



PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL LEXICAL COMPETENCE IN TOURISM STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the pedagogical foundations of developing professional lexical competence in students majoring in tourism in higher education. The relevance of the topic is determined by the growing role of professional communication in the tourism sector, where successful interaction depends not only on general language proficiency but also on the accurate use of field-specific vocabulary. The study analyzes the theoretical basis of lexical competence, identifies the pedagogical conditions necessary for its effective formation, and interprets the role of contextualized instruction, communicative practice, and authentic materials in the educational process. The findings show that professional lexical competence develops most effectively when tourism terminology is taught in relation to real communicative situations, intercultural content, and practical speech tasks. The thesis concludes that a systematic pedagogical approach integrating linguistic, professional, and communicative components significantly improves students' readiness for future professional activity.

KEYWORDS: Professional lexical competence, tourism students, higher education, pedagogical foundations, tourism vocabulary, communicative approach, ESP, lexical skills, authentic materials, professional communication.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern higher education system, the training of future tourism specialists requires not only the acquisition of theoretical knowledge in the field of tourism, management, and service, but also the development of professional communication skills. One of the central components of such preparation is professional lexical competence, since tourism specialists operate in multilingual and multicultural environments where precise word choice, terminological accuracy, and context-appropriate communication are essential. The tourism sphere includes hotel service, tour guidance, transportation, destination promotion, customer support, and intercultural mediation, all of which require a specialized lexical base.

The problem of developing professional lexical competence is especially important in foreign language teaching for tourism students. General language knowledge does not automatically ensure professional readiness. A student may know common vocabulary and grammar but still experience difficulty in explaining itineraries, handling complaints, presenting cultural sites, describing accommodation services, or negotiating with clients and partners. This contradiction between general linguistic preparation and real professional needs determines the practical significance of the research.

The aim of this thesis is to identify the pedagogical foundations for developing professional lexical competence in tourism students and to determine the methodological conditions that ensure its effective formation in higher education.

The study is based on theoretical analysis, comparative interpretation of pedagogical and methodological literature, and synthesis of approaches related to lexical competence, professional language teaching, and English for Specific Purposes. Special attention is given to works devoted to communicative language teaching, vocabulary acquisition, and profession-oriented education. The conceptual basis of the research includes competence-based, communicative, contextual, and activity-centered approaches.

The analysis focused on the relationship between lexical knowledge and professional communication, on the structure of lexical competence, and on the pedagogical mechanisms that support the transition from passive vocabulary recognition to active professional use. The study also considered the role of authentic educational materials, simulation tasks, and professional discourse in forming tourism-related vocabulary.

The research shows that professional lexical competence should be understood not as the mechanical memorization of terminology but as an integrated ability to recognize, understand, select, and appropriately use lexical units in concrete professional situations. In the tourism domain, such competence includes knowledge of travel terminology, hotel and hospitality vocabulary, transport and booking language, cultural and historical description, customer service expressions, and etiquette formulas used in international communication.

The findings indicate that the first pedagogical foundation of lexical competence development is professional orientation in teaching content. Vocabulary becomes pedagogically meaningful when it is directly connected with the student's future occupation. Tourism students demonstrate stronger motivation and better retention when lexical units are introduced through realistic professional contexts such as tour planning, hotel reception dialogues, excursion commentary, or airport service communication. In this way, vocabulary is not separated from practice but becomes part of future occupational identity.

The second important foundation is contextualization. Lexical units are learned more effectively when they are embedded in communicative situations rather than presented as isolated items. Tourism vocabulary often depends on register, politeness, and situational nuance. For example, the language of welcoming a guest, describing a package tour, or resolving a complaint differs not only lexically but also pragmatically. Therefore, the educational process should ensure repeated lexical exposure in variable but professionally relevant contexts.

The third pedagogical foundation is the communicative and interactive nature of learning. The study confirms that lexical competence develops more productively through speech activity than through translation-based memorization alone. Dialogues, role plays, case studies, presentations, guided tours, booking simulations, and problem-solving tasks activate vocabulary in meaningful use. Through such forms of instruction, students learn not only the semantic meaning of words but also their collocations, stylistic appropriateness, and functional value in speech.

Another significant result concerns the role of authentic materials. Brochures, hotel websites, travel programs, booking forms, menus, maps, promotional videos, and customer reviews expose students to living professional discourse. Such materials help bridge the gap between educational language and real tourism communication. They also enrich the lexical environment and support incidental vocabulary acquisition, which is especially important for developing flexible professional language skills.

The research also demonstrates that lexical competence is closely connected with intercultural awareness. Tourism communication is rarely neutral; it involves interaction with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, lexical teaching should include culture-bound concepts, forms of politeness, descriptive patterns for cultural heritage, and expressions that reflect sensitivity to international guests. In this sense, lexical competence in tourism is both linguistic and sociocultural.

The results of the study support the view that vocabulary teaching in tourism education must move beyond reproductive learning toward professionally meaningful communication. Traditional approaches often emphasize terminology lists and dictionary work, but such methods are insufficient if students are not taught how lexical units function in discourse. A tourism student should not simply know the meaning of such words as “itinerary,” “hospitality,” “reservation,” “check-in,” or “sightseeing”; the student must be able to integrate them into clear, appropriate, and persuasive communication.

From a pedagogical perspective, this means that the teacher’s role changes from transmitter of vocabulary to organizer of lexical experience. The teacher creates professional situations, selects authentic sources, guides interpretation, and supports active usage. The principle of continuity is also important. Professional lexical competence cannot be formed in a single course or isolated lesson. It requires systematic progression from recognition to comprehension, from controlled practice to free communication, and from classroom performance to professional simulation.

The findings also confirm the importance of integrating language teaching with specialty subjects. Tourism students benefit when foreign language instruction is connected with courses in regional studies, hospitality, guiding, cultural heritage, and service technologies. Such interdisciplinary integration increases relevance and helps vocabulary become part of a broader professional conceptual system. In this regard, lexical competence should be viewed as a dynamic outcome of both linguistic and professional education.

Students still face lexical overload, confusion between general and professional meanings, limited active vocabulary, and insufficient contact with authentic tourism discourse. These difficulties require differentiated teaching, regular vocabulary revision, and practice-oriented assessment.

The study confirms that developing professional lexical competence is an important task of higher education. Its effectiveness depends on professionally oriented content, contextual learning, communicative practice, authentic materials, and systematic work with vocabulary.

The thesis shows that tourism vocabulary is learned best when language study is closely connected with future professional activity. In this case, students not only memorize words but also use them effectively in real communication.

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