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ENGLISH TEACHING FACULTY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND PROSPECTS FOR UKRAINE

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The article deals with the issue of holding international seminars for the teachers of English for special purposes and sharing their experience among teaching staff in Ukraine. As a model, the English Teaching Faculty Development Workshop organized and held under the NATO aegis by the Partner Language Training Center Europe in Germany since 2015 was taken. The seminar presents current language teaching methodologies and practices for military contexts, with a focus on teaching speaking and writing. According to my hypothesis, knowledge obtained at any specialized seminar / workshop can be successfully extrapolated to any other area of teaching English for specific purposes. The article elaborates on a number of relevant issues such as STANAG requirements as to educational levels; language proficiency and skills; teachers' instructions, and classroom activities monitoring. Activity Root Map was described as a methodological tool to successfully plan a lesson with the focus on speaking. Activity Route Map provides a teacher with a set of checklists to consider as they plan a lesson. The concept of micro-teaching was introduced as a teacher training technique, whereby the teacher reviews a recording of a teaching session, in order to get constructive feedback from peers and facilitators about what has worked and what improvements can be made to their teaching.

Key words: Activity Root Map, English for special purposes, faculty, level, micro-teaching, proficiency, speaking, workshop

Ребрій І.М. Семінар з підвищення кваліфікації викладачів англійської мови: міжнародний досвід та українські перспективи. Статтю присвячено питанню проведення міжнародних семінарів для викладачів англійської мови для спеціальних цілей та поширення їх досвіду серед українських фахівців. За зразок взято Семінар із підвищення кваліфікації викладачів англійської мови, що організується і проводиться Європейським партнерським центром із мовної підготовки під егідою НАТО у Німеччині з 2015 року. Семінар пропонує знайомство з сучасними методами мовної підготовки та проведення практичних занять для військових потреб з особливим акцентом на мовленні та письмі. Згідно з моєю гіпотезою, знання, отримані на будь-якому спеціалізованому семінарі, можна з успіхом екстраполювати на будь-яку іншу ділянку з навчання англійської мови для спеціальних потреб. У статті розглянуто низку релевантних питань, таких як вимоги STANAG до освітніх рівнів; мовна вправність та навички; викладацькі настанови та моніторинг роботи в аудиторії. Було описано «Мапу планування діяльності» як методичний інструмент для успішної підготовки заняття, зосередженого на мовленні. Мапа планування діяльності забезпечує викладача набором контрольних моментів, на які варто звернути увагу у процесі розробки заняття. Концепцію мікронавчання було представлено у статті як особливу техніку з підвищення кваліфікації, що передбачає перегляд записаного на плівку заняття з метою отримання конструктивної думки методистів та кураторів семінару стосовно шляхів удосконалення своєї професійної майстерності.

Ключові слова: англійська мова для спеціальних потреб, викладач, говоріння, Мапа планування діяльності, мікронавчання, мовна вправність, рівень, семінар.

Ребрій И.Н. Семинар по повышению квалификации преподавателей английского языка: международный опыт и украинские перспективы. Статья посвящается вопросу проведения международных семинаров для преподавателей английского языка для специальных целей и распространения их опыта среди украинских специалистов. В качестве примера был выбран семинар по повы-

шению квалификации преподавателей английского языка, который Европейский партнерский центр языковой подготовки организует и проводит под эгидой НАТО в Германии с 2015 года. Семинар предлагает знакомство с современными методами языковой подготовки и проведения практических занятий для военных потребностей с особым акцентом на говорении и письме. В соответствии с моей гипотезой, знания, полученные на любом специализированном семинаре, можно успешно экстраполировать на любую другую область обучения английскому языку для специальных потребностей. В статье рассмотрено ряд релевантных вопросов, таких как требования STANAG к образовательным уровням, языковая квалификация и навыки, преподавательские рекомендации и мониторинг аудиторной работы. Была описана «Карта планирования деятельности» как методический инструмент для успешной подготовки занятия, сосредоточенного на говорении. Карта планирования деятельности обеспечивает преподавателя набором контрольных моментов, на которых необходимо сосредоточиться в процессе подготовки занятия. В работе представлена концепция микрообучения, которое является особой техникой повышения квалификации, предусматривающей просмотр записанного на пленку занятия с целью получения конструктивного мнения от методистов и кураторов семинара относительно путей усовершенствования своего профессионального мастерства.

Ключевые слова: английский язык для специальных потребностей, говорение, Карта планирования деятельности, микрообучение, преподаватель, семинар, уровень, языковая квалификация.

Introduction

“Effective communication is a vital means of getting business done” – such is an informal motto of the English Teaching Faculty Development Workshop in George C. Marshall European Center For Security Studies I have recently participated in as a teacher working with military students. Attending seminars like this serves a double purpose, allowing me, firstly, to update my professional skills and, secondly, to share newly obtained knowledge and experience with colleagues. Thus, the actual value of this article is determined by its methodological potential in the aspect of organizing similar kinds of short-term courses for different categories of educators in the sphere of teaching English for special purposes. The object of my research is seminars for the teachers of English for special purposes and the subject of research is the principles and methods of their conducting with the emphasis on specifics of Ukrainian educational processes. The aim of the research is to introduce new methods of teaching English as well as international experience in the organization of educational seminars to Ukrainian scholars.

Background information

The seminar I attended is held within NATO framework since this influential international organization pays much attention to the proliferation of English as a universal tool of communication among the military personnel from member-states and partner-

states, one of which is Ukraine. After conducting military personnel needs analysis, the Partner Language Training Center Europe (PLTCE) organized a Study Group to discuss the feasibility of offering teachers’ workshops. At the 2014 Bureau for International Language Cooperation (BILC) conference in Bruges, several members of the Study Group volunteered to collaborate on the design, development and implementation of these workshops.

Language teaching experts from six nations, Bulgaria, Denmark, Hungary, Portugal, Slovenia and the USA, selected the topic of teaching speaking and writing for military purposes and subsequently developed the workshop. The workshop was validated in March 2015 by four of the developers who served as facilitators and twelve participants from nine nations. Extensive feedback was collected from both participants and facilitators. Now the English Teaching Faculty Development Workshop presents current language teaching methodologies and practices for military contexts aimed at furthering interoperability for language, with a focus on teaching speaking and writing for military purposes. To ensure the multinational military language interoperability a special document was adopted in 1976 (last edition published in 2010).

STANAG requirements and educational levels

Methodologically, the seminar is organized in order to comply with STANAG (NATO Standardization

Agreement)– the main instrument of standartization of work in all areas on NATO activities, including that of teaching English. Thus, in respect to linguistic education STANAG No. 6001 is a set of definitions of proficiency levels. According to NATO definition, language proficiency is an individual's unrehearsed general language communication ability in four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) on "0" to "5" scale. The levels are labeled as follows: level "0" – "No proficiency", level "1" – "Survival", level "2" – "Functional", level "3" – "Professional", level "4" – "Expert", level "5" – "Highly articulate / native".

At the same time, STANAG states quite clearly that language training and testing is a national responsibility, NATO does not require nations to follow a standardized curriculum. Each nation must develop its own tests to comply to a common standard. The main principles of STANAG 6001 are: 1) STANAG 6001 describes functional ability, it is of no prescriptive character; 2) it has three overlapping planes – "Global Tasks", "Content", "Accuracy"; 3) each level subsumes the level below; 4) it is organized as a threshold system: defines minimally acceptable sustained performance; 5) it is organized as a range system: same task can be done differently at the same level; 6) it is organized as an ever-expanding system [4].

STANAG 6001 describes all six language proficiency levels, but only three of them are relevant for our military students, that is why they are of special importance for seminar attendees. Let's take a brief look at these levels. Each seminar can only be focused on training students of one particular level, that is why every teacher of English within NATO framework is expected to have precise knowledge of each of the levels as well as possess tools for identifying them correctly. Here's a short overview of the levels in question.

Level "1" ("Survival"). Military students at this level should be able to maintain simple face-to-face communication in typical everyday situations; create with the language by combining and recombining familiar, learned elements of speech; begin, maintain, and close short conversations by asking and answering short simple questions; satisfy simple, predictable, personal and accommodation needs; meet minimum courtesy, introduction, and identification requirements; exchange greetings; elicit and provide predictable, skeletal biographical information; communicate about

simple routine tasks in the workplace; ask for goods, services, and assistance; request information and clarification; express satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and confirmation. Topics for discussion at this level include basic needs such as ordering meals, obtaining lodging and transportation, shopping. Military students at this level do not speak with natural fluency, and cannot produce continuous conversation, except with rehearsed material. Nonetheless, they should be able to speak at the sentence level and produce strings of two or more simple, short sentences joined by common linking words. Frequent errors in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar often distort meaning. Due to the lack of sustained grammar skills, students often use only one tense or tend to avoid complex structures. Their speech is often characterized by hesitations, erratic word order, frequent pauses, straining and groping for words (except for routine expressions), ineffective reformulations, and self-corrections.

Level "2" ("Functional"). Military students at this level should be able to communicate in everyday social and routine workplace situations and within them to describe people, places, and things; narrate current, past, and future activities in complete, but simple paragraphs; state facts; compare and contrast; give straightforward instructions and directions; ask and answer predictable questions. They should be ready to handle most normal, casual conversations on concrete topics such as job procedures, family, personal background and interests, travel, current events confidently. Military students should be able to give complicated, detailed, and extensive directions and make non-routine changes in travel and other arrangements. They can also combine and link sentences into paragraph-length discourse. Simple structures and basic grammatical relations are typically controlled, while more complex structures are used inaccurately or avoided. Vocabulary use is appropriate for high frequency utterances but unusual or imprecise at other times. Errors in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar may sometimes distort meaning.

Level "3" ("Professional"). Military students at this level should be able to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics; discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with considerable ease; use the language to perform such

common professional tasks as answering objections, clarifying points, justifying decisions, responding to challenges, supporting opinion, stating and defending policy. They are expected to demonstrate language competence when conducting meetings, delivering briefings or other extended and elaborate monologues, hypothesizing, and dealing with unfamiliar subjects and situations. Military students at this level should produce extended conversations and convey their ideas correctly and effectively. Unlike students on lower levels, they can understand some cultural references, proverbs, and allusions, as well as implications of nuances and idioms. Errors may occur in low frequency or highly complex structures characteristic of a formal style of speech. However, occasional errors in pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary are not serious enough to distort meaning, and rarely disturb the native speaker [ibid.].

Language proficiency: Focus on speaking

Within STANAG recommendations, teachers' main aim is to develop and improve both students' language proficiency level and their language competence. Since the focus of the seminar I attended was on speaking, let's consider this statement on the example of this skill. The best way to realize this task is to increase classroom speaking and pay more attention to fluency. "Fluency is the ability to communicate an intended message, or to affect the listener or interlocutor in the way that is intended by the speaker, it involves the ability to adjust the message according to the responses of the listener or interlocutor, to construct coherent utterances and stretches of speech, to respond and to speak without hesitation, involves the ability to use strategies such as simplification, circumlocution and gesture to aid communication when the speaker may not have access to the vocabulary or grammar which would normally be appropriate" [2, p. 197].

Classroom speaking is usually associated with a certain activity or a task, which is the basic element of the lesson, the factor of explicit student involvement, something that learners do that involves them using or working with language to achieve some specific outcome. The outcome may reflect a "real-world" outcome (e.g. learners role-play buying tickets at the station) or it may be purely "for-the-purposes-of-learning" outcome (e.g. learners fill in the gaps in 12

sentences with present perfect verbs) [3, p. 37]. Characteristics of a successful speaking activity are as follows: 1) learners talk a lot; 2) participation is even; 3) motivation is high; 4) language is on an acceptable level. But very often teachers face some problems with organizing speaking activity. The most common problems in this respect are: 1) inhibition; 2) lack of information to present; 3) low or uneven level of participation; 4) mother-tongue interference [6, p. 121].

Methodological tool: "Activity Route Map"

In order to avoid or, at least, minimize these problems, the participants of the seminar were introduced to the concept of "Activity Root Map" (ARM). Methodologically, ARM is an instrument whose main elements include the following: 1) using group work; 2) basing the activity on easy language; 3) making a careful choice of topic and task to stimulate interest; 4) giving some instruction or training in discussion skills; 5) keeping students speaking the target language at all costs.

Structure-wise, Activity Route Map proposes planning a lesson with the focus on speaking in the following way: 1) before the lesson: familiarize yourself with the material and activity, prepare any materials or texts you need; 2) in class: lead-in/prepare for the activity; 3) set up the activity (or section of the activity): give instructions, make groupings, etc.; 4) run the activity (or section): students do the activity, maybe in pairs or small groups while you monitor and help; 5) close the activity (or section); 6) post activity: give feedback; do any appropriate follow-on work.

In addition, Activity Route Map provides a teacher with a set of checklists to consider as they plan a lesson. Let's describe them briefly.

Before the lesson checklist includes the following recommendations: 1) familiarize yourself with the material and the activity; 2) read through the material and any teacher's notes; 3) imagine how it will work in the class; 4) decide how many organizational steps are involved; 5) What seating arrangements/rearrangements are needed? 6) How long will it probably take? 7) What help might they need? 8) What questions might they have? 9) What errors (using the language) are they likely to make? 10) What errors (misunderstanding the task) are they likely to make? 11) What will your role be at each stage? 12) What instructions are needed? 13) How

will they be given? (Explained? Read? Demonstrated?) 14) prepare any aids or additional materials; 15) arrange seating, visual aids, etc.; 16) most importantly, you need to think through any potential problems or hiccups in the procedures. For example, what will happen if you plan student work in pairs, but there is an uneven number of students? Will this student work alone, or will you join in, or will you make one of the pairs into a group of three?

Lead-in/preparation checklist includes the following recommendations: 1) raise the motivation or interest (topic) or focus on language items that might be useful in the activity; 2) ask questions; 3) write up/read out a sentence stating a viewpoint; 4) elicit reactions; 5) tell a short personal anecdote related to the subject; 6) ask students if they have ever been/seen/done/etc.; 7) hand out a short text related to the topic; 8) students read the text and comment; 9) play 'devil's advocate' and make a strong/controversial statement; 10) write a key word (e.g. the name of the topic) and elicit vocabulary from students (board).

Setting up the activity checklist includes the following recommendations: 1) organize the students so they can do the activity or section (this may involve making pairs or groups, moving the seating etc.); 2) give clear instructions for the activity; 3) a demonstration or example is usually much more effective than a long explanation.

Running the activity checklist includes the following recommendations: 1) monitor at the start of the activity or section to check that the task has been understood and that students are doing what you intended them to do; 2) if the material was well prepared and the instructions clear, then the activity can now largely run itself; 3) allow the students to work on the task without too much further interference. Your role now is often much more low-key, taking a back seat and monitoring what is happening without getting in the way; 4) beware of encumbering the students with unnecessary help.

Closing the activity checklist includes the following recommendations: 1) allow the activity or section to close properly. Rather than suddenly stopping the activity at a random point, try to sense when the students are ready to move on; 2) if different groups are finishing at different times, make a judgment about when coming together as a whole class would be useful to most people; 3) if you want to close the activity while

many students are still working, give a time warning.

Post-activity checklist includes the following recommendations: 1) feedback session is important; 2) groups meet up other groups and compare answers/opinions; 3) students check answers with the printed answers in Teacher's book (pass around, photocopy, leave at the front of the room etc.); 4) groups report back to the whole class (appoint a spokesperson); 5) when checking answers ask for groups to exchange and compare the answers across the room themselves; 6) get a student to come up front and manage the answer-checking, rather than doing it all yourself (could give this student the answer sheet); 7) collect in all answer sheets, then redistribute them for "correcting" by other students. When everything has been checked, students pair-up with those who marked and listen/explain/justify/argue; 8) correct one student's answers; that student then goes on to correct other students' answers, etc.; 9) divide the board up into spaces for answers and throw pens to different students who fill the board up with their answers (each answer written by a different student); the whole group looks at the board and comments/corrects [5].

From theory to practice: the Concept of micro-teaching

The theoretical input received during the first week of the workshop was followed by the practical production stage in the form of video recorded micro-teaching presentations. *Micro-teaching* is a teacher training technique invented at Stanford University, whereby the teacher reviews a recording of a teaching session, in order to get constructive feedback from peers and facilitators about what has worked and what improvements can be made to their teaching technique [1].

Each of the participants was asked to prepare a short lesson (usually 10 minutes) for a small group of learners (simulated by peers) who may not have been their own students. Teachers could select topics for their lessons as well as assumptions as for their students' level and curricula background. For example, for my first presentation I chose the topic "Basic Combat Training" and my assumptions were that my cadets were of level 1+, they obtained some target vocabulary from the previous lessons, could use the past simple tense and had just returned from their boot camp.

This presentation was then recorded on video. After the lesson, the teacher, teaching colleagues and facilitators together viewed the videotape and commented on what they saw happening, referencing the teacher's learning objectives. Seeing the video and getting comments from colleagues and trainers provided teachers with an often intense 'under the microscope' view of their teaching. We all were supposed to prepare and present four micro-lessons. And after the last session all my colleagues unanimously agreed that it was an effective method for improving their teaching outcomes. This training procedure was geared towards simplification of the complexities of the regular teaching-learning process. Class size, time, task, and content were scaled down to provide optimal training environments. The supervisors gave us necessary theoretical support and pre-taught the skills to be practiced so it was not stressful.

Each microteaching presentation was followed by a written feedback from peers and was focused on strong and weak points of a performance. Then we were given individual feedback from our facilitators. This was sometimes challenging as we have never been taught how to give and / or receive feedback. This element of teacher training is not very common and thus requires some additional tips. Common mistakes when giving feedback are as follows: 1) being too vague or too general; 2) not "letting errors go" (even in fluency activities); 3) maintaining "focus on form"; 4) ending the session too soon. Common mistakes when receiving feedback are as follows: 1) expecting the worst; 2) counterattack; 3) defensiveness.

Teaching the teachers:

How to (inter)act in the classroom

I would like to finish my review of the principles and methods of seminar-holding with some useful recommendations elicited by me from the presentations given by our instructors. They mainly concern teacher's demeanor in the classroom which is another underestimated aspect of teacher-training. The way teachers talk to students, the manner in which they interact is crucial to both successful learning and teaching.

The most important point that determines how successfully students will learn is the way instructions are formulated and sometimes it is this point which

distinguishes good teachers from bad ones. If instructions are not effectively and clearly formulated, there will be a number of students who will simply not have assimilated what is to be done or have only caught part of the information. Being clear with your instructions and expectations will reduce the possibility of ongoing distraction and interruptions. When giving instructions teachers should remember some important rules: 1) the formulations should be short, easy to understand and precise; 2) to attract the attention of a group, try clapping your hands/knocking on a desk; 3) spoken instructions are not everything, body language counts as well, the gestures, miming, etc.; 4) instructions should always be followed by demonstration; the best way to tell students how to do something is to actually do it yourself; 5) teachers should prepare everything carefully beforehand; 6) teachers should not forget that wordy instructions do not work effectively, particularly with learners of low English proficiency; 7) when an activity is introduced for the first time, words might not be enough for low level students. In some cases, visuals can support learners' understanding even for instructions; 8) the fundamental obstruction is the mother tongue interference; 9) check for understanding by asking questions related to instruction.

Good instructions do half of the job, the other one is done by a good monitoring. Please remember that any classroom activity must be continuously monitored, and speaking is no exception. There are different ways of doing this that I would like to discuss.

Discreet monitoring is a very popular form of monitoring when you maintain a presence in the room, but do not overtly help, correct, etc. Your aim is to make sure that the students know you are there, but your watching and listening does not in any way disturb them. They will not feel tempted to call on you unless there is a significant problem – and when they do ask for help, do this swiftly and efficiently, then return to the discreet monitoring role. You are sending a message that you are interested, but that the main task is for them to do, using their own resources as much as possible. You can monitor as described above, but be more visible and allow students to be more aware of your presence and of the possibility of calling on you for help and advice. There are also situations when any teacher presence can actually interfere with and

diminish the usefulness of work being done. Sometimes the best option for you is to vanish, i.e. get out of view. You could go into a corner of the room and sit quietly. It is often an idea to have something concrete to do (e.g. read something) in order to prevent yourself from constantly worrying about how students are doing and getting drawn back into it. You need to keep a small amount of attention on the room, in order to know when the activity is reaching an end or a crisis point, but otherwise restrain yourself from doing too much.

Active monitoring implies that a teacher will be walking around, viewing, listening to many different groups and frequently offering spontaneous advice and corrections, as well as responding to requests and questions from students. There are several techniques within the concept of active monitoring. For instance, you may sit down and join a group (temporarily or for the whole task) and take part as if you were one of the group, offering ideas, helping with questions, joining in discussions. You could quietly move on to another group. By the end of the task, you might have worked with a number of groups. Of course, while you are monitoring or working with one group, you will need to remain alert to what others are doing and if there are any problems.

Conclusions

Summing up, I would like to say that attending international seminars is always a great opportunity not only to acquire some new knowledge and skills but also to share them with others. There are different ways to do it: by talking to colleagues at regular faculty meetings, by organizing and holding traditional or online seminars / workshops / presentations / master classes on the national, regional or even local levels (Kharkiv is a good example). Another great opportunity to deliver your experience to other people is through publications which was the aim of my article. It's important to understand that despite the diversity of areas in which we specialize (my seminar was endorsed by NATO for military institutions faculty) we can always find some crossover potential in what we do. When organizing a seminar / workshop educational level of

prospected students should be taken into account as well as the skill you are planning to focus on. Activity Root Map is the methodological tool to achieve the maximum output. The prospect of further research I see in sharing my personal experience as to the proliferation of information concerning organization of ESP seminars / workshops in Ukraine.

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