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Characteristics of language teaching for travel and tourism management students at the Faculty of Informatics and Management

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Abstract

The Department of Applied Linguistics provides a significant part of lessons for the students of travel and tourism management with extended teaching of English or German. Language teaching to full-time students covers 8-10 lessons a week (4 compulsory lessons). Besides the subject oriented at realia, literature and cultural studies of the countries where English and German are spoken, at translating, at improving practical language usage skills, including those needed for business language and company communication, the teaching also focuses on subjects generally contributing to the growth of the students' personalities. They include business ethics and an introduction to philosophical discourse, which increases the competences of our graduates, and gives them orientation in intercultural communication in the varied world.

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1. Introduction

The Department of Applied Linguistics consists of English and German sections. It provides compulsory English courses in the following study programmes: information science, information management, and English or German courses in study programmes of financial management and sports management. Students can also take optional conversation classes in English, German and French, taught also by native speakers. Courses in language usage, life and institutions, cultural and literary history, translating and interpreting were added in the academic year 1995/96. For about ten years these were compulsory subjects, and students closed their studies with two state exams – both in the English and the German language. Thus, at that time most of the courses were provided by the Department of Applied Linguistics, and the study programme was called Travel and Tourism Management with Extended Language Programme. With respect to the profile of the Faculty, the accreditation commission recommended enforcing the economic, managerial and informatics dimension of the study, and the study programme is now called Travel and Tourism Management. Demands on students have changed in the sense that the language state exam is

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optional. The number of compulsory subjects has also changed. All subjects have been retained in the form of optional courses – see the comparison of curricula in part 4 of this paper.

Since the very beginning the Department of Applied Linguistics has also been offering optional French, Spanish, Italian and Russian language courses. These courses have been preferentially attended by travel and tourism management students. Free seats are available to students of other study programmes.

A collective monograph was published in 2010, outlining the usage of the virtual study environment by the members of the Department.

Since 2011, the teachers of the Department of Applied Linguistics at the Faculty of Informatics and Management of the University of Hradec Kralove have created 40 eLearning courses to teach languages and humanities. Teaching has been done partly as a support of present forms of teaching (blended learning) or as on-line intra-university or interuniversity education, when the introductory tutorials and final tutorials, credit tests and examinations are usually held presently. The authors of the courses are also the authors of individual chapters of this monograph. They have acquired a lot of experience and theoretical knowledge and they have enriched their teaching activities with the results of students' evaluations (the eLearning courses have been exploited by approximately 12 000 students of which 8 000 students fulfilled evaluation questionnaires), one can assume that the perceptions of teachers and their students have a certain, not an insignificant relevance.

2. The concept of constructive and communicative education in language teaching

In education process we must aspire to a change the instructive concept of education (leading only to instant knowledge) into a communicative concept. Language teaching, which is clearly aimed at developing communicative competences, provides suitable conditions. In such teaching process we have to define mainly the input and output standards. The framework syllabus then requires a variety of methods and provides basic content items.

We have verified that the following dimensions of reflection are necessary in topics related to travel and tourism:

- social, cultural and anthropological dimension
- environmental, economic, technological and technical dimension
- gnoseological, methodological and methodical dimension
- axiological, ethical-practical dimension
- hermeneutic dimension.

Input standards are identified through diagnostic tests, which focus on necessary stylistic and grammar items and tasks. Students who have not handled individual work with text yet attend preparatory and parallel optional seminars. Analysis of text, communication built up on the topic of text, discussion on the possibilities of text creation and translation are the first steps in language preparation for travel and tourism students. Besides, of course, they are also involved in conversation on more general topics – mainly in seminars led by native speakers. We create textbooks and improve foreign language on-line courses, in which we exploit all the potential provided by virtual environment. In 2003-2011 we were dealing with the results of a survey in which our students answered questions concerning the potential and process of language teaching (including the use of on-line courses). The following reactions occurred frequently:

- above all, it is positive to have such opportunities;
- we would like to have even more language courses on different levels;
- one always has to know why he or she should do the exercises and complete tasks, objectives must be explained in a clear and straightforward way;
- also the trend, typical of teaching in travel and tourism specialization, of relevant study materials and textbooks being produced by teachers from the Department of Applied Linguistics positively perceived features thus included:
 - complex, well thought-out basis for teaching 98,8%,
 - formulation of objectives and methodological instructions 97,1%,
 - clearness 78%,
 - terminology in vocabulary 76,7%,

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