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Development of the Multilingual Competence as a Competitive Advantage in the International Labour Market

The article substantiates the necessity of introducing the new component of the professional competence called multilingual one into the pedagogical practices of the technical university, since the activities of the engineers-to-be are inextricably connected with the understanding of the national-cultural context of the partner countries, as well as the specifics of the international professional cooperation in the field of power engineering. The author combines the concept of multilingualism with the unique position of English and tries to harmonize this co-existence in the trilingual experimental workbook «Multilingual Guide to the English Speaking World», which changes the traditional approach to the study of foreign languages by implementing simultaneous multilingual immersion into English, German and French. The author emphasizes that the way towards multilingual education in Russian non-linguistic higher school becomes possible only with implementing the innovative tutorials as well as with introducing new pedagogical and linguistic methods which can develop intercultural multilingual skills, making Russian engineers sought-after in the international labour market.

Keywords: multilingual competence, multilingual education, multiculturalism, international professional communication, labour market.

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Мультилингвальная компетенция как конкурентное преимущество на международном рынке труда

В статье обосновывается необходимость внедрения в педагогическую практику технического вуза новой по своему содержанию компетенции, названной мультилингвальной (многоязыковой), которая является важной составляющей профессиональной компетентности будущего инженера-энергетика, чья деятельность неразрывно связана с пониманием национально-культурного контекста стран-партнеров, а также специфики международного сотрудничества в области энергетики. Автор сочетает концепт «мультилингвизм» с привилегированным положением английского языка и делает попытку гармонизировать такое сосуществование в триязычном экспериментальном учебном пособии «Многоязычный проводник в англоязычный мир», которое меняет традиционное представление об изучении иностранных языков посредством внедрения одновременного мультилингвального погружения в английский, немецкий и французский языки. Автор подчеркивает, что процесс мультилингвализации высшей профессиональной школы возможен только при условии введения инновационных учебно-методических пособий и внедрения новых образовательных технологий, которые развивали бы у российских специалистов навыки межкультурной многоязычной коммуникации и, таким образом, делали наших инженеров востребованными на международном рынке труда.

Ключевые слова: мультилингвальная компетенция, мультилингвальное обучение, мультикультурность, международная профессиональная коммуникация, рынок труда.

Introduction. In today's globalized world, English has started to perform the function of a universal language for international communication – *Lingua Franca*, but this is not its only purpose. Presenting a complex unity of traits and borrowings from other Indo-European languages, the XXI century English performs a new mission of a «mediator language» [10], helping people to learn related languages, which, in turn, appear to be a reflection of different world cultures.

Thus, the knowledge of the English language makes it possible to use it for universal communication, and also «serves as a basis for the development of bilingualism, multilingualism and multicultural-

ism of a modern person living in the world community» [2].

The Aim of Research. In many Russian universities English is the basic, «dominant» language, as the learners speak it better than other studied languages. According to N. V. Baryshnikov and M. A. Bodonya, the dominant language «establishes a hierarchical relationship with other languages being learned and makes the construction of multilingual dynamic model which provides the parallel emergence of the autonomous languages on the basis of the first foreign language» [1]. The first foreign language, thus, affects the formation of the ability to adapt to the system of each new foreign language:

there comes «the adaptation of psycholinguistic system by mastering a foreign language, which simultaneously improves the ability to learn the language as such» (Ibid.).

To show and prove to the students how surprisingly much they already know in a new, unfamiliar language, it's necessary to activate the existing but not yet relevant students' knowledge. The search and discovery of «the familiar in the strange» [3] can be grounded on two linguistic bases: the relation of the languages and the internationalisms (lexical units widely used in various areas of modern life as well as in special languages). This language relationship plays a major role, as it allows to discover the familiar at the linguistic and cultural levels [4].

The present study proposes to consider the possibility of simultaneous training of the three related Indo-European languages: English, German and French as the most significant in the EU and the top foreign languages studied within the Russian schools and universities.

Theoretical Background. It should be noted that Indo-European languages represent one of the largest families of Eurasian languages, spread over the last five centuries also in North and South America, Australia and part of Africa. Indo-European languages are the first language family, postulated as a special form of language association by genetic links. More than 2.5 billion people – that is about half the world's population – speak Indo-European languages.

All the languages of modern Europe belong to this language family, with the exception of Basque, Hungarian, and Sami, Finnish, Estonian and Turkish, as well as several of the Altai and Ural languages of the European part of Russia.

The common features of Indo-European languages, contrasting them with the languages of other families, are reduced to the presence of a number of correspondences between the formal language elements indicative of the general Indo-European protolanguage, or a basis language whose speakers supposedly lived about 8–10 thousand years ago.

It should also be clarified that the Lingua Franca (Italian: Frankish language) is the name of a certain language form based on the vocabulary of French, Provençal and Italian, which appeared for the negotiations of Arab and Turkish merchants with the Europeans, and existed until the XIX century. In modern interpretation this sociolinguistic term is often used to refer to one of the several existing types, the so-called contact languages, used for interethnic communication. English as a lingua franca is a rela-

tively recent phenomenon, which appeared in the second half of the XX century, at the end of World War II, before the start of which the French language, which replaced Latin, had long served as *lingua franca* [11].

It is estimated that today more than 400 million people speak English as their mother tongue and almost the same number uses it as an official or second language. In other words, the majority of the world's population is divided into those for whom English is native, those who are free to express themselves in it, and those who write (type) and understand basic English, which is explained by the need to work with the Internet.

Nowadays the vocabulary of the English language is the richest one in the world, mainly due to the great number of borrowings. The Dictionary of Contemporary English contains half the Germanic (Old English and Scandinavian) language and half the Romance (French, Latin, Italian and Spanish) borrowings, with the extensive use of Greek vocabulary (ancient Greek, Byzantine and Modern Greek) and other languages (<http://www.lexicons.ru/modern/a/english/>). According to another source, the modern English language contains almost 2/3 of the root words of German and French origin (represented in roughly equal proportions), 20 % of the Latin and 3 % of Greek (<http://www.perevedem.ru>).

Discussion. Despite the close relationship of the English language with many Indo-European languages and its obvious advantages, it is worth mentioning that in the XXI century, the knowledge of it is no longer considered an advantage but a crying need. For example, selecting among the applicants for a reputable vacancy, the demanding employers are more willing to give priority to those of them who speak not one, but several foreign languages. In this regard, the students' choice of languages to study depends largely not on a fashion, but on a sphere the future specialist is planning to work in, the region he lives or intends to live in, as well as the personal language preferences of the student [8].

In other words, the formation of the foreign language competence of technical students requires a strong motivation, moral and emotional spirit combined with cognitive activity, as well as the innovative educational materials that can meet the modern student's desire for new stimuli and challenges, for example, for travelling and studying more and more foreign languages and cultures. Therefore, the training materials aimed at XXI century engineers-to-be must certainly be solid, cohesive, informative and

demonstrative, and, of course, extraordinary [9].

Unfortunately, we have to state that nowadays the multicultural education program at a technical university is not provided with regulatory and methodological support: the quality courses for learning second and third languages are not developed; there are no corresponding multi-lingual tutorials which can solve the problem of cross-language switching; organizational questions about the amount of teaching hours required for this discipline are not resolved.

In such circumstances, the multilingual tutor has to solve not only the tactical problems of training, but also the strategic ones: to determine the content of training, choose the textbooks, adapt the existing teaching materials, create new training materials, etc. In most cases, the tutors don't have enough skill, make their decisions intuitively, because they are not fully aware of the psycholinguistic peculiarities of mastering the second and the third foreign languages, as well as of the possibility of accelerating the process of multilingual student training. Thus, there arises another pressing need – to include a special course on the formation of pedagogical skills of multilingual education into the training of the future language teachers. This course should contain the questions of the effective use of the educational technologies and methodological complexes necessary to form a multilingual competence.

Innovative Approach. In order to introduce a mediation function of the English language, as well as to install the multilingual competence development in the teaching process a new experimental multilingual tutorial «Multilingual Guide to the English Speaking World» was created. Designed in three languages this tutorial is based, firstly, on the principle of language contrast, about which the famous Russian multilingual linguist V. R. Melnikov wrote: «the learning of two or more languages simultaneously may be quite effective <...>. Apparently, there appears a synergism of action – when the maximum result is achieved by the collective participation of the contrasts» [5]. Secondly, it is based on the conclusions of N. V. Evdokimova [3] about «the possibility and necessity to form in the conditions of a non-linguistic university such a multilingualism, which is based not on a consequent or parallel study of several foreign languages, but on the multi-language competence of the students.» Thirdly, «Multilingual Guide to the English Speaking World» considers the basic Y. R. Khaydarov's postulates of simultaneous teaching methods of multiple languages [12], which are based on the genetic relationship of the taught languages and their comparison.

The trilingual «Multilingual Guide to the English Speaking World» [6] tutorial is aimed at solving a whole range of educational tasks: acquainting the students with the cultural characteristics and political systems of the English-speaking countries; using the English language as a mediator for switching to the second and third languages (German and French); expanding the linguistic and country study horizons; building an effective model of teaching the chosen foreign languages; consolidating the ability to apply modern technologies of simultaneous learning of several foreign languages.

Part I of the «Multilingual Guide to the English Speaking World» tutorial is based on the materials of «Learn More About the English Speaking World» [7] manual and is represented in the mediator language – English (FL1) as a support for the transition to a related German language (FL2), and then to the third language (FL3) – French.

Thus, the first part of the mentioned tutorial includes:

1. Information about the five English-speaking countries: the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Unit A).
2. Diagnostic tests based on visual support (Unit B).
3. Informative and entertaining tasks (Unit C).
4. Additional linguistic and country study materials (Unit D): historical information about the English-speaking countries studied; information about the royal family, Windsor dynasty; lists of the United Kingdom Prime Ministers; gallery of the Presidents of the United States of America and brief biographical sketches about them; political and state leaders of Canada, Australia and New Zealand with brief remarks about their activities; information on the composition of US states and their informal names; geographical maps of five English-speaking countries;
5. Lexical and phonetic glossary.
6. Keys for self-verification.
7. Book references.
8. Information about the author.
9. Recommended publications on multilingual education.

The tutorial is based on a model of shifting to the second and third foreign language by studying the linguistic and sociocultural features of the mediator country in the circumstances of the artificial multilingualism teaching situation.

The novelty of this tutorial is in the introduction of the new system of simultaneous multilingual

studying of the English-speaking world realities, based on the possibility of linguistic mediation as a special kind of interactive activity, that allows students to develop a mediation competence of transferring the semantic contents of the texts from one language to the other, taking into account the sociocultural features of the recipient.

Describing the psycholinguistic features of today's students, there was noted among them a tendency for developing multiculturalism and abilities of extraordinary thinking, particularly for the generation brought up outside the information boundaries of the globalized world community. Therefore, an introduction of the multicultural education into the non-linguistic universities, in particular, is possible by means of the simultaneous training of several languages and also through analyzing the specific country study situation, i.e. using our proposed innovative methods of building a multilingual educational model.

The harmonious transition from English to German in Part II, and then to French in Part III does not violate the principles of learning a second and third foreign language in the context of communicative and cognitive approach – the leading contemporary trends in teaching foreign languages. The contents of the second and third parts of the tutorial repeat the contents of the first part, given in the mediator language, however, it is not a simple translation into German and French. It appears to be as German and French linguocultural reflection through the prism of English-speaking realities. Thus, we can easily refer to a particular language part of the course for a simultaneous training of multilingual students. For example, after studying the materials in English, students can be offered a quiz in German, while the informative and entertaining tasks can be fulfilled in French, and guessed terms of the crossword puzzles and other gaming quizzes can be written in English.

It is also possible to carry out tasks in reverse order, at the request of both teachers and students, smartly «juggling» the transitions, i. e., language switching, noticing the linguocultural similarities and differences of the languages involved in the training, as well as studying the language blunders and intercultural traps.

The lexical and phonetic glossary gives the students an opportunity to learn or verify the correct pronunciation and meaning of the complex concepts, geographical and personal names, which, of course, is of great help in the formation of the students' multilingual competence.

Conclusions. Thus, «Multilingual Guide to the English Speaking World» performs several functions: improves the communicative competence; develops the mediation competence; forms the linguistic and country study competence and sociocultural literacy of the students; develops the understanding of the tolerance principles and students' awareness of themselves as a part of a multicultural society; improves the ability of critical thinking; forms the students' sustained functional multilingualism.

A distinctive feature of the offered tutorials consists in testing their principles within the framework of the large-scale interactive activities carried out within the five years of studies at Ivanovo State Power Engineering University (Ivanovo, Russia). Moreover, some of the development stages of the tutorial parts have been demonstrated in the form of master classes at the Russian and international conferences in recent years (2013–2016).

It leads us to the final conclusion that the integration of this new generation trilingual tutorial into the model of the introduced methodical system for the future experts' multicultural competence formation can greatly improve its efficiency and provide the training of the necessary contingent of qualified specialists for different spheres of society, including power engineering.

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