



Personalizing the Way of Teaching LSP

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Abstract

Introduction. The problem of effective teaching language for special purposes (LSP) to the students of non-linguistic professions has been discussed for a long time and in full details by academicians both in Russia and foreign countries. As the result of multiple and thorough surveys general problems of the given situation have been revealed, the way out being defined as special training/retraining of LSP teachers. But in language education publications it is hardly possible to find the description of the program aiming at the training of the above mentioned teachers. The aim of the article is to present effective approaches to teaching LSP and offer the developed master program “Methods of teaching LSP” as a means to solve the problems mentioned above.

Materials and Methods. The research methods used are a combination of analytical review of studies by Russian and foreign researchers and interpretation of the results obtained by interviewing university teachers specializing in teaching foreign languages to students completing Bachelor’s or Master’s degree programs. The survey was conducted to assess the level of readiness of professional educators to design the structure and content of programs for teaching LSP, and actually conduct classes within the specified language-teaching area, 81 teachers being responders.

Results. As a result of the undertaken review of theoretical works and analysis of the conducted survey a master program “Methods of teaching LSP” was designed for training graduates who will then teach English or Russian as a foreign language at industry-specific higher schools. The developed program focuses on instructing future LSP educators to work out a personalized educational route adjusted to the level of foreign language skills of a student and their prospective professional activities.

Discussion and Conclusion. The master program developed by the authors as well as the content of the subjects suggested as its integral part are expected to become a productive way of training LSP educators who are supposed to acquire a number of special skills and competences described in the article. Distant learning and e-learning technologies are also engaged in the program to facilitate learners’ more efficient independent activities. The master program is seen as one of the means of modernizing LSP teachers’ professional training which meets the long-term needs of the Russian education system.

Keywords: language for specific purposes, teacher training, non-linguistic universities, personalized education, LSP educators

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Оригинальная статья

Индивидуализация преподавания иностранного языка для специальных целей

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Аннотация

Введение. Проблема эффективного обучения иностранному языку для специальных целей (LSP) студентов неязыковых специальностей и направлений подготовки давно и активно обсуждается представителями академического сообщества не только в России, но и за рубежом. В результате многочисленных и тщательно проведенных исследований выявлены основные проблемы данной ситуации, решение которых видится в специализированной подготовке/переподготовке преподавателей LSP. Однако в академической литературе, посвященной лингвистическому образованию, отсутствует описание конкретных программ, нацеленных на подготовку такого рода лингводидактов. Цель статьи – представить результаты исследования эффективных подходов к обучению LSP и предложить разработанную магистерскую программу «Методы обучения языку для специальных целей» в качестве инструмента для решения обозначенных проблем.

Материалы и методы. Методы исследования включали аналитический обзор работ релевантной тематики российских и зарубежных авторов, а также анализ результатов анкетирования преподавателей иностранного языка в неязыковых вузах. Для определения уровня готовности обучающихся к разработке структуры и содержания программ обучения языку для специальных целей и их реализации на практике было проведено анкетирование, в котором приняли участие 81 человек.

Результаты исследования. Разработана программа магистратуры «Методы обучения языку для специальных целей», предназначенная для подготовки выпускников, которые впоследствии будут обучать английскому или русскому языку как иностранному студентов отраслевых вузов. Программа также акцентирует внимание на подготовке будущих преподавателей языка для специальных целей к разработке индивидуального образовательного маршрута, учитывающего уровень владения иностранным языком обучающегося и область его будущей профессиональной деятельности.

Обсуждение и заключение. Представленная магистерская программа, а также предлагаемые в ее рамках дисциплины станут эффективным путем подготовки преподавателей языка для специальных целей, которые сформируют специальные компетенции, обозначенные в статье. В программе предусмотрено использование дистанционных и цифровых технологий для организации самостоятельной работы обучающихся. Разработанная программа магистратуры рассматривается как одно из средств модернизации профессиональной подготовки преподавателей языка для специальных целей, что соответствует потребностям российской системы образования в долгосрочной перспективе.

Ключевые слова: язык для специальных целей, профессиональная подготовка учителей, нелингвистические университеты, персонализированное обучение, преподаватели языка для специальных целей

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Introduction

Effective approaches to teaching languages for specific purposes (LSP) in non-linguistic universities are in the focus of the paper, since the strategic goal of learning a foreign language in a university classroom is the development of

professional and communicative competence ensuring the student is ready to participate in professionally significant intercultural communication with colleagues worldwide [1]. The authors concentrate on the set of competences that make it possible for LSP educators



to maximize the academic progress of every learner, no matter what their language background is. This has become especially significant due to the digitalization and computerization of education process [2].

The relevance of the research conducted by the authors of the article is determined by the Russian Educational Standard requirements for developing intercultural, professional, and special competences of a foreign language teacher [3] enabling them to design appropriate approaches to teaching foreign languages, LSP in particular. A similar reason underlies the need for academic programs of teacher training universities being aimed at developing special foreign language teachers' competences while teaching LSP [4].

The research focuses on developing such competences in pedagogical, instructional and project activities in order to refine the professional competence paradigm of students completing the bachelor program "Pedagogical education". Such competences include LSP educators' readiness to design courses of teaching LSP, to develop teaching aids in order to adjust textbooks and learning packages used in non-linguistic institutions, to use and test special approaches to teaching LSP with the aim of involving all the learners in the educational process. This approach will allow the LSP educator to implement their learners' professional potential to the full extent at various levels of foreign language instruction [5].

The coauthors of the paper have considerable experience of teaching English as a foreign language and Russian as a foreign language at the level of post-secondary education. They have lately been involved in carrying out joint educational projects such as designing the layout of the bachelor program comprising two majors "Information technologies and the English language", "Biology and the English language", "Geography and the English language". They have also worked out the content and conducted in-service vocational courses for university teachers aimed at developing the skills of giving subject-specific lectures and participating with reports at conferences devoted to the subject that they teach. The authors of the paper have also taken part in the implementation of the urban level project of "Digital didactics" and "Perfecting

the educational content and the education environment" carried out by the State autonomous educational institution of higher education of the City of Moscow "Moscow City University" (Moscow, Russia).

The authors' collective theoretical, scientific and practical experience in teaching LSP and in training LSP educators calls for modernizing LSP educators' professional training. The authors consider that it is necessary to significantly alter the system of multilevel LSP educators' training so that it would be focused not only on content and language integrated learning, but also on personalized education.

This approach is aimed at solving the existing contradiction between the required LSP educators' set of competences and the lack of educational tools, both classical ones and advanced technical and interactive, to develop the competences needed. Moreover, in non-linguistic universities LSP educators have to teach students who initially have different levels of a foreign language. This contradiction may be eliminated if teaching is based on the principle of the personalized content of LSP teaching, if technologies of personalized education, enabling to teach a foreign language to all learners with regard to their level of language acquisition are used. A key notion here is personalized education based on the learner-centered approach, taking into account learners' individual educational demands at various levels of LSP teaching and learning. This dimension highlights the requirement for LSP teachers to master the technologies of developing a foreign language communicative competence via designing personalized instructional courses targeted at achieving the planned learning results by all learners. Mastering special competences in personalized teaching will enable the teacher to solve instructional problems efficiently to the advantage of all learners, thus preventing a situation when educational content is, on the one hand, excessive for some students, on the other hand, is insufficient for others.

The authors are aware that effective approaches to teaching LSP include LSP educators' competences to design an individual learner-centered curriculum for each student considering the principles of humanization, individualization and openness of education.



Literature Review

The growing interest in language for specific purposes, which is perceived as a set of language units (mainly vocabulary) serving as a means of conveying messages in professional discourse [6; 7], has increased the number of LSP courses at universities and colleges worldwide. As a result, teachers often begin to teach LSP without any special professional preparation, as J. Kic-Drgas and J. Woźniak mention in their article 'Training outcomes based on identified gaps between LSP provision in Europe and LSP teachers' needs' [8], since using correct language means and taking into account the addressee factor is of great importance [9].

Besides, the issue of English-medium instruction of disciplinary subjects has arisen lately bringing about the challenges that teachers and researchers of language for specific purposes face worldwide [10; 11]. Therefore, the problem of appropriate qualifications and training for university staff engaged in delivering courses in a foreign language for specific purposes has been viewed as significant [4; 12]. LSP teacher education programs, as H. Basturkmen highlights, have concerned both pre-service and in-service LSP teacher education [13].

Apart from introducing new language structures, making learners practise language items, using the language within fairly controlled parameters [14], LSP teachers face additional demands that include, according to T. Dudley-Evans and M. J. St John [15], the roles of a teacher, course designer, materials provider, collaborator (with subject specialists), researcher and evaluator of courses, materials and student learning that create the common communicative space [7].

As G. Taillefer suggests, an LSP educator also ought to be an advisor on content and language integrated learning programmes in English-medium university teaching contexts [16]. H. Basturkmen points out that LSP (ESP) teachers are involved in research and in curriculum and materials development tasks as well as teaching [13].

In terms of CLIL, E. Corino and C. Onesti suggest corpus-based methodology that will promote the development of teachers' and students' competences to move away from

mere surface of texts towards understanding meanings and structures [17].

T. Morell emphasizes that LSP specialists need to be trained by content specialists and to do their own research to support 'best practice' in classrooms [10]. J. Kic-Drgas in 'Development of soft skills as a part of an LSP course' also suggests the idea of soft skills oriented LSP teaching as a means of bridging the gap between the lack of knowledge of a foreign language for specific purposes and the increasing internationalization of all spheres of people's life [18]. These technologies can help facilitate learning process, increase learners' motivation [19] and provide students' participation in real life academic events in digital learning environment [20; 21]. E. M. Silva et al. suggests creating an e-learning based package for LSP educators to guide them in innovating their language teaching methodologies through the effective use of quality digital based open educational resources teaching sources [22].

Materials and Methods

The methods of the research applied combine the analytical review of the studies carried out by the authors in Russia and abroad and the interpretation of the results of interviewing university teachers who specialize in teaching foreign languages, including Russian as a foreign language, to students studying for their bachelor's or master's degrees at Moscow City University (MCU) and at National Research Mordovia State University (MRSU).

At the first stage of the survey a questionnaire was worked out. The major aim of the questionnaire was to assess the level of readiness of professional educators to design the structure and content of programs for teaching language for specific purposes, actually conduct classes within the specified language-teaching area, choose and / or create relevant teaching materials, develop tools necessary to evaluate academic progress of students and critically consider the results of program implementation. The questions were also to establish whether there existed knowledge and skills deficiencies, which could prevent qualified university teachers from effectively teaching language



for specific purposes. All the responders had been informed about the aim of the survey and expressed their willingness to co-operate with the authors.

Forty-nine teachers of MCU and twenty-nine teachers of MRSU were interviewed during the survey. The teachers who participated in the survey mostly worked in the department of English studies and cross-cultural communication of Moscow City University as the department was appointed in 2019 to be the principal one responsible for teaching English at several institutes which are part of Moscow City University where students study to work in the spheres of mathematics, information technologies, sports, biology, geography, special needs education, law, culture, arts, etc. At the time when the teachers filled in the questionnaire most of them were either engaged or used to be engaged in teaching English to students of such institutes as the Institute of Culture and Arts, the Institute of Natural Sciences and Sports Technologies, the Institute of Digital Education, the Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology of Education, the Institute of Law and Management, the Institute of Special Education and Psychology, and the Institute of Foreign Languages of MCU.

The MRSU interviewed teachers worked at the Department of Foreign Languages and taught English, German and French at all departments and institutes of MRSU to students of Bachelor, Specialist, Master and

post-graduate study programs who specialize in the spheres of Humanities, Natural Sciences, Engineering, IT, Art, Social assistance, etc.

The questionnaire comprised 6 questions which were compiled to obtain the information on the following topics: the number of years the respondent had been working as a teacher at the level of post-secondary education, the respondent's professional experience in the sphere of teaching language for specific purposes, topical areas of LSP the respondent dealt with, difficulties they faced when teaching LSP and additional professional education the respondent might need in order to efficiently cope with the difficulties which were pointed out during the survey.

When the survey was carried out, professional teaching experience of the respondents at the level of post-secondary education varied from one to 48 years (Fig. 1).

All the participants admitted having taught LSP to students for at least a year or some years. Topical areas of LSP the responders dealt with were numerous with aviation and engineering as the areas rarely named by the teachers and mathematics, digital technologies, education for special needs, arts, natural sciences, law and management as the areas most often mentioned. The result was to be expected, as the teachers who participated in the survey mostly had to teach English, German, French (or Russian) for specific purposes to the students studying in the institutes of MCU and MRSU mentioned above.

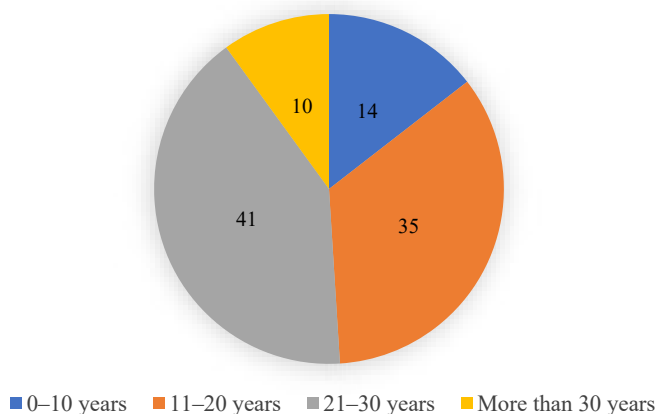


Fig. 1. Experience of teaching LSP

Source: Hereinafter in this article all figures were drawn up by the authors.



Some of the teachers noted that although they predominately worked with the students of MCU studying at the institute of foreign languages they felt they had to make their course content more specific to cover the language educational needs of students studying for their master's degree due to the features of the profiles of the master's programs such as "Teaching English and Russian as a foreign language", or "Language and culture for special needs", or "Personalized education".

The same necessary adaptation of the language content and methodological tools were mentioned by MRSU teachers who had to teach both categories of students: those majoring in foreign languages and those who will use a foreign language only as a means in their future professional activities.

The question in the survey that was crucial to our research required the respondents to describe the difficulties they had to face when teaching students LSP.

The areas of concern that were mentioned by most respondents were the following: lack of efficient teaching materials that could be relied on when planning the course (37.8%); difficulties with establishing the language needs of students studying LSP (25.4%); problems with working out the order of covering language topics (be it grammar, vocabulary, or phonetics) (12%); the problem of choosing the content of the course (27.2%). Also, the teachers noted that it was difficult for them to figure out the basic principles determining the way LSP should be taught to a particular group of students (26.4%); they pointed out that the groups they taught were predominantly heterogeneous regarding their language level and skills (43.2%); they also indicated that assessment of language skills gained proved to be most difficult (36.8%). Some of the respondents indicated that they had difficulties with special terminology of the relevant professional sphere of the students taught (17.2%). Among other areas of teachers' concern were insufficient quantity of hours for teaching LSP, shifting from one professional language to another rather frequently because of unavoidable change in teachers' curriculum, low level of students' motivation of learning LSP (21.7%). It should be noted as well that 24.7% of the interviewed teachers found no difficulties in teaching LSP. In our opinion it

can be explained by the fact that at the moment of the research being done more than half of the respondents had had rather a long period of teaching LSP (Fig. 2).

To conclude, the teachers' responses indicated that they found it hard to answer the most important question for any foreign language teacher who works at the level of post-secondary education, namely, "What language should be taught and what language skills should be developed to achieve learning objectives?"

The analysis of the teachers' responses allowed us to state that all troublesome issues were caused by a certain deficiency of methodological knowledge necessary to identify the best course content and approaches to teaching LSP.

The question of what would be truly useful to give the respondent enough confidence and boost their readiness to teach LSP was predominantly answered in a precise and explicit way. All the respondents pointed out the necessity of arranging short time in-service tutorials with such issues as methodology of planning LSP courses, the adaptation of teaching materials, methods and criteria of assessing learning outcomes, the use of informational communication technologies in such situations included.

40.8% of interviewed teachers answered the fifth question of the survey "Is it necessary to train prospective teachers to make them ready to teach LSP?" affirmatively while 81.6% of them pointed out that this kind of training should be carried out at the level of master programs. This response was crucial for our research since it indicated the explicitly expressed need of the teaching community to be trained for a prolonged period of time in order to be able to teach LSP.

It should be mentioned that the last question of the survey was meant to measure the level of satisfaction of the teachers regarding the way methodological support of LSP teaching was arranged by the heads of the department. 91.8% of the responders indicated that they were satisfied with the fact that short tutorials were organized on a regular basis to discuss the issues of planning LSP classes and working out the content of them. All the teachers who actually taught LSP indicated their acute need to clearly see the outline of the whole LSP course in order to effectively plan their classes and anticipate learning outcomes (Fig. 3).

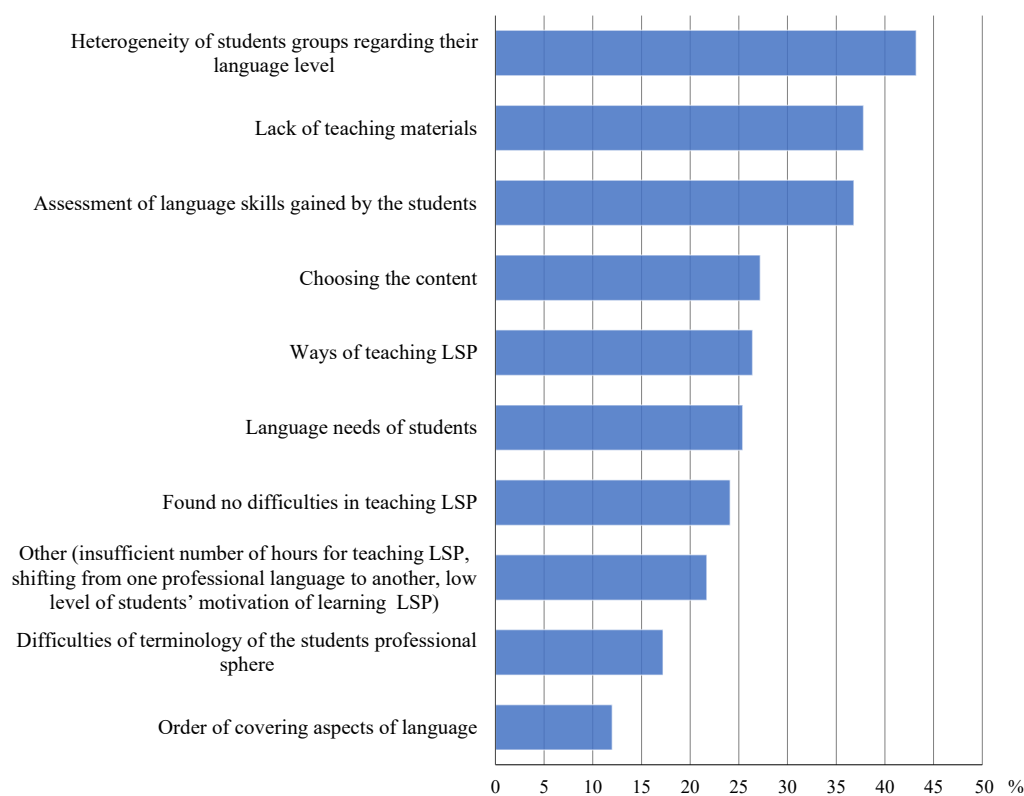


Fig. 2. Areas of teachers' concern

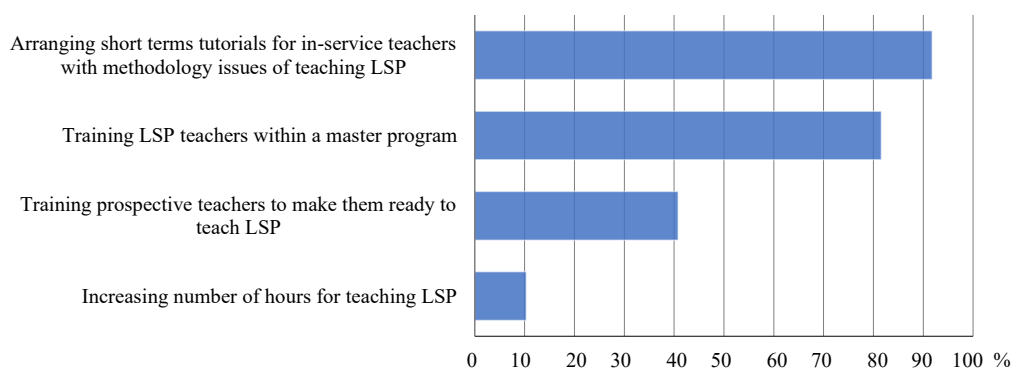


Fig. 3. Ways improving the situation with LSP

Results

In the following part of the article, we shall dwell upon the possible content of a FL teacher master program “Methods of teaching LSP”. The program is seen as unique for it allows those studying it to choose the language to work with (English or Russian as a foreign language) and therefore it can become a major way of training LSP educators at least

in Moscow and Saransk. The program that was designed at the department of English studies and cross-cultural communication of state autonomous educational institution of higher education of the city of Moscow “Moscow City University” has been launched in the academic year 2023–2024.

The program is meant to cover the gap between the acute necessity felt in industry-specific



high schools of training qualified professionals who are able to apply foreign language skills in order to solve professional tasks and the actual lack of LSP educators who are able to design education courses of English or Russian for specific purposes and elaborate adequate teaching materials to make their courses effectively work at the level of tertiary education.

Thus, the major objective of the program is seen as training graduates whose professional competencies allow them to adapt teaching of English or Russian as a foreign language so as it meets professional communicative needs of students studying in industry-specific high schools. In practice it means that the graduates of the program will be aware of the peculiarities of teaching a foreign language at industry-specific higher schools.

Language for specific purposes (in our case these are the English and Russian languages) are treated by the authors of the program from the perspective of cross-disciplinary approach to teaching a foreign language when “specific purposes” do not only mean the specific features of professional discourse but also specific educational needs of learners and their educational goals.

Training future LSP educators to build a personalized educational route adjusted to the level of foreign language skills of a learner and their prospective professional activities is also what the program focuses on.

The graduate of the program is expected to be able to single out the features specific for effectively teaching a foreign language at a given higher school and organize the studying process accordingly.

The layout of the key subjects bound to develop the abovementioned skills of a graduate is given below.

It is believed that studying should be organized within the framework of three educational modules. This scheme is common for the majority of pedagogical master programs realized at Moscow City University.

Module 1 is supposed to be of a general theoretical character. It includes courses devoted to methods of research work in the sphere of foreign language education; innovations in foreign language education; basics of polylingual education; contemporary challenges of home and foreign education as well as cross-cultural

workshops. Students have the opportunity to choose elective courses such as the Terminology of pedagogical discourse or Special vocabulary in teaching a foreign language.

Module 2 is meant to introduce core teaching courses such as General methods of teaching LSP. It includes a variety of elective courses whose objective is to develop the skills of designing educational LSP courses, creating educational materials for LSP courses, evaluating specific features of teaching LSP. The key point here is that students can choose what language for specific purposes they plan to work with. It can either be English or Russian as a foreign language.

The courses that are included into Module 3 are more specific. Their objective is to allow students to perfect their own communicative skills and develop particular skills necessary to effectively teach LSP. We would name here courses devoted to frameworks used for teaching communicative approaches, approaches for teaching pronunciation skills within communicative learning, content and language integrated learning for working with ESP, terminology. Elective courses are presented by a number of subjects connected with applied linguistics.

Discussion and Conclusion

The master program, the layout of which was described above, could become an effective tool for training LSP educators in the Russian Federation.

A projected result may be specified as a list of special competences of the LSP teacher who takes into account parameters of present day global LSP educational environment. The master program described above is aimed at developing special LSP educators' competences so that they will be able to do the following [23]:

- 1) to diagnose learners' language level in order to personalize LSP teaching;
- 2) to design educational programs taking into account learners' language level;
- 3) to adjust available teaching practices and textbooks in order to guarantee that all students will be able to achieve planned academic results at different levels of learning LSP;
- 4) to accordingly plan classroom and extra curriculum activities.



The content of the subjects within the master program discussed, such as Adjusting learning packages in the context of personalized LSP teaching, Learners' independent activity management, Planning the learning process based on students' language level and some others relating to personalized LSP teaching, will prepare the pedagogical university graduate for the following:

- 1) to organize their knowledge on the aims of LSP teaching at different levels and in various educational institutions;
- 2) to use technologies of personalized teaching including the ones of linguo-methodical instructional support;
- 3) to develop productive assessment tools, ways of adjusting learning materials to learners' language level;
- 4) to plan a 'personalized' class and audience management;
- 5) to use information technology tools and the systems of instruction management (smartboards, podcasts, blogs, web-page, quizzes, flashcards, etc.).

It should be highlighted that being aware of the technologies of mastering a foreign language autonomously, of information technologies, distant learning and e-learning technologies will facilitate learners' more efficient independent activities, both in class and out of the University.

Pedagogical universities graduates will apply their knowledge and skills in the areas of personalized LSP teaching in various educational institutions, in organizations of further education, and when developing their own scientific and methodological materials [24]. The pragmatic focus of the research may be the fact that pedagogical universities graduates will be able to diagnose a specific educational situation and to productively work at any educational institution [25].

The modernization of LSP teachers professional training is in compliance with relevant needs of the education system of the Russian Federation and with its long-term perspective. Being aware of that, the authors of the article are actively engaged in scientific, methodological and practical teaching activities, implement a number of educational projects aimed at improving educational environment, promote learners' creativity and professional advancement. The projects promote furthering Moscow City University and National Research Mordovia State University educational activity with respect to developing the continuous system of high quality secondary and higher education. The system is aimed at providing the implementation of individual academic programs for LSP learners as well as graduates' higher competency via taking full account of real working activity in the educational process.

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M. A. Molchanova – describing the structure and contents of the LSP master program; analysis of the results of the survey; writing the article.

E. A. Morozova – formulating the problem of the research work described in the article; critically analyzing the sources; writing the article.

N. V. Burenina – participating in the discussion of the materials; reviewing research methods; developing a questionnaire; doing the survey; analysis; proof-reading; editing and adding to the text of the article.

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