

DEVELOPING HIGHER EDUCATION CONTENT TEACHERS' ESP COMPETENCE

РОЗВИТОК АНГЛОМОВНОЇ ФАХОВОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ ВИКЛАДАЧІВ ПРОФІЛЬНИХ ДИСЦИПЛІН В ЗАКЛАДАХ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ

The article is devoted to one of the urgent problems of professional education – developing higher education content teachers' English for Specific Purposes (ESP) competence. In particular, the essence of such a concept as «English as a Medium of Instruction» (EMI) in the system of higher education is revealed. The main focus is on the teacher's training, which is one of the most important variables in the successful implementation of EMI programs and involves improving the speaking skills of teaching staff and students. Different models of teaching English professional communication core disciplines in English are considered, in particular: ESP; Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); teaching core disciplines in English (English Medium Instruction – EMI). Several tasks have been identified that must be performed when learning a foreign language professional discourse, which include: the development of the necessary speaking skills and abilities, the improvement of professional competence through immersion in a foreign language professional discourse, as well as the formation of competencies that will allow maintaining the level of foreign language proficiency and continuing to perform professional communicative tasks. The constituent elements of the content of foreign language learning, which form the basis of professionally oriented language training, are characterized. The main areas of activity of the Professional Foreign Languages Department, aimed at quality management of the English-language project of the National Aviation University (NAU), are indicated. The subject content of the manual «English for Technical University Teachers» and educational and methodological materials for higher education content teachers' ESP instruction were analyzed. Based on the analysis of scientific research, the prospects for future studying of the problem of teaching core subjects in a foreign language have been determined.

Key words: professional foreign language, English for Specific Purposes Competence (ESP) competence, content teachers, English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

Стаття присвячена одній з актуальних проблем професійної освіти – розвитку англomовної фахової компетентності

викладачів профільних дисциплін у закладах вищої освіти (ЗВО). Зокрема, розкривається сутність такого поняття як «англійська мова як основна мова викладання» (англ. EMI) в системі вищої освіти. Основна увага зосереджується на підготовці викладачів, що є однією з найбільш важливих варіативних складових успішної реалізації програм підготовки EMI й передбачає покращення мовленнєвих навичок викладацького складу та студентів. Розглядаються різні моделі навчання викладачів і студентів професійного спілкування й викладання профільних дисциплін англійською мовою, зокрема: англійська мова професійного спрямування (English for Specific Purposes – ESP); предметно-мовне інтегроване навчання (Content and Language Integrated Learning – CLIL); навчання профільних дисциплін англійською мовою (English Medium Instruction – EMI). Визначено низку завдань, які необхідно виконати при навчанні іншомовному професійному дискурсу, що включають: розвиток необхідних мовленнєвих умінь і навичок, підвищення професійної компетентності за допомогою занурення в іншомовний професійний дискурс, а також формування компетентностей, які дозволять підтримувати рівень володіння іноземною мовою та продовжувати виконувати професійні комунікативні завдання. Схарактеризовано складові елементи змісту навчання іноземних мов, що становлять основу професійно зорієнтованої мовної підготовки. Зазначено основні напрями діяльності кафедри іноземних мов за фахом із забезпечення менеджменту якості роботи англomовного проєкту Національного авіаційного університету (НАУ). Проаналізовано предметний зміст навчального посібника «English for Technical University Teachers» і навчально-методичні матеріали для англomовної підготовки викладачів профільних дисциплін у закладах вищої освіти (ЗВО). На основі аналізу наукових досліджень визначено перспективи подальшого розвитку проблеми навчання профільних дисциплін іноземною мовою.

Ключові слова: фахова іноземна мова, англomовна фахова компетентність, викладачі профільних дисциплін, англійська мова як основна мова викладання (EMI), предметно-мовне інтегроване навчання (CLIL).

UDC 378.147.091.3:[1/9: 811.111
DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2663-6085/2024/70.2.24>

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Research problem statement. Nowadays, many Ukrainian higher educational institutions on the way to internationalization face the problem of quality education and the selection of content teachers with high level of English proficiency to be involved in implementing English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs. In general, “EMI refers to the use of the English language to teach academic subjects, other than English itself” [6, p. 166] in settings where English is a foreign or second language to at least some of the learners and/or teachers [11, p. 503]. The need for linguistic

support in the educational process implies teaching different subjects to native and foreign students in English, research work, i.e. searching and studying foreign language sources, cooperation with foreign scientists, international mobility, etc. In teaching positions related to core disciplines in the universities of Ukraine, there is a shortage of specialists with proper English competence for delivering courses of lectures, conducting laboratory and practical classes, developing course training programs, educational and methodological materials [3]. For example, at the

National Aviation University (NAU), as in many other universities, there is an English-language project, which has recently felt an acute need for teachers of various subjects with high level of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) competence. Thus, the entire range of the outlined problems determines the relevance of the research on developing higher education content teachers' ESP competence.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

According to the researchers [2, p. 96], the study of the EMI phenomenon can be conditionally divided into three main parts: research on language policy and programs, in particular in the field of higher education; the research focused on students, their perceptions and attitudes towards EMI, language and speaking skills, learning strategies, outcomes and expectations; the third conditional area of research concerns higher school teachers, respectively, how they perceive EMI, their language competence and speaking skills, teaching strategies and procedures, and the need for new pedagogical skills. The training of teachers is one of the most urgent needs during the implementation of EMI because teachers are the most important variable component in the educational system and the main determinant of success. Specialists identify four main types of problems (challenges) that EMI teachers should overcome: the teacher's language proficiency, the students' language proficiency, acceptable teaching methods and insufficient resources [2, p. 96].

ESP is a learner-centered approach that has been a fruitful field of research for many scientist [4; 5; 6; 8; 10; 12] for decades. However, few findings deal with developing higher education content teachers' ESP competence.

Unresolved parts of the overall problem. As the problem of the implementation of EMI is rather complex and controversial and practically all researchers emphasize the need to improve the language skills of students and teachers involved in EMI programs, we decided to pay special attention to some theoretical and practical aspects of developing higher education content teachers' ESP competence.

Results and discussion. Today, at NAU, curricula for specialties provide studying a professional foreign language at the first year of the bachelor's degree, which ensures the formation of basic foreign language competence in the professional and everyday spheres. At the master's level, the study of a business foreign language is provided in only one semester. If students do not practice communicating in a foreign language on their own, then from the first year of the bachelor's degree to the first year of the master's degree, foreign language skills are lost, and one semester in the master's degree is not enough to refresh them. Given that, there is a low level of English proficiency after graduation and the inability to use English in professional activities. Additional

professional linguistic programs are insignificant compared to the needs of leading research universities. Thus, the foreign language competence of content teachers is formed by the general education programs in high school and higher education institutions and does not correspond to the level sufficient for professional activity or teaching professional disciplines in English at the university.

The main goal in mastering ESP is the development of communicative skills in a foreign language obtained at previous levels of education, as well as bringing them to a level where it becomes possible to solve professional social-communicative tasks when communicating with native speakers and for further personal development. Improving foreign language communication skills through teaching professional foreign language discourse and immersion in it ensures readiness to communicate in a foreign language in a professional context. In addition to this, mastering a foreign language by professors and teaching staff is also aimed at improving the ability to self-educate, research and cognitive skills, and expanding the range of interests.

In recent years, scientists have considered various models of teaching students foreign language professional communication and core disciplines in a foreign language. Researchers single out three main models of teaching: a) a professional foreign language [4; 5; 6; 8; 10; 12]; b) CLIL [7; 9; 14]; c) teaching core subjects in a foreign language [3; 6; 11; 13].

Depending on the methodological context of education and the level of students' foreign language communicative competence, one or another model may be used in practice. In the studies devoted to the formation of foreign language professional discourse skills of students of various fields of training, scientists prove that the subject content of the discipline "Professional Foreign Language" must necessarily reflect the peculiarities of a specific study profile within the specialty [4; 5; 6; 8; 10; 12]. For example, the IT field combines such specialties as computer science, computer and software engineering, cyber security, etc. Each of these specialties contains several specializations. We share the opinion of scientists that the subject content of the foreign language should be different for students of all study profiles.

The research of various scientists unites the fact that one of the main problems in teaching a professional foreign language is the incompetence of the foreign language teacher in the student's specialty. Ways out of this problem are now widely discussed in a scientific setting. For example, a number of researchers [4; 7] see a possible way out in the implementation of the tandem method in education, when the discipline "Professional Foreign Language" is taught simultaneously by two teachers: of a foreign language and a core subject. At the same time, the scope of teaching is clearly divided between the

teachers. Other researchers [9; 14] see the way out in CLIL, which will be implemented not by foreign language teachers, but by content teachers who feel the need for foreign language training.

The specified goals form several tasks that must be performed when teaching a professional foreign language, and in particular, include the following: development of necessary speaking abilities and skills, improvement of professional competence through immersion in foreign language professional discourse, as well as the formation of competencies that will allow maintaining the level of proficiency in a foreign language and continue to perform professional communicative tasks.

Consideration of specific features of professional discourse makes it possible to determine the constituent elements of CLIL, which form the basis of professionally oriented language training. In this study, we determine the following elements:

- language material of a certain professional discourse;
- linguistic communicative aspects of the professional sphere of communication, sociolinguistic aspect, standard situations and topics of communication, specifics of professional texts, their examples and examples that constitute the language base;
- mastering the ethics of using various language units, skills and the ability to apply them adequately in various professionally oriented communication situations;
- mastering the methods and techniques of analyzing and interpreting information presented in a foreign language.

The content of teaching foreign language professional discourse also contains, in addition to linguistic elements, proper, extralinguistic factors that largely determine the pragmatics of utterances, their form, conditions of reproduction, specificity, choice and context. Discourse, combining linguistic and non-linguistic components, sets the task of harmonizing its elements, which is achieved due to systematicity and consistency in the educational process. Specialized scientific knowledge (engineering, mathematical, IT, etc.) is the basis for the selection of professional texts, which is a necessary component in content teachers ESP instruction.

It should be noted that the Professional Foreign Languages Department of NAU is engaged in ensuring the quality management of the work of the English-language project, which involves content teachers' English training, assessment of their English proficiency level, attendance of content teachers' classes and editing educational and methodological materials written in English. A course training program, educational and methodological support for teacher training courses of the English-language project, test, evaluation and examination tasks have been developed. The manual "English for Technical

University Teachers" [1], prepared by the teachers of the department, is composed of the following topics: educational activities, features of English-language professional discourse, English idioms, innovative technologies, and education in different countries of the world. Each chapter contains informative texts, discursive communication exercises, examples of dialogues, useful phrases for discussion, phone conversation, conducting classes, conferences, writing theses and articles. Teachers studying at the courses prepare lecture notes in English, read, translate, and annotate scientific articles on their specialty, listen to and discuss professionally oriented audio and video materials. They were also offered online platforms, English-language educational resources and applications for the development of speaking skills and independent study of professional vocabulary.

In the process of content teachers' ESP training the following problems were discovered. Firstly, difficulties arose related to the unequal level of language competence within one group, which greatly complicated the use of educational materials designed only for a certain level. Content teachers in the group also demonstrated different gaps and shortcomings in language proficiency, which requires the use of an individual approach and feedback from course participants to adjust the teaching methodology. It also turned out that listening comprehension was the most poorly developed language skill. Another problem is the insufficient amount of time for content teachers to do homework due to the workload at their main place of employment. According to the course training program, most listening tasks are intended specifically for self-studying and viewing video materials relevant to the special field of knowledge on the Internet.

The above-mentioned problems, revealed during practical activities, make it possible to supplement and outline the ways of successfully mastering ESP by the content teachers. Firstly, they should be divided into groups according to their level of language proficiency. Secondly, it seems necessary to adjust the plan for conducting such classes according to the actual workload of the content teacher.

Conclusions. In conclusion, we can note that developing content teachers' ESP competence is a complex task that requires a thorough approach. In today's globalized world, employers highly value knowledge of English, especially in the scientific and technical field. English projects (EMI programs) in education provide a competitive advantage to both teachers and students, as they develop their ability to apply knowledge and skills in real situations of foreign language communication. This can open a wide range of career opportunities in multinational companies, research institutions and international cooperation.

Future research of problems related to EMI programs needs to explore a substantial range of items outlined by S. Bortnyk [2]:

- to determine whether content teachers have the necessary linguistic competence to teach in English, if there is a difference between the general English proficiency and the competence to teach academic subjects in English;

- to understand with what level of language proficiency students begin their studies in higher education after high school and what the implications are if students are admitted to EMI classes with different levels of English;

- to determine if there is a certain inequality of opportunities, when the selection is based on language tests, and professionally capable students do not have access to this course;

- to understand if EMI students need more time for preparation for exams and tests or other additional support and if such help can be provided by a foreign language teacher;

- to reach a certain consensus on what kind of English will be used in the higher education EMI program, as well as whether it is necessary to reduce the richness of the language and simplify it if teachers and students do not have high level of language proficiency [2].

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