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# The model of English language learning of the sport students

Model učenja engleskog jezika kod studenata sporta

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## ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**  
Sport,  
English language,  
Communicative  
skills,  
Model of learning

The knowledge of an English language is one of the crucial skills for any person in the field of sport. The multicultural diversity at international competitions and a large number of sports professionals working and competing worldwide created a bigger demand for a more adequate level of linguistic knowledge. Therefore, as a result of it, it is crucial to develop a model of learning English at the institutions of higher education where the focus will be on practicing the communication competence in the field of physical culture that would primarily be context based. This means that the learning environment and the curriculum should be organized in such a way that the students are placed in different situations where they will have real life simulations of the different situations in sport or training. The important part of this model would also be the cultural aspect of language learning which would contribute to the development of intercultural communicative competence.

## SAŽETAK

**Ključne reči:**  
sport,  
engleski jezik,  
komunikacione  
veštine, model  
učenja

Znanje engleskog jezika predstavlja jednu od ključnih veština za svaku osobu iz sfere sporta. Različitost kultura na međunarodnim takmičenjima i velik broj sportskih profesionalaca koji rade i takmiče se širom sveta je stvorilo veću potrebu za adekvatnijim nivoom lingvističkog znanja. Kao rezultat toga, važno je da se razvije model učenja engleskog jezika na ustanovama visokog obrazovanja koji će se, pre svega, fokusirati na vežbanje komunikativne kompetencije u sferi fizičke kulture i koji bi se prvenstveno bazirao na situacionom kontekstu. Ovo znači da će kontekst učenja jezika i nastavni program biti takvi da će se student stavlјati u različite situacije koje će predstavljati simulacije situacija iz sporta ili trenažnog procesa. Važan deo ovog modela bi takođe bio i kulturni aspekt učenja jezika koji bi doprineo razvijanju interkulturalne komunikativne kompetencije.

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## Introduction

In a modern society, the learning of an English language on any educational level represents a necessary aspect of higher education of any sports professional. The reason why it is important to learn this global language or *lingua franca* of today's world is closely connected to the

development of the present-day society and its general trends. They include notions such as: globalization, interculturality, the need for education in a diverse, multi-colored and tolerant society, international competitions and a big mobility of people of all professions, but especially from the area of sport.

The demands of the sport profession are becoming more and more expansive in a modern society. Thus, learning an English language represents a necessity for future sports specialists on many different levels. Firstly, it represents a way to communicate on different kinds of events and matches or professional training that will be crucial both during their studies as well as their professional career. Nastas (2017) claims that by learning a foreign language, students also acquire knowledge which will allow them to understand and appreciate another culture, to broaden their spectrum of the career prospects. This cultural aspect of language learning is crucial for the students of sports and will be discussed in greater detail in this paper. All in all, the fact that learning an English language will benefit them greatly in their professional career and life in general should provide a good motivation for learning.

Furthermore, teaching a foreign language at an educational institution, especially higher education, is gaining an increasing social significance. Students of sport on a higher educational level have an opportunity to be exposed to a wide variety of contexts and situations which would enable them to expand their knowledge not only to their area of sport, but also all other sport discipline and pedagogical contexts they could come across in their professional life. The process of learning English should not only focus on acquiring language skills such as vocabulary, pragmatics, phonology and the aspect of critical thinking. The learning of a language itself should represent a multi-layered model that is taught through a gradual process and with thorough planning and modeling by the educators themselves.

When we observe the process of language learning, the development of communicative competence is necessary for an appropriate communication in a foreign language. For that purpose, it is stated that there is a necessity of a communication ability development model for the students in the physical education domain within the teaching-learning process of foreign languages (Cusen, 2000). With all this in mind, there is a need to develop a model of learning English at the institutions of higher education where the focus will be on practicing the communication competence in the field of physical culture that would be context based. This means this learning environment and the curriculum should put students in different situations and contexts where they will have real life simulations of the different situations in sport or training process. Important part of this model would also be the cultural aspect of language learning which would also contribute to the development of

intercultural communicative competence. To put it in simple terms, it describes the ability to understand and successfully communicate with people who belong to other cultures. This cultural aspect is especially important to any professional in sport where the aspect of international exposure and possibility of professional practice in other countries is very high. The overlapping of this competence with communicative skills will be discussed in greater details in the following chapters.

### **The communicative skills**

In this chapter, we will talk about the importance of communication as a language skill crucial for the learning process. Nastas (2017) claims that aspects of language learning should not only be content, but also components such as communication and speaking skills. The communication in foreign languages generally covers the basic skills described in a common European framework CEFR for all languages and it includes reading, speaking, grammar, listening and writing. It is based on the ability to understand and express different notions in the form of a text or speech in different contexts in life. Communication includes also the ability to understand other cultures and social contexts.

The communicative language teaching concept of a foreign language for the future specialists in the field of sport requires the formation of foreign communication skills necessary for professional communication under the conditions of professional activity. Linguists argue that there is no language without communication or communication without a good knowledge of it. In the case of students in physical education, the communicational ability is closely connected to their job and professional career. (Yashima, 2000). All these abilities should be developed by the formation of an intercultural communicative model of learning for the students of sport. This communicative model generally includes the following objectives:

- 1) Exploring the process of English language learning at the university level
- 2) Learning the sports terminology in order to read the literature and scientific articles in English.
- 3) Putting the students in specific situations or different types of role play activities where they would apply all their knowledge in real-life situations and simulations of sport events.

## Methodics

The practice of teaching English at the university level has shown that students mostly face difficulties to verbally communicate in English. Nastas (2017) claims that the traditional methods of teaching a foreign language to the students of sport at the university level were not completely effective to enable the students to communicate effectively in their area of expertise. The conclusion from the classroom practice shows that the older textbooks were found not to be suitable for professional learning purposes, and are found to contain an extensive volume of professional specific terminology.

In acquiring a foreign language, developing the skills of oral expression is a primary objective. Not the same seems to be the case in teaching the scientific aspect of the foreign language. Most of the materials dealing with this issue emphasize the written expression, considered to be the most common hypostasis of the scientific and technical language. It is clear that in this situation, the immediate purpose of approaching a scientific text must be, for a time, the comprehension of the written text, quite difficult by its specificity (Finco & Herpson, 2017).

The language learning process in a specific field, in this case - sport, is not only about learning the terminology. Even if the specialized lexicon of the sport area is studied in detail, the knowledge of its lexicon is not sufficient, because it does not provide proper understanding of a specialized text. The combination of these words is not linear - it can be repeated in different texts, but it may also vary depending on whether it belongs to one or another domain. The reason for this is that we need to know not only the meaning of the words, but also their interconnectivity with other collocations and words and also to develop the ability of the comprehension of a text or a speech utterance. Nastas (2017) also claims it is important to know morpho-syntactic constructions, not just isolated terms, in the case of acquiring the specialized language.

The methodical aspect of this language learning refers to the organization of the selected material, the determination of the succession of texts, the system of exercises and forms of control, the verification of the formed skills and linguistic skills. According to the curriculum, the introduction of the general and specialized sports lexicon is done in progressive stages during the first year of the university studies. During this period, the students acquire, strengthen the lexicon of the general English language, laying the foundations for

learning the specialized terminology. In parallel with this lexicon, the students assimilate the general sports lexicon which is taught through the specific sports and real-life simulations of these sports and training environments. The core of this method is that after acquiring it, students are placed in various situations or simulations where they would have the opportunity to use it. For example, to be placed in the context of the gym and make a simulation of a sports training or a gym practice in English. The process of learning is a concise process that has a great impact on the student's motivation. The aim is to combine the previous knowledge and experience and to create real-life situations that will generally increase the student's motivation. Focusing on the practice in real-life aspects of training and sport activity offers the opportunity to incorporate different learning styles, strategies and modern technologies to train the future sports specialist.

Galavova (2015) claims that by teaching English to the students of sport, the students are enabled to use in an appropriate way the sport-related vocabulary and in this way fulfill all the objectives and the requirements of the curriculum for physical education. It is of the crucial importance that there is a good method in combination with the right materials that will motivate students.

## The communicative cultural model

In the process of learning English, Finco & Herpson (2017) state that "a unitary conception is created about the functioning language as a primary element of communication. In this respect, there is a need to develop a model for the English language communication skills of students in the field of physical culture". Even though the communicative model was a crucial part of language teaching and learning from the early 60s, the cultural approach to learning a language became more relevant in the literature in the recent years (Yashima, 2000). However, this modification and the approach to the university level and students of sport is proposed by the author. This model contains clear learning objectives and incorporation of the cultural aspects into the communicative model.

The advantages of the model based on the communicative principles are:

- 1) Skills of speaking and writing are developed in the second language, but are reflected in the mother tongue.
- 2) Developing the cultural skills of students.

- 3) Opportunity to turn the passive language knowledge into the active one in these simulated situations.
- 4) Methods that are based on communication inspire tolerance and intercultural understanding.
- 5) To prepare for different types of situations that can happen in real life or in practice.

Nastas (2017) thinks that there should be three main goals of the model of language learning:

- A communicative goal;
- A linguistic goal of the comparison of the learned language to the mother tongue;
- A cultural goal.

A very important thing to emphasize before the start of the learning process is the question of student's motivation. Motivation of the students of sport is a crucial factor in the process of language learning both methodologically and educationally. Some of these factors include: the intelligence, the ability to learn language easier, interesting textbooks, the involvement of the teacher (Cusen, 2000). When motivation is concerned, it is argued in the literature that the biggest motivation for achievement is willingness to display good abilities or avoid bad results. Yashima (2000), claims that the student's motivation primarily derives from their sense of self-worth. It is noted in the practice with students that the more the learning process is versatile and closer to real-life situations and kinesthetic learning, the more motivated the students become. The communicative model will offer them the opportunity to practice language skills in

real-life situations, instead of just focusing on the text and terminology. The applicability to use it in real life will be an important motivating factor. Consequently, there is a sense of using a personal experience of the students during the classes which also can be a motivating factor. Such approach considers the increase of creative and innovative aspects of curriculum and extracurricular activities on the cultural and subcultural levels. The students can plan, execute, assess and develop different language competences through the texts with the integration of social and cultural issues and different cultural patterns into linguistic work.

The theoretical background of the issue under study helps to start the development of the special educational module, which will unite culture, the English language and sport. The main aim of this module is to allow students gaining competences, knowledge and skills in interdisciplinary and cultural combination of two subjects – Foreign language and Physical education. The image of the model is presented in Picture 1. The communication objective will be developed gradually through thematic activities of each sport individually, and afterwards combined in the professional training and the teaching practice. This means that terminology of each sport is introduced gradually and practiced through different situations and simulated activities. The second goal is to combine all of this professional knowledge with their general knowledge of English and to use it as a means to express and explain various concepts and communicate and understand each other more effectively. The last aspect of this model is the cultural awareness which



Picture 1. The Intercultural Communicative Competence model  
(Source: Mearns, 2019)

will create a full picture and incorporate all the elements. This cultural aspect is especially important to any professional in sport where the aspect of international exposure and possibility of professional practice in other countries is very high. Furthermore, we pay attention to the fact that modern sport has English roots, so it has made an influence on the culture of the English-speaking countries, their traditions, history, educational system and, especially, popular identification, social coherence, the concept of 'fair play' and so on. Tomić & Čolić (2019) claim that in addition to intercultural competences, well-organised lessons of foreign languages for students would have to develop pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences, as well.

The module takes into account that both a teacher and students perform as the initiators of learning where the following methods are also used: project work, exercises, group work, dialogues, presentations, individual work and reflection. This model also takes into account various methods of learning styles such as kinesthetic, auditory and visual. The model is presented in the following way. Before the learning process, it is assumed that the student will gain knowledge:

- In the sphere of culture and cultural issues;
- In culture and society in the English-speaking countries as well as the questions of globalization;
- In creative and innovative learning;
- About sport as a culture-generated factor, sport cultures, classical and new kinds of sport;
- About sport ideals, fair play, tolerance.

A student will have the following competences:

- explaining the content of learning in relation to language, culture and society;
- planning, executing, assessing the learning and project work which improve the skills;
- improving moving forms in the context of physical education;
- planning, executing, assessing the interdisciplinary learning;
- planning, executing, assessing the learning which supports, develops the educational environment and educational community.

It is supposed that the model includes some interdisciplinary additions to the objectives and the taken competences. New objectives will also include:

- interdisciplinary education;
- didactic interaction between the subjects – the English language and Physical education;
- learning with physical and cognitive components;

- development and continuity;
- studying different kinds of sport, including the rules, techniques, didactic and cultural backgrounds for teaching two subjects.

In this chapter, the application of the communicative cultural model for university students of sport is proposed. It will have three main objectives. The first one is learning the terminology of each sport through different situations and simulated activities. This can be viewed also as a content-based learning. Second objective is the practice of general English and the use of it as a means to express and explain various concepts and communicate and understand each other more effectively. The third main objective is cultural where students will be encouraged to learn some cultural patterns of English speaking societies and the cultural contexts and patterns related to it.

## Conclusions

The knowledge of a foreign language is a very important aspect of the career of any sport professional. As a result, the methods that are proposed to be used at the high education level of students of sport primarily aim at the development of communication skills because this is an aspect that will be mostly used in real-life situations of any sports professional. Therefore, it is important to develop and adjust the model of learning English at the institutions of higher education where the focus will be on practicing the communication competence in the field of physical culture that would be context based. This means that this learning environment and the curriculum should put students in different situations and contexts where they will have real life simulations of the different situations in sport or training. The core of this method is that after acquiring it, students are placed in various situations or simulations where they would have the opportunity to use it. The last aspect of this model is cultural awareness which will create a full picture and incorporate all previously mentioned elements. Learning in this way becomes a clear process that will increase the motivation of the students and bring us closer to the successful results and learning process.

## STATEMENT

*In her statement, the author confirmed the absence of any conflict of interest.*

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