the quality of foreign language training for the students on the university level, as well as practical experience of using innovative teaching methods in the educational process in Poltava University of Economics and Trade.

The problem of foreign language training methodology has been the subject of numerous theoretical studies by both Ukrainian and international researchers. Nonetheless, one of the most urgent challenges today – to increase the level of motivation of students of non-language specialties of universities to learn English – has not been solved yet. According to the research, a crucial factor in solving this issue is identifying the needs of students in order to increase the quality of the educational process.

In the context of foreign language teaching within higher education, various methods are employed to enhance students' motivation to study and therefore to elevate the efficiency of language training. The article is focused on several key initiatives adapted in Poltava University of Economics and Trade, including exploring strategies to increase the number of academic hours dedicated to foreign language practice, personalizing the foreign language learning approach to better meet individual student needs and integration of native speakers into the language training process to provide students with means to practice speaking and comprehension in real-world contexts.

The results of the research indicate an overall improvement in students' English skills during their university studies and a desire for more language learning hours. The Business Foreign Language Department will use these findings to update training materials and improve English language instruction. The department's experience with surveys highlights their value as a tool for professor-student collaboration, assessing educational quality, and managing improvement.

***Key words:** quality of foreign language training, teaching methods, survey, challenges that arise in the educational process, needs of students, foreign language proficiency*

**Statement of the problem in general and an indication of its connection with important scientific or practical tasks.** Nowadays, English is the main tool of international communication in academic and business environments. Using it as a means of communication is one of the requirements for future specialists in any professional area. The main goal of teaching foreign languages in universities is to provide students with a quality language teaching process to ensure acquiring the skills and abilities to use a foreign language in everyday situations, business and professional communication. Therefore, universities have to develop a qualitative system of foreign language training in order to give their graduates the ability to adequately meet the challenges of the present moment.

The main goals of Poltava University of Economics and Trade are to increase the awareness of the importance of foreign languages for the future of Ukraine among students, professors, and university staff, to stimulate motivation to study of foreign languages, and therefore the level of proficiency in a foreign language; create opportunities for educational, cultural, and professional development of students and professors in order to improve the quality of educational services.

**Analysis of the most important publications in which the solution of the researched problem is initiated and on which the author relies.** The problem of foreign language training methodology has been the subject of numerous theoretical studies by both Ukrainian and international researchers. The works of the

leading scientists have shown that a system of tasks and techniques, different from traditional ones, contributes to a more successful formation of foreign language skills and abilities.

The conducted analysis of scientific and methodological literature reveals that many Ukrainian and international researchers are searching for ways to increase the quality of language training by introducing innovative (interactive) technologies into the educational process.

Ukrainian researchers N. Bilan, A. Bilotserkivets, B. Gridneva, O. Matveyenko, Z. Osada, O. Tymofeeva studied various aspects of teaching foreign languages in non-linguistic higher education institutions, which is especially important for our research. In particular, Z. Osada and O. Matveyenko analyzed modern methods and technologies of teaching foreign languages in technical higher education institutions; N. Bilan studied the communicative method of teaching foreign languages; A. Bilotserkovets analyzed the modern methods of teaching a foreign language in a professional direction, V. Ishchenko and S. Horbunova paid attention to the use of innovative teaching methods for training specialists in the sphere of Economics, Entrepreneurship and Trade. The specific features of teaching Latin or ways of training English pronunciation of students majoring in Philology were also examined, emphasizing the need for incorporating innovative methods and teaching tools in the preparation of philological specialists.

Therefore, the methodology of teaching foreign languages is a complex phenomenon, characterized primarily from the standpoint of the tasks and goals set, which are based on the principles of activity aimed at effectively conveying the necessary foreign language material to students, which should ultimately lead to a high level of language proficiency.

**Distinguishing still unresolved aspects of the scientific problem addressed in this article.** The requirements of modern society and the reform of the educational system in Ukraine are increasingly pushing trainers and lecturers towards the use of methods that promote the development of the creative principles of a personality, taking into account the individual characteristics of the students and the integration of modern technologies and resources to ensure the most impactful execution of the educational process.

Among the most urgent challenges today is to increase the level of motivation of students of non-language specialties of universities to learn English. Addressing this issue requires innovative teaching methods, interdisciplinary approaches, and tailored learning strategies that align with the students' academic and professional goals. A crucial factor in solving this issue is identifying the needs of students in order to increase the quality of the educational process.

**Formulation of the purpose and tasks of the article.** The purpose of the article is to identify the challenges that arise in the educational process; to reveal the needs of the students and to find the ways to satisfy them; to describe the main ways of increasing the quality of foreign language training used at the Poltava University of Economics and Trade (PUET). The task of this research is to describe the methods of training which help to make the process of foreign language training more interesting, more individualized and therefore more efficient and effective.

**Statement of the main material with a full justification of the obtained scientific results.** In the context of integration of Ukraine into the international scientific and educational space, the teaching and studying of English as the language of international communication, is not just one of the pillars of higher education, but it is becoming one of the key issues for meeting such requirements of the Bologna Process as expanding the academic mobility of students, professors and other personnel for mutual enrichment with European experience; increasing the competitiveness of graduates in the domestic, European and global labor markets. Taking into account the opportunities for the students of PUET to have their internship in different countries of the world, the importance of fluency in English, increases dramatically.

Improving the quality of foreign language teaching at the university should be ensured by increasing interest in acquiring knowledge through explanatory work on the role of foreign language proficiency in enhancing the competitiveness of graduates and the mobility of students.

In recent years, the Department of Business Foreign Language has been conducting student surveys as one of the steps to improve the quality of studying and teaching foreign languages at the university. In the 2023-2024 academic year, a student survey was conducted according to the topic "Quality of English Training in the University".

The research had a focus on identifying the following:

- to determine the degree of motivation of students to study foreign languages;
- to investigate if the knowledge of a foreign language acquired during study meets the expectations of students;
- to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of the way the foreign language training is organized in the university;
- to investigate the most effective forms of cooperation between professors and students;
- to find out the opinion of students regarding the level of foreign language training.

The survey was conducted among first – fourth year students of the Educational and Scientific Institute of Day Education, with whom the Department of Business Foreign Language works. 61% of the total number of students was surveyed, namely:

1st year – 205 students,  
2nd year – 94 students,  
3rd year – 61 students,  
4th year – 54 students.

A questionnaire administered to the students covered different aspects of a foreign language training, such as motivation, organization of the educational process, students' assessment of the level of knowledge acquired, etc. The questionnaire included multiple choice questions as well as open-ended questions. The analysis of the results demonstrated that students gave preference to open-ended questions. It proves the fact that not only are the respondents strongly motivated and ready to study hard but also showing their desire to participate in the process of foreign language teaching quality improvement in PUET.

The examples of multiple choice questions in the survey included the following:

- 1) *Do you need to know a foreign language in the future?*
  - a) *not at all necessary*
  - b) *very necessary*
  - c) *difficult to answer*
- 2) *What is your opinion on the level of foreign language teaching at the university?*
  - a) *low*
  - b) *average*
  - c) *high*
- 3) *Have your English language skills improved during your studies at the university?*
  - a) *yes*
  - b) *no*
  - c) *difficult to answer*
- 4) *Which method of foreign language training is the most effective?*
  - a) *classroom*
  - b) *self-study (distance learning)*
  - c) *blended.*

The survey results provided valuable insights. All the surveyed students mentioned the necessity of a foreign language in the future both in everyday life and in their career; 54% of surveyed students rate the level of English teaching as high, 39% as average, and 7% as low.

The vast majority of respondents say that their English language skills have improved during their studies at university; however, in comments some of them note that the degree of these improvements is not significant enough.

As for the most effective methods of foreign language training 89% of the respondents chose blended education.

The examples of the open-ended questions were as follows:

- 1) *In your opinion, the number of hours for foreign language training should be...*
- 2) *What could be done to increase the quality of studying and teaching foreign languages at the university?*
- 3) *The distance learning course should be...*

The responses of students that were of a paramount interest for the researchers were:

- 1) *To increase the number of academic hours for foreign language training (87% of responses).*

The majority of the students spoke in favor of increasing the number of hours for foreign language training. Almost a third of those surveyed are satisfied with the current state of affairs. Students of all years of study highlight the necessity of increasing the allocated hours for English language training, with the most pronounced demand observed in the fourth year students. This is attributed to the significant number of professional disciplines, which leave insufficient time for English language study.

- 2) *To make the process of foreign language training more individualized. (63% of responses).*

As far as the students of PUET come to the university with a different level of English due to their academic background and the challenges of the pandemic and the war period, the Business Foreign Language Department worked out a system of entry test for the first-year students. During the first week at the university all students are checked for their foreign language proficiency and they start language training in the groups with the same level (A1, A2, B1, B2). Each course is structured in alignment with established guidelines for teaching English at the corresponding proficiency level, ensuring that the materials, vocabulary, and grammar are tailored to meet the specific needs and abilities of the students. It makes the process more effective and efficient and moreover language training is comfortable for all the students.

- 3) *To involve native speakers into the process of foreign language training in order to practice speaking and comprehension skills. (58% of responses).*

While the process may require significant planning and resources, the benefits of engaging native speakers in the educational process are recognized as invaluable in promoting linguistic and cultural fluency. Although the idea of inviting native speakers is a challenging one, some steps are made to satisfy this need.

Professors of the Business Foreign Language Department in cooperation with the Educational and Scientific Center for Quality Assurance of Higher Education worked on the plan for increasing the quality of language training and increasing the satisfaction of students. This plan included the following points:

- 1) To work out the ways to increase the number of academic hours for foreign language training.
- 2) To personalize the foreign language training strategy.
- 3) To practice speaking and understanding by incorporating native speakers into the foreign language instruction process.

In order to increase the number of hours for practical training of English skills the department initiated the student science club "Speaking Club". Students of different specialties get together on a weekly basis to discuss different topics. Among the topics under discussion are: "The art of communication", "Stress management", "Culture and traditions of English speaking countries" etc. "Speaking Club" provides students with a platform to practice and improve their communication skills, helps students articulate complex ideas more clearly and effectively, fosters collaboration and critical thinking. In response to the need of students to practice speaking and listening skills with native speakers, the professors of the Business Foreign Language Department invite language trainers from Germany and the USA. Our colleagues (professor Candida Johnson, Dr. Hartmut Quehl, Dr. Olena Kobzar) participate in meetings of discussion lovers. This collaboration broadens students' knowledge and helps cultivate a genuine interest in continuous learning.

Since university education involves the development of an individualized educational trajectory, different elective courses were developed for the students of second – fourth years. Among them: "English (A2)", "English (B1)", "English (B2)", "Business English (A2)", "Business English (B1)". These courses ensure the continuity of education and make the process of language training more personalized as these distance courses were developed with the idea that students can work with the materials in the convenient time and with a suitable pace.

As far as the students expressed the idea that a communicative approach to language training is preferable, the courses are planned to be reorganized to satisfy the needs of language learners. So, next year the students will be offered the following courses: "Communicative Course of English (A2)", "Communicative Course of English (B1)", and "Communicative Course of English (B2)". This restructuring will involve integrating more interactive and student-centered teaching methods that emphasize real-life communication, problem-solving and practical language use in diverse contexts.

In response to the requirement to personalize the foreign language training strategy, the professors of the Business Foreign Language Department developed "The Online English Language Marathon". It takes place every semester and lasts from 6 to 10 weeks. Among the topics offered are "Lifelong education", "Emotional intelligence", "Digital trail", "The language of social media", "Routines". The materials of the marathon include theoretical materials, practical exercises, and tasks for listening. Each week finishes with a test for self-evaluation. The online format allows for greater accessibility, enabling students to participate from anywhere and at any time, making language learning more convenient and adaptable to their schedules.

To raise the level of motivation to study foreign languages the professors of the Business Foreign Language Department invite students to participate in an annual language festival "Linguafest" which includes round table talks, tongue twister battles, competitions for the best knowledge of grammar, the best essay, best translation of the poetry and fiction. This event offers students a unique opportunity to actively engage with the language learning process in a fun and interactive way. The festival encourages healthy competition, collaboration, and a sense of community among students, making the process of learning a foreign language both enjoyable and rewarding.

**Results of the research and prospects for further development of this thematic area.** A significant number of students have a personal motivation to study foreign languages. The survey results confirm that, in general, students note an improvement in their English language skills during their studies at the university, and are in favor of increasing the number of hours devoted to studying a foreign language.

The data obtained in this research will be taken into account by the Business Foreign Language Department when developing and updating training materials and planning measures to improve the level of learning and teaching of English. The experience of conducting surveys by the department confirms their importance as a form of cooperation between professors and students, a source of information for assessing the quality of the educational process and a means of quality management. In the future, it is necessary to continue to work out the mechanisms of research to study the factors influencing language training at the university.

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### **ЯКІСТЬ ПІДГОТОВКИ З ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ В СИСТЕМІ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ: ВИКЛИКИ ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ**

У статті розглядаються деякі напрями підвищення якості викладання іноземних мов студентам вищих навчальних закладів, а також практичний досвід використання інноваційних методів навчання у навчальному процесі в Полтавському університеті економіки і торгівлі.

Проблема методики викладання іноземних мов є предметом численних теоретичних досліджень як українських, так і іноземних науковців. Проте одне з найбільш актуальних завдань сьогодення – підвищення рівня мотивації студентів немовних спеціальностей ЗВО до вивчення англійської мови – досі не вирішене. Як показують дослідження, вирішальним фактором у цьому є виявлення потреб студентів з метою підвищення якості освітнього процесу.

У контексті викладання іноземних мов у закладах вищої освіти застосовуються різні методи для підвищення мотивації студентів до навчання, а отже, й ефективності мовної підготовки. У статті розглядаються кілька ключових ініціатив, запроваджених у Полтавському університеті економіки і торгівлі, зокрема стратегії збільшення кількості навчальних годин, присвячених мовній практиці, персоналізація підходу до вивчення іноземної мови з метою кращого задоволення індивідуальних потреб студентів та інтеграція носіїв мови у процес мовної підготовки, щоб надати студентам можливість практикувати говоріння та розуміння мови в реальному контексті.

Результати дослідження свідчать про загальне покращення рівня володіння англійською мовою студентами під час навчання в університеті та побажання щодо збільшення кількості годин навчання іноземній мові. Кафедра ділової іноземної мови використовує ці результати для оновлення навчальних матеріалів та вдосконалення викладання англійської мови. Досвід кафедри у використанні опитувань підкреслює їхню цінність як інструменту для співпраці викладачів і студентів, оцінки якості освіти та управління процесом її вдосконалення.

**Ключові слова:** *якість підготовки з іноземної мови, методи навчання, опитування, виклики, які виникають у навчальному процесі, потреби студентів, володіння іноземною мовою*

Стаття надійшла до редакції 03.02.2025 р.