
«UNIVERSITY TRAINING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE», раскрывающая роль и значение языка для специальных целей в области профессионально ориентированной коммуникации.

Надеемся, что выпуск настоящего сборника вызовет несомненный интерес, а подготовка к конференции и её проведение способствовали формированию у студентов неязыковых специальностей умений и навыков переводческой деятельности.

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DOKUZ EYLUL UNIVERSITY UNIVERSITY TRAINING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE

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Introduction

Globalization is the theme of the current century. Globalization, amongst other things, requires increased communication and sharing of knowledge between people from many backgrounds. This means a common language is definitely needed. Nowadays this common language is English.

An artifact and a driver of globalization is multi-national companies. These are companies that operate in many countries providing jobs and knowledge to locals. Examples of these multinational companies are Pfizer, Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Google, etc. Multi-nationals do not just provide jobs to university graduates in many countries but they also provide highly-paid jobs with real career opportunities and a chance to travel and work internationally. The prerequisite, though, to work for one of these companies is a good command of English language. This is required to make sure that offices in many different parts of the world can work together almost on a daily basis.

Many universities recognized this fact early in developing countries and therefore searched for ways to educate bilingual graduates. Even some high schools in developing countries tuned their educational programmes to facilitate training in English. In practice, though, questions remain whether teaching in English, in non-English speaking countries has any educational value at all.

This report reflects personal experiences of its author and is not meant to be a scientific presentation.

The Author

The author has received his BS from Technical University in Istanbul (1982) and completed his MSc (1986) and PhD (1988) at the University of Arizona. He worked at the University of Sydney (1988-1998) as an academic and spent a year at Czech Technical University (1995) in Prague as a visiting professor. From 2005 till 2009, the author worked at Halic University where he also held the position of the Dean for the Engineering Faculty, and since 2009 he has been working with Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey. Both Halic University and Dokuz Eylul University offer their degree programmes in English. The author also has extensive research, development and industrial experiences through research grants or consultancies.

The Structure of Training In English

In non-English speaking countries, training in English requires, on the students' part, a solid and a working knowledge of English which needs to be gained before vocational training can start. This is an obvious fact and it seems that the general approach to make this possible is to put students through intensive (full-time)

English training for one year before their university training starts. My experience shows that, where possible, native English speaking teachers are preferred by schools for this preparatory training.

Assuming that everything goes well, having spent a year at the English preparatory school, students can proceed to their regular university courses in English. However, at this stage another important resource is to have academicians competent in teaching in English.

This approach is a phased approach where, at the first phase of their training, students are expected to devote their full-time to acquiring English language and at the second phase students go through their regular university course provided to them in English.

Other approaches are possible. One approach may be to offer a percentage of the university degree programme in English. In Turkey some universities adopt this approach and offer their courses in English only partially. Typically the proportion of lectures delivered in English may vary from 25% to 40% of the overall coursework. This is particularly good if English speaking academicians are available but not to the extent that the entire coursework can be delivered in English. This is intended to keep students in touch with English so that they do not lose English skills they gain during their preparatory year.

Practice of Training In English

Based on author's experience, many universities which commit to teaching in English are unable to deliver on their pledges. Many universities in Turkey, including the ones that the author has worked with, can only teach in English partially. Some, though on paper commit to teaching English, do not teach a single lecture in English. They are hesitant to announce this fact, that is their teaching is really done in local language, because prospective students seem to value more the universities that teach in English. So with fear of losing good students, universities do commit to teaching in English but they really do not have the resources to deliver on their promises. Despite these facts, students are expected to spend a year trying to learn English, although in most cases, it is not likely that they will need to draw heavily on English skills they develop throughout their university training.

Globalization, I believe, is the driving factor behind the idea of teaching in English. However, if teaching in English is only used as a marketing gimmick and that the university does not have resources to deliver training in English, the result may be a mess. In Turkey, currently, very few of the universities with a commitment to deliver courses in English can deliver a proper training programme in English.

Pros And Cons of Teaching in English

Here I point out some pros and cons of teaching in English.

Teaching in English is not possible in a non-English speaking country.

This is true only if resource planning is not done properly. Defenders of this usually argue that people best learn in their local language; that is their mind can best respond to stimuli expressed in their native language. While this may be true, author's personal experience shows that in some technical subjects learning in English is not only easier but may be even more beneficial. One such field is Computer Science. Being a relatively new field, almost all technical terms, all products and all literature are in English. Therefore, training in a local language requires invention of a whole new set of jargon in a local language which may not sound familiar or natural even to a local language speaker.

Teaching in English will weaken the local language in time.

This may be a real concern. To balance out teaching in English so that the local language will not have a disadvantage for survival, some course work may be held in the local language. History, literature, optional course work may be candidates for course work to be held in local language. In addition students may be required to prepare one major report in their local language every term or so to keep their intellectual connection with their native language.

Preparatory year best be used for analytical learning for biological reasons.

Defenders of this argument propose that the year spent on learning English should be used for learning analytical subjects. This is an argument about brain development. However, we believe that preparatory year should include some vocational content. This may be important for students to get used to their regular field of study.

Non-English speaking academicians can not teach in English.

It is true that it may sound natural to propose that people who speak some native language in their daily lives will have difficulty to switching to English when teaching. However, academicians usually read many pages in English every day. Many of them watch TV channels which present information in English and surf the web which is full of English content. Despite this, especially for those academicians who did not receive their training in an English speaking country, it would be wise to design language courses to advance their English skills. So in a way teaching in English requires an ongoing effort to make sure that the proper educational environment is established and maintained.

Recommendations

A university considering teaching in English must do a careful analysis of resources available. Design of a preparatory year for English is necessary but not sufficient to achieve the goal. Summer English refresher courses for students must be designed to provide students with facilities to advance their English understanding/speaking/ writing skills throughout their university education. Academicians with good command of English are needed. They will, too, need continuing support to practice and advance their English skills. In addition, teaching resources in English are required. Library resources, computing resources are couple of such resources. Exchange programmes with universities in other countries would be very useful as presence of foreign students automatically enforces training in English.

Once training in English is established additional measures will need to be taken to ensure contiguity. Course material must be prepared and presented in English and these activities must be monitored. Academicians with good command of English need to be rewarded. Academic exchange programmes with universities in other countries must be encouraged.

Conclusions

English seems to have prevailed as the language for global use. A good command of English is a prerequisite to ensuring a good career in almost every field. It is the responsibility for educational institutions and universities to train and graduate students who may be employed by multi-national companies and who can function in a global environment. Training in English is one such way to ensure globally competitive graduates. However, commitment to teaching in English requires careful planning of resources and procedures. In many countries, acts of good will on the part of some universities to provide their students with training in English did not necessarily translate into success stories. It is therefore important to consider all facts before embarking upon such an important enterprise.

If resources are not fully available, educational programmes with partial English content may be considered. If successful, proportion of courses offered in English may be increased.

Another alternative is to deliver instruction in local language but support educational activities with good English content. However, this option is a more difficult one to ensure its contiguity.

Many options, depending upon resources available to the particular institution, may be considered and may be argued about. The only sure thing is that a good command of English is a prerequisite to train globally competitive university graduates.