

## РОЗДІЛ ІХ. ПЕДАГОГІКА ВИЩОЇ ШКОЛИ

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### WAYS TO RAISE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS GENDER AWARENESS AT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE LESSONS

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The article is devoted to the analysis and description of the practice of raising university students' gender awareness at the lesson of Foreign Language for Specific Purposes. The study was in the frame of the formation of a new type of specialist who could respond to the existing gender stereotypes and prejudice regarding the role of men and women in society.

The proposed problem for discussion was defined as well by the challenges that Ukrainian society, and system of higher education in particular, face today. It is the necessity of searching new forms, methods that can provide future professionals not only with knowledge and skills essential for their productive future work, but skills and ability that will allow them to be effective in their interpersonal relations at workplace and personal lives.

It was stated that subject "Foreign Language for Specific Purposes" gave the opportunity for students not only to master it but used its content to implement an idea of gender equality. Due to the presenting certain information about gender aspects of different spheres of society, as gender as a social construct penetrates every sphere of people's lives and is crucial in people's interrelations and self-realization, students had possibility to analyze their own experience of gender socialization and identify gender problems in their lives.

The present finding describes the experience of the gender component implementation in the content of the discipline "Foreign Language for Specific Purposes" in order to inform students about the idea of gender equality and its benefits for their self-fulfillment not only in their future professional activity but in their public and private domains. Successful forms and methods were identified and verified at the practical lessons at university due to the observation and interviews with students.

The main issues of gender component implementation that promotes students' gender knowledge accumulation were determined. Students' interpersonal communication was defined as the main factor of raising gender awareness as it is one of the psychophysiological needs of students' age. Through teaching/learning material students had possibility to recognize the forming and functioning gender prejudices and stereotypes that they could face in their everyday lives.

## ЧИННИКИ СПРИЯННЯ ГЕНДЕРНІЙ ОБІЗНАНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ НА ЗАНЯТТЯХ З ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

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**Ключові слова:** студент,  
гендер, упередження,  
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компонент.

Стаття присвячена аналізу та опису практики сприяння гендерній обізнаності студентів університету під час викладання дисципліни «Іноземна мова професійно-комунікативної спрямованості» в контексті формування фахівця нового типу, який спроможний у майбутній професійній діяльності протистояти гендерним стереотипам та упередженням щодо ролі чоловіка і жінки.

Запропонована проблема визначена також завдяки запиту українського суспільства та системи вищої освіти зокрема на необхідність пошуку нових форм та методів, які забезпечать студентів не тільки професійними знаннями та навичками, які необхідні для продуктивної професійної діяльності, але й знаннями та навичками, які дозволять майбутнім фахівцям бути ефективними у міжособистісній взаємодії у різних сферах суспільства.

У статі пропонується залучення можливостей дисципліни «Іноземна мова професійно-комунікативного спрямування» не тільки як засіб опанування іноземною мовою, але й як інструмент реалізації ідеї гендерної рівності. Завдяки ознайомленню студентів із гендерними аспектами різних сфер діяльності особистості, адже гендер як соціальний конструкт, проникаючи у всі сфери людського життя, є важливим чинником під час особистісної взаємодії та впливає на самоідентифікацію та самореалізацію особистості, студенти мали можливість проаналізувати свій досвід гендерної соціалізації, порівняти його з досвідом інших студентів та визначити можливі шляхи вирішення гендерних проблем у своєму власному житті.

Запропонована стаття описує практику впровадження гендерного компоненту у зміст дисципліни «Іноземна мова професійно-комунікативного спрямування», який спрямований на підвищення рівня обізнаності студентів щодо ідеї гендерної рівності, яка допомагає зрозуміти її переваги в контексті самоідентифікації та самореалізації особистості не тільки в майбутній професійній діяльності, але і в особистому житті. Завдяки спостереженню та співбесідам зі студентами під час навчально-педагогічного процесу були визначені основні форми та методи, які стали ефективними для досягнення поставленої мети. Міжособистісне спілкування студентів визначено основним чинником підвищення гендерної обізнаності, адже воно відповідає психофізіологічній потребі, притаманній студентському віку.

Визначено пріоритетні напрями у змісті гендерного компоненту, які впливають на підвищення рівня гендерної обізнаності студентів. Завдяки запропонованому навчальному матеріалу студенти мали можливість зрозуміти формування та функціонування гендерних упереджень та стереотипів, з якими вони стикаються у своєму повсякденному житті.

Technology is undeniably transforming our society. Smartphones, virtual reality, machine learning, online gaming, artificial intelligence are words that characterize our digital age. Online services have a broad range of different offers that allow to communicate but be hidden, stay anonymous participant of the interpersonal communication.

In this context it is necessary to stress also that chatting; discussions, that take place via online, presented mostly in writing forms, short video and often these messages shorten to words only, not sentence. Thus, the fact that young people's life partly has moved to cyberspace and Internet has become one of the agents of gender socialization cannot be ignored. Impact of different gadgets on interpersonal communication among students is analyzed in the work by Emily Drago [3].

At the same time the trends in the modern education system inspire teachers to apply information technologies in the process of students' training pointing out that it gives objectivity during students' academic performance evaluation. This process has been accelerated also by COVID-19 pandemic and necessity to keep social distance. But we must stress that it leads to less amount of in-person, face-to-face interrelation not only between a teacher and students, but students as well.

The importance of interaction between a teacher and students and its influence on students' academic performance is studied in the research by Palos & Petrovici [7]. Thus, the problem of developing skills of effective interpersonal communication of a future specialist has gained special attention. We don't try to deny the role of information technology during communication nowadays, but we would like to stress the necessity to actualize the demand of society, and Ukrainian higher education system for a new type of specialist who can solve problems in the situation where people can execute and transfer gender stereotypes, gender prejudices that are barriers for person's self-identification and fulfillment.

At the same time distance education has made us to rethink the role of language not just as a system of certain signs and symbols but as a carrier of a certain patterns of people's behavior while socializing.

Besides, in condition of distance learning it is especially demanding for Foreign Language teachers to convey essential information to students as sometimes educators are fully or partly deprived of productive communication, using non-verbal means of interaction and have difficulties with feedback because of some technical, and even students' psychological problems, for instance, fear to speak during videoconference.

Online communication allows future specialists often to avoid verbal communication, create their false names and spend a lot of time surfing the Inter-

net. To our mind it can lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation between young people, or they can even witness such problems as cyberviolence and computer addiction among young people.

At the same time a lot of information that is spread due to the internet and social media dictates modern youth the rolemodels of real men and women of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And these rolemodels are not always correspond to such pattern of person's behavior as demonstrating respect, empathy to other person, avoiding gender prejudice, stereotypes.

At the same time the study of teenagers' chatrooms (text messages, profile pictures) revealed the fact that young people still generally conform gender stereotypes. Girls present themselves in seductive manner (posture, clothing) but boys try to look dominant, not to care about their clothes [4].

Skills of effective social interaction and ability to communicate in foreign language are among the key competences of the education system declared by the Council of Europe [5]. Besides, gender equality is still on the agenda [2]. That is why today's challenge for higher education, to our mind, is to promote gender awareness among university students in order to identify situation where there is a risk of gender inequality that resulted due to gender stereotypes and bias that are barriers for person's self-realization.

Thus, there is a task to find forms and methods to train effective professionals who will solve real-life situations not only at their future workplace but in different areas of his/her life avoiding prejudices and gender stereotypes.

In order to achieve set goals, we believe that university is one of the most powerful instruments that can decide this problem as its students' body includes young people of different ages, nationalities that creates the real opportunity for students to develop their skills of reflection, gender analyses by sharing their experience of gender socialization in the group. So, education can challenge existing gender norms of behavior [6].

The issue of gender education is analyzed in the wide spectrum of works by Ukrainian scientists. The importance of introduction of a gender component into the disciplines' content of Ukrainian higher education institutions is pointed out in the works by N/ Baydyuk, O.Chuyeshkova, T .Doronina, O. Kikinedzhi, V. Kravets, O. Lutsenko, O. Ostapchuk.

From the point of view of application trainings techniques to develop students' gender sensitivity the training manual was analyzed and considered in our research [1]. Our special attention has been paid to the works by Jane Sunderland [9], Aneta Pavlenko and Ingrid Piller [8] who have made their detailed analysis of gender aspects of foreign language learning. But despite rather large number of scientific findings on the issue of implementation of gender component

into the content of academic subjects, gender aspects of different spheres of society are still misunderstood by young people.

Hence, **the purpose of the article** is to describe the practice of using foreign language (English) to raise university students' gender awareness in order to define the most effective methods and forms.

Analyzing the content of the university subject "Foreign Language for Specific Purposes" we have concluded that it can give opportunity for students not only to master foreign language but use its content and methods to raise their gender awareness.

Gender as a social construct penetrates every sphere of people's lives and is crucial in interpersonal interrelations. And in this case, language can act as a form of intercultural learning, and means of exploration of gender socialization in the frame of analysis of different customs and traditions referring the role of a man and woman in a certain type of society.

Language as a reflection of society's culture demonstrates the relationship between people and their status. So, at the lessons of foreign language a teacher can present academic material including those issues that are not always suitable for discussion or those that are not in the curricula of their specialized disciplines, but they touch upon people's interrelation, help to recognize gender stereotypes and bias.

So, we believe that by means of gender-oriented teaching/learning material it is possible to foster students to assimilate gender norms, knowledge and values based on the idea of gender equality.

To identify the most effective ways, forms, and methods in order to achieve our purpose we observed students of different specialties. Among them there were future specialists who studied Computer Science, Applied Mathematics, Physical Education and Social Pedagogy. It was managed to identify some students' general features corresponding to their professional orientation and gender representation in the group. It was necessary to understand what type of learning material, communicative tasks to propose.

So, girls of Physical Education department showed the most active participation in the group discussion of some gender-based problems comparing to girls of mentioned specialties above. Boys considered their groupmates-girls as partners and even demonstrated disrespectful behavior not only towards them but other groupmates-boys. So, taking into account this fact, we prepared assignments with emphasis on the development of teamwork skills, roleplaying.

It should be noted that among students of Computer Science and Applied Mathematics specialties there were a smaller number of girls than boys in the groups, and girls demonstrated restraint in their statements. They did not show initiative but mostly were waiting for being asked by the teacher. Communicative tasks in this group were aimed at the develop-

ment of girls' skills of leaderships, teamwork, ability to work in pairs.

In the group of social pedagogues, the predominant number was girls. Hence, the difference in gender characteristics within the same sex was obvious. In this case, boys were limited in their statements and preferred not to be the first to answer. In this case we preferred such methods as case-study where the future specialists could analyze real-life situation from their own gender experience.

So, our observation helped us define the crucial ways of effective gender component implementation in the content of the discipline. First, it was important to disclose gender characteristics of students, involve non-active students in the solving problems using group work or giving them individual task to present in front of the groupmates.

Second, the main strategy in achievements of the goal was to use gender neutral language and a wide variety of such methods as roleplaying, business games, case-study, and elements of social and pedagogical training (reflection, brainstorming).

During the lessons special attention was paid to thorough selection of authentic texts for students. Besides their professional orientation, the stress was made on gender issues presented in the learning material. Thus, it was structured into some themes: 1) family; 2) education; 3) career; 4) conflicts. For example, while studying language students were proposed such topics for discussion as "My school years. Being Ignored", "Women in Science", "Career Track. No Ticket to Top", "Gender Violence" and so on.

Foreign-language texts and exercises were chosen in such a way that future professionals could understand forming and functioning gender bias and stereotypes in certain culture, education, or other domains of society. The main criteria for selecting the content of educational material were authenticity, appealing, gender-oriented character. Students' interpersonal communication was defined as the main factor of raising gender awareness as it was one of the psychophysiological needs of students' age.

Among methods the most productive was case-study method. It allowed students to immerse in the gender situation and find out the possible solution for gender-based problems. Besides, students were encouraged to give examples from their own experience, for example, how gender prejudices interfered their lives, their self-realization.

It should be noted that we understood that not all students shared others' opinions and tried to comprehend such types of problems due to their gender characteristics as, for example, their national, cultural peculiarities or religious beliefs. That is why the main task was to give students the opportunity to compare the issues faced by families, men and women, girls, and boys abroad, and in their country.



Thus, the next emphasis was made on developing the skills of positive, dialogical communication aimed at effective interaction in the future professional activity. It included the stress on such skills as active listening, respect of others' opinions and empathy.

In the frame of remote education, students were proposed to analyze different types of messages, predict who could be the authors of them, characterize them according to the words they used in messages.

The leading role in writing exercises belonged to essays. Thus, for example, there was the task to write essay "I am good at..." Students presented their works to their group, and everybody could ask some questions and found out the strengths of their groupmates. This kind of assignment was oriented on personal achievements which boosted students' self-confidence and made it easier for future specialists realize their gender characteristics and promote their self-development in professional activity and be successful in interpersonal relationships.

Work in pairs and groups was one of the effective methods to develop skills of face-to-face communication where students were united to perform common task. The objectives of these exercises were to stress the fact that the most effective way to do the task was the creative activity of the representatives of both sexes which gave the opportunity to demonstrate unique gender characteristics and engaged students with different background into making-decision process.

In the period of distance learning the platform Zoom was used and due to its options, there were

opportunities for groupwork, individual work with the following discussions of gender aspects of future professional activities. So, for example, discussion about possible risks at workplace (glass ceiling, psychological violence, sexual harassment, ageism).

To conclude we should emphasize that students' gender-oriented communication was a crucial factor for raising gender awareness. Foreign language teaching/learning material has given possibility to touch upon gender aspects of everyday life, to reveal gender stereotypes and prejudice that students took them for granted in the culture of society. Methods and forms based on communication has been revealed as the most effective ones.

Forms and methods were chosen not only according to future professionals' areas of activity but strongly based on students' gender characteristics, their personal manifested qualities, and immediate surroundings within learning environment.

We have to note that some forms and methods could work for one group of students but did not work for another. That is why the teacher should analyze what kind of exercises and tasks to use in a certain group and what emphasis should be done to motivate students to take interest in gender issues.

The perspective of our future research is in the further investigation of foreign language's possibilities to form gender competence of the future professionals and to figure out how social media influence on the future specialists' ability to identify and solve real-life gender problems.

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