

TILTM 2020

Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication

NEW LINGUODIDACTIC CHALLENGES IN TEACHING PROFESSIONALLY ORIENTED ENGLISH AS REFERRED TO PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

The article deals with the issues of linguodidactics aimed at the development of theory and practice of teaching professionally oriented foreign languages. Linguodidactics as a dynamically developed academic area is determined by the language which is constantly in a state of flux. Linguodidactics is a multifarious discipline closely connected with knowledge formation area within the modern interdisciplinary paradigm. As an interdisciplinary field of knowledge linguodidactics combines the achievements of related disciplines that foster professionally oriented L2 teaching. Linguodidactics is based on several premises that are important for restructuring educational process of LSP teaching to PR undergraduates. In the article special attention is paid to discerning of linguistic mechanisms that reveal Public Relations language peculiarities. Public Relations presents itself as a synergetic field of study based on its interdisciplinary nature. PR is an integrative discipline, which is reflected in its terminology that includes terminological units of other academic areas, which tend to acquire new meanings and functions within the PR discourse. The findings reveal that PR vocabulary is the most dynamic stratum of the PR language, to which special linguodidactic attention should be paid, as well as the use of abbreviations, which play an important role in PR-communication, aimed at saving both linguistic and temporal efforts, and to create new models of message optimization. The shift of PR activities to the 3.0 Internet involves new approaches to the process of LSP learning and teaching seeking new ways of communication skills formation within the electronic environment.

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Keywords: LSP, public relations, linguodidactics, English.



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1. Introduction

While dealing with the notion of linguodidactics as the theoretical basis for teaching languages, including theoretical justification for the application of specific approaches to language education, one should take into consideration the fact that the scientific field itself is constantly changing due to the dynamic development of the main object of linguodidactics, i.e. natural human language, as well as both educational approaches and their constituent elements. It is a well-established fact that linguodidactics as an independently existing field included in a wide range of pedagogical sciences is directly related to the solution of such important problems as the adoption of the concepts to be put forward in terms of the content and structure of language education, organizational forms of language education at all levels, mechanisms for analysis and modelling the educational process elaborating, aimed at acquiring personalized knowledge, with particular attention to linguistic knowledge and language skills as well as cultural knowledge.

LSP has been of increasing importance in the issues of L2 acquisition in the domain of higher education. PR undergraduates are taught the register of English permitting them to cope with the tasks posed before highly qualified experts that include not only understanding such written texts as press releases, but the ability to produce them to promote the major ideas of their companies, create press-kits and advertisements, and be aware of the psychological climate prevailing among the leaders and masses. Public Relations is a synergetic discipline due to its integrative systematic nature (Ponomarenko, 2013), as it comprises different aspects of numerous disciplines and activities to connect various organizations and institutions with public by disseminating information, to inspire the latter and make them perform activities necessary to the officials.

2. Problem Statement

In the present paper we precede from the premise that the basic category of linguodidactics is language, which is considered to be not only the object of study, but also the means of instruction. Thus, one of the most prominent features of linguodidactics is its complex nature, as it is associated with a number of important functions (Shaklein, 2008; Vishnyakova, 2019). Linguodidactics is a complex field, combining the achievements of teachers, linguists, psychologists, philosophers and other specialists, to be used for the reliable justification and further development of the language learning process. In the limelight there is an obvious scientific justification for the approaches used in language teaching. As has already been noted, one of these approaches is the study of language as a professionally oriented discipline (Minyar-Beloroucheva, 2001; Nazarova, 2019; Vetrinskaya et al., 2019).

Thus, the language of Public Relations in terms of its professional peculiarities is under consideration within these lines. The current trends of its development require identification and thorough analysis of significant phenomena in this regard, as well as the elaboration of new educational approaches to the language for special purposes in the field of PR.

3. Research Questions

The issues analyzed in this paper directly concern the study of the PR language that is manifested in both theoretical and practical activities of PR specialists. The scope of study concerning professionally

oriented language of Public Relations is integrative, as it is characterized by language representations of notions and concepts related to certain areas of human activity. Thus, one of the topical issues within these lines is how the dynamic process of semantic and functional adaptation of the new reappearing concepts may be represented via means of language and reflected in the course of language instruction.

One more important point should be made in this connection, which deals with the new trends in semiotic and linguistic semiotic presentations of conceptual and linguistic meaning and the ways of their interpretation as referred to the special fields of knowledge. The phenomenon of abbreviation may be considered to be the actual tendency in the development of modern languages. Thus, it is important to penetrate into the essence and reasons for extensive spread of this phenomenon within PR- area at the present period of time.

The next very important issue that deals with language education in the PR sphere in terms of new methods and approaches elaboration is the shift of PR activities to the 3.0 Internet, which possesses its own characteristics in terms of communication models construction and certain peculiarities of linguistic means realization within the framework of LSP. In this regard, it seems important to subject to the analysis the processes of linguistic knowledge representation and professional communication skills formation under the influence of the Internet environment.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyze the integrative area of PR in terms of its interdisciplinary nature, reflected at the level of language that presents particular interest in terms of both theoretical and structural-modeling functions of linguodidactics, with special attention to new approaches to LSP teaching as referred to PR language and communication process optimization. It should be noted in this connection that in the course of time, PR discourse has acquired specific features, which deserves further investigation both in terms of its linguistic peculiarities and the way the phenomenon in question is subject to presentation in the linguistic education process.

5. Research Methods

The methodology of the present research is based on general scientific principles of investigation such as objectivity, consistency, relativity, and interconnectedness.

For the study of Public Relations sphere in terms of its linguistic peculiarities, the traditional methods of linguistic research were applied, including contextual analysis, the semantic analysis based on the lexicographic materials application, as well as the method of comparative analysis, with the elements of linguoculturological analytical procedures.

The analysis of the linguodidactic aspect of the phenomenon in question due to its integrative nature includes methodological approaches worked out for the study of pedagogy, linguistics, psycholinguistics, psychology, as well as cultural studies, computer science and information theory.

6. Findings

6.1. PR as an interdisciplinary field of research and education

Experts in the field of Public Relations note that this sphere of human activity is closely connected with all aspects of life and has exerted a certain influence on the further development of social interaction and communication. E. Bernays, a well-known PR theorist and practitioner, who created the basis of the profession as early as the 1920s, claimed that “... there is probably no single profession which within the last ten years has extended its field of usefulness more remarkably and touched upon intimate and important aspects of the everyday life of the world more significantly than the profession of public relations counsel.” (Bernays, 2004). The complicated nature of Public Relations is expressed by both the professional activity and the PR language employed by experts and PR educator (Berger, 2011; Black, 1989; Grunig & Grunig, 2003). PR discourse thus can be reviewed from both, the communication theory, such as, for example, professional business communication (Malyuga & Orlova, 2018) and the linguistic science per se. As for the PR terminology, it comprises peculiarities of various branches of science on which the PR theory is based on.

The present scheme, first devised by S. Black and presented in the Goldpapers of International Public Relations Association in 1982, is the proposed model for the education of future PR specialists, reflecting the degrees of PR studies connections with other academic disciplines (see Figure 01).

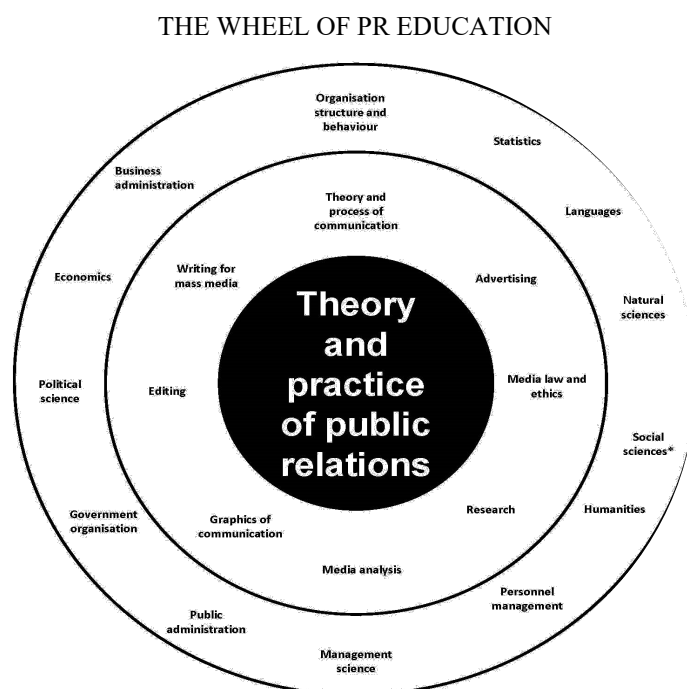


Figure 01. The Wheel of PR Education presented by Sam Black in IPRA Goldpapers (1982)

6.2. The dynamic character of professional PR vocabulary

The kinetic nature of PR terminological units constituting the bulk of the vocabulary of the sphere in question is reflected in the fact that certain units may belong to other spheres of professional activities,

which is registered by professional dictionaries and widely used by experts in various fields. Table 01 below demonstrates findings in terms of the origin of PR terminology.

Table 01. The Dynamics of Semantic Changes in PR Terminological Borrowings

Terminological units	The source field	The original meaning	The meaning in PR
Embargo	International commerce, politics, IR, Economics	The exclusion of commerce (division of trade) and trade with a certain country, in order to isolate it and to put its government into a difficult internal situation, given that the effects of the embargo are often able to make its economy suffer from the initiative.	A restriction of PR activities and campaign.
Cartouche	Computer technologies, Arts and Architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A gun cartridge; • An architectural element. 	An illustrative element of a building to serve as a means of advertising or promotion.
Communicator	Electronics	A device to facilitate communication akin to a portable telephone.	Someone who is able to talk about their ideas and emotions in a way that other people understand.
Consumerism	Social Studies, Economics	The general trend in society indicating the increasing consumption.	The promotion of consumers' interests.

Thus, for instance, the word of the French origin – ‘cartouche’ is defined as 1) a gun cartridge with a paper case 2) an ornate or ornamental frame 3) an oval or oblong figure (as on ancient Egyptian monuments) enclosing a sovereign's name (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.), or ‘a bundle, or a roll parcel’ is an element in architecture and decorative art – an artistic motif in a shape of a shield, framed from both sides by two curls, or half-unfolded paper scrolls, a site to place an emblem or an inscription (Vlasov, 2000). In architecture, the decorative properties of cartouche were commonly used in the 15th - 16th centuries during the Baroque and Rococo periods. Most frequently cartouches were placed above the main entrances of buildings and window openings. Moving into the sphere of PR, the terminological unit ‘cartouche’ was rethought semantically and transferred to the commercial field for a specific purpose - the promotion of goods and services, and understood as a graphic decoration in the form of a shield, a panel, or a tablet to place an advertising text and decorative elements.

The next example is ‘consumerism’ that refers to the socio-economic sphere and is used as the typical characteristics of the modern consumer society, emphasizing the pernicious desire to constantly make purchases and ignore spiritual values (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.). At the same time in the domains

of corporate social responsibility, marketing and PR consumerism is understood as a movement in defense of consumer interests. It is realized in the formation of societies, public appearances, in a boycott of firms, shops, etc. (Glossary of terms on advertising, marketing and PR, n.d.). Otherwise stated, it is characterized by the shift of conceptual and linguistic meaning, and functionally serves the needs of the corresponding discourse. This is due to the kinetics, or the dynamic nature of the term, which is associated with the origin of the term and reflects the dynamic nature of terminological processes in language (Gvishiani, 2019). Thus, the dynamic transition of a term from one domain to another contributes to the creation of a new terminological system representing the corresponding area of human activity.

6.3. Current trends in PR language development

Abbreviations being one of the major trends of the English language development, are also extensively used in the sphere of Public Relations in accordance with a number of linguistic and extralinguistic factors (Minyar-Beloroucheva et al., 2020; Sergienko, 2018). English is one of the most vivid examples, both due to its basic linguistic features (analyticism manifestation, implicitness/expressiveness combination at the level of meaning, semantic capacity and optimization pursuit), and as a result of functioning as a means of intercultural communication in a variety of areas (Vishnyakova, 2017). The emergence of new concepts that reflect the emergence of new phenomena, accompanied by the new linguistic signs realization, alongside the use of existing sign forms representing new meanings in combination with new functions, may be regarded as an incentive to convey a message in a minimized and effective form. For instance, an important abbreviated notion for PR sphere is the RACE formula, developed in the course of communications, which has been widely used throughout the history of the industry. The abbreviated unit RACE is deciphered as ‘Research, Action, Communication and Evaluation’ and is generally taken as a guideline for any specialist working in the area in question. Some other representations of key PR and marketing instruments are also commonly abbreviated to speed up and facilitate the professional communication: the SWOT analysis, the PLC, PEST factors (Glossary of terms on advertising, marketing and PR, n.d.), etc.

As a result of technological changes regarding information and communication technologies happening in the modern world, most of the PR activities aimed at promoting a positive image of a company or an individual have been transferred to the electronic environment. At the present stage, all high-profile communication projects are deployed either completely on the global network, or widely supported by various Internet services. The implications of digital instruments used for promoting a company or an individual are currently subject to numerous investigations (Minaeva, 2018, 2019). Various platforms are used to target the potential customers and tailor to their demands. It is the aim of linguodidactics to foster the 3.0 Internet skills development via the new approaches and principles of teaching and learning professional languages elaboration, as the new methods and materials as well as educational models are needed for successful operation.

With the advent of Web 3.0 era, certain additions have been made to the traditional PR formula of two “I”s: Information and Integrity, which traditionally concerned the informational nature of electronic PR materials and their comprehensive nature. It should be mentioned that the third “I” that has been added recently into the scope of PR, functions as the broader term characterized by its relatively recent appearance in language usage and has become common due to the Internet communication spread - Interactivity, that

is the ability of the audience to participate in communication with the company on practically equal terms. Thus, the notion of interactivity at present becomes more and more popular as the Internet communication grows (Ponomarenko & Mal'yuga, 2015), thus adding to the meaning of the third 'I' of the abbreviation in question the idea of the immediate possibility to express the opinion of your own and get the immediate feedback from the interlocutors, being on the same terms and conditions with them.

It should be emphasized that in case the main task of PR activities is establishing contacts between the participants, it is no exaggeration to say that the capabilities of the Internet may be aimed at the effective implementation of the goals and objectives of this area of professional expertise. At the same time, this poses the task for language education authorities and teachers to provide future specialists with the ability to immediately respond to the situation by realizing the language knowledge and skills acquired in the process of learning the LSP in the corresponding area and familiarizing with the most effective formats of the Internet communication in the professional field.

The Internet gives the chance to its users to apply hypertext technologies in providing information to the audience. Mediated by the computer environment, this system can be characterized by non-linear processes of reading and writing (Crystal, 2001). Besides, hypertext combines various semiotic systems, presented in the form of verbal, visual and video elements proving the information message to be effective for the potential customers. For instance, previous research has shown the example of the BP company presenting its corporate magazine on their website www.bp.com in the form of hypertext (Sergienko, 2016). The company successfully manages to answer the requests of the growing pressure from the public, including environmental protection problems. The public becomes well informed and persuaded in the company's initiatives and perspectives through the digital platform and by specially adjusted repertoire of linguistic means.

7. Conclusion

In the course of the investigation we have come to the conclusion that there is a continuous need for both practical and theoretical work to be undertaken in the field of linguodidactic approach to the analysis of LSP teaching development. As the important linguodidactic task relates to the improvement and restructuring language teaching process in terms of its organization and content, special attention should be given to teaching language as the professional tool of integrated interdisciplinary areas of human activity, which includes the domain of Public Relations, subjected to the investigation in the present paper. The analysis has shown that teaching L2 with regard to the professional area of study in this case requires special approaches and methods application due to the dynamic processes concerned with semantic and functional adaptation of notions and terms borrowed from other branches of science and gradually transformed into semantically independent linguistic units belonging to the particular professional field. To understand the essence of this process and to acquire the relevant skills in this regard, each student of PR English should carefully delve into the related linguistic phenomena and the specifics of linguistic means realization in certain fields of human activity.

Among the reasons for the new methods and approaches to PR professional language teaching application is the development of the current trend manifested in the heuristically justifiable optimized presentation of conceptual and linguistic meanings belonging to particular areas. Thus, the most common

and obvious phenomenon within these terms is the use of abbreviations. It should be added in this connection that the problem of decoding and interpretation of the units in question, characterized by similar formal structure and belonging to different semantic fields, is becoming more and more complicated with the development of the language phenomenon under consideration, as it requires direct reference to the context and profound linguistic and cultural knowledge as applied to the professional sphere of realization.

Abbreviated forms are used in the PR domain both in order to save linguistic, temporal and memory resources, and to meet the needs of an extralinguistic nature, including to conform to the technical characteristics of the digital technology used by people. A number of abbreviations that function within the PR domain have been taken from other spheres of realization and are characterized by the tendency to acquire the status of semantically independent linguistic units in the course of time.

The Internet space, being a generally favorable environment for the implementation of communication, is considered an additional incentive in the linguistic meanings dynamic realization in terms of new semantic and functional characteristics manifestation in PR contexts. The hypertextual abilities of the Internet provide access to various kinds of resources, which facilitates the user's task of information search. The necessity to optimize the process of establishing contacts with the target audience in the electronic interactive mode of communication deals with new challenges and approaches to professional linguistic knowledge development.

Thus, the analysis has shown that the recent development of the PR domain and the need for deeper penetration into the linguistic phenomena, characteristic of its language representations, as well as the development of practical language proficiency involve new challenges in the field of linguodidactics. This conditions the search for new integrative methods and approaches to teaching LSP as a tool for obtaining professional knowledge and skills and further professional expertise improvement.

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