

MODERN CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ESP AND EAP AT A UNIVERSITY IN UKRAINE

Modern university course of English for Specific Purposes and/or English for Academic Purposes should meet lots of demands. Students are supposed to be provided not only with the development of language competences necessary for their future professional development but also such 21-century skills as critical thinking, ability to organise their own learning process, set goals and develop ways to achieve them. This paper considers some of the challenges that ESP and EAP teachers at a Ukrainian university face today.

One of the most important issues is a growing gap in students' level of language competence. Today this level is largely defined by the ability of their parents to provide private tutoring or language courses. As the result only a small percentage of university students (especially at a technical university) can cope with the ESP curriculum and the classroom activities should be adopted to cater for the needs of students ranging from A1 to B2 in their level of English (according to CEFR classification). [1]

The second problem is closely connected with the previous and can be described as dramatic reduction in the amount of contact hours. Today's practice of 2-3 academic hours per week (instead of 4-6 about 10 years ago) makes the task of transferring the student to the next level of language competence very difficult. Despite this sad reality there is a growing demand for students with good level of English as universities in Ukraine increasingly join the trend of “internationalisation” of education that takes place in Asian and European countries.

This trend involves the introduction of courses taught in English instead of native languages at higher educational institutions. As E. Macaro puts it, “there is an unshakable belief held by university managers that their institution has to

“internationalise” in order to progress in the world rankings or, at the very least, to survive financially.” [2; 5] Growing number of disciplines taught in English together with the percentage of scientific publications written in English makes this professional competence in this language an inseparable component of a higher educational degree.

Thus, an ESP/EAP teacher at the university has to cooperate with subject specialists, carefully select and create the learning material, adapt the curriculum and organize students’ work in such a way that will ensure their ability to operate effectively in an academic and professional surrounding. All those challenges are addressed by the team of Ukrainian and British educators working together within the framework of the project “English for Universities”.

References

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