Development of Technical College Students' Communicative Competence

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Abstract

The role of communication has increased in modern society due to the growth and expansion of interpersonal, inter-regional and international relations in politics, economy, science and culture. In this regard, one of the priorities of educational policy is a radical improvement in the system of vocational education aimed on training of highly qualified personnel for the country's economy. The main result of the educational institutions activities should not be a system of knowledge and skills, but a set of core competencies as the expected learning outcomes. The effective solution of this problem in a technical college depends not only on the training of future engineers for using production technologies and working with modern technology, but also on the development of specialists' culture of communication. Dynamic character of life and professional activity requires communication skills, the ability to rapidly integrate into the production team, willingness to adapt to new working conditions and regulate the relations between people in the process of joint activities.

The article reveals the essence and the basic characteristics of communicative competence, characteristics and development model of technical college students' communicative competence. It also considers creating educational communicative space as a leading factor in the development of students' communicative competence. The study identified and disclosed criteria indicators (organizational and cognitive, emotional, behavioral and speech) and levels (high, medium, low) of students' communicative competence. The results of the experimental work suggest the viability and validity of the educational environment to develop effectively the students' communicative competence.

Keywords: communicative space, communicative competence, communicative needs, educational activities, technical college students, the humanities

1. Introduction

1.1 Actualizing the Problem

Communicative competence as a necessary professional engineer quality is a major component of his professional competence. Unreadiness for communication often leads to various difficulties. In modern conditions the knowledge and skills as a unit of learning outcomes are necessary, but not sufficient in order to be successful in society. For a specialist it is important not so much to be encyclopedic literate as to have the ability to apply general knowledge and skills to resolve specific situations and problems arising in a real professional activity (Kovaleva et al., 2015; Torkunova et al., 2014; Ganieva et al., 2014; Shaidullina et al., 2015).

Communicative competence of an engineer is becoming very important due to the increasing level of information society, expansion of social experience (Valeeva et al, 2014). It becomes crucial in situations of public speaking, debate, dispute, negotiation, meetings, presentations, industrial conflict resolution. However in modern teaching practice we found the following contradiction: the need for a high level of communicative competence in engineering, on the one hand, and the low development of technical college graduates' communicative competence, on the other hand; modern society needs of a socially active professionals with strong communication skills, on the one hand, and the lack of theoretical and practical elaboration of the technical college students' communicative competence development problems by means of the humanities, on the other hand (Lopatina et al., 2015; Grigoryeva et al., 2015; Gutman et al., 2014; Masalimova et al., 2014; Valeeva & Demakova, 2015).

1.2 Explore Importance of the Problem

Professional engineering activity depends very much on the skill of the future engineer to realize him in communication, to establish business relations, to interact, to explain clearly his thoughts and suggestions, to resolve constructively different conflicts. Therefore, future professionals need the ability to communicate effectively in a complex production environment (Lopatina et al., 2015; Ivanenkoet al., 2015; Sakhieva et al., 2015; Shaidullina et al., 2015; Masalimova & Sabirova, 2015; Valeeva & Valeeva, 2013).

The necessity of Russian society modernization involves entering a new generation in the globalized world by means of the young people's key competencies development: social, communicative, informational, cognitive, and other (Levina et al., 2015). One of the most important is communicative competence. Its relevance lies in the following three aspects: public request from the professional business world, which is acute shortage of practical communication skills of university graduates; the needs of the education sector; the need for productive communication among individuals that is associated with the condition for the existence of any society.

1.3 Criteria for the Development of Technical College Students' Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is an integral system of interrelated knowledge, skills, ways of working defined with respect to a certain range of objects and processes and determining the ability to effective communicative interaction in the situations of professional activity. The criteria for the development of technical college students' communicative competence are:

1) The complex of theoretical knowledge of professional activity communicative organization (the ability to organize communication, to analyze the goals and objectives of the communication process, its subject matter and the reason).

2) The ability to conduct business negotiations, business conversation, mastery of the technique of business communication; knowledge of business etiquette; persuasion and the ability to dispose one's interlocutor, to develop a strategy of communicative behavior, influencing decisions, to demonstrate tact, peacefulness and good manners.

3) The ability to listen and hear the other party, to own techniques of active listening, showing interest and respect, constructive criticism, possession of an effective exit strategy from the conflict, to control one's own emotions, and manage them, to adjust the range of verbal and non-verbal means.

4) The ability for empathy, expressed in understanding feelings, thoughts, expectations and aspirations of the communication partner, attempts to put oneself in a partner's place, identifying and assessing the state of the interlocutor, owning ways of expressing emotions with voice, type of speech, choice of adequate situation tone, intonation, pausing.

5) Practical ownership of the means of professional communication realizing special knowledge (selection and use of non-verbal communication).

6) Possession of language skills: correct speech, competent speech, pleasant voice, good diction.

1.4 Status of a Problem

In recent years, the development of various competencies of the individual including the communicative competence have attracted the attention of researchers. For example, the following competences are studied: language competence (Beam, 2002; Zhukov, 1987; Kitaygorodskaya, 1986); discursive competence (Kucherenko, 2000); linguistic competence (Milrud, 1999; Haris, 1998). Various aspects of the communicative competence of the individual are discussed in the works of Ges (1985), Emelyanov (1990), Kashnitsky (1995). General methodological and pedagogical aspects of a competent person are examined by Bolotov and Serikov (2003), Petrova (1999), Mazo (2000). Professional competence is considered by Budarina (2001), Vardanyan (1999), Zeer (2005). Solution to the problems of effective communication in the interaction is especially important for teaching and learning process. In this context, the problem of communication in pedagogical process are discussed by Leontiev (1999), Sidorenko (2002). Ideas of vocational pedagogy, professional growth at the university are reflected in the works of Bessarab and Neustroev (2000), Shadrikov (1996). Important ideas competence as a backbone factor in building a model professional and as a result of a new quality of education are considered by Delor (1996), Zimnaya (2004), Verbitsky (2004). Structural and functional analysis of professional and engineering activity is presented in the researches of Alekseev (1993), Grachev (1998), Khairullina et al. (2015), Nigmatov (2015), Masalimova and Nigmatov (2015), Gatiyatullin and Nigmatov (2014).

The analysis of the works in the topic showed that the issues related to the research of the technical college students' communicative competence development as a problem remain an understudied area of scientific

knowledge and practical activities.

1.5 Hypothesis

The process of the technical college students' communicative competence developing will proceed more effectively if the educational process implements the following pedagogical conditions: enriching the content of the course "Psychology and pedagogy" with situations of social interaction; fulfillment of individual communication tasks, developing cognitive activity and independence of students; using the communication training in the classroom; systematic monitoring of the level of development of students' communicative competence, aimed on determining compliance of the training process with expected results.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 The Tasks of the Research

The tasks of the research are:

- To clarify the nature and structure of the concept "communicative competence";

- To develop a model of communicative competence of technical college students in the conditions of the educational communicative space;

- To identify the forms, methods and means of technical college students' communicative competence development in teaching the discipline "Psychology and pedagogy".

2.2 Theoretical and Empirical Methods

To test the hypothesis there has been used a complex variety of methods, complementing each other:

- theoretical—analysis of the pedagogical and psychological studies on the issue; study and generalization of innovative teaching experience, analysis, synthesis;

- empirical—participant observation, ascertaining and forming pedagogical experiment, survey, testing, interviews, discussions, study results of academic and extracurricular activities of students.

2.3 The Trial Infrastructure and Stages of the Research

Experimental base study was Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University Branch in Naberezhnye Chelny. The study was conducted in three interrelated stages from 2011 to 2014.

At the first stage of the theoretical search (2011) there was carried out the selection, study and theoretical analysis of psychological and pedagogical, philosophical, scientific literature on the issue of research, the main challenges and the hypothesis of the study were identified.

At the second experimental phase (2012-2013) we generalized theoretical material, refined pedagogical conditions determined by the method of the experiment; based theoretically the idea of creating a training communicative space for the development of technical college students' communicative competence. There was conducted experimental work on the development of technical college students' communicative competence while studying the humanitarian discipline "Psychology and Pedagogy."

At the third synthesis stage (2014) we carried out the processing of empirical data, summarized and systematized the results of the study, refined theoretical and experimental findings.

2.4 Evaluation Criteria

During the experiment there were determined criteria indicators of technical college students' communicative competence on the basis of which the evaluation, definition, classification and performance qualitative and quantitative characteristics of each personality traits were formed. These indicators characterized the structure of communicative competence of students and were evaluated on the following criteria:

- *Organizational and cognitive* criterion includes the presence of organizational aptitudes, availability of communicative dispositions and self-capacity for self-education and self-development;

- *Emotional and behavioral* indicators include the ability to listen and hear the other party, the capacity for empathy, the ability to control own behavior in conflict situations, to choose the right strategy behavior, effective use of non-verbal communication);

- *Speech indicator* is made up of a certain speech culture ownership, which is expressed in articulation, diction, voice tone; knowledge and skills in grammar.

To identify the level of technical college students' communicative competence there were determined methods for each indicator, which included a criterion characteristic of each level: high, medium, low. Characteristics of

communicative competence levels are represented in the following table:

Table 1. Characteristics of technical college students' communicative competence levels (organizational and cognitive indicators)

The level of competence	Characteristics
High level	The student is able to prepare a presentation corresponding to the intended target, to provide research results and argues on the work that were done during the presentation. He is well-versed in the situation of communication, creates an environment necessary to achieve the objectives; he is able to conciliate for cooperation; he selects forms of treatment to the partners in accordance with their psychological characteristics, as well as forms of expression available to the intellectual level of the interlocutor and his purposes; he takes into account the more subtle features (cultural identity, gender-sensitive). He uses a creative approach to the organization of business conversation: seeks to contacts, to be persistent and demanding, working as a team towards a common goal. He uses effective methods of influence (friendly advice, request, clear requirement, etc.); can find the appropriate form of persuasion (logical constructions, the reference to authorities, suggestion). He is able to prove, to convince; he is active in the interaction, focused on the personality of the communication partner. He knows how to make the right impression (to be liked, to instill fear, to evoke pity, sympathy, etc.). Various techniques are used by him to attract the audience's attention; he can explain difficult passages with examples; he uses images, diagrams, drawings.
Medium level	He doesn't demonstrate very stable organizational and communicative inclinations. His knowledge of the organization to communicate is systematic; he has a positive attitude to the joint organizing activity; he is easy to engage in dialogue and participates in the discussions; he is often influenced by the communication partner.
Low level	The desire to communicate is limited; he feels awkward and insecure in the team; he prefers to spend time alone with himself; he has difficulty in establishing contacts with people and the audience. There are no skills of independent work with information; he is lack of skills of persuasion and has weak skills in computer information technology. His taking the initiative in social activities is extremely underestimated.

Table 2. Emotional and behavioral indicators

The level of competence	Characteristics
High level	Fluency in verbal and non-verbal means of behavior: speech, intonation, facial expressions and gestures correspond to the meaning and content of statements, as well as the situation and needs of the audience. He understands the particular partner; he is is able to find a compromise solution, the best way to overcome the conflict, uncertainty in the relationship; he is able of unacceptable feelings and emotions as well as to show needed of them. He knows how to listen to the interlocutor, to perform confident behavior in everyday communication; he is able to make responsible decisions independently. He is able to exercise self-restraint and self-control with various partners in dialogue.
Medium level	Limited ability to understand the interlocutor; there is a slight discomfort in the selection and use of non-verbal communication; having difficulty in conflict situations; he owns his emotional state, but in difficult situations or communication he is often irritated, sometimes losing his control of his emotions. Restrained and tolerant attitude to the majority of interviewees.

Low level	Intonation, gestures and facial expressions significantly at odds with the plot of the statements; he is not able to take into account individual, other gender-sensitive, one's educational level and status. Unable to analyze his own and other people's behavior, emotional state of the partner; he does not understand (or misunderstand) subtext of communication. He has bad temper, affected by his mood; in a conflict situation he does not account for his own and the partner's possibilities; he is not convincing.

Table 3. Speech indicator

The level of competence	Characteristics
High level	The ability to clearly and distinctly engage in dialogue or debate, to own both mainstream and more complex grammatical phenomena. He outlines his thoughts clearly; his speech is logical and meaningful; he can competently and convincingly express his opinions and defend them. He has good diction and oratory skills, changing voice volume and intonation; he refers to the experience of the audience; he owns emotional expressiveness, manner of execution; actively uses a large amount of vocabulary, a large number of synonyms. His speech meets the objectives and terms of communication.
Medium level	He is able to coherently and logically present his own position. He is able to correctly and clearly express own thoughts, but he cannot correctly argue ambiguously manifesting himself in the clarity of expression. His speech doesn't express expressiveness and clarity; he has minimum vocabulary, basic knowledge of grammar.
Low level	He has very limited ability to keep the conversation on professional topics; he possesses minimum knowledge of basic grammatical phenomena, speech impaired logic expressions that are not available for understanding; his speech contains the words-parasites, pauses, dialect and jargon.

2.5 Experimental Procedure and Its Description

Pedagogical experiment in accordance with the tasks was carried out in 3 interrelated phases (ascertaining, forming, and control). Each stage of the experiment was characterized by its objectives, methods and means of their decisions and results. The ascertaining experiment involves identifying entry-level of technical college students' communicative competence. During the study there were conducted surveys, observations, interviews with students and teachers, testing of results of students learning activities (their tests) and the analysis of student achievement. It exposed the problems of students' communicative competence development during their training in a technical college. The measurement of the initial level of the students' communicative competence development was carried out by the following methods: self-test questionnaire of the abilities to self-identity and self-development after V. I. Andreev; the test "Listening" after N. A. Litvintseva; diagnostics of the capacity for empathy after Yu. A. Fomin; evaluation of the personality conflict level after V. I. Andreev; questionnaire "What can you say about facial expressions and gestures?" by V. R. Vesnina; self-assessment test "The ability to express one's thoughts" after N.A. Litvintseva; test "The style of behavior in the conflict" after K. Tomas. Longitude monitoring of students' work showed that they did not have the skills of working with information. The difficulty lay in the transmission of information to another person and proof of one's own point of view.

Ascertaining experiment allowed formulating preliminary conclusions:

- Most of the technical college students do not consider themselves as communicative personalities: they cannot start connecting, attract the attention of partners, support communication; they do not possess communication skills and knowledge in the organization of business negotiations;

- Most of the students expressed a strong desire to learn the discipline of ethics and psychology of business communication, because the ability to communicate is an important component of professionalism;

- Students want to learn leadership skills (the ability to plan, clearly and reasonably formulate the task; the ability to motivate and exercise control; the ability to constructively criticize and accept criticism);

- Students showed great interest in learning coherently, logically, correctly build speech utterances, gaining the ability to compromise, the ability to evaluate their own process of communication, personal and his partner's involvement.

The results for all three indicators (organizational and cognitive, emotional, behavioral and speech) in ascertaining experiment showed that the level of the students' communicative competence development is insufficient. This confirms the need for targeted special work with students to develop their communicative competence.

3. Results

3.1 Creating a Communicative Space in the Technical College

In the process of creating a communicative space there were taken into account its following characteristics: *the aim* (creation of mutually binding communicative teaching and learning situations aiming on the positive-active communication activities and the positive-active behavior of the student), *functions* (informational, integrative, translational, expressive, the function of complicity), *means* (use of oral and written information exchange), *content* (creating a trusting relationship based on dialogue as a mechanism for the formation and existence of tolerance) and *structure* (component composition of the subjects of educational activity, event-related meetings, using the real and meaningful communicative tasks, openness and choice of communication).

The study showed that communicative space can be a factor of humanization of student life and learning. It will be a community space, filled with real and meaningful communicative tasks, games, discussions, workshops, where the effective interaction with each other may take place. Based on this, a communicative space means specifically organized communicative learning environment, a structured system of pedagogical conditions in this environment for efficient development of technical college students' communicative competence. Thus, we concluded that we can develop technical college students' communicative competence only in such educational environment where necessary humanized conversion activities are organized; where the development of communicative competence is seen as an important but not the only and most important tool for self-training of specialists for their working life in today's competitive environment. This educational environment we created in the process of teaching the humanitarian discipline "Psychology and Pedagogy".

3.2 Solution of Primary Tasks of Didactics

The purpose of the technical college students' communicative competence development was that teachers and students were able to present the final outcome, the result of their interaction. In this case, the principles determined the main directions in achieving the objective; pedagogical conditions provided effective activation of the students' communicative competence; the forms attached pedagogical process logical completeness and perfection; the methods helped to transmit the content of information; the means in unity with the methods played the role of ways to work with the content.

To achieve this goal we identified the following teaching objectives:

- Arming technical college students with appropriate theoretical and practical knowledge necessary for successful development of communicative competence;

- Developing their personal and interpersonal qualities, abilities and skills;

- Developing students' skills with revealing the content of communicative competence;

- Organization of communicative space in the development of communicative competence of technical college students by means of humanities.

3.3 The Procedure and Results of the Experiment

To conduct a formative experiment we organized 2 experimental groups of 45 students and two control groups in the amount of 46 students. The experiment was conducted while teaching the course "Psychology and Pedagogy". In the control groups the academic work was organized on the basis of the usual standard program, and in the experimental groups we introduced the pedagogical conditions and the model of technical college students communicative competence development. Each component of communicative competence was conventionally defined in points corresponding to the levels of development of communicative competence and assessed as low, moderate and high.

Dividing the data obtained in three areas: organizational, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, speech, we obtained the following results, presented in tables number 4, 5, 6.

Table 4. Results of the study of communicative competence organizational and cognitive indicator in control and experimental groups before the experimental work

Groups	The amount of students	Index of communicative competence Organizational and cognitive index		
		High	Medium	Low
Control group 1	24	8.3%	54.0%	37.5%
Control group 2	22	4.5%	41.0%	54.5%
Experimental group 3	23	4.4%	56.5%	39.1%
Experimental group 4	22	9.0%	45.5%	45.5%
Total	Control groups—46	6.5%	47.8%	45.7%
	Experimental groups—45	6.7%	51.1%	42.2%

Table 5. Results of the study of communicative competence emotional and behavioral indicators in control and experimental groups before the experimental work

Groups	The amount of students	Index of communicative competence Emotional and behavioral index		
		High	Medium	Low
Control group 1	24	4.2%	54.1%	41.7%
Control group 2	22	9.0%	45.5%	45.5%
Experimental group 3	23	4.3%	52.2%	43.5%
Experimental group 4	22	9.0%	45.5%	45.5%
Total	Control groups—46	6.5%	50.0%	43.5% 44.7%
	Experimental groups—45	6.7%	48.9%	44.4%

Table 6. Results of the study of communicative competence speech indicator in control and experimental groups before the experimental work

Groups	The amount of students	Index of communicative competence Speech index		
		High	Medium	Low
Control group 1	24	4.2%	37.5%	58.3%
Control group 2	22	4.5%	36.4%	59.1%
Experimental group 3	23	4.4%	39.1%	56.5%
Experimental group 4	22	4.5%	31.8%	63.7%
Total	Control groups—46	4.3%	37.0%	58.7%
	Experimental groups—45	4.4%	35.6%	60.0%

At the final (control) stage of the experiment we evaluated the efficiency of complex pedagogical conditions affecting the development of technical college students' communicative competence. At this stage we revealed the level of development of all the indicators of technical college students' communicative competence. The state of the development of technical college students' communicative competence in three areas after the experiment is shown in Tables 7, 8, 9.

Table 7. Results of the study of communicative competence organizational and cognitive indicator in control and experimental groups after the experimental work

Groups	The amount of students	Index of communicative competence Organizational and cognitive index		
		High	Medium	Low
Control group 1	24	8.3%	50.0%	41.7%
Control group 2	22	9.1%	54.5%	36.4%
Experimental group 3	23	17.4%	69.6%	13.0%
Experimental group 4	22	13.6%	68.2%	18.2%
Total	Control groups—46	8.7%	52.2%	39.1%
	Experimental groups—45	15.6%	68.8%	15.6%

Table 8. Results of the study of communicative competence emotional and behavioral indicator in the control and experimental groups after the experimental work

Groups	The amount of students	Index of communicative competence Emotional and behavioral index		
		High	Medium	Low
Control group 1	24	12.5%	54.2%	33.3%
Control group 2	22	4.5%	59.1%	36.4%
Experimental group 3	23	13.0%	69.6%	17.4%
Experimental group 4	22	22.8%	63.6%	13.6%
Total	Control groups—46	8.7%	56.5%	34.8%
	Experimental groups—45	17.8%	66.7%	15.5%

Table 9. Results of the study of communicative competence speech indicator in control and experimental groups after the experimental work

Groups	The amount of students	Index of communicative competence Speech index		
		High	Medium	Low
Control group 1	24	8.4%	45.8%	45.8%
Control group 2	22	4.5%	36.4%	59.1%
Experimental group 3	23	13.0%	43.5%	43.5%
Experimental group 4	22	9.1%	54.5%	36.4%
Total	Control groups—46	6.5%	41.3%	52.2%
	Experimental groups—45	11.1%	48.9%	40.0%

4. Discussions

To implement the teaching tasks there were defined principles underlying the model of technical college students' communicative competence development:

- The principle of humanization of the educational process (reasonable and judicious combination of training future professionals implying a departure from the one-dimensional evaluation of the student as a future specialist);

- Professional expediency principle (varying content of the technical college student training, his focus, methods and forms that contribute to the preparation of generalist);

- Scientific principle (using problem situations in the organization of training activities involving students in a variety of observations studied phenomena and processes, scientific debates, analysis of the results of their observations, seeking additional scientific information to substantiate the findings, evidence of their point of view);

- The principle of linking theory to practice (using analysis of examples and real-life situations, introducing future engineers with situations where a high level of competence is required);

- The systematic and consistent principle (teaching and learning in a specific order and system);

- The principle of accessibility (taking into account the peculiarities of students' development, analysis of the learning material in terms of their real possibilities);

- The principle of cognitive activity and consciousness (assistance to students in the realization of the goal of learning, planning and organization of their work, the ability to check themselves, taking an interest in knowledge, raising issues and seeking their own solutions);

- The principle of professional orientation (direction of the educational process on the final result of student learning in high school - a profession, specialty, project management and organizational skills);

- The principle of cultural appropriateness (maximum use in the upbringing and education of the culture medium in which there is a specific institution);

- The principle of increasing motivation (gaining personal orientation with the use of active learning methods in the classroom).

5. Conclusion

The study confirmed the hypothesis. During the experiment we observed increasing the activity of students, their interest in their activities and the pursuit of self-development. Tiered data analysis suggests the effectiveness of pedagogical conditions and the model for the development of technical college students' communicative competence by means of the humanitarian discipline "Psychology and Pedagogy."

As a result of the research we came to the following conclusion. Development of communicative competence depends not only on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and ways of life, but it is caused by the environment which affects its constituent entities and contributes to the formation of a competent professional. This idea became the leading one in our study when creating educational communicative space as the main factor in the development of communicative competence of technical college students.

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