

# Improving the Ability of Romanian Employes to Communicate in a Foreign Language, in order to Increase Their Adaptability on the European Job Market

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***Abstract*** – *The activity of Romanian industrial units and companies is often carried out in a multinational context; thus, the conformation of Romanian employees to the standards of the global culture, characteristic of the economic or the public domain, alongside with their ability to express and reproduce correctly the professional discourse, from and into a foreign language, might help them activate with more efficiency in the context of the national and the European job market and offer them new possibilities to improve their qualification level.*

***Keywords:*** *professional discourse, communication abilities, foreign languages.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Being a good communicator is an essential ability, common to most people who are likely to be promoted and succeed in their professional careers. Such persons demonstrate the capacity to express ideas clearly and concisely, listen actively, speak and write effectively. In the context of the contemporary world, people are often faced with the need to demonstrate not only the skills of a good communicator, but also the knowledge of a foreign language and of the cultural aspects inherent to any form of communication.

Professional communication is a relatively new discipline that has as chief objective the improvement of the communication abilities of employees activating in different domains of activity. It focuses on discourse forms and the communicative process, as they appear in business, scientific, or academic contexts. It has been observed that most activities in the fields mentioned above encompass, to varying degrees, applications involving writing, reading, speaking, listening, editing, and internet research, which are sometimes carried out in a language that is foreign to employees. Thus, training courses in professional communication often start with the analysis of information in general and focus upon the way in which ideas are produced, received and distributed. Reference to rhetoric and various research methods is also made. Such training courses are aimed

at helping employees or job applicants master both the oral and the written discourse, as well as of the art of gesture and other non-verbal forms of communication.

When a foreign language needs to be used, the employees might find communication even more difficult, especially since it involves not only the possession of linguistic competences, but also the familiarization with cultural standards, specific to each country in particular.

This paper starts from the assumption that strengthening the communication skills of employees, and their ability to express themselves fluently in a foreign language, enhances not only their potential for advancement, but also their professionalism. Its main purpose is to present a series of activities that can be part of a program aimed at improving the abilities of Romanian employees to communicate more efficiently in a foreign language and enable them to manage in the new professional contexts that have emerged after the integration of Romania among the other members of the European Union. It starts with the identification of problems encountered by Romanian employees trying to find employment in national or multinational companies and continues with the presentation of the objectives and the activities of training courses that might help employees acquire the linguistic skills, as well as the forms of behavior that they need in order to be efficient at work<sup>1</sup>.

## II. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY THE ROMANIAN EMPLOYEES WORKING FOR NATIONAL OR MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

Ever since our country has become a member of the European Union, professional communication as a subject has grown in importance, due to the fact that the activity of Romanian industrial units and companies is

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<sup>1</sup> The organisation of this paper follows the structure suggested by the the Applicant's Guides for the Operational-Sectorial Program for Developing Human Resources, 2007-2013, Reference number of the program: 2007RO051PO001, No. 62, "Qualification – A Chance for the Future".

often carried out in a multinational context; thus, the conformation of Romanian employees to the standards of the global culture, characteristic of the economic or the public domain, alongside with their ability to express and reproduce correctly the professional discourse, from and into a foreign language, might help them activate more efficiently on the national and the European job market and offer them new possibilities to improve their qualification level.

The employees of Romanian companies or industrial units, as well as the persons trying to find employment in multinational and national companies or public sectors, can encounter the following problems:

- people are more and more often confronted with an urgent need to communicate in a foreign language; business, governments and non-profit organizations require people who can communicate effectively across countries and cultures, which calls for the mastering of both language and the non-verbal communication;
- there is an absence of practice in decoding or producing professional written English, or written discourse in other foreign languages; employees often overlook the importance of having a sense of audience and a sense of purpose in writing; examples of technical writing include letters, minutes, project proposals, persuasive memos, technical manuals and users' guides.
- the lack of awareness concerning the cultural specificity of the written discourse conventions in professional contexts;
- the employees of Romanian industrial units and companies encounter difficulties in understanding the oral discourse of native speakers of the foreign language, especially the ones whose pronunciation is dialectal;
- the employees of Romanian industrial units and companies demonstrate insufficient abilities in organizing their ideas in ways that are appropriate to the type of discourse they need to use;
- the profile, the expectations of the interlocutor, or the cultural accuracy of the linguistic and the rhetorical means that should be used can often be overlooked.

In order to help employees and persons trying to find employment overcome the difficulties mentioned above, it is imperative to create programs that might help them acquire or improve their communication abilities in a foreign language. Academic institutions should be encouraged to create the context in which activities of learning and teaching a foreign language, or of improving the communication abilities of employees, both in their native and in a foreign language, can be carried out.

### III. THE OBJECTIVES OF A PROGRAM AIMED AT HELPING EMPLOYEES OR JOB APPLICANTS ACQUIRE OR IMPROVE THEIR COMMUNICATION ABILITIES IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The public or private educational centers and departments can develop programs to create the pilot sites that would allow them to help the Romanian employees and applicants for jobs in the economic and the public domain to improve their communication abilities in a foreign language and make them aware of the cultural dimension, coexisting with the linguistic one, that characterize the professional communication in different fields of activity. The ability to negotiate with foreign business partners, the capacity to produce a convincing piece of writing or make good presentations in a foreign language, together with the understanding of institutional and cultural norms, specific to the countries wherefrom different economic agents or public institutions have their headquarters, have become necessary abilities in the context of the contemporary economic and public domains.

More concretely, professional communication training courses should help participants improve their capacity to evaluate different communicative situations, as well as designing and producing appropriate written documents and become skillful in making presentations, persuading, negotiating and chairing meetings. Second, communication between divergent cultural systems should be evaluated and understood.

Among the objectives of a program aimed at the improvement of the employees' communicative abilities, one can mention:

- improving the efficiency of employees at workplace, by acquiring abilities and competences to communicate in a foreign language;
- increasing the adaptability and the mobility of employees in the context of a permanently changing job market, by helping them acquire communication abilities in a foreign language;
- helping employees and job applicants to adapt easily to the different communicative situations created by the contemporary economic and public environment;
- acquiring competences, attested by certificates that are accepted by national authorities, which would indicate the improvement of the professional activity of employees and job applicants;
- the simulation of contexts or situations that might facilitate the understanding and appropriation of communication standards characteristic of the contemporary economic and public domains, together with the understanding and the correct use of concepts specific to the professional discourse;
- the integration of the linguistic and the professional abilities;

- the understanding of the cultural dimension of professional communication.

### III ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE PART OF A PROGRAM AIMED AT HELPING EMPLOYEES OR JOB APPLICANTS ACQUIRE OR IMPROVE THEIR COMMUNICATION ABILITIES IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Putting into practice the program aimed at helping the employees or job applicants acquire or improve their communication abilities in a foreign language can be difficult and time-consuming. It needs to be preceded by a series of actions that might create the context in which the activities that lead towards the reaching of the established final objectives can become applicable. These should have in view, first of all, the identification of a team of specialists in the field of foreign language learning and their involvement in the designing of activities aimed at improving the language abilities of participants to the course. Second, the collaboration of specialists in languages with economists could provide helpful in the design and production of relevant support materials for the courses. Third, the resources that form the material basis: equipped rooms, textbooks, dictionaries, etc. should be made available. Fourth, the information of economic agents and young graduates about the availability of foreign language courses should be carefully organized and supervised.

Thus, some of the program activities can have in view:

- the authorization of human resources so that they might be allowed to issue certificates for the participants at the course that has as main objective the improvement of the communication abilities of the employees or job applicants in the economic and the public domain;
- the publication and distribution of brochures that inform employers, employees and graduates looking for a job about the existence of courses aimed at the improvement of the communication abilities of the employees or job applicants in the economic and the public domain;
- increasing the employers' awareness about the importance of improving the abilities of their employees to communicate in a foreign language;
- creating the web-page of the course;
- organizing and presenting the course modules;
- the configuration of disciplines and the elaboration of support materials for the course aimed at developing the necessary linguistic competence for a good communication in a foreign language;
- the adaptation of support materials to the standards of international communication in the economic or the public domain;
- the selection of tutors;

- the participation of tutors to training sessions;
- choosing the location for the course having in view improvement of the communication abilities of the employees or job applicants in the economic and the public domain;
- the arrangement and equipping of the course room where the instruction and evaluation of participants to the course aiming at the improvement of the communication abilities of the employees or job applicants in the economic and the public domain will take place; the course participants should have access to the means and the methods they need in order to acquire or improve their communication and interaction abilities;
- the selection of participants to the course: the organization of an interview session and the filling of forms;
- the completion of the list of participants to activities aimed at the improvement of the communication abilities of employees or job applicants in the economic and the public domain;
- the organization and tackling, by tutors, of courses aimed at initiation participants in the corporative communication. These courses will include activities that have as objective the improvement of communicating abilities in a foreign language, characteristic of linguistic interactions in the public or the economic domain: oral presentations, forms of communication in writing, the assimilation of words specific to meetings, negotiations, etc., the facilitation of socialization and the understanding of cultural aspects involved in professional interactions;
- the organization of workshops;
- the evaluation of participants, by means of specific tests.

### V. OTHER ACTIVITIES

- monitoring the presence of participants to the activities included in the program;
- round tables aimed at improving the course materials and the adaptation of these materials to the participants' needs;
- the constant preoccupation to improve the quality of teaching;
- organizing activities such as supervision of classes, participation to training sessions, reports concerning the course participants' progress; questionnaires by means of which the activity of the tutors is evaluated by course participants;
- the dissemination of results: the participation of tutors at round tables, workshops, conferences, etc.
- the organization of campaigns for the presentation of the benefits of taking part to

courses for the improvement of the communication abilities of the employees or job applicants in the economic and the public domain.

## VI. ANTICIPATED RESULTS

Among the anticipated results of a program aimed at the improvement of the communication abilities of the employees or job applicants in the economic and the public domain one can mention:

- the training of human resources specialized in helping employees of job applicants to improve their abilities to communicate in a foreign language;
- the organization of a course room in which the activities aimed at the improvement of the communication abilities of the employees or job applicants in the economic and the public domain can be efficiently conducted;
- the formation of groups of evaluators for the process of helping course participants improve their communication abilities in a foreign language, adapted to the demands of professional contexts;
- the acquisition, by course participants, of the following communication abilities: the capacity to understand native or non-native speakers of the foreign language; the acquisition or improvement of new knowledge or the activation of passive knowledge, especially the specialized jargon, the pronunciation or the grammatical accuracy; the improvement of fluency in the oral usage of the foreign language, as well as the improvement of the course-participants' trust in their communication abilities; at the end of the course, the participants are expected to be able to make an efficient oral presentation in the foreign language, to be able to present clearly their point of view, prove their capacity to organize meetings or adopt different other roles, characteristic to the economic or the public environment; the ability to write official letters, e-mails, faxes or other types of written documents (invitations, memos, official reports, request orders, etc); improve their capacity to understand and decode oral discourse; the understanding of the intercultural aspects that are inherent to their profession.

## CONCLUSIONS

As Romania has recently become a member of the European Union, our national companies and institutions have been involved in different forms of communicative interactions with similar organizations from abroad. Henceforth the need to improve the employers' or job applicants' abilities to communicate in a foreign language and help them adapt to the new context of the economic or the public domains. The adaptation of the Romanian employees or job applicants to the standards of the global culture is not only a necessity, but also a way of increasing the chances of employees to become integrated in the European job market.

Improving the employees' or job applicants' competences and their capacity to adapt to a job market that is constantly changing means, among others, to improve their capacity to communicate in a foreign language. This ability could help people to respond to the challenges of the global economy and have better opportunities to integrate themselves on the job market.

These objectives can be achieved with the help of courses that are specially designed to help people master the linguistic and the communicative skills they need in interactions determined by the context in which they activate.

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