

FIVE EASY STEPS TO SUCCESSFULLY TEACH YOUR UNIVERSITY COURSE IN ENGLISH

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Abstract

Why to teach your course in English? How to teach your course in English? The authors of this paper have made an attempt to give answers to these important and relevant questions related to current challenges in constantly changing educational settings. To answer the first question is not a big deal. It is common knowledge that the English language performs the role of the global language of communication; this is why English assumes the responsibility to be tool #1 in multicultural and multilingual learning environments. To find the answer to the second question takes more time and effort. The purpose of this study is to substantiate the importance of working out a general strategy for teaching a university course in the English language. The leading research methods used by the authors are a theoretical analysis of scientific literature, a content analysis of pedagogical literature, and modeling. Drawing on literature of teaching EFL (English as a foreign language) / ESP (English for specific purposes), multicultural studies, as well as personal international teaching and learning experience, the authors examine the specificity of teaching courses in the foreign (English) language to university students and present the universal teaching model which may allow modeling any theoretical university course. The offered teaching model may include the development of training and test exercises aimed at facilitating specific academic vocabulary for the formation of students' language proficiency in their majors.

The teaching model "Take five steps to successfully teach your course in English", easy for being implemented into the educational process at university, consists of five steps:

Step 1. Compile a glossary of terms on the topic you plan to present. The glossary should not contain more than 10 terms on each topic.

Step 2. Explain/ translate if necessary into students' L1 (Language 1) all the terms included into the glossary. You can use any dictionary with definitions and/ or a bilingual dictionary.

Step 3. Make a clear outline of the topic you intend to present. This step presupposes drafting a lecture plan with all the items and sub-items you are going to talk about.

Step 4. Prepare an accurate presentation.

Step 5. Equip your students with a handout, which is a printed PowerPoint presentation. It is an easy step to take.

The model may include an intermediate stage between Step 2 and Step 3, at which academic vocabulary, namely terms and collocations, can be trained and tested.

The practical output of the research consists in the compilation of a bilingual glossary of academic terms in the English-Russian languages which can be utilized by university teachers and students. A set of training and test exercises is also presented. The paper discusses issues and practices of the studied model and offers general recommendations for university faculty.

Keywords: Course drafting, facilitating academic vocabulary, modeling theoretical courses, specificity of teaching courses in English, training and test exercises.

1 INTRODUCTION

The article highlights current issues, the solution of which may meet the challenges the changing educational environments face up to. The expansion of international contacts, the increasing influx of foreign students dictate new conditions and pose difficult tasks for national education, which must be promptly addressed. One of these tasks is the teaching of theoretical courses in a foreign language.

In this study, the authors propose a general strategy for teaching theoretical courses in a foreign language and offer a universal model that allows designing a theoretical course and conducting it in a foreign language that can be easily integrated into the educational process. The algorithm consists of five steps and is as follows:

Step 1. Compile a glossary of terms on the topic you are going to present. The glossary should not contain more than 10 terms on each topic.

Step 2. Explain/ translate if necessary into students' L1 (Language 1), all the terms included into the glossary. You can use any dictionary with definitions and/ or a bilingual dictionary.

Step 3. Make a clear outline of the topic you are going to present. This step presupposes drafting a lecture plan with all the items and sub-items you are going to talk about.

Step 4. Prepare an accurate presentation whose content should correspond exactly to that in the instructor lecture plan.

Step 5. Equip your students with the handouts. The handout is a printed PowerPoint presentation which is an easy step to take.

The algorithm may include Step 2², at which academic vocabulary, namely terms and collocations, can be trained and tested.

The research methods in this study were pedagogical sources' analysis and designing theoretical courses in the English language.

The practical significance of the study lies in:

- the compilation of a bilingual glossary of academic terms in the English and Russian languages, which can be incorporated into the educational process,
- the development of a set of training and test tasks,
- the elaboration of guidelines for university faculty to compile theoretical courses in the English language.

In this paper, the answers to the questions "Why to teach your course in English?" and "How to teach your course in English to non-native students?" have been found, which can encourage university faculty to design models of teaching their own courses in the English language fitting with the curriculum and learning environments.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Goals and research methods

The main goals the authors set in this study were to prove that the offered algorithm of designing a theoretical course and conducting it in the English language can:

- be easily integrated into the educational process
- significantly increase students' knowledge in the fields of the major subject and English and, in this way, develop MA students' professional competence in a meaningful way.

The leading research method was modeling which allowed designing theoretical courses in the English language. Other methods the authors utilized in this study were the brief review of literature on the topic of investigation, and the approbation of the above algorithm of designing a theoretical course in English. For that MA students who take ESP (English for Specific Purposes) class were offered to create a short course in the English language on the subject they are specifically interested in.

2.2 Research questions

How to design a theoretical course in the English language?

How far can this teaching model be effective?

2.3 Research Site

Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University (Russian Federation).

2.4. Research participants

In this research 34 MA students of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University took part.

2.5 Methodical recommendations

Teaching a new class is always a daunting prospect, even for the most experienced teachers. As you try to control your own nerves, it is easy to forget that your students may be just as nervous to create their courses and implement them in front of the class. Therefore we studied some sources on the investigated topic so that to prepare methodical recommendations for designing courses in the English

language. The very first prompt is well described on the web-site [1], which recommends the course developers to build their confidence in order to use English effectively to teach their subject, which, in our opinion, sounds inspiring and motivating. Another piece of advice is given by Morgan [2], who declares that a course developer should prepare to teach a course by determining its learning objectives, developing a syllabus, and making lesson plans. A great number of Russian and foreign scholars ([3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19]) devote their researches to CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach in education. They all focus on integration, inclusion, language awareness, impact of language learning and CLIL as an educational approach. These works allowed us to make out one more recommendation: a course developer needs to adapt his teaching methodology to cater for the integrated learning of both content and language.

2.6 Procedure

MA students' work was organized in the step-by-step way. They were to adhere to the following work plan:

1. Find the social sphere you are specifically interested in. Explain why and how you have got interested in it.

This was classroom activity.

2. Design a draft of the named course on the base of the algorithm. Follow all the instructions how to design a course in the English language. Consult with your professor during his/ her office hours.

This was home assignment.

3. Act out any part of the course in front of the class. Pretend you are a lecturer/ or a classroom teacher.

This was classroom activity.

3 RESULTS

While being instructed, students underwent two pathways: one focusing on TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), and one focusing on ESP (English for specific purposes).

Only two students focused on TESOL and presented two 4 week short courses:

1. Teaching folklore through idioms.

2. Teaching to read American and British classics in the English classroom.

32 students presented 6 week short courses focusing their attention on ESP, among them:

1. English for law students

2. English for hair dressers

3. English for IT professionals

4. English for medical workers

5. English for pilots and flight attendants

6. English for journalists

7. English for engineers

8. English for agricultural workers

9. English for marketing managers and experts

10. English for navigators

11. English for ESP teachers

12. English for guides.

13. English for travelers, etc.

Sample "English for Art Teachers" course

Course description

The course suggests that students develop an understanding of the visual arts and explore their artistic creativity. In this wide-ranging course, each student will take a tour of the art world exploring art pieces and decoding their social or political purpose. In each activity, students will study art themes and create own art pieces to deepen the understanding of the course topics.

Learning Objectives

English for Art Teachers course aims at learning:

- historical and social purposes of art (e.g. religious ceremonies and rituals, storytelling, data recording, etc.)

English for Art Teachers course aims at identifying:

- basic visual elements that form aesthetic experiences
- fundamental composition and visual communication techniques
- historical and current uses of art as protest, propaganda, and commentary
- relationship between fine art, visual art, applied art, and performance art as components of art

English for Art Teachers course aims at creating:

- art work exploring compositional techniques, artistic purposes, and multiple disciplines
- portfolio with all completed art works

Course content

1. The beginning of art. Early Civilizations: China, India, Europe, Egypt
2. Art of Africa, Oceania and Australia, America
3. Arts of Asia. Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist art and architecture
4. Early arts of Europe. The Western Classical Ideal
5. Modern art of the 19th/ 20th century
6. Global diversity: Contemporary art forms of the Information age

Teaching methods and tools

1. Lecture
2. Group discussion
3. Audio-visual, artifact, slide presentations
4. Art demonstrations

Assignments and exams

1. Weekly assigned readings

Students will be given articles about different artists, art styles and techniques within the current learning unit.

2. Research paper

Students will be given a range of different topics on the current learning unit.

3. Small art projects

Students will complete individual and group art projects within the current learning unit.

4. Exams

Students will have midterm and final exams.

Grading

Students' final grade will be evaluated on the basis of performance in the following:

Class Participation and Attendance - 15 points

Weekly assigned readings - 10 points

Small art projects - 10 points

Research paper - 20 points

Midterm Exam - 10 points

Final Exam - 20 points

Portfolio - 15 points

Attendance and Participation Policy

Class presence and participation points are given to encourage students' active class participation and discussion. Students will be rewarded with a perfect score as long as they frequently come to class and actively contribute to the class discussion during recitations and lectures. Class participation is a very important part of the learning process in this course. Students will be evaluated on the QUALITY of their contributions and insights. Quality comments possess one or more of the following properties:

- offers a different and unique, but relevant, perspective
- contributes to moving the discussion and analysis forward
- builds on other comments
- transcends the "I feel" syndrome.

Quality comments include some evidence, argumentation, or recognition of inherent tradeoffs, in other words, demonstrate reflective thinking.

Sample Unit 1: The Art of Egypt

Lesson 1: King-Tut-anhk-Amen's Burial Mask

Length: 90 minutes

Level intended: Upper-intermediate

Summary: Students will learn about Egyptian culture and society, King Tut-anhk-Amen and his death, and they will create a burial mask. The lesson will increase students' vocabulary in specific areas of social life and help them to be in the mainstream of the discursive topic.

Performance Objectives:

- Given the resources needed, students read the articles discussing the importance of King Tut-anhk-Amen. The following questions are suggested:
 1. Reasons of his fame and for his death.
 2. The archaeological discovery of his tomb.
- The students gain knowledge of the duties and services brought forth by a king/ pharaoh.
- The students relate the duties and services of a king/ pharaoh to the system of current government and how our experiences are different.
- Given a worksheet, students complete a word search after defining vocabulary words dealing with Egyptian culture, e.g. Hieroglyphics, tomb, pharaoh, etc.
- Given the example of how to write hieroglyphics, students will determine how to write their own names and three hobbies.
- Using knowledge of Ancient Egyptian culture, students will draw their own design of a burial mask for King Tut-anhk-Amen.
- Given metallic paints, students will paint the burial mask and add features, such as shapes, lines, and facial objects.

Glossary:

Amulet - small token, for example, a hieroglyphic symbol or figurine of a God that is believed to provide magical protection or another kind of benefit to its wearer.

Amun - God of Thebes, "the hidden one" shown in human form with a tall crown of feathers.

Sacred animals are the ram and the goose.

Ankh - hieroglyphic sign meaning "life" and "to live".

Blue crown - khepresh, a helmet-shaped crown frequently worn by kings from the New Kingdom, usually colored blue.

Cartouche - oval frame (meant to indicate a tied rope) in which the birth and throne names of the king are written.

Demotic - cursive form of hieroglyphic writing developed in the seventh century B.C., written from right to left.

Harakhty - "Horus of the horizon," the God of the rising sun, depicted as a falcon or a falcon-headed human crowned by a sun disk.

Heh - God of millions of years, of eternity.

Ka - life force; the hieroglyphic sign is a pair of extended arms.

Mastaba - type of Egyptian tomb having a rectangular superstructure with exterior walls slightly slanting inward as they rise; contains chapels, chambers, and a shaft leading to an underground burial.

Myrrh - fragrant aromatic plant gum used in making perfume, unguents, and incense.

Nephthys - sister of Isis, protector of coffins and canopic jars.

Papyrus - writing surface of Egyptian scribes, made from the pith of papyrus stalks separated into strips that were flattened and placed side by side, slightly overlapping, etc.

Equipment list:

As a visual art student you should know that there is a high level of manual practice required in creating paintings, drawings, and models. Getting a decent set of tools will make this both easier and more accurate. Over the course you will probably collect masses of material and tools, but as a start the list below should be the one to begin with.

1. A4/ A3 cartridge sketchpad with removable pages (minimum of 80gsm)
2. A1 cartridge paper

3. A1/ A2/ A3 layout paper/Tracing Paper/ Butter Paper rolls
4. 0.5 Automatic pencil
5. Selection of traditional pencils 2B-6B for shading work and loose design development
6. Plastic eraser
7. Eraser shield (really useful!)
8. Masking tape (for securing paper to drawing boards/ table)
9. Watercolor paints set
10. Gouache paints set
11. Acrylic paints set
12. Oil paints set
13. Different thickness paintbrushes
14. Colored pencils set
15. Crayons set
16. Tape measure
17. Scalpel or craft knife
18. Lockable tool box
19. UHU or cheap superglue
20. Dress makers pins for putting up work.

4 SUMMARY

In this paper, two research questions were considered:

- How to design a theoretical course in the English language?
- How far can this teaching model be effective?

To answer these questions, the authors designed and then approbated the model "Take five steps to successfully teach your course in English". The approbation took place in ESP class: MA students were asked to draft a course in the English language on the topic within their areas of expertise. The following requisites were suggested to be taken into consideration before and while designing the course:

- 1) Courses should deliver content in a straightforward and easily understood format so that you can reach a large number of people very quickly and provide a lot of transformations.
- 2) Once you create your course, you can repurpose and reformat your course for as long as you'd like.
- 3) You need to define your goals and learner personas.
- 4) You must know how to engage your target learners.
- 5) You should think over the most effective teaching methods for delivering each class.

After reading up on the theory, every student managed to succeed in designing their specific course. Thus, the approbation of the model "Take five steps to successfully teach your course in English" proved itself to be reproducible and efficient.

5 CONCLUSIONS

It is common knowledge that experimenting in the learning process should be staged and justified. In this study, the authors made an attempt to describe and then empirically prove the viability and plausibility of their experiment on the utilizing of the copyright teaching model which presents a step-to-step algorithm of designing a theoretical course in the English language. The detailed 5-stepped model proved itself to be feasible in the experiment undertaken by the researchers. MA students, approbating this model, designed well-framed short courses focused on TESOL and ESP issues. These activities built their confidence:

- to use English effectively to teach different subjects
- to facilitate academic vocabulary
- to learn specificity of teaching a course in English
- to spotlight the most preferable ways of teaching and lesson planning.

All this together contributed to the formation of their skill to teach their subject professionally and successfully in the English language.

The findings of this study can be recommended for university teachers to be applied at any level of students' English proficiency.

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