

## **РОЗДІЛ 3 – ПРОБЛЕМИ ПЕДАГОГІКИ ВИЩОЇ ШКОЛИ**

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### **FOREIGN LANGUAGE AS MEANS TO FORM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS GENDER COMPETENCE**

Vasylchenko O.

*Zaporizhzhya National University, Zhukovsky str., 66, Zaporizhzhya, Ukraine*

elenapost@ukr.net

The article is devoted to the problem of forming gender competence of university students by means of foreign language at the lesson of English for Specific Purposes. The necessity of implementation of gender component into learning material is grounded. The main methods and forms of forming gender competence of future specialists are considered.

*Keywords: gender competence, gender equality, university students, foreign language.*

### **ІНОЗЕМНА МОВА ЯК ЗАСІБ ФОРМУВАННЯ ГЕНДЕРНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ**

Васильченко О. І.

*Запорізький національний університет, вул. Жуковського, 66, м. Запоріжжя, Україна*

elenapost@ukr.net

Стаття присвячена питанню формування гендерної компетентності студентів університету засобами іноземної мови під час викладання дисципліни «Англійська мова професійно-комунікативної спрямованості». Обґрунтовується необхідність впровадження гендерного компоненту у зміст навчального матеріалу. Розглянуто основні форми та методи формування гендерної компетентності майбутніх спеціалістів.

*Ключові слова: гендерна компетентність, гендерна рівність, студенти університету, іноземна мова.*

### **ИНОСТРАННЫЙ ЯЗЫК КАК СРЕДСТВО ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ ГЕНДЕРНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТИ СТУДЕНТОВ УНИВЕРСИТЕТА**

Васильченко Е. И.

*Запорожский национальный университет, ул. Жуковского, 66, г. Запорожье*

elenapost@ukr.net

Статья посвящена проблеме формирования гендерной компетентности студентов университета средствами иностранного языка во время преподавания дисциплины «Английский язык профессионально-коммуникативной направленности». Обоснована необходимость введения гендерного компонента в содержание учебного материала. Рассмотрены основные формы и методы формирования гендерной компетентности будущих специалистов.

*Ключевые слова: гендерная компетентность, гендерное равенство, студенты университета, иностранный язык.*

Ukrainian National Strategy of Education Development for 2012-2021 has stated the main goals and ways of their implementation in the system of education of our country. It was pointed out the importance of youth socialization and development in the direction of recognizing by students their European and national identity and ability to live in modern, changeable and competitive world [1].

Thus, Ukrainian system of education faces the necessity to focus on such issues like youth' social activity, responsibility and tolerance and needs to create condition for students' development, their successful socialization and further professional improvement. At the same time it is necessary to

emphasize the role of education in prevention of deviant behavior among young people (violence, aggression), forming their healthy life style, responsible parenthood.

Additionally the agenda of lifelong learning concept of European countries was proclaimed as forming key competences and their implementation in the system of education. These competences “are defined here as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfillment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment” [2].

Among these skills there is a person’s communication in foreign language and “horizontal skills” such as social and civic responsibility, cultural awareness. It is necessary to emphasize that key competences points out personal fulfillment. So, there is challenge for higher education to train future specialist who will have mentioned competences, abilities along with his or her personal fulfillment.

We share an idea that the content of education must correspond to actual issues and strategy of the state and personal development of those who study. Taking into account the necessity of our learning content to be actual for students it is necessary to stress that gender equality is one the main goals for Ukraine according to the Millennium Development Goals Program by the UNO [3]. Gender equity is not only valuable in itself, but essential for promoting human development and responds to the task of personal fulfillment. “

Promoting gender equality is a core activity for the EU: equality between women and men is a fundamental EU value” [4]. So, to our mind future specialists’ gender competence must be defined as one of the main issues of higher education system due to the fact that it corresponds to the main demand of European society, i.e. human development, personal fulfillment and equality between women and men in different areas of society.

Demand of a modern society for a new type of a specialist who meets declared competences and has abilities and skills to perform high efficiency in interpersonal relations and interacts with other people at the workplace both individually and in groups fostered our conclusion that gender competence should be a part of professional competence of a future specialist as it states the principle of equal relationship between all participants of communication and fosters personal fulfillment.

Thus, we believe that a question of finding new forms and ways to form gender competence of future specialists of the university has arisen in modern education system of our country. We think that one of the main tasks of the modern higher school education should be search for new methods to form future specialists with gender competence that can help them to be effective in interpersonal relationships and to promote their self-realization.

The problem of professional competence is considered in the works by V. Bolotova, O. Ovcharuk, S. Vitvitska, V. Zhukovskiy, I. Zymnya, A. Hutorskiy and others.

M. Mulder writes that professional competence is seen as the generic, integrated and internalized capability to deliver sustainable effective performance and consists of various competencies. “A competency is a part of generic competence; it is a coherent cluster of knowledge, skills and attitudes which can be utilized in real performance contexts” [5]. So, we can propose that gender competence is internalized capability to perform effectively in interpersonal relations and consists of competencies of gender knowledge; skills which can be can be utilized in interpersonal communication.

The term “gender” refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures[6].

The problem of gender competence of a future specialist was highlighted in the works by T. Golovanova, T. Doronina, T. Drozhzhina, S. Hryshak, O. Kikinezhdi, I. Muntayn, G. Fesenko, I. Zagaynov.

Despite the fact that gender studies developed in the 80-90<sup>th</sup> of the last century there were some different interpretations of key issues. Three main gender theories have become the most widespread in scientific literature. They are: theory of social construction, gender as a stratification category and gender as a social metaphor [7].

In the context of our analysis the most suitable for us is the theory of social construction of gender. According to this theory gender is considered as organized model of social relations between men and women that constructed by the main institutions of society. This approach based on two postulates: 1) gender is constructed during socialization; 2) gender is formed by individuals at the level of their consciousness (gender identity), acceptance of social norms and their assimilation.

The most popular view is to consider socialization as the process of person's integration in social environment with his or her further cultural assimilation [8]. We can assume that scientific investigation of gender in different spheres of society, Women's Studies have led to the recognition of necessity to form idea of coexistence of representatives of different sexes, cultures. This idea might meet the need of society for respect and dignity of a person and effective communication between people of different sexes, cultures, races and so on. Thus, to our mind, the idea of gender equality has arisen.

Gender equality is an equal legal status of women and men and equal opportunities for its implementation that allows both men and women take part in all areas of society [9]. It gives possibility for every person to perform effectively not at the workplace but in their personal lives. New challenges of our society as its multicultural character, needs for personal flexibility, people's abilities to perform different roles and work in team avoiding aggression, gender stereotypes and using non-violent problem-solving practices dictate necessity for future specialists to possess not just professional knowledge, skills but ability to understand others, respect other's opinion, organize interpersonal partnership in future professional activity. So, future professionals are called upon implementation of the gender equality in different areas of society.

The aim of our article is to describe the practice of forming future specialists' gender competence at English lesson at the university.

Students of university are young people of 17-22 years old. Events that young people had before become their basic determinants of socio and cultural guidelines that direct their behavior in future activity [10]. Students come to the university with formed beliefs, stereotypes about roles of men and women in different areas of life. It happens due to the agents of socialization (kindergarten, school, subculture and so on) and family. Parents' relations affect children and lead to their assimilation of norms of behavior which associated with child's sex. Socio and normative parents' beliefs demonstrated to a kid, through mother's and father's interpersonal relationship, become patterns of behavior between men and women for a child in future [11].

This way a person develops and identifies himself or herself as a representative of that or other sex with norms of behavior for different situations, so a man or a woman gets a set of gender roles and stereotypes [12].

Thus, young future specialists experiencing their cultural and gender peculiarities that they got before entering the university can perform interpersonal relationship based not only on gender idea of equality but dominance of one of sexes.

So, we think that a specialist with gender competence will be a new type of a professional who is free from gender stereotypes and prejudices that interfere person's fulfillment.

A new gender sensitive environment should be created at the university. In this case it is necessary to point out the importance of taking into account students' gender characteristics, their personal achievements which will boost students' self-confidence and make it easier for future specialists to find better jobs, take part in decision making process and engage in public debate.

Gender competencies at work can include:

- the capacity to set project selection criteria that reflect the gender equality objectives;
- a comprehensive understanding of gender mainstreaming and of the importance of the selection criteria on gender equality;
- a clear top-down strategy regarding the coherent integration of gender equality into all the program procedures [13]. Gender competence is the knowledge that behavior of women and men is socially stipulated in their daily life according to existing gender stereotypes.

Gender competence implies the ability to recognize this and ensures that equal opportunities are opened to all people [14].

To distinguish students' gender competence we generalized professional and gender competences. It has three main components: knowledge, skills and attitude. We have come to the conclusion that gender competence of university students is based on the idea of gender equality that means awareness of gender stereotypes, prejudices about the role of women and men in society (gender knowledge), skills of gender sensitive communication (avoiding verbal sexism, aggression), gender-responsive attitude (to be aware of gender issues).

Taking into account that we based on the theory of social construction of gender it is very important to create conditions for students' assimilation of parts of gender competence.

To solve the problem we have found possibility to implement gender component into teaching/learning material at the university by means of foreign language.

“Language conveys messages beyond the meaning of words. A prime message in the English language is that males are the norm and the females are exceptions” [15, p.127]. Language as a reflection of society's culture demonstrates the relationship between men and women and their position in our society. There is a relationship between our language use and our social reality. That is very important not to ignore one of the parts of the humanity, women, to achieve gender equity.

“If we “erase” women from language, that makes it easier to maintain gender inequality. As Professor Sherryl Kleinman (2000:6) has argued, [M]ale-based generics are another indicator—and, more importantly, a reinforce—of a system in which “man” in the abstract and men in the flesh are privileged over women’ [16].

To help students clarify their personal beliefs about the roles of women and men it is necessary to balance academic literature introducing the real world where women succeed in non-traditional fields like engineering, and men succeed in nursing [17].

English for Specific Purposes is taught for students of university who don't have English as specialized subject. Formation of gender competence was provided by implementation of gender component into teaching / learning material. It was defined the main ways of its realization:

- gender oriented content of teaching/ learning material;
- gender-sensitive/neutral communication.

Our gender analysis of some teaching material has shown that it is frequently gender-biased. Teachers, lecturers do not perceive some images and texts as sexist. As a result students learning English continue to assimilate and teachers continue to transmit norms that men are for work, women are for home. The content of the academic material proceeds fixating gender stereotypes leading to the limitation students' self-development in all spheres of their lives.

According to our analysis of educational material it often contains stereotyped characterizations of men and women, their roles, for example, “*Who does the cooking and looks after the house? – It's all in the hands of my mother. Of course, my sisters help her*”, “*Does your daughter help your around the house?*”, “*My son can do this work by himself*”, “*Our cousin is only 5, but she likes to look at herself in the mirror*”. In our opinion there is a hidden form of women's discrimination as

the content of the teaching material stresses the roles of men and women according to gender stereotypes.

That is why the first task was to enrich educational content by situation where men and women worked in non-traditional for them positions, for example, a man as a teacher of primary school, a woman as a director of enterprise. It was interesting for students to discuss possibility for people to change their roles according to the demands of society and individual characteristics of a person. Students worked in pairs to dramatize the situations. They had opportunity to understand others as it put students in the role of people who were faced with gender determined situations.

Special attention was made to students' specialities.. Thus, students of pedagogical specialities were proposed to analyze psychological peculiarities of their future pupils (clients). While studying a module "Describing People" boys and girls defined the fact that every person is unique and can have variety of gender characteristics, for example, not all boys are active and aggressive, not all girls are shy and passive. At the same time for students of technical specialities we proposed to give characteristic of their future director, to find information about real world chief executive officers and present their achievements emphasizing their personal qualities.

It was important for us to demonstrate how gender stereotypes and prejudices work in society's culture due to the traditions, customs and that a person has a set of gender characteristics that cannot be always associated only with one sex. It gave us possibility to introduce students what gender equality is and to explain that it is able to provide effective interpersonal relations in different spheres of their lives avoiding discrimination, aggression. Interpreting gender idea to students we tried to focus on the usefulness for them to follow and support gender strategy as it promotes person's fulfillment in spite of gender biases.

At the same time our task was to fill teaching / learning material with gender-neutral words. University students have traditionally been taught to use masculine pronouns and nouns in case where the gender of their subjects is variable. For example, textbooks often propose to ask friend *if he can speak English; if he can swim, if his friends can play hockey*. Besides, masculine nouns predominate in Ukrainian language especially in documents and rules too.

To use only pronoun *he*, where the gender of the subject is variable has become a usual case and perpetuated in both students' and teachers' minds. As for students at first it was hard to explain them that they erase women not only from the learning content but make women's contribution to our society invisible and negligible.

To emphasize the presence not only men but women in the educational content we used both pronouns she and he. Proposing students to do exercise we said, for instance, *ask your friend, if he or she can speak English etc*. Studying the topic "Sport" there was a possibility to use gender neutral words (sportspeople, sportsperson) and speak about contribution of men and women into the development of sport in the country.

To foster reflection and evaluate the results we proposed students to write essay about their experience on different topics, for example, "The role of a mother (father) in the family", "Parents are stricter to girls than to boys" and so on. Students wrote their opinion about these issues and some of them, if they wanted, read his or her essay to the groupmates. Such kind of work helped boys and girls to understand each other better, to feel empathy, to share their experience and at the same time it revealed gender stereotypes and prejudices.

So, during discipline English for Specific Purposes students had possibility to form not only their foreign language competence but gender competence as well.

Thus, we believe that gender competence should be one of the parts of professional competence of students as it gives equal opportunity for their free development, self-realization and effective performance at work and in interpersonal relations.

University as one of the agents of socialization can create environment for forming gender competence through implementation of gender component in educational content of different

disciplines. It will give opportunity not to load curriculum excessively. All parts of gender competence as gender knowledge, skills of gender sensitive communication, gender-responsive attitude are inseparable.

We came to the conclusion that forming gender competence mostly depends on teachers, lecturers who share gender idea and support it. That is why the perspective of our research we see in finding ways to involve academic staff and students of the university more in the process of gender strategy implementation and forming gender competence especially.

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