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THE ISSUE OF CREATING AN INTRODUCTORY – CORRECTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE FOR FIRST YEAR EXTRA MURAL STUDENTS OF PSYCHOLOGY

This article discusses the question of preparing extra-mural students specializing in Psychology for working with the textbook *Psychological Matters*. Attention is paid to the most widespread and characteristic difficulties faced by groups of extra-mural students of different ages at the initial stage of studying English at university and solutions are suggested for problems which are characteristic of the extra-mural system of learning English for students of non-linguistic specialties.

Key words: English for professional communication, extra-mural department, Internet resources, information technology, immersion, self assessment.

The relevance of this topic is clear, above all, because of the immense significance which learning a foreign language for professional communication holds for students who are engaged in preparing for a speciality of a non linguistic profile. In this article we review the question of teaching English to future psychologists who are studying in their first year in the extra-mural department.

The outline of the issue: Teaching foreign languages in an extra-mural department possesses a number of specific features not characteristic of the daytime/full time form of study. In the majority of Ukrainian universities the curricula of extra-mural departments provide for the teaching of foreign languages, predominantly English. As a rule, other foreign languages which are widely studied in the state school system (German, French, Spanish and some others) are not covered in such extra-mural curricula or are relegated to the status of a second foreign language, as an optional discipline. This fact obviously presents immense difficulties for those numerous first year students who did not study English within the state school system and who therefore have to start learning English from zero, or near zero, level.

Discussion of the topic: It follows that one of the peculiarities of the extra-mural form of study is the existence of completely different levels of command of English within each group of students, varying from near ignorance to a level that exceeds the standard one B1 which is the goal envisaged by the current secondary school programmes [2, 4].

Another peculiarity is the fact in the majority of cases that groups of extra-mural students are composed of representatives of different age groups. The factor of age difference, sometimes as wide as several decades, clearly divides students into representatives of «digital natives» and «digital immigrants» [8, 9]. This means that a typical group includes both people for whom knowledge of modern information technology can be taken for granted and those who remain unfamiliar with or have only a shaky grasp of computer skills.

The next peculiarity of studying in an extra-mural department is that most of the extra-mural students specializing in psychology chose that speciality for their second and not their first higher educational degree. Indeed, many students occupy stable, well-paid jobs in a variety of professions, ranging from medicine to fitness training, banking and finance to construction engineering, or a huge range of non technical jobs involving interpersonal skills. In justifying their selection of psychology as their second higher education, these students explain that they wish to perfect their skills in dealing with colleagues, subordinates, clients, etc. It is rare for students in this category to choose psychology with the intention of changing their professional orientation entirely.

The second group of students take this speciality as their future main profession. Representatives of this group, as a rule, come to university directly after completing secondary school. Naturally, their grasp of English is on a higher level than that of the first group, who are somewhat more likely to have studied a different language at school in the days before the phenomenal expansion of English and who, even if they did study English at school, are typically out of practice. The second group, brought up in the new era of computer games and social network sites also tend to be more confident in information technology than the older group, though exceptions abound. Obviously, the range of professional interests of extra-mural students is very wide. The only element that unites all their interests is their new speciality Psychology. The second unifying element must be English, and the authors of the article see this as one of the main tasks confronting teachers of the English language.

As can be seen from the material presented above, extra-mural students are divided into different groups inclining in various directions. It is vitally important to take these divisions into account when planning an English course for extra-mural students of Psychology. At our university, Alfred Nobel University, Dnipropetrovs'k, the choice of organizational forms of work, selection of teaching material, preparation of tests for identifying the students' levels of English language competence, the choice of professionally oriented texts and specialized lexicon is oriented towards preparing a group of first year students for conducting further work with an English language textbook written specifically for Psychology students [5]. They are expected to start working with this book at the beginning of the second year. The textbook is distinguished by the fact that it is based on an innovative method of teaching English for the special requirements of students in the speciality Psychology. This new approach to teaching English has acquired the label «experiential-interactive» and it requires the compulsory use of the internet as an integral part of the academic process [3]. As its authors point out this textbook is suitable for use by students who have reached the intermediate level in English – B2 (General English) [6]. Normally, students of non-linguistic specialities reach this level after one or two years of study at university.

It follows that a teacher starting to work with a group of first year extra-mural students faces a whole series of problems which will inevitably influence the study process and its end result. The only correct way to deal with these problems is to adopt an individual approach to each student taking into account his level of English and competence in information technology (primarily the internet), his/her motivation in learning this discipline and also his/her professional interests.

The students' level of English is identified by so-called placement testing and the level of IT competence can be assessed by a questionnaire or by checking the quality of completed assignments using internet search. It is precisely this type of work with internet resources which the authors of the above-mentioned textbook *Psychological Matters* consider as the means of achieving experiential-interactive learning.

The provision of an individual approach and the organization of the academic process based on this with active use of internet technologies are to be implemented in the first year with the aim of raising students' competence in English and achieving level B2 for all the members of an academic group by the end of the first year. It is only realistic to reach this goal with the help of the Internet, which allows one to choose for each student the material appropriate for his/her individual peculiarities: from formal in-class English lessons to actualizing and developing skills in his/her work with internet resources.

The authors of this paper have developed special questionnaires that allow the teacher to define the levels of English and IT competence for each student and accordingly allow him/her to plan each student's work on the basis of the information received. Taking into account the fact that the level of English of first year students varies from near zero to B2 and occasionally an

even higher level, the texts of these questionnaires are given in Ukrainian, Russian and English versions. Here we give examples of the questionnaires in English.

Form Number One is to facilitate preliminary acquaintance of the teacher with the group and find out through their self-assessment their levels in various aspects of the English learning process, particularly relating to motivation, knowledge of foreign languages and familiarity with computer technologies.

Questionnaire No 1

| No | Question | Answers |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | Which languages do you know and at what level? Indicate one of the following levels: 0 1 2 3 4 5 | Ukrainian 0 1 2 3 4 5 Russian 0 1 2 3 4 5 English 0 1 2 3 4 5 German 0 1 2 3 4 5 French 0 1 2 3 4 5 Spanish 0 1 2 3 4 5 Others (indicate which) _____ 0 1 2 3 4 5 _____ 0 1 2 3 4 5 _____ 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2 | Which foreign language or languages did you study at school? | _____ _____ _____ |
| 3 | What is the level of your completed education? | – Secondary school. – Vocational / technical. – Higher: university or equivalent. |
| 4 | What is the specialism of your diploma? | _____ _____ _____ |
| 5 | What is your work place? | _____ _____ _____ |
| 6 | Are you planning to change your career after completing your education in Psychology? | Yes No. |
| 7 | Which foreign language do you consider to be the most useful for you in your profession? | English 0 1 2 3 4 5 German 0 1 2 3 4 5 French 0 1 2 3 4 5 Spanish 0 1 2 3 4 5 Others (Indicate which ones) _____ 0 1 2 3 4 5 _____ 0 1 2 3 4 5 _____ 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8 | To what extent do you need this foreign language in your work? | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9 | Please indicate how important each of the four foreign language skills is for your work and for your future. | Listening 0 1 2 3 4 5 Speaking 0 1 2 3 4 5 Reading 0 1 2 3 4 5 Writing 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10 | Please assess your knowledge and skills in information technology: – Touch-typing. – Mastery of a western script keyboard – Ability to use e-mail. – Ability to find the information you need on the internet for work, household matters, leisure, etc – Ability to do this in foreign languages. – Please assess your use of the informational potential of the internet for your studies (preparing reports, making presentations, writing assessed class or course work, etc.) – ...Ability to do this in foreign languages. | 0 1 2 3 4 5 0 1 2 3 4 5 0 1 2 3 4 5 0 1 2 3 4 5 0 1 2 3 4 5 0 1 2 3 4 5 0 1 2 3 4 5 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11 | How much time each week are you able to devote to learning a foreign language? | – No more than 60 minutes. – One to two hours. – Over two hours |

Questionnaire No 2 for assessing the level of students' competence in information technology

| № | Questions | Answers | |
|----|--|---------|----|
| | | Yes | No |
| 1 | I have my own computer. | | |
| 2 | I have access to the internet. | | |
| 3 | I can touch type. | | |
| 4 | I am familiar with English language terminology connected with computer technology. | | |
| 5 | I have an e-mail address. | | |
| 6 | I am familiar with various search engines and am able to search for information I need using key words and other criteria. | | |
| 7 | I am familiar with the terms «memory», «memory volume», «display» and with their characteristics. | | |
| 8 | I know what is meant by «operating system», «software», «document» and «file». | | |
| 9 | I am able to use the right-hand mouse button to activate a context menu. | | |
| 10 | I am able to save image and text files for use later. | | |
| 11 | I am familiar with different image formats: tif, bmp, jpg, psd, gif. | | |
| 12 | I am able to print out both text and image documents in both black and white and colour format | | |
| 13 | I am able to search databases using known criteria including filters | | |
| 14 | I am able to create a web page with hyper-links to other resources, addresses, tables, etc. | | |
| 15 | I am familiar with various formats for transmitting audio and video information: wav, mp3, aiff, ra, midi . | | |
| 16 | I am able to set up multimedia resources (sound, cartoon, slides, hyperlinks) on a web page. | | |
| 17 | I am able to use the programmes Hot Potatoes, Rayuela and others for creating multimedia materials. | | |
| 18 | I am able to use the archive programme WinZip | | |
| 19 | I use the internet for studying English. | | |
| 20 | I communicate using social network sites. | | |
| 21 | I communicate with English native speakers on the internet. | | |
| 22 | I am familiar with social networks for studying foreign languages. | | |
| 23 | I prefer to communicate using email. | | |
| 24 | I prefer to communicate by chat. | | |
| 25 | I prefer to communicate by Skype. | | |

The texts of these forms are sent to students in three versions (Ukrainian, Russian and English). As our experience shows practically every student has at least one email address. During the first lesson, which as a rule has an organizational character, we suggest to students that they set up one more mail box on the mail server of Google. This address has the advantage of having a common structure for students of all groups of the extra-mural department: name_surname-group@gmail.com. For example, olga_ivanovna_PS-11z@gmail.com.

After processing all the information received for each academic group the teacher forms virtual academic subgroups, for each of which he/she chooses appropriate academic resources from the internet and establishes terms for their studies with further reporting on their fulfillment of assignments. The forms of reporting back about completed assignments can be various, from interview with the teacher during face-to-face in-class studies (usually Wednesday and Saturday) to virtual discussions and consultations via Skype or by email. Besides academic materials the students systematically receive from the teacher as extra or optional materials links to professionally orientated texts and also texts recommending various methods of foreign language study. These texts are interesting for students because they correspond to their professional aims and also orientate them in choosing their optimal way of studying English.

The authors will write a separate article devoted to the process of selecting academic materials, the criteria for selection, systematization of internet resources, depending on the individual

characteristics and motivation levels and describing the technology of conducting face-to-face/in-class lessons on the basis of preliminary Internet search (blended learning).

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У статті розглядаються питання підготовки студентів-заочників першого курсу спеціальності «Психологія» до роботи з підручником «Psychological Matters». Наводяться приклади найбільш поширених і характерних труднощів, які виникають у різновікових групах студентів-заочників на початковому етапі вивчення англійської мови, пропонуються шляхи виходу із ситуацій, що є притаманними саме заочній системі навчання англійської мови студентів немовних спеціальностей.

Ключові слова: англійська мова для професійного спілкування, заочне навчання, ресурси Інтернету, інформаційні технології, автентичність, автономія, занурення, самоконтроль.

В статье рассматриваются вопросы подготовки студентов-заочников первого курса специальности «Психология» к работе с учебником «Psychological Matters». Приводятся примеры наиболее распространенных и характерных трудностей, которые возникают в разновозрастных группах студентов-заочников на начальном этапе изучения английского языка, а также предлагаются пути выхода из ситуаций, свойственных именно заочной системе обучения английскому языку студентов неязыковых специальностей.

Ключевые слова: английский язык для профессионального общения, заочное обучение, ресурсы Интернета, информационные технологии, аутентичность, автономия, погружение, самоконтроль.

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