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## **BUSINESS NETWORKING SIMULATION FOR DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS THROUGH TBL**

In the context of modern higher education, the search for effective methods to develop students' foreign language communicative competence has become particularly relevant, as these methods should ensure not only the acquisition of linguistic knowledge but also the development of practical skills for using that knowledge in a professional setting. In this context, the Task-Based Learning (TBL) method is of particular interest. TBL is a communicative approach in which the language trainer or teacher facilitates the use of tasks at the core of language teaching. In this approach, the learners do meaningful activities or tasks. (Georgy, 2023)

The **TBL** method is based on the principle of learning through the completion of communicatively meaningful tasks. Its key idea is that students first use the foreign language to resolve a real-life professional or social situation, and only then move on to analyzing the language structures used, reflecting on their own speech behavior, and reviewing the mistakes made. Thus, the focus of the educational process is not on the acquisition of linguistic material per se, but on its functional application in conditions as close as possible to authentic communication.

A telling example of this method in teaching English to students majoring in economics is the simulation of a networking event. As part of this task, students must introduce themselves and their company, learn about their conversation partners' professional backgrounds, outline the organization's scope of activity, and lay the groundwork for potential collaboration. This format allows integrating elements of

small talk, professional communication, and business communication into a single practical scenario.

Structurally, a lesson using the TBL methodology consists of three consecutive stages: **pre-task**, **task**, and **post-task**.

During the **pre-task stage**, the instructor outlines the lesson’s goals and objectives, establishes the professional context, conducts a brief warm-up to activate prior knowledge, and provides the necessary instructions for completing the main task. The main goal of this stage is to lower the language barrier, review familiar vocabulary and speech patterns, and psychologically prepare students for further interaction.

It is advisable to use questions that activate students’ prior experience, for example: *Have you ever attended a professional event? What do people usually say first? How do you start a business discussion?* Such questions help recall the language structures necessary for self-introduction, engaging in small talk, and transitioning to a professional conversation.

It is important to emphasize that TBL does not involve teaching “from scratch,” but rather focuses on activating existing knowledge and applying it in a professional setting. For students with intermediate or lower language proficiency, it is advisable to use scaffolding support – language prompts in the form of cards with useful phrases for informal and professional communication, such as: *How are you finding the event?, What does your company specialize in? Are you open to partnerships?*

In addition, at this stage, students can be provided with role-play cards containing a brief professional profile, the company’s field of activity, and its current needs. For example:

**Card A**

*You work for an international retail company **Global Retail Hub**.*

*Current issues: slow customer support; many complaints.*

*Looking for: technology company; automation solutions.*

The main goal of this approach is to create a realistic professional situation in which language serves as a tool for achieving a specific communicative goal.

During the **task stage**, students directly perform the tasks: they introduce themselves, engage in conversation, ask questions, discuss potential areas of cooperation, and seek the most suitable business partner. In an offline learning setting, this can be implemented by allowing students to move freely around the classroom and interact with different participants; in an online format, it is advisable to use breakout rooms that allow switching between groups. At this stage, the teacher’s role consists primarily of observing and noting typical language difficulties. The teacher must not interrupt students or correct mistakes during the communication process, since one of the key principles of TBL is fluency before accuracy – prioritizing speed and naturalness of speech over formal correctness.

In the **post-task stage**, reflection on the completed task and linguistic analysis take place. The teacher discusses with the students how easy it was for them to find a “business match,” which phrases proved most effective, and what difficulties arose during the communication process. For example, *How easy was it to find a match? What phrases helped you most? What was difficult?*

At this stage, the focus shifts from simple error correction to language upgrading, that is, improving students’ speech through the analysis of successful linguistic choices, correction of inaccuracies, and expansion of their functional linguistic repertoire.

Thus, the use of the TBL method contributes to the development of communicative competence through actual language use rather than rote memorization. This approach helps reduce the language barrier, develop spontaneity in speech and reaction speed in professional situations, and prepare students for effective communication in their future professional environment.

## REFERENCES

1. Georgy, C. M. (2023). Implementing task-based language teaching in an ESP classroom: Design and implications. VEDA’s Journal of English Language and Literature (JOELL), 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2023.10212>