



The Importance of Implementing Soft Skills into Business English Classes

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Abstract

The demand in developing teaching skills and soft skills has become “just-in-time” necessity. In this article we would like to signify importance of soft skills in professional development of teachers and business learners. It is revealed that leadership, risk taking, competitive spirit, great communication skills, creativity, personal and professional skills are common for both teachers and business people. Our experience at the Republican Graduate School of Business and Management shows that soft skills are more effective in teaching Business English, where a teacher serves as a role-model. Listeners of Republican Graduate school on the example of their companies make research, which includes teamwork, leadership skills, communication skills, problem solving skills, work ethic, adaptability and flexibility, and interpersonal skills. As a result of this experience the specialists from different business sectors get equipped for future business activities.

In order to improve learners' knowledge teachers should themselves acquire soft skills or 21 century skills in order to cultivate these in learners and provide the society with skilled professionals. Our research is based on the experience and employs descriptive and analytical-comparative methods.

Key words: *teaching skills, business skills, soft skills, experience.*

Introduction

The developed countries in the world emphasize on education and business communication first. To get progress in the development our country also focuses on these two spheres. Nowadays soft skills are demanded so as economy becomes known as 21st century high skilled economy. Thus, taking teachers and businessmen as an example, we can state that it is important to acquire 21 century skills for them, so as to strengthen the future of our republic. One of the essential reasons for education is to prepare students to be successful participants in the marketplace. So, what does the marketplace want? Are we organizing our learning environment to empower students to have necessary qualities? There is a range of hard skills – such as data analysis and software engineering – and even more soft skills – such as leadership, collaboration, and problem solving – that is growing in demand in the job market. Does our teaching reflect this? [7] XXI century has marked the rapid integration of information technologies in people's lives. Hence, the flow of information increased in numbers. Government of Republic of Uzbekistan by creating opportunities for English learners to achieve success in both educational and workplace environments and join a global academic and workplace community supports educational process in our country. A great variety of educational grants and need for making international agreements trigger our citizens to learn English. The necessity of raising English teachers' skills and qualification are notified in number of governmental decrees and decisions, for instance PP-2909 of April 20, 2017 "On measures for the further development of the system of higher education", The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan of August 29, 1997 "On Education"; "National training program" of 29 August 1997. Consequently, having basis for developing educational system we, teachers, should cultivate necessary skills both in ourselves and in our growing generation.

The importance of developing teaching skills

International research studies done by Uppsala Universitet emphasize three aspects when defining teaching skills. They focus on

- What teachers do (different kinds of abilities)
- Different kinds of knowledge that teachers need in order to be able to act in the best possible way
- Attitudes and underpinning values that teachers embrace and apply. [4]

According to our research data of 2017 the majority of multidisciplinary teachers pointed that they are hardworking but not organized, lack of leadership and motivation, and hardly exercise reflection in teaching and learning [13]. This fact serves the reason for turning to the issue of developing teaching



skills. Sometimes such factors as the age of learners, their social background, level of knowledge (in multilevel class) and etc. make it difficult to conduct a lesson. Hence, to regulate the situation in the classroom easily it is advisable for every teacher regularly upgrade their teaching skills. As teaching business English has become “just-in-time” necessity we need good English specialists who will provide with professional service entrepreneurs, government and non-government organizations and the whole business society. At Republican graduate school of business and management we teach specialists from significant corporations of both governmental and private sectors, who aim to be able to communicate in English with business partners. We share the viewpoint stated in the E-book called *Build up your business English skills with Macmillan Education* by Fauzia Eastwood “Communication with our students is key here and we need to use it to identify and prioritize the business skills that are important for them. Language input and presentation are essential, but we also need to look at the communication strategies students can integrate that language within and give them meaningful and realistic opportunities to practices using them.” Our main goal is to deliver knowledge for improving students’ language skills and soft skills. For these needs it is actual to be aware of essential modern skills, understand their beneficial influence to business society and implement them in the working activity. “Key competencies can be identified on the basis that they make a measurable contribution to educational attainment, relationship, employment, and health and well-being outcomes, and do so for all individuals, not only those in a specific trade, occupation, or walk of life” [11]. The dynamic of development in all spheres depends on effective educational process where mastery in teaching has tremendous impact on formation of skilled specialists. Teachers attitudes to their profession and the way of cultivating cultural and spiritual values in their disciples reflect in shaping young generation’s worldview and accepting the life. So, it is crucial for teachers work on themselves.

Our study on teaching skills and business skills

During the last several months we studied materials on teaching skills and business skills basing on internet sources. The results of our studies showed that most demanded qualities for businessmen and teachers are almost similar: leadership skills, risk taking, Competitive spirit, Personal and professional skills, Creativity, and Great communication skills.

On the bases of comparison we can state that the teacher with good teaching skills can be considered as the role- model for the future businessman. Thus, we can see that these skills complement what is now known as 21 century skills. “More than technological expertise, 21st century skills refer to content knowledge, literacies and proficiencies that prepare individuals to meet the challenges and opportunities of today’s world,” stated the Kamehameha Schools report, An Overview of 21st Century Skills. The Ontario Public Service developed the following categories of 21st century competencies have been shown to have measurable benefits in multiple areas of life:

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Innovatio, creativity, and enrepreneurship
- Communication
- Collaboration(teamwork)
- A growth mindset (metacognition/learning to learn to learn, perseverance, and resilience)
- Local,global, and digital citizenship [19]

Hanover Research recently analyzed six major educational frameworks designed to improve the development of 21st century skills. While each framework has slightly different list of critical 21st century skills, all agree on four critical areas for development:

- Collaboration and teamwork
- Creativity and imagination
- Critical thinking
- Problem solving

MHA Labs chose 21st century skills to highlight the shift from a more structured 20th century basic skills economy to a fragmented 21st century high skilled economy. Now, all youth and adults must possess these skills in order to access higher quality education and career opportunities [14]. As the result of internet sources review we can conclude that contemporary teachers are supposed to have 21st century skills , which is synonymous with soft skills, so as to prepare the youth to meet the challenges and opportunities of today’s world

From our experience

To prepare good professionals for business world it’s crucial to obtain good teaching and business skills. “The term English for Business is wider and it represents every linguistic aspect used



in **business areas**: accounting, commerce, e-commerce, finance, HR, insurance, IT, law, manufacturing, marketing, production, property, the stock exchange, (international) trade, transport and the **business communication activities**: presentations, negotiations, meetings, correspondence, or report writing" [7]. In our business school among listeners we have great range of specialists who aim to have a career growth and upgrade their knowledge and skills starting from engineers and accountants up to CEO from different sectors of economy. According to the requirement of our graduate school which is in the stage of entering the world market, soft skills are necessary for both teachers and students. As our Professor Yoko Toyoshima says: "In fact, teachers talk about actual business cases with business people rather often. This opportunity may surely make teachers clearly understand the business itself and accordingly create appropriate English expressions, vocabularies, idioms and other soft skills as well." We have worked out a new programme which includes all aspects of language and soft skills that we need to be successful.

We, ESP teachers, permanently work on our professional development: in 2018-2019 academic year we took short term international on-line courses and participated in seminars hold at our school by business experts from different international organizations such as International Project Management Associations, European school of management and technology (Germany), Asian Development Bank (Uzbekistan), Freedom invest to mention but four. We have improved our knowledge of soft skills which we regularly implement during our classes. By incorporating media resources to the teaching process we successfully develop language skills, in particular listening and speaking. By introducing business articles we try to develop reading skills and critical thinking in our learners. By studying samples of business correspondence the students practice writing similar letters, memos, ads, etc. We also pay special attention on ethical issues at work as well as develop intercultural communication skills which is crucial in our modern world.

Creating good learning environment, we empower students to have necessary qualities for conducting their future business. The scope of the informative material presented in the form of presentations, cases and articles for discussion, fragments from films and special video materials makes it interesting for students actively participate and implement the acquired knowledge during the class time. On every lesson they practice both language skills and soft skills, i.e. using specific business vocabulary and grammatical constructions they make presentations, conduct meetings, have negotiations and deal with dilemmas. Listeners of our graduate school on the example of their companies or other organizations make research, which help them to develop presentation skills, leadership skills, communication skills, team management, problem solving skills, work ethic, adaptability and flexibility and interpersonal skills.

As a result of this experience our specialists are equipped for future business activities. It is noted to say that for the last 3 years during their scheduled internships to Korea they employed these language and soft skills and had good experience and feedback.

Conclusion

Concluding the article we would like to signify that specialists with knowledge of international language and soft skills are demanded in the marketplace. The most important skills for teachers and learners are leadership, risk taking, competitive spirit, great communication skills, creativity, personal and professional skills. They are common for both teachers and business people. It is necessary to point out that learning and developing soft skills is vital for teachers, especially for Business English teachers as they deal with adult learners who need communication skills for making business successful. We recommend all English teachers to update their skills on the regular bases and implement in the classes. In order to improve learners' knowledge a teacher should develop his/her mastery in teaching language and soft skills. Creating opportunities for business English learners to achieve success in both educational and workplace environments and join a global academic and workplace community should be our everyday duty.

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