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DEVELOPING ENGLISH PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN FUTURE SPORTS REFEREES

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Abstract. This article examines the pedagogical and methodological aspects of developing professional communication skills in English among prospective sports referees. It analyzes the communicative aspects of refereeing in sports competitions, the acquisition of professional terminology, the explanation of refereeing decisions, and the management of communication in conflict situations. Furthermore, criteria for assessing students' professional communicative competence are proposed.

Keywords: sports referees, professional communication, English language, communicative competence, sports terminology, ESP, scenario-based learning, role-play, conflict management.

The international development of modern sport requires sports professionals not only to demonstrate a high level of professional competence but also to possess the ability to communicate effectively in foreign languages. The exchange of information among athletes, coaches, referees, and organizers participating in international competitions plays an important role in ensuring the smooth conduct of competitions and fostering professional relationships.

The professional responsibilities of a sports referee extend beyond knowledge of the rules of the game and decision-making. During a competition, a referee must warn players, explain rule violations, respond to coaches' questions, and manage communication in contentious situations. In such circumstances, the ability to use concise, clear, and context-appropriate expressions is an essential component of professional practice.

In higher education institutions specializing in sports, English language teaching is often focused on developing general language skills. However, general vocabulary and grammatical knowledge alone are insufficient for future referees who may work at international competitions. They must also learn to use sport-specific terminology accurately, explain decisions clearly, de-escalate tense communication, and maintain a professional tone.

The aim of this study is to analyze pedagogical approaches that contribute to the development of English-language professional communication skills among future sports referees and to propose a practical methodological model for their development. "At least two people participate in the exchange of information, either orally or in writing, during the communication process, in which the expression and reception of ideas take place alternately"[1].

Professional communicative competence is the ability of a specialist to use language resources appropriately, accurately, and effectively in a specific professional context. For a sports referee, this competence requires the integration of linguistic knowledge, terminology related to the rules of sport, pragmatic skills, and the ability to manage emotionally charged situations.

The professional communication skills of future referees in English can be divided into the following components.

[1] Council of Europe. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Cambridge University Press, 2001, 4.4.3-bo'lim.

Linguistic competence. This encompasses knowledge of sports terminology, the ability to construct simple and clear sentences, the accurate formulation of commands and instructions, and the maintenance of pronunciation accuracy.

Pragmatic competence. This refers to understanding which expressions to use in a particular situation, when to give a brief command, and when to provide a more detailed explanation of a decision.

Interactive competence. This involves communicating with players, coaches, and other officials, responding to questions, and maintaining a professional approach to interaction.

Conflict management competence. This relates to remaining calm in situations involving disagreement or disputes, using a respectful tone, and preventing communication from escalating into conflict.

These components are closely interrelated. For example, a referee may know the terminology related to a particular sporting rule; however, if the referee uses an inappropriate tone when expressing it in a tense situation, the communication may fail to achieve the intended outcome. "Language use always takes place within a specific context that determines various conditions and constraints"[2] . Therefore, in the language teaching process, situational appropriateness and speech intelligibility should be developed alongside grammatical accuracy.

The English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach is based on teaching English in connection with students' future professional needs. For sports referees, this approach involves shifting the focus of instructional content from general topics to sports rules, refereeing decisions, competition procedures, and professional communication situations.

For example, the following English expressions can be used in training sessions related to sports refereeing:

Please remain calm. — Iltimos, xotirjam bo'ling.
The decision stands. — Qaror o'z kuchida qoladi.
Please respect the decision. — Iltimos, qarorni hurmat qiling.
The match will resume shortly. — Musobaqa tez orada davom ettiriladi.
Please follow the rules of the game. — Iltimos, o'yin qoidalariga rioya qiling.

It is important not to limit learning to memorizing these expressions individually. Students should practise using them in different contexts, adjusting their tone, and adapting their language to the person with whom they are communicating.

When teaching professional terminology, the specific sport should also be taken into account. The terminology and official instructions used in football, basketball, volleyball, wrestling, and other sports differ from one another. Therefore, it is advisable to adapt training sessions to the rules of a particular sport and the current terminology used by the relevant federation.

Scenario-based learning is one of the effective methodological approaches to developing the professional communication skills of future referees. Using this method, students analyze simulated situations prepared in advance or situations drawn from actual competitions and respond to them in English.

For example, the teacher presents the following scenario: during a competition, a player expresses disagreement with the referee's decision. Acting in the role of the referee, the student must explain the decision briefly, clearly, and respectfully. Other students take on the roles of the player, coach, or observer.

Such training sessions can be organized into three main stages:

1. Preparation: Familiarizing students with the scenario, the necessary terminology, and possible communicative expressions.

[2] Council of Europe. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

2. Simulation: Acting out the scenario in English, communicating decisions, and managing the interaction.
3. Reflection: Analyzing the participants' speech, identifying effective expressions, and discussing aspects that require improvement.

The main advantage of role-playing activities is that they enable students to move beyond artificial language exercises and use the language in situations closely resembling their professional activities. In this process, students learn not only what to say but also how to say it, when to speak, and for what purpose.

Video recordings of sports competitions can serve as valuable learning resources for studying communicative situations in refereeing. By watching the videos, students analyze the referee's instructions, body language, volume of voice, and the appropriateness of communication to the situation.

The teacher can pause the video at certain points and ask students the following questions:
What decision did the referee make?
Was the referee's instruction clear?
How could the player's question have been answered?

Which expression could be used to explain the situation without escalating tensions?Afterwards, students record their own short video statements in which they explain a decision in English while acting as referees. Reviewing these videos helps them analyze their pronunciation, speaking pace, clarity, and non-verbal communication. Digital dictionaries, interactive quizzes, and electronic flashcards can also be used. However, learning materials should be based on reliable sports-related sources, and the terminology should be aligned with the rules of the relevant sport.

When assessing the English-language communication skills of future sports referees, relying solely on the number of grammatical errors is insufficient. The referee's primary responsibility is to communicate a decision or instruction clearly and in a timely manner. Therefore, assessment should be based on a multi-criteria approach.

The recommended assessment criteria are as follows:

1.Speech intelligibility: The ability to convey the meaning of an instruction or decision clearly to the listener.
2.Terminological accuracy: The use of terms and expressions appropriate to the specific sport.
3.Situational appropriateness: The suitability of the chosen expression for the communicative purpose.
4.Communication management: The ability to respond to questions, listen to objections, and maintain interaction within professional boundaries.
5.Pronunciation and fluency: The ability to express ideas in an understandable manner without excessive pauses.

Developing the English-language professional communication skills of future sports referees is one of the practically significant areas of sports education. At international competitions, a referee's professional responsibilities require not only knowledge of the rules of sport but also the ability to explain decisions clearly, establish professional relationships with various participants, and manage communication in contentious situations.

Based on the scientific approaches analyzed in this article, the following conclusions have been drawn. First, teaching English for specific professional purposes makes it possible to connect the language needs of future referees with the demands of their actual professional activities.

Second, scenario-based learning and role-playing activities enable students to practise communicating decisions in English, providing explanations, and interacting in conflict situations.

Third, video analysis and reflective activities broaden opportunities for developing speech intelligibility, maintaining a professional tone, and understanding non-verbal

communication.Fourth, when assessing communicative competence, grammatical accuracy should be considered alongside terminological precision, situational appropriateness, and communication management skills.

In the future, it would be advisable to pilot the proposed model across different sports disciplines, compare initial and final performance results, and examine the reliability of the assessment criteria. Such research would help to identify more comprehensively the practical potential of English language teaching in preparing sports referees for their professional careers.

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