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## Peculiarities of Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Technical Students

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### Abstract

Research stresses out that teaching English in technical universities has specific features in terms of vocabulary, grammar and developed skills. The purpose of this paper is to outline the three-stage model of teaching English to technical students. As the curriculum presupposes studying English for both general and special purposes, as well as mastering skills essential for corresponding professional communication sphere, it influences the content of the studied material and the structure of the academic process. The description of the highlighted stages enables specialists to apply the results for experimental purposes.

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*Keywords:* linguistic competence; language skills; language for general purposes; language for special purposes; professional communication

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### 1. Introduction

Nowadays the communicative competence is a dominating target of teaching a foreign language. The English language performs the function of communication, education and self-education, being an instrument of collaboration and interaction in modern society. The vast majority of students are interested in the practical use of language not only as a means of introduction to the world culture, but also as an efficient and necessary tool for becoming competent in the labour market. In modern business environment, ambitious employees are expected to possess professional skills to be able to compete internationally. Consequently, the university education should train the students capable of working in the real circumstances of professional environment. This is exposed on their

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language skills even if their future profession is not directly connected with linguistics, translation, or teaching foreign languages.

### *1.1. Literature review*

Authors have different approaches to the solution of the problem of teaching English in technical universities. One of the methods is creation of the interdisciplinary curricula conception which is based on the profession-oriented model of sociocultural formation of personality (Slesarenko, 2007). Communicative competence, intercultural competence, professional competence, professional communication, communication at a workplace, and professional language are highlighted as the components of the English teaching process (Frolova & Aleshchanova, 2013). Modular training is worked out for teaching students to analyse information, make creative decisions and form a high level of cultural competence (Dulepova, 2013). There exist efforts in creation and use of universal multimedia textbooks for studying language for special purposes (Osadchaya, 2012). The question how to improve the quality of foreign language teaching by means of mass communication, namely the Internet, is also regarded in papers on education (Molchanova, 2011). Nevertheless, communicative competence is regarded as the main aim of learning a foreign language.

The structure of the communicative competence has been described in a wide range of publications. For example, L.V. Sukhova distinguishes the following components:

- 1) language competence including the knowledge of vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar rules;
- 2) sociolinguistic competence, which is the ability to react appropriately in different cultural and social situations choosing and applying adequate language forms and means depending on the aim of communication, type of communicative situations, and the social roles of participants;
- 3) discourse competence, which is the ability to understand the utterances of different communicative types, make up linked and logical sentences in different functional styles;
- 4) strategic competence including being aware of verbal and nonverbal means or strategies which can be applied if the communicative task is not achieved;
- 5) sociocultural competence includes the knowledge of the cultural peculiarities of native speakers, their customs, traditions, norms of behavior and etiquette and the ability to understand and adequately use them in the process of communication being the representative of a different culture;
- 6) social competence is an ability and desire to interact with people and self-confidence in communication (Sukhova, 2007).

## **2. Assumptions**

The foreign language is an obligatory subject in all the universities. The curriculum is based on knowledge and skills obtained by students at schools. By the end of their study technical students must possess the skills of everyday communication, understand monological and dialogical speech on general and cultural topics; know the rules of grammar and be able to use basic grammatical phenomena, typical of everyday oral and written communication, know essential vocabulary used in everyday and professional communication; read and understand literature on general and special topics using a dictionary; master the skills of oral speech; make prepared reports; take part in discussions on general, cultural and scientific topics; master basic writing skills for everyday and professional correspondence; master basic skills of abstracting and translating literature on general and special topics.

The first challenge which faces a teacher of English at university is the fact that an academic group includes students demonstrating different levels of language skills. Groups may comprise beginners, intermediate and advanced learners. Formation of groups in accordance with the students' language skills is not always possible. This requires using the individual approach and graded language, especially in the beginning. Nevertheless, textbooks and final assessment materials are equal for everyone. Besides, teaching English to technical students presupposes teaching not only the language for general purposes (LGP), but also the language for special purposes (LSP). Learning terms requires background knowledge from both students and English teachers. However, as the foreign language is always studied during the first or the first two years at universities, most students are not familiar with

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