



3rd GLOBAL CONFERENCE on BUSINESS, ECONOMICS, MANAGEMENT and TOURISM,
26-28 November 2015, Rome, Italy

Model of the development of language competences for tourism

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Abstract

The article describes a proposed concept and implementation of individual intensive personalized language courses, such as Course of Meetings and Guiding in Eco and Geotourism, for the students of Management of Tourism within the project of Interdisciplinary, information-cognitive, linguistic and modular development of study (IKLIM) run at the Faculty of Informatics and Management in Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic. The author explores aims, identification of participant's needs, content, study materials development, distribution of study materials and evaluation of the individual courses in compliance with the requirements of the Common European Reference Framework for languages and overall project goals. All these highly specialized courses are run in three different languages: English, German and Spanish.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of BEMTUR- 2015

Keywords: methodology; professional language; English language; German language; Spanish language; language competences

1. Introduction

The teaching of foreign languages reflects the current paradigmatic changes which can be seen in all spheres of human activities by moving from positivism to post-positivism. The emphasis is rather put on social character of teaching than on students as individuals. Learning is not directed anymore; it is aimed at a student, not at a teacher; students are actively involved in the decision-making process; learning is more and more based on cooperation. Attention is paid to student's specific needs; students are perceived as individuals with their specific needs and learning styles. It is the student's creative potential which is being considered. Language skills and knowledge are being integrated across curricula; pedagogy works together with other related sciences in order to help students in their learning. Teaching is enhanced by different teaching methods, strategies or techniques; teacher can also have in

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one class students of various cultural backgrounds. In addition, learning is perceived as a lifelong process than just preparation for an exam. Therefore the main factors of the learning process are autonomy, integration of knowledge and skills, continuity, creativity, multiculturalism and cooperation (Frydrychova Klimova, 2012). These changes are also described in the Common European Reference Framework for languages (CERF, 2014), whose aim is to increase the quality of communicative competences of the EU citizens who speak different languages and come from different cultural backgrounds. This document provides a wide range of pedagogical recommendations on how to achieve this target. For the teaching of foreign languages it is the key document. Therefore these methodological aims are a necessary part of the whole methodology of the Module of the Development of Language Competences for the Students of Management of Tourism.

1. Aims and the content of the module

The aim of the Module is to develop professional language knowledge and all four language skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing).

The Module consists of the following professional language courses:

- **Course of Meetings and Guiding in Eco and Geotourism in the English Language**
- **Course of Meetings and Guiding in Eco and Geotourism in the German Language**
- **Course of Meetings and Guiding in Eco and Geotourism in the Spanish language**
- **Course of Intercultural Dimensions of Tourism in the English Language**
- **Course of Intercultural Dimensions of Tourism in the German language**

The content of these individual personalized professional language courses for tourism is based on their specification and aims of the IKLIM project. The Courses of Meetings and Guiding in Eco and Geotourism in the English, German and Spanish Languages which deal with active negotiations and guiding in eco and geotourism focus more on productive use of professional terminology. On the contrary, the Courses of Intercultural Dimensions of Tourism in the English and German languages include more sociolinguistic aspects of communication, owing to communication with members of individual cultural nations. The time allocation for contact teaching is approximately 12 lessons. The same number of lessons students should spend on their self-study at the time when these courses are held. Since the courses require a relatively high level of professional language, students' level of the target language should be B2 according to (CERF, 2014).

In the first year (2013) of the IKLIM project the methodology of the individual courses and the concept of the whole Module were developed and they can be used even after the completion of the project. Furthermore, the identification of participants' language needs was done; syllabuses and study materials/texts in the virtual environment LMS Blackboard were developed. An important part of the implementation of the professional language courses was also their integration into the teaching of tourism in a modular way, the so-called block teaching.

The identification of participants' language needs was done on the basis of teacher's identification; on the basis of self-evaluation according to the Common European Reference Framework for languages by individual course participants (CERF, 2014); or on the basis of DIALANG (2014), a diagnostic test which gives information about student's strengths and weaknesses in more than just one skill and language. The test was developed by an expert team at the University of Lancaster and it was carried out with the financial support of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture (SOCRATES Programme, LINGUA Action D). The test can be easily downloaded free of charge. It tests language proficiency in 14 European languages: Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish, Irish, Icelandic, and Norwegian. DIALANG tests more than grammatical structures and vocabulary. It covers the following language skills: reading, writing, listening, grammatical structures and vocabulary. Furthermore, DIALANG provides test instructions, controls, help pages, explanations, self-assessment statements, test results, feedback and advice in all 14 languages. Moreover, it is designed in adherence to Europe's Common European Framework of Reference – CEFR – as a basis for determining language proficiency.

In the second year of the IKLIM project all the courses mentioned above were run; consequently they were modified on the basis of evaluation and course participants' needs; and new textbooks were written:

- Module of the Development of Language Competences for Tourism
- Practical English Course I

- Practical English Course II

In addition, other online courses of professional English language taught at FIM and intended for the students of Management of Tourism were innovated:

- Professional English 1-6 (OA 1-6) – for present and distant forms of study
- Life and Institutions of the English Speaking Countries 3-5 (RAMZ 3-5) – for present and distant forms of study
- Business English 1-2 (OBAJ 1-2) - for present and distant forms of study
- Practical English 5-6 (CAJ 5-6) – for distant form of study
- Academic Writing (AWT) – for present form of study

Each course within the module including the innovated online courses of English has the same template which besides the aim, stimulating questions, exercises, assignments and summary also has specific graphic items and other parts which provide guidelines to study and its understanding. The sense of implementing the subjects into Blackboard is a support of the contact classes and students' motivation for self-study. This electronic support is also an important enhancement of functional literacy through the tailored-made current exercises and assignments. After the successful completion of the course (attendance of individual lectures or seminars and successful passing of all given assignments –making a presentation and writing an article) within the module, participants were awarded a certificate.

2. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to describe a profile of the participant of the Module of the Development of Language Competences from the development of language skills point of view. According to, he should possess B2-C1 level of the target language. In this sense, they should be able in the area of **speaking**:

- use the language fluently, accurately and effectively on a wide range of general, academic, vocational or leisure topics, marking clearly the relationships between ideas;
- engage in extended conversation on most general topics in a clearly participatory fashion, even in a noisy environment;
- easily follow and contribute to complex interactions between third parties in group discussion even on abstract, complex unfamiliar topics;
- give a lecture, make a fluent telephone call, or make a presentation in the target language.

In the area of the **written speech** MT graduates should be able to:

- express themselves with clarity and precision, relating to the addressee flexibly and effectively;
- write formal and informal letters/ reports, projects, for example from their study stay abroad;
- write qualified papers, such as dissertations.

In the area of **listening comprehension** MT graduates should be able to:

- understand enough to follow extended speech on abstract and complex topics beyond their own field, though they may need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar;
- easily follow complex interactions between third parties in group discussion and debate, even on abstract, complex unfamiliar topics;
- follow lectures, discussions and debates with relative ease .

In the area of **reading comprehension** MT graduate should be able to:

- understand in detail lengthy, complex texts, whether or not they relate to their own area of speciality;
- have a broad active reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low frequency idioms;
- understand both formal and informal documents, such as articles, news items, reports, manuals, leaflets and formal and informal correspondence.

The productive and receptive language skills, activities and strategies are connected with a relevant choice of language means (i.e. general and specific lexis, grammar structures, and orthographic rules) and other, general competences (e.g. sociocultural or intercultural skills), which was specified in the methodologies of the individual language courses (cf. Horvathova, 2014; Reid, 2014; Stranovska, Munkova, Hvozdkova, 2013).

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