



## Language and Testing

*Elixir Lang. & Testing* 100 (2016) 43509-43511

**Elixir**  
ISSN: 2229-712X

### Some Issues of Teaching English for Future IT-Specialists

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#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Article history:

Received 4 October 2016;

Received in revised form:

4 November 2016;

Accepted: 10 November 2016;

##### Keywords

IT-specialists,

English Language Training.

#### ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the problem of training future IT-specialists in Ukraine, particularly, the English language training of Master students and the role of English for the future career of IT-specialists. The goal of the research is to determine the role of the English language competence for the specialists of IT-field and to find out the attitude of Master students to teaching English: relevance of including the discipline “Fundamentals of Scientific Communication in Foreign Language” in the curriculum of Master Course; the ratio of classroom activity to independent work; necessary focus of foreign language and the types of speech activity; relevance of attention to the grammar structure of the language; the preferred teaching methods; the frequency of using periodicals at the classes; the appropriate source of professionally oriented texts; the desired type of control.

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#### Introduction

In modern society, the problem of training highly mobile professionals is extremely important. One of the important components of professional competence is considered to be foreign language training. This problem is of special priority for the professionals of IT industry, which is in high demand in the current development of information technology.

IT-companies operating in Ukraine have special requirements to the list of skills for the experts of various levels and areas. The analysis of these requirements shows that the English language training of specialists plays an important role along with professional competence. Therefore, the training of future IT-specialist in General English (GE) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) should meet the requirements to a modern highly developed specialist of this branch.

Priority tasks of training specialists of IT-field is to study employers' requirements to the employees of this field and to correlate curriculums and programs with these requirements, to consider new approaches to training future IT-specialists in the English language, to study and analyze the interests and needs of the students, future IT-specialists.

The Association of Information Technology Enterprises was created in Ukraine in 2007 in the framework of reforming “Association of IT-Distributors” public organization founded in 2004. The goal of the created Association was to coordinate and consolidate the efforts of Ukraine IT-companies for solving the problems of their professional activity being of common interest. The main objectives were determined to be the influence on public police in the field of IT, protection and representation of companies' interest, the development of IT-market, the development of market relations, facilitating of information exchange, etc. [2].

The sphere of application of the developed standards for professions involves employees, employers, education and state. The benefits of standards for professions for educational institutions is to understand industry expectations regarding

learning outcomes; to provide appropriate training modules and at a profit if the services of an institution are recognized by employers.

Nowadays, the deficit of IT-specialists is 30% in Ukraine. UNIAN informed about it in the press service of State Information Science referring to the Head of the Agency Volodymyr Seminozhenko. It is noted that despite such a deficit, only 25% of graduates can find work in IT companies, others do not meet the level of their skills. Thus, V. Seminozhenko points out that the situation with these specialists can be changed due to the efficient state-private partnership. In his opinion, IT-profession should become a priority in higher education. The problem should be solved due to not only increasing of quotas for entering universities but, foremost, increasing of qualitative requirements [3].

#### Materials and Methods

The analysis of IT-companies' requirements to the skills of professionals of different levels shows that both professional competence and the English language competence are of paramount importance. The English language competence will provide specialists an opportunity:

- to have training to specialists-beginners;
- to attend English-speaking workshops to improve their skills;
- to exchange experience with colleagues around the world;
- to participate in meetings with foreign customers;
- to have effective business trip abroad;
- to take part in technological societies.

Foreign language training of future specialists is implemented through the following education disciplines: “Foreign Language”, “Foreign Language for Specific Purposes”, “Business English”, “English for Scientists”, “Fundamentals of Scientific Communication in a Foreign Language”, etc.

Teaching “English for Specific Purposes” provides training on the basis of content, which is defined as the integration of learning content for the purpose of language

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teaching [1]. It means that there is a concurrent study of language and professional subjects in which the form and sequence of language presentation are dictated by content (Brinton, Snow and Wesche, 1989). In content-based learning, a form follows content. The curriculum is developed based on the content; syntax, functions and vocabulary come from the content. Brinton, Snow and Wesche described three forms of content-based learning: topic-based, covered-content-based, and supplemented-language-based. Topic-based learning is organized around the topics that are of particular interest to those who study a foreign language. Covered-content-based learning is used mostly at schools, however, is sometimes applied at colleges and universities. In this learning, necessary content is transmitted through the activities that are available to those who study a foreign language. Supplemented-language-based learning involves two related courses: one is the content of necessary field, the other is a foreign language; both courses are interconnected and provide the interaction of teachers. Any of these models can be used for teaching English of specific purposes [1].

Researchers point out that English for Specific Purposes can have various forms: pre-professional, special professional, general field, etc. Pre-professional program may include preparation for the job at the workplace. The content of such training involves, for example, the skills of reading, the use of documentation, counting, writing, oral communication, working with others, computer use, self-education, etc. (Office of Literacy and Necessary Skills Canada, 2007). Other countries may use different terminology, but the author notes that the necessary skills on the job are the ability to work in a team and the ability to solve problems. Among the competencies that are distinguished as a priority in the United States, the author stresses personnel management, information management, social interaction, system behaviour, executive skills and use of technology (US Department of Labour, 1991). In the United Kingdom, competencies include key skills (effective communication and the use of information technology) and wider key skills (cooperation, self-education, problem solving) (Leytch, 2006) [1].

Professional education program combines the idea of integration of curriculums and students' interests. The author notes that the objective of these curriculums is to help the students with the low level of the English language competence to adapt to professional training. Although professionally oriented programs are not carried out in the workplace, the author points out that educational institutions cooperate with employers who can provide advice on curriculums, provide equipment and the opportunity to practice [1].

General branch program involves several professions being related. Language training in such curriculums combines programs for some related specialities of one general branch.

### **Results and Discussion**

We should take into account the level of students' language and speech competence and their needs and interests. We studied the opinion of Master students as to the peculiarities of teaching foreign language for scientific and professional purposes. 80 Master students of the Cherkasy National University were interviewed. When we developed the questionnaire, we were interested in the following aspects of the academic discipline "Fundamentals of Scientific communication in a Foreign Language" (FSCFL): relevance of including this discipline in the curriculum of Master

Course; the ratio of classroom activity to independent work; necessary focus of foreign language and the types of speech activity; relevance of attention to the grammar structure of the language; the preferred teaching methods; the frequency of using periodicals at the classes; the appropriate source of professionally oriented texts; the desired type of control. The questionnaire was conducted at the beginning and at the end of the academic year to compare the opinions before and after the study of academic discipline FSCFL.

The results of the study show that most Master students consider including this discipline into the curriculum of Master Course to be relevant. The percentage of respondents for the relevance increases at the end of the academic year (76.2% - 83.3%). The number of Master students who consider that the relevance depends on the students' needs and the level of language competence decreases at the end of the academic year (21.4% - 16.6%). Thus, the obtained data and the lack of objections regarding the relevance of including this discipline show the Master students' awareness of the necessary study of professionally oriented foreign language.

Most Master students find the ratio of class activity to independent work as 2/3 to 1/3 to be efficient (59.5% - 60%). 26.2% of Master students at the beginning of the academic year and 36.7% - at the end, consider the ratio 1/2 to 1/2 to be efficient. The increase of this indicator can be explained by the readiness of some Master students to work independently more or their employment. A small percentage of respondents consider the ratio of class activity to independent work as 1/3 to 2/3 to be efficient. At the end of the academic year this percentage decreases (14.3% - 3.3%) that can show the Master students' awareness of the efficiency of class activity.

Most Master students think that they need language competence of both generally-oriented and professionally-oriented (61.9% - 76.7%) that can show two aspects: insufficient level of training concerning general knowledge and skills and / or the awareness to improve knowledge and skills in both General English and English for Specific Purposes, since in scientific and professional activity there are situations, which require everyday communication in English. A small number of Master students needs professionally-oriented language (28.6% - 16.7%) that shows rather high level of language competence of a relatively small number of Master students. It is relevant to give them more tasks for independent learning of scientific-technical literature, creative tasks, leadership roles in didactic games and in project presentations. Those students who prefer generally-oriented foreign language (9.5% - 6.7%), obviously, have a low level of foreign language competence and are not ready for professionally-oriented foreign language or are not aware of the importance of a foreign language in professional activity. In the first case, it is relevant for them to attend additional courses in a foreign language since the Master Course curriculum is designed for intermediate and upper-intermediate level of language competence. In the second case, a number of Master students become aware of ESP importance during the academic year.

Most Master students consider that they should improve all the types of speech activity (61.9% - 43.3%); higher percentage of respondents stresses speaking and listening (28.6% - 43.3%), lower – reading and writing (4.8% - 13.3%). It shows the need to improve oral speech of master students.

The respondents' interests are on the side of oral discussion of general and special problems (26.2% - 67%), if compared with reading and the translation of special texts

(14.3% - 13.3%), but the vast majority of students are for both types of activity (66.7% - 80%). At the end of the academic year, the number of supporters of both types of activity increases against the background of significant increase of the percentage for the oral discussion of the problem. In our opinion, it is associated with the fact that oral types of activity are more interesting and dynamic.

Most Master students consider that it is relevant to pay attention to the grammar structure of a language (61.9% - 70%), understanding the importance of this language aspect and, obviously, wishing to intensify knowledge and skills after the break of few years in learning foreign language.

Rather essential percentage of respondents considers this problem depending on the needs and preparation level of Master students (35.7% - 26.7%); and rather small percentage of respondents do not consider it is relevant to pay attention to this language aspect (2.4% - 3.3%). It may show their high levels of language competence and long-term memory.

Concerning teaching methods, most Master students prefer discussions and "round tables" (54.8% - 80%), that confirms the preference of oral types of activity: discussions, disputes, thematic conversations. The increase of percentage at the end of the academic year demonstrates clearly positive evaluation of this teaching method. A small number of Master students prefer project presentation (9.5% - 10%), that may show the complexity of this type of learning activity for most students or the lack of information about this type of activity.

#### **Conclusions**

It should be noted that Master students highly appreciate the activities with authentic materials of mass media (press materials) since a significant part of students consider it relevant to pay much attention to this activity at every lesson (30.9% - 63.3%) or once a month (50% - 36.7%). It shows the interest of future specialists in scientific professional periodicals.

Most Master students think that the source of professionally-oriented information can be both independent search and materials found by a teacher (57.1% - 66.7%). The students prefer good combination of both sources. In our opinion, it is the most optimal variant since a teacher comes to

the selection of educational material from a scientific and methodological point of view; and students take into account their needs and interests that is an important factor of motivation and efficiency of educational process.

At the beginning of the academic year the Master students are not sure in the type of control; at the end of the academic year most students stand for module-rating control (90%) indicating the advantages of this type of control especially for the students: systematic, consistent, creative work during the semester is highly appreciated at the end of the course.

Summing up the results of the survey, we can make conclusions about the following tendencies concerning the educational activity of the Master students in learning the educational subject "Fundamentals of Scientific Communication in Foreign Language":

1. In general, Master students are interested in learning this discipline and prefer the cooperation with a teacher.
2. Master students have insufficient level of language competence, need to intensify and improve their knowledge and skills concerning both General English and English for Specific Purposes.
3. Understanding the necessity to perform all kinds of speech activity, Master students prefer oral forms, particularly such methods as discussion and "round table" involving the activity with the materials of mass media.
4. Although the Master students are used to the traditional forms of control, they prefer credit-module control.

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