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*Everyday Communication.  
Acquisition and Application of Colloquial Lexis  
by Polish Students of German*

Summary

**Introduction**

Communication is a term which has been accompanying humans since the dawn of civilization. Being open to other cultures involves the necessity of communicating in languages different from the mother tongue. A foreign language class is – to some extent – a substitute for communication in a natural environment. The communicative approach – still applying for foreign language teaching – demands that teachers adapt communication in class to everyday communication effectively. To achieve this goal it is necessary to develop basic and partial language skills. Very significant is successful vocabulary work which is, on the one hand, characterized by using a wide range of techniques in foreign language lessons, and, on the other hand, connected with the introduction of various types of vocabulary – especially colloquial words and expressions as part of communication typical for everyday life.

The aim of the thesis is to investigate the knowledge of colloquial German lexis among people using this language at an advanced level. This will allow to determine whether the vocabulary already acquired by the test persons includes lexical items which appear in the corpus of lexis collected from German television programmes and applied in this research. The corpus is a reflection of colloquial vocabulary used by German native speakers on a daily basis. The knowledge of slang happens to be priceless due to its usefulness in communication in everyday life. Therefore, colloquial expressions should receive more attention in class. The colloquial way of speaking has been around people since their youngest age. Not without cause is the colloquial style regarded as the most important style used by people of every background.

The work consists of six chapters, of which the first four provide a theoretical framework for empirical research included in the final two chapters.

## **Theoretical part**

The theoretical part of the thesis sheds light on the broadly defined terms of communication and language. Chapter 1 presents selected definitions of communication. Communication can take a verbal, nonverbal or paraverbal form. The most important component of verbal communication is the language. The analysis of verbal communication requires a detailed description of language and colloquial language with its variations. It is crucial to address speech acts. An important issue discussed in this chapter refers to stressing the fact that communication is culturally embedded. Thus, it is necessary to examine the term *culture*.

Chapter 2 focuses on the description of the most representative communication patterns. Discussed are the most important factors facilitating and deteriorating the everyday communication. Evaluated are Paul Grice's conversational maxims. A significant part of this chapter falls to the presentation of Noam Chomsky's linguistic competence and of the communicative competence, to which Dell Hymes drew the attention for the first time as well as of the intercultural competence, without which effective communication in the intercultural arena cannot occur.

Addressing the key aspects of communication in the first two chapters allows to transfer the discussion to the term of meaning in Chapter 3. *Meaning* has been defined from various perspectives, for example in semiotic or behavioural terms. The knowledge of the context facilitates the understanding of the intentions of the speaker. Lexical items do not appear in isolation, but are combined with each other to form connotations. The term *meaning* is closely related to understanding. It is essential to mention the text reception. Texts play an important part in the process of language learning, both of the foreign language and the mother tongue, and provide a good source of vocabulary for learners.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the process of conveying meaning and to vocabulary work. Lexis serves one of the key functions in the process of language acquisition. Vocabulary is to be selected properly and to be acquired in the correct order – from concrete items to more abstract ones. This chapter shows selected methods and techniques used for conveying meaning in foreign language classes with regard to the level of language proficiency. Highly interesting is the issue of equivalents – often culturally dependent – of foreign words and expressions in the mother tongue. It is justified to mention dictionary work and to refer to the complex process of translation and interpretation. It should be stressed that some of the translations provided in dictionaries are only superficial.

## **Empirical research**

The theoretical considerations are strongly connected with the research as the empirical part of the thesis focuses on the knowledge of the meaning of colloquial words and expressions used in communication in everyday life. The empirical part consists of two chapters.

Chapter 5 presents the results of an analysis of 40 episodes (73 hours and 8 minutes in total) of German shows *The Voice of Germany* and *The Biggest Loser* with regard to colloquial vocabulary used by their participants. On the basis of this analysis a corpus of colloquial lexis (containing ca. 600 words and expressions) has been prepared, giving information on the frequency of the items collected from the programmes. Such a list shows, for example, which German colloquial words and expressions can be regarded at present as the most useful ones in communication with native speakers of the German language. The lexical items have been classified into the following groups: words and expressions to describe emotions and mental state (*happiness, fury, disappointment, indifference* etc.), vocabulary to assess other people (positively and negatively), fixed expressions in recurring situations (*wishing good luck, congratulating* etc.) and colloquial words as synonyms for lexical items used officially. At that point, it was also advisable to provide connotations of all the words and expressions listed. Furthermore, the vocabulary has been divided thematically into: *People, Family and Social Life, Everyday Culture* and *Sports*. Due to the nature of the programmes the description couldn't lack a link to Anglicisms and pejorative vocabulary.

The results of a longitudinal study conducted during the 2015/2016 academic year among undergraduate and postgraduate students (both of the first year of study) of German Philology at the University of Rzeszów have been presented in the final Chapter 6. The study comprised three measurements – October 2015, January 2016, May/June 2016. The proper study had been preceded by a pilot study conducted in the first week of October 2015 among undergraduate students of German (the second year of study). The research tool applied in the study was a language test elaborated on the basis of a corpus discussed in the previous chapter. The test examined the level of knowledge of German vocabulary of colloquial nature among students of German Philology at the beginning of their study and after the first and the second term. The application of the same test during all the measurements enabled to capture changes in the colloquial vocabulary understood and used by the test persons and to draw conclusions going beyond the population tested.