Architectural and Interdisciplinary Studies.
Designing "English for Architecture"

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Abstract

The structure of Architectural and Urban planning studies at the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca addresses architectural space from an interdisciplinary perspective, exploring alternative approaches to design and creative practice. This paper presents a linguist's outlook on designing an English for Architecture (EA) practical coursebook, for students whose main specialization is Architecture and Urban Planning. This course was created so that other categories of learners could benefit from its content as well. On the one hand it is useful for all science students and on the other hand it is aimed to meet the concrete English for Specific Purposes (ESP) needs of the professionals involved in the fields related to architecture. In architecture, as well as in many other fields of knowledge, English language is used as a global vehicle for the exchange of information. This book identifies and develops these skills, looking at some of the situations in which they are used in architecture. By getting familiarized with the main elements of great, fundamental European architecture, students and professionals alike embark on an enriching journey, both from a linguistic and cultural point of view. They get acquainted with "a living architecture" and the working tasks are meant to help them interact with it. Among the many activities included, one can find combinations between individual tasks (strengthening the foundation of communication in English through vocabulary and grammar) and interactive tasks, designed to engage learners in group activities, necessary for reinforcing English as a communicational tool for architects.

Rezumat

Structura studiilor de Arhitectură şi Urbanism în cadrul Universităţii Tehnice din Cluj-Napoca se raportează la spaţiul arhitectural dintr-o perspectivă interdisciplinară, explorând abordări alternative ale proiectării şi practicilor creative. Lucrarea de faţă prezintă perspectiva lingvistică privind proiectarea unui curs practic de engleză pentru arhitectură (EA), dedicat studenţilor a căror specializare principală este Arhitectura şi Urbanismul. Acesta a fost creat astfel încât şi alte categorii de cursanţi să poată beneficia de asemenea de conţinutul său. Pe de o parte cursul este util pentru toţi studenţii din domeniul ştiinţific, iar pe de altă parte el are ca scop să îndeplinească nevoile concrete de limba engleză pentru scopuri specific (ESP), al profesioniştilor implicaţi în domeniile legate de arhitectură. În arhitectură, precum şi în multe alte domenii ale cunoaşterii, limba engleză este folosită ca vehicul global pentru schimbul de informaţii. Cursul prezentat identifică şi dezvoltă aceste abilităţi, raportându-se la unele dintre situaţiile în care acestea sunt utilizate în arhitectură. Prin familiarizarea cu principalele elemente ale arhitecturii europene mari,

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fundamentale, studenţii şi profesioniştii deopotrivă vor putea porni într-o călătorie care să-i îmbogăţească atât din punct lingvistic, cât şi cultural. Ei vor face cunoştinţă cu "o arhitectură vie", iar sarcinile de lucru sunt menite să îi ajute să interacţioneze cu aceasta. Printre numeroasele activităţi incluse se pot găsi combinaţii între sarcini individuale (consolidarea bazei de comunicare în limba engleză prin vocabular şi gramatică) şi sarcini interactive, concepute pentru a angaja studenţii în activităţi de grup, atât de necesare pentru consolidarea limbii engleze ca un instrument comunicaţional pentru arhitecţi.

Keywords: basic skills; communicational tools; English for Specific Purposes (ESP); interdisciplinary perspective; practical coursebook.

1. Overview - Department of Modern Languages and Communication

As mentioned on the Department's web page [1], the Department of Modern Languages and Communication has an activity of over 50 years. It has contributed and still contributes to the training of linguistic and cultural specialists formed by the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca through language courses, communication skills courses and professional communication. The fundamental concerns of department members regard the formation and strengthening of scientific and technical communication skills and mastering the notions and cognitive-specific operations of the specialized discourse. By its structure and programs, the department provides modern language learning and communication in the professional and public sphere, in all nine existing faculties of the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca.

The mission of the department is: to develop students' ability to communicate orally specialized information and concepts, to understand and make themselves understood when submitting written or oral information on professional or routine matters and routine; to integrate students in study programs and international cooperation; to adapting future engineers to the new requirements in their specialized field or in a connected one, by using the intercultural knowledge acquired.
Applied modern language teaching and learning in science and technology cannot be done if students don't have at least an average level of knowledge of the general foreign language. Starting from this consideration, the department offers specialized language courses aimed at practical development of the four basic skills in mastering a foreign language: written and oral comprehension and written and oral expression. For this, future engineers and architects must acquire the specific vocabulary and structures of technical and scientific discourse, must master learning and documentation strategies in foreign languages and use specialized language in real communication. The courses, seminars and papers rely on student centered communicative methods, on the individualization of learning and awareness.

Language skills cannot be dissociated from the communication ones and, therefore, foreign communication techniques offered by the Department of Modern Languages and Communication aim the improvement of the oral and written expression of the students in Romanian languages, in circumstances relating to their professional life. The activities propose a theoretical approach to communication, the development of the analysis and synthesis capacity, the protocol of expression in front of an audience, supporting an argument, treatment and presentation of specialized information, development of relational potential and understanding of human interactions. Teaching English to Architecture students is targeted towards the students' specialization. 1st and 2nd year students English classes last for 2 years (4 semesters) and are designed for intermediate/advanced students (B1+/B2 level).

2. Thesaurus

The following terms are extremely important for understanding the indicators of language competence:

2.1. English for Specific Purposes

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is a sphere of teaching English language including Business English, English for Science and Technology, English for Architecture a.s.o. It is designed to meet the specific needs of the learners, making use of the methodology and activities of teaching EL. Being designed for adult learners, higher education / professional work education, it is centered on the language skills to be learned
Language skills = what we need for complete communication
Macro-skills = listening, speaking, reading, writing
Micro-skills = grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation

2.2. Level of competence

Level of competence – CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) = "a framework of reference". It was designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency. The CEFR describes foreign language proficiency at six levels: A1 and A2, B1 and B2, C1 and C2. It also defines three 'plus' levels (A2+, B1+, B2+). Based on empirical research and widespread consultation, this scheme makes it possible to compare tests and examinations across languages and national boundaries. It also provides a basis for recognizing language qualifications and thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility. The CEFR's illustrative scales of "can do" descriptors are available in a bank of descriptors together with many other related descriptors. [2]. Being a European indicator of language competence, the responsibility of the member states is that of a coherent, realistic use. It has been rapidly adopted in Europe, we are currently witnessing a widespread use of its proficiency levels.

2.3. Content and Language Integrated Learning

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) = "buzz word". It is similar to but distinct from: language immersion and content-based instruction and used as an "umbrella term" for teaching both the language and the subject. The effective opportunities of CLIL target the use of the language skills now rather than "learn them now for later use", thus being of particular interest in vocational settings.

3. Designing "English for Architecture"

Taking into consideration all the above, I started designing "English for Architecture" (EA) [4] as a practical coursebook for students whose main specialization is Architecture and Urban Planning, but other categories of learners can benefit from its content as well. On the one hand it is useful for all science students and on the other hand it is aimed to meet the concrete English for Specific Purposes (ESP) needs of the professionals involved in the fields related to architecture.
The level of competence in general English required to study this material is B1/B2, as described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

In architecture, as well as in many other fields of knowledge, English language is used as a global vehicle for the exchange of information. In order to participate successfully in this exchange, one needs to develop certain basic skills. This book identifies and develops these skills, looking at some of the situations in which they are used in architecture. The design and teaching approaches of this practical course are based on the teacher's fifteen years of experience in teaching English to Architecture students at the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca.

Table 1: Common European Framework [3]

Levels - CEF	Listening / Speaking	Reading	Writing
A1 Beginners	Can understand basic instructions or take part in a basic factual conversation on a predictable topic.	Can understand basic notices, instructions or information.	Can complete basic forms, and write notes including times, dates and places
A2 Pre-Intermediate	Can express simple opinions or requirements in a familiar context.	Can understand straightforward information within a known area, such as simple textbooks or reports on familiar matters.	Can complete forms and write short simple letters or postcards related to personal information.
B1 Intermediate	Can understand the main points of familiar matters, with enough language to get by in everyday situations.	Can understand non-complex, routine information and articles.	Can write simple letters/texts on familiar topics with reasonable accuracy and express personal ideas and opinions.
B2 Higher Intermediate	Can understand and express ideas with some fluency and reasonable accuracy in everyday contexts.	Can understand the general meaning of non-routine information within a familiar area.	Can produce longer texts, with paragraphs using a range of structures with a fair degree of accuracy.
B2+ Higher Int. Plus	Can understand and express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way or offer advice within a known area and understand instructions or public announcements.	Can understand the main ideas of a complex text on both concrete and abstract topics.	Can produce a clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and give advantages and disadvantages of various options.
C1 Advanced	Can understand and express feelings, opinions and ideas with sufficient clarity to work in an English-speaking environment.	Can scan texts for relevant information and understand detailed instructions or advice.	Can make reasonably clear notes while someone is talking or write a letter including non-standard requests.
C1+ Advanced Plus	Can contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work and keep up a casual conversation with a good degree of fluency, coping with abstract expressions.	Can read quickly enough to cope with an academic course, read various media for information and understand non-standard correspondence.	Can prepare/draft professional correspondence, take accurate notes in meetings or write an essay which shows a highly effective ability to communicate.
C2 Proficiency	Can advise on or talk about complex or sensitive issues, understand colloquial references and deal confidently with hostile questions.	Can understand documents, correspondence and reports, including the finer points of complex texts.	Can write letters on any subject and full notes of meetings or seminars with good expression and accuracy.

Intended mainly as a class material, this practical course for future architects fits their specific communicational needs. It features a functional approach with the educational objective of enabling personal and professional development. Each specific unit was covers skills related to the comprehension of information, considering the fact that in architecture they are required to understand and interpret a great variety of data.

By getting familiarized with the main elements of great, fundamental European architecture, students embark on an enriching journey, both from a linguistic and cultural point of view. They get acquainted with "a living architecture" and the working tasks are meant to help them interact with it. Among the many activities included here you can find combinations between individual tasks (strengthening the foundation of communication in English through vocabulary and grammar) and interactive tasks, designed to engage learners in group activities, necessary for reinforcing English as a communicational tool for architects.

The topics include educational architectural sites, historic sites, religious sites, churches and cathedrals, bridges, historic walking areas, universities and colleges, points of interest, landmarks, landscaping architecture, royal gardens, public gardens, student life, iconic architecture of great

universities, great halls, student prisons, university libraries, archives, central stations, elements of urban planning.

If offers hours of great architecture to wander amongst, in an English speaking environment. This vast selection does not intend to make any kind of architectural judgment, but to introduce the learners of ESP to a highlight of projects with the element of authenticity.

English for Architecture is structured in twelve units, covering linguistic aspects frequently used in the architectural discourse. Three annexes are provided at the end, (reading bank, word bank and key to tasks) intended as useful supplementary materials for the learners to add to as they develop their reading and writing skills in English for their specialization.

4. References

[1] ***, http://lmc.utcluj.ro/misiune.php (website: Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Department of Modern Languages and Communication, accessed date ….2015)

[2] ***, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp (website: Council of Europe, Education and Langueages, Language Policy, accessed date ….2015)

[3] ***, http://blog-imgs-61.fc2.com/w/i/t/withjetstream/20131001083850c8a.jpg (Common European Framework, accessed date ….2015)

[4] Pădureţu, Sanda, *English for Architecture*, Editura Risoprint, Cluj-Napoca, 2015, pp. 3-4,