

*Short Reports***OLYMPIAD IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
FOR CADETS OF HIGHER MILITARY
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
AS A MEANS OF DEVELOPING
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

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The author analyzes the communicative competence in a foreign language as a criterion for evaluating the educational level of university graduates. Olympiad in a foreign language is regarded as a form of control and verification of the level of foreign language communicative competence formation. The author describes the process of preparation for the competition taking into consideration the teaching means, educational technologies as well as methodological forms of educational process organization. The description of the three rounds of the All-Army Olympiad in the English language is presented in the article as well as the criteria for assessing the participants' answers.

With economic globalization and the integration of Russia into the world economy the knowledge of a foreign language has become a key competitive factor for young professionals. The importance of language skills of graduates of institution of higher education is no longer in doubt. This is due to at least two reasons: firstly, a foreign language, as a training course, performs the humanistic function of development of creative and logical qualities of a personality, and secondly, in today's interrelated and interdependent world the knowledge of a language as a means of communication enables to establish business contacts between professionals. Obviously, the formation of communicative competence in a foreign language has become the criterion for evaluating the educational level of university graduates.

One of the most important components of training a highly qualified specialist is to master a foreign language as a tool of professional communication, including skills of professional translation (translation of the authentic literature on specialty): lexical and grammatical knowledge (building of vocabulary and grammar skills) and skills of monologic speech that determine language competence [2]. The aims of a foreign language course in an institution of higher education are defined by the communicative and cognitive needs of the professionals in an appropriate specialization.

The teaching aim is to acquire communicative competence by trainees. The level of communicative competence enables to use a foreign language in professional communication as well as for the

purposes of self-studying at different stages of language training. So there is a need not only for significant updating, but also for controlling the level of formation of foreign language communicative competence of graduates of institution of higher education [1]. Olympiad can be regarded as a form of control and verification of knowledge and skills, but it should be taken into consideration that this contest is not only an independent, objective examination of knowledge, but it is also a competition. Participation in the Olympiad gives cadets the opportunity to adequately assess their level of language knowledge and to stimulate them to further improvement.

In April, 2013 the Baltic Naval Institute as well as 39 other higher military institutions took part in All-Army Olympiad in the English language which was held for the second time. The preparation for the competition was very intensive as a tough deadline had been defined by the organizer. Furthermore, the content of the Olympiad turned out to be extremely diverse and complicated.

While preparing for classes our teachers made efforts to find appropriate teaching materials as well as to reconsider educational technologies. A wide range of teaching means was involved, including the Internet resources, video fragments, authentic periodical press, etc. A large amount of information necessary for assimilation by cadets required using new educational technologies as well as methodological forms of educational process organization. The trainees

Competition in the professional foreign language for cadets of higher military educational institutions included three rounds.

The first round included tasks on writing an essay on a professional military topic and monologic utterances of participants on a given topic. Criteria for assessing writing and oral presentations embraced such parameters as the topic completeness (the text integrity), the introduction, presenting the theme of a composition/speech, a concluding part with conclusions, logical and consistent presentation of ideas, the presence of reasoning elements and expression of one's thoughts, as well as the use of a wide range of lexical, modal means, various tense forms, including those beyond the training program.

The second round included military-cultural study test on issues related to the military and geographical situation of Britain and the USA and their Armed Forces, as well as the solution of military-specific tasks – listening to a speech about the preparation for the combat training task performing, answering the sounded questions and explaining one's position. This task checked not only basic communication skills: reading, listening and speaking, but

also paid considerable attention to proficiency in professional vocabulary and the ability to find and make the right decision quickly. The complexity of the task lied in its subject matters as themes represented different branches of troops, so cadets had to be aware of aspects of all arms of the service. In carrying out this task participants were assessed for reading comprehension (understanding of their role, situation, orders), listening skills (understanding of rank, position of an addressing officer, information on situation changes, the essence of requests), speaking skills (presenting one's own utterances in a foreign language, highlighting the most important information or translating it into a native language and transferring the response of the commander). To fulfill this part of the test cadets were required to have knowledge of basic lexical and grammatical structures in English, the laws of their compatibility and the ability to use them.

The third round «Briefing in a foreign language» was held in a form of defense of a pre-arranged presentation using video and computer technology. Topics were chosen by the cadets in the specified themes. Participants of the third round were to answer the jury and audience questions related to their topic, to debate logically, showing initiative in the case of question misunderstanding. The main criteria of presentation assessment were precise structure (introduction, main part, conclusion), the connection between the components of

the speech, the oral presentation itself (the contestants did not read), absence of mistakes, usage of various grammatical structures and professional vocabulary. Overall, the results of the Olympiad indicated the desire of cadets to acquire communication skills in the field of foreign language communication.

Holding of such competitions has many advantages. Firstly, the Olympiad involves cadets from different higher military educational institutions, and this allows identifying talented cadets among a large number of participants. Secondly, it increases the motivation of cadets for studying foreign languages and stimulates their intellectual and linguistic activity, which, in its turn, intensifies the cogitativity and provides the opportunity for implementing an effective cross-cultural interaction. Thirdly, the event has pedagogic value: the cultural level of cadets increases thereby their imagination and creativity skills develop. And finally, the work carried out in the form of Olympiads has positive psychological impact on the relationship between teachers from different institutions, creates an atmosphere of cooperation and creativity.

References

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