TOWARDS A PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING ENGLISH FOR COMMUNICATION AT EU INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The need to prepare European Studies students to work in the sphere of EU integration in general or to function successfully at EU institutions requires paying more attention to their language instruction, and, in particular, to their English language training at university. Since they form a specific discourse community it is justifiable to view this process as a kind of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This particular field of ESP has not been researched extensively and practitioners of teaching English for communication at EU institutions (ECEUI) need to be supported theory- and practice-wise. The paper briefly discusses some of the aspects of the debate on the use of English on a European level and focuses on proposing a pedagogical framework for teaching English for communication at EU institutions (ECEUI). Two of the most important variables in the framework – EU Studies students and their language teachers – are dealt with in greater detail.

Key words: European Studies, multilingualism, English for communication at EU institutions (ECEUI), pedagogical framework

Background

The debate about the role and the future of English in the European Union is not new. On the one hand, it is closely connected to the research into English as a lingua franca on a global scale and on the other, a number of specialists have been investigating the use of this language in a European context. Although the United Kingdom is no longer a EU member, English is still one of the official EU languages, and its mass use in communication on an interpersonal and a professional level (including at EU institutions) is the prerequisite for

conceptualising its usage in Europe. For instance, Modiano contends that it is 'legitimate' to talk about 'Euro English' based on the big number of terms, jargon, newly-coined words which are specifically related to a 'EU culture'. EU politicians and officials using English leads to the fossilisation of certain language structures which are untypical of the variants used by native speakers.[1] Examples of such discourse nativisation are the common noun *euro* or the term *single market*, abbreviations of EU institutions such as *EP* for *European Parliament* or of terms characteristic of the functioning of the EU such as *EMU – Economic and Monetary Union*. Analyses of the language situation in EU member states focused on communication in different spheres have been carried out for several decades now by a number of researchers among whom Berns[2], Jenkins[3]; Jenkins, Modiano, and Seidelhofer[4]; Seidelhoffer[5], Peckham, Kalocsai, Kovacs, and Sherman[6]. In the study on *English in Europe* Berns et. al draw the specific socio-linguistic profile in the EU taking into account the historical context, the spheres of language usage, the role of education, the influence which English exerts on the media, the English proficiency levels, and learners' attitude towards the language. Their argument is that the European context is characterised by linguistic diversity within which English is favoured and is seen as a useful language – part of the linguistic repertoire of many professions. Although committed to the EU multiligualism policy, the tendency for member states' educational systems is to provide opportunities to study English from the beginning of primary school and this tendency is evident in non-formal education as well.[7]

In her analysis of the 'linguistic influence' of the European Union, Stoicheva (2008) also emphasises the multilingual nature of the EU and analyses the origins of the EU language policy. However, she also points out that the only sphere of applying the EU multilingualism policy in its absolute is the documents connected to the work of the decision-making EU institutions, where all documents are translated in all official EU languages, while only two languages are predominantly at an advantage according to the EU institutions internal rules.[8] This is a prerequisite

[1]   Modiano, M. (2001), Linguistic imperialism, cultural integrity, and EIL, *ELT Journal* 55, no. 4: 339/346, p 13.

[2]   Berns, M. (1995), English in the European Union, *English Today*, 43, Vol.11. No.3, 3-11.

[3]   Jenkins, J. (2000), *The phonology of English as an international language: New models, new norms, new goals.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

[4]   Jenkins, J., M. Modiano, Seidelhofer, B. (2001), Euro-English. *English Today,* 68: 13-19.

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[6]   Peckham, D., K. Kalocsai, E. Kovacs, and Sherman, T. (2012). 'English and Multilingualism, or English only in a Multilingual Europe?' In: Studer, P., Werlen, I. (Eds.), *Linguistic Diversity in the European Union: First Findings of LINEE,* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 179-201.

[7]   Berns, M., Claes, M.-T., de bot, K., Evers, R., Hasebrink, U., Huibregetse, I., Truchot, C., van der Wijst, P. (2007), English in Europe. In: Berns, M., de Bot, K., Hasebrink, U. (Eds.), *In the Presence of English: Media and European Youth.* Springer.

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for a multitude of uses of English at EU institutions combined with other languages. Another researcher of the role of English at a European level, Jennifer Jenkins, suggests that in circumstances of social and personal multilingualism such as the ones in the EU the particular position of English should be viewed as 'multilingualism-with-English'[9].

Prompted by the debate about the future of English in the EU after Brexit some years before it actually took place, Modiano speaks about the 'growth in the status of the English language across continental Europe' and predicts that Brexit will actually intensify the processes of English becoming a mass second language'. He attributes this to continental Europe becoming a 'unified multilingual community dependent on English as the medium with the most utility when and where people do not share greater proficiency in other languages.'[10]

Learning English for communication at EU institutions as an academic discipline

English for Communication in EU Institutions (ECEUI) should be regarded as a branch of its own kind within English for Specific Purposes (ESP)[11]. As noted by Tsvetkova[12], the objectives of teaching ECEUI are related to the general objectives of ESP outlined by Basturkmen[13]. First and foremost, ECEUI should reveal the specific use of the language in the target environment. Second, the target competences are developed in their complexity and in line with what students are expected to be able to do using the language (i.e. with respect to developing receptive skills – to understand the importance of EU-specific documents in English – communications, regulations, annual reports, etc.; with respect to developing productive skills – to be able to participate in debates on the issues of a European policy, etc.). Third, the objectives of ECEUI are associated with the enrichment of students' starting knowledge (e.g. knowledge of the types of EU institutions and their competences, of policy-making processes in the EU, of the history of European integration, etc.). Four, the goal of developing learners' strategic competence is an important part of communicative competence within ESP in general and particularly in ECEUI, as it provides the link between the context of the situation and the linguistic knowledge, leading to successful and

[9]   Jenkins, J. (2015), Repositioning English and multilingualism in English as a Lingua Franca, *Englishes in Practice*, 2 (3), 49-85. doi:10.1515/eip-2015-0003.

[10] Modiano, M. (2017), English in a post-Brexit European Union. *World Englishes*, Volume 36, Issue 3/2017, 313-327. DOI: 10.1111/weng.12264.

[11] Цветкова, Н. (2018), *Английски език за комуникация в европейските институции. Теоретико-приложни аспекти.* София: УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“.

[12] Tsvetkova, N. (2019), The potential of language education at the tertiary level to develop intercultural mediators. В Огнянова, Н. (Съст.), *Юбилеен сборник 20 години катедра „Европеистика“*, София: УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“.

[13] Basturkmen, H. (2006), *Ideas and Options in English for Specific Purposes*, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

effective communication. Last but not least, the objective of supporting the development of critical learner awareness is directly related to the need for critical cultural awareness – the fifth element of Byram's[14] intercultural speaker model. Achieving this goal is especially important for ECEUI instruction, as communication in the context of European integration is by nature intercultural and should foster mutual respect and consideration of the cultural specifics of the context, as well as the complex national, cultural and social identities of those who participate in it.

In view of the specifics of teaching English for Communication at EU Institutions (ECEUI) we should highlight the importance of intercultural learning by developing declarative knowledge (conscious comparison and contrast, connecting one's own culture with the culture of the first foreign language and the following languages being studied) and procedural knowledge (promoting awareness and knowledge of the process of mastering understanding of and skills in communicating with / in different cultures). It is not by chance that researchers emphasise the importance of the learner's personality and his / her learning-to-learn skills as well as that of the teacher as someone who can help learners realise the wealth of skills, attitudes and values underlying a language and can foster their self-awareness through an awareness of otherness (Byram, M. 1997[15]; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey 2020[16]; Tsvetkova 2012[17]).

A pedagogical framework for teaching English for communication at EU institutions

The proposed pedagogical framework for teaching English for communication at EU institutions (ECIEU) is based on the existence of clearly formulated European language and education policies, which inevitably influence language policies in EU member states, including Bulgaria. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages[18] and the validated versions of the European Language Portfolio provide both a reference field and practical tools to be used in organising and conducting modern foreign language learning, taking into account the realities of multilingualism and enhanced intercultural communication today. The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education

[14] Byram, M. (1997), Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

[15] Byram, M. (1997), Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

[16] Byram, M., Gribkova, B. and Starkey, H. (2002), *Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching: A Practical introduction for teachers*, Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education, DGIV, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

[17] Цветкова, Н. (2012), Обучението по английски език и междукултурността, *Чуждоезиково обучение/ Foreign Language Teaching*, кн. 3, с. 236-246.

[18] Council of Europe (2001), *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Area are also factors in creating curricula in all disciplines studied at universities. Globalisation processes and the mass use of English as a language of communication in various spheres of interaction, as well as the established language teaching approaches and the leading theories of learning in modern conditions cannot be ignored as well. This is visualised in the diagram below.
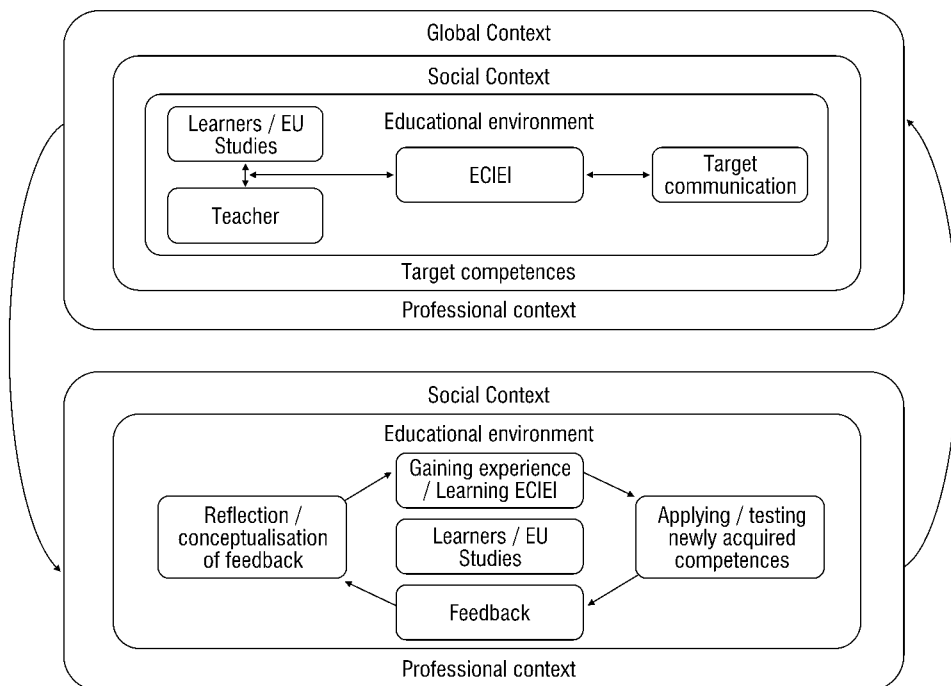

Diagram 1. Pedagogical framework for teaching English for communication at EU institutions (ECEUI)

When it comes to teaching English for communication at EU institutions, four basic questions have to be answered.

- *Why?* – This question focuses on the peculiarities of the specific target and training situation and the principles on which ECEUI training is based.
- *What?* – These are the curriculum, knowledge and skills (description of the language – vocabulary, language structures, styles and registers, target language skills, etc., target areas and contexts of interaction, target professional skills, learning-to-learn skills, etc.).
- *How?* – These are the approaches to and methods of teaching (influenced by accepted theories of learning), the means of teaching, the teaching materials, especially the authentic ones, as well as the learning activities.
- *Who?* – These are the learners (with their entry level language proficiency) and the teachers (with their roles).

In view of the importance of the latter, and of their potential to shape the teaching and learning experience, we shall focus below in more detail on these two 'variables' from the proposed pedagogical framework.

The learners of ECEUI

Who the learners of ECEEUI are is a crucial question which in the field of English for specific purposes is related to a thorough needs analysis. In order to be of help in planning the process of teaching ECEUI, the latter should cover the areas below (based on Dudley-Evans, T. and St John, M. J.[19]).

- The *personal information about learners* provides an opportunity to learn about the factors that would affect the way new knowledge and skills are acquired (among them are their previous language learning experience, number and sequence of languages acquired / learned, their cultural characteristics, their learning expectations, their attitude to English and to foreign languages in general, etc.). Establishing this information can relate to the personal needs of students.

- The *language information about learners* makes it possible to determine their English language skills.

- Establishing *what the learners lack (in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes)* helps to determine their needs in relation to the specific training and how to achieve the objectives of teaching ECEUI.

- Establishing *learners' language needs* gives the opportunity to determine the most effective methods and techniques that will lead to the acquisition of the target language knowledge and skills.

- Analysing the specifics of *communicating in the target situation* determines the parameters of the specific educational content. This analysis is carried out based on linguistic, discourse and genre analysis.

- The *professional information about learners* helps to identify the tasks and activities in which students will use the language in connection with communication at the EU institutions (i.e. this is an analysis of the target situation and the necessary target skills).

- The analysis of the *institutional environment* and the cognitive and broader educational goals formulated in this connection, as well as the forms and means of education related to it, also have a direct influence on the preparation and course of the overall process of learning and teaching ECEUI.

Therefore, the aim is to understand as much as possible about learners, their personalities, and their features as language learners. It is necessary to identify the ways that will effectively facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills in the specific learning environment.

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[19] Dudley-Evans, T. and St John, M. J. (1998), *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [14th printing 2011], p. 125.

Such a needs analysis is not static or absolute. Each of the listed parameters can change thus leading to the need for adjustment in the planned curriculum, the selected study content or the progression of the language material. Whether it is a change in social and historical processes, a change in educational policies at a European, national or institutional level, or in the interests and linguistic experience of a group of students, the needs analysis should rather correspond to such changes. The analysis can serve as a basis for the initial preparation of the learning process, and it can also be used in the course of teaching ECEUI in the event of updating or revision of the relevant curricula (Dudley-Evans, T. and St John, M. J. (1998: 113-116)[20] ; Basturkmen (2010: 17-29)[21].

A number of tools have been identified as adequate in analysing learners' needs. Some studies indicate the appropriateness of using elements from the CEFR descriptors or of self-assessment (including self-assessment based on European Language Portfolio) (see van Avermaet, P., & Gysen, S. 2009[22]; Bocanegra-Valle 2015[23], etc.).

In Bulgaria, teaching ECEUI is carried out within the field of Political Science and is usually part of the training in specialties such as International Relations and European Studies. When developing curricula, both the analysis of the target communication and the analysis of the learners' needs are taken into account, in view of their successful professional realisation.

At Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski', teaching ECEUI takes place within the European Studies specialty, which is part of the specialties offered by the Faculty of Philosophy. After taking an entrance exam in a foreign language (English, French, German or Spanish), students must study one of the other three languages as a second foreign language in the course of four semesters. They also have the opportunity to choose to study a third foreign language and the choice of languages includes Russian as well. Unlike the students of political science at the University of National and World Economy, who are expected to reach the C1 level for the first foreign language studied and B2 - for the second (Stefanova, 2016)[24] upon completion of their language training, the students of European Studies at Sofia University are expected to reach proficiency in the second foreign language equal to that of the first, and after the second year of

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[20] Dudley-Evans, T. and St John, M. J. (1998), *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [14th printing 2011], pp. 113-116.

[21] Basturkmen, H. (2010), *Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes*. Palgrave McMillan, pp. 17-29.

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study those who have studied a language as a first and those who have studied it as a second, together start on a language training oriented towards higher levels of specialisation.

The teachers of ECEUI

The teacher is an important 'element' of the pedagogical framework for teaching English for communication at the EU institutions. Foreign language teaching literature traditionally discusses the roles a foreign language teacher assumes, and for a long time now these roles have not been limited to providing information, organising the learning process and evaluating learning outcomes. Whether it is secondary or higher education, the teacher is an important figure and influences educational processes in a variety of ways. In view of ECEUI, we shall summarise these roles, referring to a typology based on EFL methodology, the rethinking of English as a global language for international communication and the roles most often mentioned by ESP specialists.

- *Advisor* – guides the learners in their choice of information sources, in their comparison and critical evaluation of the new knowledge in terms of relevance, reliability and quality and in organisating these in easy and accessible formats.

- *Facilitator* – supports students in implementing tasks independently, in arranging and controlling knowledge, in outlining problem areas and in choosing strategies to overcome the difficulties they encounter.

- *Generator of activities and tasks* – creates a sequence of activities and tasks, through the implementation of which, learners develop their cognitive and language skills, their communication skills in the specific target environment, their logical thinking and critical reconsideration of the provided information.

- *Communicative partner* – participates on an equal footing with his/her students in discussions and debates and at the same time provides a benchmark for communicatively relevant models and successful socio-pragmatic or compensatory strategies for overcoming linguistic and cultural differences in the context of intercultural communication.

- *Ethnographer* – offers knowledge of the means by which cultural and social characteristics are indexed in speech and help to develop a certain identity, and encourages learners to search, compare, collect and process ethnographic data on linguistic and cultural differences between English users in the EU context.

- *Motivator* – encourages students to seek original solutions to the tasks they work on, appreciates everyone's contribution in their collective efforts to deal with communication problems; shows understanding when it is difficult for them and maintains learners' interest in the use of English for communication in the context of a united Europe.

- *Organiser* – organises, directs and controls the joint work of the class / group and provides a good working atmosphere for all participants with respect for and esteem of their individual characteristics.

- *Curriculum author and material selector* – plans and implements the curriculum, making the necessary adjustments when required by the analysis of specific learners' needs; selects and combines learning materials that best meet the learning objectives and the learners' needs; adapts existing teaching or authentic materials and, if necessary, creates such.

- *Researcher* – despite the ever-increasing research related to ESP, conducts his/her own research not only in connection with the students' needs, but also with the specifics of the discourse in the field of the use of English for communication at EU institutions.

- *Evaluator* – evaluates learners' needs; evaluates the adequacy of the curriculum and the selected methods and means of teaching, creates or adapts existing tools for assessment of students' achievements related to the acquired language knowledge and skills, as well as their intercultural competence; conducts assessment during and at the end of the training course (Georgieva, 2012[25]; Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998[26]).

Conclusion

Professional practices are currently changing more intensively than ever, and this holds true for the sphere of functioning and communicating at EU institutions as well. That is why, to stay abreast with such transformations and to be able to provide adequate training in ECEUI, it is necessary to consider a complex multi-aspect pedagogical framework. The latter will allow ECEUI theorists and practitioners to manage effective teaching and learning of English for communication at the EU institutions as part of an educational continuum which does not begin or end with higher education and in which language education occupies a prominent part.

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