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## RAISING CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS IN THE ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES CLASSROOM

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*The article discusses basic pedagogical considerations of raising students' efficiency in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classroom to provide quality language learning within an academic context. The authors argue that the basis for effective language teaching is related to a number of practically-oriented assumptions with special focus on the content, enhancement of language learners' motivation and reinforcement of the ability to process new information that comes from diverse sources via language. The assumption that language is learned and used within the context of content leads to the understanding of the significance of content-based instruction in terms of promoting language learners' motivation, development of their cognitive and analytical skills, acquisition of the language and building the ability to think critically while evaluating their language progress and performance.*

*Integration of language and content results in the efficient implementation of content-based approach that allows for greater flexibility in the curriculum and more opportunities to meet students' academic needs while narrowing the gap between language learning and cultural studies in the ESP classroom.*

*Key words: language instruction, learner's motivation, content processing skills, content-based instruction, critical thinking.*

*Кандидат філологічних наук Чугу С.Д., Ковальська В. Поглиблення міжкультурних знань при вивченні англійської як мови професійного*

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*В статті окреслюються основні теоретичні засади та педагогічні проблеми ефективного застосування контентного (змістового) навчання мови (КНМ) в процесі вивчення англійської мови як іноземної та як мови професійного спрямування.*

*КНМ має на меті орієнтацію на засвоєння змісту навчальних матеріалів, підвищення мотивації студентів та вміле користування мовою для вивчення нового контенту. Головною ідеєю даного підходу є опрацювання студентами контенту навчальних матеріалів, що посилює їхню внутрішню мотивацію до навчання, сприяє використанню когнітивних та аналітичних навичок при роботі з новою інформацією та формування навичок критичного мислення та самостійного оцінювання прогресу у вивченні мови.*

*При застосуванні КНМ спостерігається інтеграція мовного та змістового аспектів, що створює ширші можливості для розробки належного програмного забезпечення та вибору завдань, які якнайкраще відповідають навчальній меті студентів. Ефективність пропонованого підходу сприяє опануванню окрім мовного, літературним та культурним аспектами мови, що вивчається.*

*Ключові слова: навчання мові, навчальна мотивація, навички опрацювання інформації, контентне навчання, критичне мислення.*

*Кандидат філологічних наук Чугу С.Д., Ковальская В. Приобретение межкультурных знаний при изучении английского как языка профессиональной направленности // Винницкий торгово-экономический институт Киевского национального торгово-экономического университета, Украина, Винница*

*В статье очерчены основные теоретические подходы и педагогические проблемы эффективного применения контентного (содержательного) обучения языку (КОЯ) в процессе обучения английскому как иностранному и как языку профессиональной направленности.*

*КОЯ ориентировано на усвоение содержания учебных материалов, повышение мотивации студентов и умелое пользование языком при изучении*

нового смысла. Основной задачей данного подхода является работа студентов над контентом учебных материалов, что усиливает их внутреннюю мотивацию к учебе, способствует использованию навыков аналитического мышления при работе с новой информацией, формирует навыки критического мышления и вырабатывает умение самостоятельного оценивания прогресса при изучении языка.

При использовании КОЯ прослеживается интеграция языкового и содержательного аспектов, что создает более широкие возможности для разработки необходимого программного обеспечения и выбора таких заданий, которые отвечают учебным потребностям студентов наилучшим образом. Эффективность предложенного подхода способствует усвоению помимо языкового, литературным и культурным аспектами изучаемого языка.

*Ключевые слова:* языковое обучение, учебная мотивация, навыки работы с информацией, контентное обучение, критическое мышление.

**Introduction.** Current integrated language instruction mostly takes place in the content-based teaching context that aims at improving linguistic performance of the language learners. A wide use of content-based techniques and activities in both the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classrooms facilitates the teaching process and meets vocational and occupational interests of the students. The necessity to summarize the main pedagogical trends in the language instruction is connected with further search for to the effective approach that will ensure the acquisition of the language in the context of any subject matter so that students learn the language by using it within a specific context of learning with the focus on gaining professional knowledge.

Effective language instruction should encourage incorporation of a variety of thinking skills, and learning strategies which are to lead to rich language development, such as a range of different skills, namely information gathering skills; organizing skills; analyzing skills; generating skills within the process of language acquisition of different linguistic areas.

**Aims and tasks.** The article aims to highlight new vistas in the ESP field with the focus on its diverse aspects from solid theoretical considerations to effective teaching practices. The authors of the article will discuss the main advantages of the use of the Content- Based Instruction (CBI), analyzing content-based tasks designed for the ESP classroom, outlining the perspectives of the implementation of the CBI to raise language learners' motivation, and developing their critical thinking skill. The attempt to reveal the advantages the CBI as one of the most innovative and efficient methods in language instruction that aim at the development of certain communicative and cognitive skills in the process of learning an academic subject will be supported by practical guidelines.

In addition the issues of the second language acquisition in terms of mastering English both as a language form that includes different language aspects (grammar, lexis, intonation, sounds) will be discussed to emphasize the necessity to teach language functions that are to be applied in a proper way in different real-life settings.

**Rationale.** The ESP/EFL concerns at present are identified in terms of the declining methods, understanding of the significance of bottom-up and top-down skills in language learning, pedagogical applications of new findings about integrated teaching of the English language, and focus on the development of multiple skills in the academic context [1, 3, 8, 10].

The present research on language instruction has proved that language teaching is to be content-based aiming at effective communicative competence of language learners. The CBI is often regarded as an approach to language instruction that integrates the presentation of topics or tasks from subject matter classes (e.g., math, social studies) within the context of teaching a second or foreign language [11, p.271] or as "... the integration of particular content with language teaching aims ... the concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills" [12, p.698]. Throughout the last few decades it has been recognized that for English as the second language acquisition to be effective language learners must use it to construct meaningful elements and their combinations and interact with others in real world contexts [4, 6, 8].

The advances in language instruction from formal to meaningful teaching have caused significant changes recently due to the focus on the CBI in the Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) classroom. The importance of learners' interaction in acquiring a second language emphasises the need for teacher-directed and student-centered activities and techniques as the basis for effective language instruction. Efficient teaching is to help optimize students' autonomy and facilitate effective cooperative learning, which is at the core of a student-centered environment, while different understanding of the main idea behind the CBI approaches led to different interpretation of its goals. Some educationalists claim that the CBI instruction "...views the target language largely as the vehicle through which subject matter content is learned rather than as the immediate object of study" [7, p. 5]. Krashen S. insists that the CBI is aimed at the development of use-oriented second and foreign language skills and is distinguished by the concurrent learning of a specific content and related language use skills [5].

Nunan D. suggests that content needs not be purely academic; it can include any topic, theme, or non-language issue of interest or importance to the learners [6, p.18]. Hinkel E. proposes that "... content' in content-based programs represents material that is cognitively engaging and demanding for the learner, and is the material that extends beyond the target language or target culture" [4, p.119].

Undoubtedly, successful language teaching should recognize the essential roles of the teacher and the learner in terms of the use of situationally relevant sets of teaching procedures. Savignon S.J. expresses criticism of the overuse of certain techniques, stating that if the instruction focus on the development of communicative skills is too intense, it may turn out of reduced value when training students for entrance exams or language proficiency tests, for securing academic enrollement and guaranteed employment, as some students need to speak and write in academic and professional settings, while others aim at conversational or reading skills for different purposes [9]. Sharing this opinion, we believe that it is the language needs that are to be regarded central in the language instruction.

In this respect there is another essential component that should be developed, namely students' critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is considered one of the key challenges students face in the ESP classroom as it involves not only accepting ideas that are to be dealt with but also learning to constantly challenge and question the ideas of others [2].

Given the considerations the authors aimed to investigate the impact of English courses on the development of language performance of ESP graduate students at the Vinnytsia Institute of Trade and Economics of the Kiev National University of Trade and Economics. The students were questioned on a number of issues related to their language studies to find out their response to the new ways of teaching offered in the ESP course in 2012-2015 on a number of variables to evaluate their communicative competence, grammar accuracy, fluency, listening and reading comprehension, vocabulary use, and writing skills.

The study revealed that the majority of the students questioned believed that they have made certain progress in either several or all linguistic areas. For example, about one third of the students surveyed stated that while not much progress had been made in grammar accuracy and fluency, they were able to use more vocabulary, and gained more quality reading and listening comprehension skills, thus improved their language band significantly. One fourth of the students pointed out the usefulness of the course for developing their writing skills and overall homework assignments. In addition, the students reported the enhancement of their academic skills, benefit in helping them to gain confidence.

Having analyzed the results, we believe that every course in the ESP curriculum is to be designed so that it provides a comprehensive input to ensure appropriate language performance and skills. In addition it should offer practical help in improving ways of dealing with different situations and social correspondence within the range of professional topics. Essential components are to include explanations of key terms; an analysis of the objectives to aim at when using the language, with lists of alternative phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that can be substituted in different situations; various examples of communication, correspondence and transactions, to support

comprehension questions focusing on content, vocabulary, and style; and finally, a summary of key information that provides an opportunity for the language learner to review the material covered in the course. The examples used are to be linked to one another throughout the course to provide continuation and to enable students to create and use similar ones in real-world settings. Another important goal is connected with the necessity to regard differences between business cultures throughout the world and to consider the importance of communicating effectively in intercultural and international settings to comply with the practical needs of the language learners.

Students must be trained to strengthen and support their opinions using research, which can also lead them to reflect on aspects such as the best part of the text to show their views and personal ideas, useful ways to express them into their own words, and how this can be included in an essay. Focus on the language makes students able to understand a wider range of texts and transfer this knowledge into writing. Second language acquisition is enhanced by comprehensible input, which is a key pedagogical technique in the CBI; however, students need form-focused content instruction as an explicit focus on relevant and contextually appropriate language forms to support content learning [5].

Contrasted with interpersonal communication skills, students need to learn content while they are developing cognitive academic language proficiency. In the CBI language learning becomes more concrete rather than abstract. Moreover the integration of language and content in instruction respects the specificity of functional language use as it recognizes that meaning changes depending upon context considerably.

Two important factors underlying the CBI are connected with motivating students to learn. Motivation and interest are crucial in supporting students' success with challenging, informative activities that support success and which help language learners learn complex skills. When students are motivated and interested in the material they are learning, they make greater connections between topics, elaborations with materials and can recall information better. So, when students are intrinsically motivated they achieve more academically.

The CBI approach provides for cognitive engagement; tasks that are intrinsically interesting and cognitively engaging will lead to more and better opportunities for second language acquisition. It emphasizes connections to real life, real world skills; in content-based classes, students have more opportunities to use the content knowledge and expertise they bring to class. Moreover, they activate their prior knowledge, which leads to increased learning of language and content material and provides revision of the material learned previously.

Apart from pedagogical considerations, the CBI approach promotes the importance of learning strategies, thus providing the curricular resources for development of the strategic language and content learner [6]. As to task-based learning it focuses on the use of authentic language through meaningful tasks based on cognitive mechanisms such as going to the restaurant, doing shopping, visiting the doctor or making a telephone call. This method encourages meaningful communication and is student-centred. The main characteristics of its student-oriented nature are as follows: 1) students are encouraged to use language creatively and spontaneously through tasks and problem solving, 2) they focus on a relationship that is similar to real world activities, 3) the conveyance of some sort of meaning is central to this method, 4) assessment is primarily based on the task outcome.

Due to its obvious benefits efficient implementation of the CBI allows for greater flexibility to be built into the curriculum and activities; there are more opportunities to adjust to the needs and interests of students. The general outcome is useful for all the parties engaged in the instruction, as the integration of language and content throughout a sequence of language levels has the potential to bridge the gap between basic language study and advanced literature and cultural studies in language programs.

As students are exposed to a considerable amount of language through stimulating content they have a possibility to explore interesting content and are engaged in appropriate language-dependent activities. Due to these factors language learning is becoming more natural. In addition, the CBI approach supports contextualized learning; learners are taught useful language that is embedded within

relevant discourse contexts rather than as isolated language fragments. Hence students make greater connections with the language and what they already know as complex information is delivered through real life context for the students to grasp well, which consequently leads to higher intrinsic motivation.

**Conclusions.** Commonly accepted perspectives on language teaching and learning recognize that in meaningful communication people use language skills not in isolation but in tandem of cognitive and language production actions. Due to this fundamental assumption current ESP/EFL practices aim at the integration of language and content teaching, it being considered an effective way for students to make a good progress in a foreign language. The content-based instruction helps increase English language learners' proficiency and teaches them the skills necessary for successful performance and communication in various professional contexts and settings in the future. Within the CBI, learners acquire a greater control of the English language, consequently they participate more fully in an increasingly complex academic and social environment and are more efficient in the professional field.

The CBI offered a new perspective in teaching linguistic areas, in other words language becomes the medium through which new information is learned and students learn the target language by using it in order to learn new content. It has been proved that provided students are engaged with more content, their intrinsic motivation is raised as the language is learned and used in the context of content that results in the development of more advanced thinking skills when dealing with new information. The benefits of the CBI make it the major method in the ESP classroom that aims at the subject matter of the academic disciplines alongside language proficiency and good knowledge. As the CBI is an effective method of combining language and content learning, it works well in the EFL/ESP academic context. Its systematic use increases as educationalists are able to design new syllabi in response to students' needs and interests. As to students their motivation increases when they focus on learning new information organized around topics, rather than just on studying the language aspects. The efficient use of the CBI is connected with the use of carefully chosen teaching

materials and effective techniques so that students' needs, learning styles, and academic requirements are met in the most suitable and appropriate way.

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