

**DEVELOPING ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPETENCE
IN UKRAINE FOR A NEW ERA**

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Introduction – English in Ukraine Today

This very short paper is a partial precis of a presentation to the conference which raises some ideas and issues to provoke discussion and stimulate further ideas for sustainable development. We start with three strategic level questions: What has been the point of teaching so much English in Ukraine over the last 25 years? Have the learning and teaching arrangements evolved suitably? Are the teaching arrangements the most effective way for 2024 and beyond? The general point of the last 25 years has been for Ukrainians to be able to communicate evermore in the international environment of the changed context from 1990. That change has been both technological and political. The change has an internal character: so much internet-related activity has become English-based that it touches a lot of most people's lives, be that communicating, shopping, trading, or technical and IT aspects. The need to use English starts long before the phrase 'travel abroad' becomes relevant. There is also an external character: trade and academic activity, particularly with increased cooperation with the European Union and neighbouring states in many aspects of life – the external connection starts before Ukrainians even leave their home. Certainly 'learning' has evolved in the past 25 years because of the availability of material to every learner – through wider and simpler internet applications. To answer the question, 'Has the 'teaching' evolved?' we must all look individually and collectively at what we do to see if we meet the expectations of the customers – students, national needs and business. On the issue of 'effective,' even if many classes are on-line, they appear to be often simply in the same format as in the classroom of 25 or more years ago. Although the COVID period and then the invasion period pushed much activity into an on-line basis, the arrangements are not perhaps the most effective that they could be. To take but one simple practical example: face to face activity in the physical classroom has been replaced by audio online because some people won't turn on their video cameras and university authorities have not created an effective policy about video. Furthermore, difficulties with electricity and internet connections have made the online teaching arrangements vulnerable and unstable. This situation therefore seems like a backward step from the physical classroom.

Challenging Arrangements for English in the 3rd Decade - 21st Century

However, even if universities had or were to create an effective policy about video cameras for online seminars and lectures, this would not alter the issue of the unchanged format in the last 25 years – in respect of learning and teaching English in the university context. There remains generally still the same approach – mainly based on philological study. This is where a radical approach is possible: should we consider English as a 'foreign language' in the new Ukraine context? We should certainly treat English as a competence of skills rather than just in the context of traditional philological study. The teaching and learning of English in the contemporary Ukrainian context need to be based on competence requirements rather than only study aims.

Practicality As the Main Goal. At the end of 2022 we published an English Grammar Handbook for Ukrainian Speakers. The approach was neither novel nor unique but it had an overwhelming requirement: 'useable'! It was aimed at just Ukrainians, with explanations in both languages. It had to be a practical handbook rather than a course, to allow simple access to any aspect of English. Another example: over the past 3 years, Anthony has interviewed

hundreds of candidates for jobs in the Ukrainian IT development sector. This means competent English where the person can communicate effectively in their working context with clients and between collaborative international teams. This is the real world of English in Ukraine – not the cloistered ‘groves of academe’ [to reference the Roman poet Horace] in which the academic world tends to look inwards. We liken the universities of the modern era to those ancient ‘groves of academe.’ However, the ‘truth’ is of no practical use unless institutions look outwards from their academic buildings to support Ukraine’s practical needs.

English as an Official Language. The new Ukrainian law on is an opportunity; there are implications for the business of the State and for public life. Many more Ukrainians will need English at a working competence level (B2). Although this law will not take full effect until after martial law has ended, now is the time and opportunity for universities to adjust their focus. This law is simply a recent example of the already expanding need and opportunity for academic institutions to adjust their arrangements for the learning and teaching of English. If we consider Ukrainian schools and universities to be the main power stations of the learning of English, the ramifications are an opportunity and need for these institutions to increase practical support to this expanding English language requirement.

English Competence Development. English has become a ‘capability’ as essential as IT competence rather than just another foreign language. So, in the context of the expanding use of English in Ukraine, it needs to be given to as many people as need it. Although English as a philological study remains an important option for linguistic specialists, for general purposes English is now a life skill in communication rather than a foreign language. It is thus an item for training. Therefore, consideration should be given to expanding the scope of training in English beyond just the philological departments. We need training departments which provide practical training in spoken and written competence for an increasing number of people. Those people are not just students but teaching and administrative staff who work beyond the scope of philology. A ‘training’ approach is especially necessary to bring people up to a comfortable B2 standard.

The Changed Aims for English in Ukraine

Effective Practical Communication. We become very concentrated on complex grammar and often we lose sight of the end game. Why are Ukrainians are teaching and learning English for a real practical reason: to communicate effectively. The word ‘effectively’ is essential in the description. Effectively means ‘that the listener or reader can understand our message’ not just the individual words. Speaking and writing in English in the international context means that fellow Ukrainians and other non-native English speakers can understand or read our messages easily and comfortably. Inevitably there is a need to communicate statements in English which have first been created in the brain in Ukrainian – this is natural for all except the few who are bilingual. The requirement is an arrangement of ideas in a simple enough way that they can be easily converted into English. Although there are structural differences in Ukrainian and English, those differences distil down to a common goal of practical communication in international style. In this ideal style, statements are created in less complicated form. Traditionally and currently, the Ukrainian academic written style of a sentence is often much too complex for conversion into international English. Much academic native English suffers from the same problem. Both are difficult to convert into ‘international communication.’ For routine operational communication, including academic papers, the style needs to be carefully simple.

Dual Language. Unlike the pure approach of Content & Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), the learning process can be bilingual with teaching and explanation in both Ukrainian and English. New vocabulary can be acquired in both languages at the same time. This develops the competence of fluency of communication. It is therefore possible to teach and learn other subjects in both languages together. The dual language principle applies everywhere and variations of it are already being used: For example, in DNU there are English classes for

specific subjects; however, the lecturer is an English or communication specialist rather than a subject-matter expert. In the University of Hradec Kralove in Czechia there are seminars held in English on international communication and cross-cultural competence; here the lecturer is also the subject specialist.

More Teaching in Both Languages. Apart from the obvious continuing need for teachers of English, there is the wider need for more teachers and lecturers who can teach other subjects in English. For example, this is a common need in medical academies, IT schools and engineering schools. In our vision, Ukrainian and English can be used in parallel rather than separating the timetable into sessions in only one of the two languages or creating purely separate English lessons. Development of teachers to teach their subjects in English is an essential expansion of a university's activity. In Ukraine, ever more adults have learnt English at school from an early age. The number of adults who could teach their subject in English is growing steadily. However, those teachers who are not yet confident to teach in English should be assisted in converting their teaching competence to include doing it in English. This support structure is a necessary goal in a university's arrangements for teaching their range of subjects.

Change Management. We would urge university leaders and staff to review the landscape of English teaching and use. This approach requires a review of the traditional arrangements in the school or university. University Rectors and leaders will face resistance to change those who see English teaching as their exclusive responsibility; and from those who don't see it as their responsibility to teach in English, or who are underconfident about their skills to do so.

Conclusion – A Review is Needed

In today's environment, Ukraine's universities and academic institutions need a strategic review of their support to the English needs of Ukraine. English has become a 'capability' rather than just another foreign language. Now is the time and opportunity for universities to adjust their focus in the light of the new law on English in Ukraine and mid-21st century requirements. Many more Ukrainians will need English at a working competence level. Ukrainian schools and universities are the main power stations of the learning of English. English should be taught and learnt as a competence, with a skills-based training approach and context. Practicality should be the main goal with training in verbal skills and in written skills – in international English that anyone can understand. It is possible and necessary to teach and learn other subjects in both languages together. Development of teachers to teach their subjects in English is an essential expansion of a university's activity. These re-focussed requirements will require a practical review of teaching and learning and a bold approach to change management. Developing competence through training in English for effective communication in the 3rd decade of the 21st Century is necessary and possible.

ІНТЕГРАЦІЯ ЦІЛЕЙ СТАЛОГО РОЗВИТКУ У ФАХОВУ ПІДГОТОВКУ МАЙБУТНІХ УЧИТЕЛІВ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ

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Актуальність. Інтеграція цілей сталого розвитку (далі – ЦСР) у фахову підготовку майбутніх учителів іноземних мов є нагальною потребою сучасної педагогічної освіти, що відповідає глобальним викликам ХХІ століття. В умовах зростаючої взаємозалежності країн та культур, підготовка вчителів іноземних мов, здатних не лише навчати мовам, але й формувати у своїх учнів розуміння глобальних проблем, стає критично важливою. Впровадження ЦСР у програми підготовки майбутніх педагогів дозволяє розвивати у них не тільки мовні компетентності, але й навички критичного мислення, міжкультурної комунікації та активної громадянської позиції, необхідні для виховання