

IMPROVING VERBAL, NON-VERBAL, WRITTEN AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION OF EFFECTIVE MANAGERS

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Abstract

The paper describes management students from two Slovak universities and their possibilities of acquiring basic knowledge of management within the English language seminars. It deals with integrating, one of the five tasks of managers, which includes motivating and communicating. It is focused on communicating – the development of interpersonal and communicative skills of future managers, improving verbal, non-verbal, written and electronic communication and improving direct speech acts.

Key words: management, tasks of managers, communication, direct speech acts

INTRODUCTION

The work of managers is divided into five tasks: planning, organizing, integrating, measuring performance and developing people. Motivating and communicating is included in integrating. We realize that effective communication is important for business.

Graduates of Industrial Management, Business Economics and Management, Financial Management and other similar study programmes will have to demonstrate social skills of motivation and communication. As managers they need to know how to lead and motivate people, how to behave and communicate with them, how to communicate objectives to the people responsible for attaining them [1]. As well as they will organize and supervise the work of their subordinates and will work with people in other areas and functions. From the above mentioned, we clearly see that they need to be good communicators. English language seminars provide great opportunities to practise and use a foreign language for different purposes as well as to improve direct, open, two-way, verbal, non-verbal, written and electronic communication and also to practise direct speech acts.

1 STU AND EU MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

Management is probably a mixture of innate qualities and learnable skills. Business universities clearly believe there are learnable skills

and techniques, but they know that these alone do not suffice to make a great manager. Middle, senior or top managers know that the success or failure of big or small companies, public sector institutions and services, not-profit organizations and other types of institutions depends on the quality of their managers. The Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, the Faculty of Materials Science and Technology in Trnava (hereinafter referred to as STU MTF) and the University of Economics in Bratislava, the Faculty of Business Management (EU FPM) offer study programmes aimed at management. Both universities produce versatile and flexible graduates who perform successfully in a wide scope of professions. The graduates of Industrial Management (MTF) and the graduates of Business Economics and Management, Financial Management and other similar study programmes (FPM) have fundamental knowledge of natural sciences, technical, technological and humanities disciplines, business and economics as well as knowledge of informatics and specialist knowledge of industrial and business engineering focused on economy, business and production management, regardless of the sector and size classification, marketing, accounting etc. During the study, the emphasis is put on the development of managerial skills so that they will be able to apply gained knowledge and skills in practice, mainly as team-leaders or team-members in middle management and to set and run small businesses or companies.

2 MANAGEMENT IN THE SYLLABUS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Economics students need to understand and express the key concepts of business and economics, whereas technical students the key concepts of technology and production. Both types of students use different types of English textbooks. Technical students use *Technical English*, whereas Economics students use *English for Business Studies*, *First Insights into Business* and *First Insights into Business and Informatics*. The first of them covers the most important areas of management, production, marketing, finance and macroeconomics. *Technical English* does not contain the area of management. More experienced teacher can adapt teaching material from this textbook in order to have an insight into it with their students.

Within the English language seminars undergraduates of the FPM study different units which are grouped thematically in several sections. One of them is called *Management* consisting of *Management*, *Work and motivation*, *Company structure*, *Managing across cultures*, *Recruitment*

and *Women in business*. Thanks to this section the Economics students can acquire basic knowledge of management in English. They will become familiar with a well-known classification of the tasks of a manager which comes from Peter Drucker, an American professor and consultant, who is often called 'The Father of Modern Management'. According to him, the work of a manager is divided into five tasks: planning (setting objectives), organizing, integrating (motivating and communicating), measuring performance and developing people. Although the tasks of a manager are analyzed and classified in this fashion, management is not entirely scientific. There are management skills that have to be learnt, but management is also a human skill. Some people are good at it, some are not. Some people will be unable to put management techniques into practice. Others will have lots of techniques, but few good ideas. Excellent managers are quite rare [1].

A component part of the English language syllabus is writing business e-mails in English. Students are shown a typical style for organising paragraphs in e-mails. First, they have to study some phrases, then, they replace the phrases with their equivalents or alternatives. According to these headings – thanking for communication, reminding of background, introducing bad news, requesting action, showing one's availability, attaching a document and closing – they have to write their own versions.

3 IMPROVING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The Academic Information Systems of both universities allow the academic community to interact with the students by means of e-mail communication. E-mail has allowed all of us to find benefits, because it respects the demands of more urgent business. Teachers and students are, first and foremost, human beings and in their everyday direct and electronic communication they should follow certain principles of co-operation and what is considered appropriate polite behaviour in their institutional, social and cultural environment, since these are important aspects of all human communication. Although communication is even possible without sufficient co-operation between participants, such communication is not adequate and does not lead to any successful results [2]. As already stated, spoken or written interaction is co-operation between two or more partners in a communicative situation which requires a certain degree of mutuality and togetherness [5].

Politeness plays an important role in all human communication, particularly in university communication in which participants have to face immediate reactions from their conversational partners. Some students have never heard about any principles of polite communication so they do not

often realize that they sound impolite, especially in electronic communication.

3.1 Verbal and non-verbal communication

Management students use the English language to communicate their thoughts and feelings and use the systems of signs, symbols and gestures for conveying information. Many of them enjoy talking to others face-to-face. Most of them find it embarrassing to remain silent in company, and feel they have to fill silence by saying something. Others like silence and do not use many words because they know that silence sometimes communicates ideas more powerfully than speech.

Students need to realise that their body language tells us a whole range of things they may not be conscious of. They know that we have a complex body language of gestures, postures and facial expressions and that our bodies are constantly talking. We usually join words with gestures. We are able to understand non-verbal performers like mime artists, dancers or ballet dancers who 'speak' body language fluently. A symbolic gesture indicates an abstract quality that has no simple equivalent in the world of objects and movements. Students should learn symbolic gestures of other nations as they learn their vocabulary. Ten top tips for interpreting and using the unspoken code future managers should know are: eye contact, posture, head position, arms, legs, angle of the body, hand gestures, distance from others, ears and mouth movements.

4 DIRECT SPEECH ACTS

Within the English language conversation students practise five types of speech acts. They should realize that when communicating with teachers or classmates, they do not only *produce utterances* containing grammatical structures and words, they *perform actions* via those utterances [6].

Successful managers should be persuasive, decisive, intelligent and educated. In the future they will make important decisions, will be responsible for the work of their subordinates, will talk to them and produce many utterances. They may say the utterance (1) which will be more than just a statement.

(1) *You are laid off!*

They can use the utterance in (1) to perform the act of ending people's employment. However, the actions performed by utterances do not have to be as dramatic or as unpleasant as in (1). The action can be quite pleasant, as in the compliment performed by (2a), the acknowledgement of thanks (2b), or the expression of surprise in (2c).

- (2) a) *You are so nice.*
 b) *You are welcome.*
 c) *You are crazy.*

Actions performed via utterances are generally called *speech acts* which are commonly given more specific labels, such as *apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request*.

These descriptive terms for different kinds of speech acts apply to their communicative intention in producing an utterance. The speaker normally expects that his/her communicative intention will be recognized by the hearer.

4.1 Speech act classification

This classification system lists five types of general functions performed by speech acts: *declarations, representatives, expressives, directives, and commissives* [6]. All of them are studied and practised by management students.

Firstly, they perform *declarations* – speech acts that change the world via utterance. As the example (3) illustrates, the speaker has a special institutional role, in a specific context in order to perform a declaration appropriately.

- (3) *You are laid off!*

Secondly, they produce *representatives* – speech acts that state what the speaker believes to be the case or not. Statements of *fact, assertions, conclusions, and descriptions*, as illustrated in (4), are all examples of the speaker representing the world as s/he believes it is.

- (4) *Peter Drucker, the American management professor and consultant, was the author of many books about business.*

Thirdly, they practise *expressives* – speech acts that state what the speaker feels. They express psychological states and can be statements of *pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, or sorrow*. As illustrated in (5), they can be caused by something the speaker does or the hearer does, but they are about the speaker's experience.

- (5) *I am so sorry!*

Congratulations!

Well done!

Fourthly, they use *directives* to get someone else to do something. They express what the speaker wants. They are *commands, orders, requests, suggestions*, and, as illustrated in (6), they can be positive or negative.

- (6) *Could you lend me An Introductory View of Management by Peter Drucker, please?
 Do not lay off the older staff.*

Finally, by using *commissives* they commit themselves to some future action. They express what the speaker intends. They are *promises, threats, refusals, pledges*, and as shown in (7), they can be performed by the speaker alone, or by the speaker as a member of a group.

- (7) *I will be back in my office in 5 minutes.
 I am going to get it right next time.
 We will not threat so many employees.*

CONCLUSION

Most of MTF STU teaching rooms, lecture halls and laboratories are equipped with in-built data-projectors and computers in order to enhance the quality of the teaching and learning process. What is more, each teacher has its own computer in his office. Therefore, the teaching and learning process and written communication with students via the AIS is more efficient. Within the English language seminars both types of management students do not only study management in English but they also improve their communication skills to become good managers.

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