

## DEVELOPING ENGLISH COURSE FOR TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY TEACHING STAFF

*Investigated in the article is professionally oriented English competence formation of technical university teaching staff. Considering growing opportunities of participation in academic mobility programs, successful performance of teachers of technical subjects is required. Whilst many lecturers lack special linguistic training, they are not confident in using English and helping students with their learning problems. Thus, formulated are the aim, structure and content of the course "English Professional Communication" for teaching staff of a technical university, methods used for teaching technical lecturers, various ways to conduct assessment. The course consists of three thematic modules: organizing and conducting lectures, seminars, workshops; presenting at international conferences; supervising student research. The first module is aimed at non-native English-speaking academics, who need to present and publish in English. The second module deals with real life situations connected with attending the conference abroad. The third module is focused on successful communication with scientific communities, academic writing, designing and describing an experiment. Drawing on data from the surveys, end-of-program reports, learning portfolios, progress tests, exam results, email communication and video recordings of classes, the main features of an effective course for technical university teachers have been identified. First of all, it is aimed at the needs of teachers who conduct lectures, seminars, take part in international conferences and supervise student research. Another feature is the usage of authentic materials which are based on real life situations and creating democratic atmosphere by exploiting cooperative structures. Thirdly, an important feature is the usage of formative, summative and informal assessment, which allows adult learners to demonstrate the acquired knowledge and skills developed during the course, engage their experience cooperating with other participants.*

**Key words:** English course, technical university, teaching staff, adult learners, cooperative structures, assessment.

**Introduction.** Contemporary multicultural educational environment is characterized by growing opportunities for teaching staff to participate in academic mobility programs which demands English competence. Successful performance at an international level is closely connected with providing English training for teachers of technical subjects. To solve the problem, it is necessary to develop such courses which are aimed at formation of professionally oriented English competence to prepare teaching staff for using English in real life situations.

The issue of integrating English language and content instruction has been the subject of the research conducted by J. Coleman, D. Graddol, D. Fernandez, P. Hudson, D. Marsh. Principles of adult education are presented in the works of E. Lindeman, M. Knowles, S. Brookfield, S. Merriam. However, developing English training courses for technical lecturers was not the main focus of their investigations.

**Actuality.** Technical lecturers, who are mostly without special linguistic preparation, have to cope with the challenges of teaching in English in order to meet the requirements of academic mobility. The related studies highlighted the interest and readiness of technical lecturers towards English as the medium of instruction. At the same time, many lecturers still need training in speaking, classroom instructions and writing. They also lack confidence to use English and solve learning problems of students [14, p. 2]. Such situation requires developing English language training courses for technical lecturers which will meet their professional needs.

**The aim, structure and content of the course.** Educational Methodical Complex "Institute of Postgraduate Education" in cooperation with the Faculty of Linguistics launched the course "English Professional Communication" for teaching staff of National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute" in 2016-2017 academic year [8]. The aim of the course is formation of professionally oriented English competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing to prepare teachers of technical subjects for communicating in English. The course is designed to meet the needs of teachers who conduct lectures, seminars, take part in international conferences and supervise student research. Therefore, the course comprises three thematic modules: module 1 "Organizing and conducting lectures, seminars, workshops," module 2 "Presenting at international conferences" and module 3 "Supervising student research."

In order to achieve the aim, the following tasks have to be accomplished: to learn the vocabulary and acquire grammatical knowledge within scientific, educational and professional fields; acquire pragmatic, socio cultural knowledge enabling successful English language communication at the appropriate level; deepen

academic knowledge within scientific and professional areas that allow delivering professional public speeches, lectures, workshops, presentations, research reports in English, develop speaking, listening, reading and writing skills to communicate successfully in academic and professional environments.

Successful completion of the course requires using the Cambridge University Press and Express Publishing textbooks, which contain authentic materials related to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). For the first module "Cambridge Academic English" by M. Hewings, which is aimed at non-native English-speaking academics who need to present and publish in English, is used as the main textbook. Lecture Skills units are based on the lectures and interviews with students recorded at the University of Cambridge, which help to understand the best ways of structuring lectures, using English, visuals, body language and pronunciation to present the content [6, p. 5].

According to M. Wallace, there is a strong tendency to make a lecture more interactive by means of using buzz or discussion groups, quiz technique and other tools [16, p. 34-36]. Discussion which promotes critical thinking is successfully used in American universities as demonstrated in the manual "Discussion as a way of teaching" written by S. Brookfield. Technical lecturers become familiar with the theoretical underpinnings of discussion and the ways of mastering this skill and exploiting this tool, particularly at seminars with students [2].

As a matter of fact, many teachers of technical subjects either do not have pedagogical education, or studied pedagogy a long time ago. Therefore, a book "Classroom Management Techniques" by J. Scrivener may fill in those gaps and help participants to exploit the features of the classroom, focus on the characteristics of an effective teacher, understand the importance of a learner-centered approach, use different ways of interactions with students and structure the classes successfully [14].

"English for Academics Book 1" is recommended for the second module. It deals with real life situations connected with attending the conference abroad: arrival at the hotel, solving problems of misunderstanding, troubleshooting of technical problems, networking with other participants, public speaking [5].

The textbook for the third module is "Cambridge English for Scientists" by T. Armer. Learners are introduced to successful communication with scientific communities, doing a literature review, designing and describing an experiment, presenting the results of the research, etc. [1].

In addition to the main textbooks, supplementary grammar books by R. Murphy or J. Dooley & V. Evans may be integrated in the course for technical university teaching staff providing opportunities for better understanding of how the language functions [11; 4].

In addition to textbooks, materials generated by participants of training comprise a valuable part of the content of the course. Combining action and reflection, using data from different sources, conducting ongoing research are powerful learning tools for educators [12, p. 24]. Therefore, surveys completed by adult learners, end-of-program reports prepared by a teacher, learning portfolios, progress tests, exam results, email communication between a teacher and learners, video recordings of classes have become the main data collection tools aimed at improving the course "English Professional Communication."

**Methods for teaching technical lecturers.** According to M. Knowles, adult learners have some unique characteristics which differ them from children: adults are self-directed, have experience, are ready to learn, they are interested in practical application of their knowledge and skills, intrinsic motivation prevails [10, p. 83-84]. To learn successfully, adults need a friendly atmosphere in which each participant is respected and valued. The relationships between a teacher and adult learners are democratic, therefore a teacher is considered to be a facilitator who creates favorable supportive environment. The adult learner is placed in the center having the power to take decisions about their own learning thus taking responsibility for their progress.

Cooperative structures, which aim at successful communication in heterogeneous study groups and critical thinking development, are especially valuable in the context of teaching adults. Applying Kagan cooperative structures requires following four principles which are as follows: positive interdependence, when being successful for one person is related to the success of others; individual accountability, when each participant has their own input in the process of completing the task; equal participation, when all team members have the same rights and responsibilities; simultaneous interaction, when groups are working at the same time thus providing more opportunities for everyone to speak and act. As a result, exploiting cooperative structures promotes creating the atmosphere of success when instead of competing adult learners cooperate joining their efforts in order to achieve the goal [9]. That is why short-term trainings for teachers dedicated to mastering interactive methods of teaching and learning are common in American universities [7].

Besides 90 hours of regular classes over a five-month period, participants of the course "English Professional Communication" are expected to carry out 18 hours of self-directed learning and do assignments in order to submit a learning portfolio containing lectures and practical classes, handouts for students, glossaries, videos of lectures, academic articles, critical reviews, essays, etc. It is important to remember that participants of the course are teachers of different faculties like Faculty of Physical Engineering, Faculty of Heat and Power Engineering, Faculty of Electric Power Engineering and Automatics, Faculty of Sociology and Law, Faculty of Applied Mathematics, etc. Such assignments allow them to use the language in specific contexts, practice acquired knowledge and demonstrate the skills necessary for successful communication in English.

In order to benefit from greater exposure to the target language, adult learners are encouraged to use English outside the classroom, for instance, when emailing a teacher or each other, before or after the class.

Choosing the methods of teaching adults, different learning styles should be taken into account: visual, auditory and kinesthetic [13]. Therefore, regular classes include individual, pair and group work, presentations, discussions, watching videos, listening to podcasts, role plays, games, which often require moving around the room (mingling), manipulating with flashcards, etc. It is also vitally important for participants to understand the reason of everything they do in class and receive the feedback about their performance. That is why each classroom activity is preceded by warming-up and instruction, and followed by evaluation and reflection.

**Assessment.** According to L. Darling-Hammond, assessment may be effective only if different ways of evaluation are involved and analysis of various learning materials is conducted [3]. Assessment of the English Training Course for KPI Teaching Staff is divided into formative, summative and alternative. Formative assessment consists of three progress tests at the end of each module. Progress tests have listening, reading, writing, use of English sections. Summative assessment takes place at the end of the course; it is an exam comprised of written and oral parts. Alternative assessment is presented by self-assessment and peer-assessment. Self-assessment, which usually precedes peer-assessment, includes using checklists, learning logs, etc.

Peer assessment, when each learner is evaluated by others, urges participants to become active listeners, speakers and readers. Using the correction code in peer editing may serve as an illustration of peer assessment. After completion of a writing task learners exchange their papers and read them. First of all, they focus on the content and provide their comments agreeing or disagreeing with the writer's opinion. After that learners focus on accuracy; they use the correction code marking different types of errors. For instance, "SP" stands for "spelling error", "WW" means "wrong word", "P" means "punctuation error" [17]. When the writers get their papers back, they proofread their writing, using the correction code and consulting their peers if necessary, which provides a unique learning opportunity. The task of a teacher is to monitor the activity and help struggling learners. The goal of peer editing is to develop the ability of learners to edit and improve their own writing which is a valuable skill usually challenging to master.

Peer assessment is also used when participants demonstrate presentations. At the beginning of the course learners decide on the most important characteristics of a slide presentation and develop the criteria such as content, structure, visuals, language (accuracy), body language, used for presentation assessment. When one of the participants delivers a slide presentation, others assign points according to the criteria on a 10-point grading scale. In case they give, for example, 7 points for the language, they should take note of the errors justifying the given amount of points. Finally, participants should add suggestions about possible ways of improving the presentation, trying to be objective and positive at the same time. As a result, the presenter receives feedback from different observers, which provides material for further reflection aimed at improving presentation skills.

In order to receive feedback from the participants, three surveys were conducted. According to the survey at the beginning of the course, the adult learners had expectations of deepening grammatical and lexical knowledge, improving pronunciation, developing the skills of listening and speaking, reading and writing, presentation skills, the ability to participate in discussions, group work, etc. The survey in the middle of the training revealed that the most enjoyable for the participants were listening tasks, creative writing and speaking (compiling stories based on cues), work in pairs and teams, role-playing, writing essays, discussions, problem-solving tasks used for warming-up, etc. The participants considered it important to increase vocabulary, to be able to overcome difficulties in communication, to reduce the number of errors, especially in writing, to use grammar rules in real communication.

At the end of the training the technical lecturers had the following suggestions regarding the improvement of the course: weekly grammar tests, slower pace of training, preparation for the international tests (IEST / TOEFL), using modern authentic material (movies, news, conferences, etc.), effective methods for conducting lectures and seminars, work with gifted students. Some participants mentioned that in order to succeed one must practice English language every day and, besides home assignments, watch movies, listen to podcasts, read fiction and nonfiction in English.

**Conclusions.** For the English course to be effective, it should be structured according to the needs of technical university teaching staff; it should be based on authentic materials; democratic atmosphere should be created; various types of assessment should be exploited. Formation of professionally oriented English competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing creates prerequisites for successful implementation of academic mobility programs for teachers of technical subjects.

The focus of further investigation may be developing English training courses aimed at meeting the needs of other categories of adult learners.

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#### РОЗРОБКА КУРСУ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ДЛЯ ВИКЛАДАЧІВ ТЕХНІЧНИХ УНІВЕРСИТЕТІВ

*Стаття присвячена дослідженню питання професійно орієнтованого навчання англійської мови викладачів технічних університетів. У статті описуються мета, структура та зміст курсу "Професійна комунікація англійською мовою" для викладацького складу. Були визначені основні особливості ефективного курсу для викладачів технічних університетів: задоволення потреб викладачів, використання автентичних матеріалів, створення демократичної атмосфери на занятті, формуюче, підсумовуюче та неформальне оцінювання.*

**Ключові слова:** курс англійської мови, технічний університет, викладацький склад, дорослі слухачі, кооперативні структури, оцінювання.

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#### РАЗРАБОТКА КУРСА АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА ДЛЯ ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЕЙ ТЕХНИЧЕСКИХ УНИВЕРСИТЕТОВ

*Статья посвящена исследованию вопроса о профессионально ориентированном обучении английскому языку преподавателей технических университетов. Описываются цель, структура и содержание курса "Профессиональная коммуникация на английском языке" для преподавательского состава. Определены основные особенности эффективного курса для преподавателей технических университетов: удовлетворение потребностей преподавателей, использование аутентичных материалов, создание демократической атмосферы, формирующее, суммирующее и неформальное оценивание.*

**Ключевые слова:** курс английского языка, технический университет, преподавательский состав, взрослые слушатели, кооперативные структуры, оценивание.

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