



Using TED Talks for Updating and Customizing the Learning Experience

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Abstract

The article contains the analysis of current trends in education that should be taken into account when teaching ESP students. In particular, the author underlines the necessity to develop students' discursive competence as well as their ability to present the results of their research in a foreign language. The existing learning materials in form of textbooks often become outdated rather quickly. What is more, the majority of them often overlook developing students' public speaking skills. For these ends, on-line TED conferences can be employed. In the course of working with TED talks students learn to analyze authentic video clips and make up their own presentations and lectures in accordance with the speech patterns they have learned. They develop the skill of impromptu speaking skills on a variety of professional subjects they major in. The work with TED talks in a classroom, though, requires a thorough preparation and a careful planning on behalf of the teacher. Successful integration of talks into an ESP course, on the other hand, will provide students with a readily available updates in their areas of expertise as well as entertaining and motivational learning material.

Keywords: *Public speaking skills, ESP classes, Ted Talks, impromptu speech*

The most important goal of working with students studying a foreign language for special purposes, that is, when teaching English in non-linguistic universities, is the formation of a number of professional skills. It is quite obvious that a simple ability to read and understand texts in a foreign language, as well as work with video and audio materials, is no longer sufficient. The globalization of the educational environment has turned a foreign language into a means of cognition, into the most important working tool, without which the formation of a modern, highly qualified specialist is no longer possible.

This approach is relevant for a number of specialists ranging from engineers to managers and lawyers. International practice of solving problems does not stand still, so modern scientists just have to receive fast dates, exchange experiences, get acquainted with the results of studies carried out in other countries and related fields. The question arises why simple work with the text of the article is no longer enough? The fact is that along with the expansion of the geography of research, the speed of research processes is growing, which means potential competition. Months, sometimes years, pass from the moment a study is conducted to the publication of its results in a reputable international scientific journal. Young scientists, in anticipation of important data, cannot afford the luxury of such downtime, so one of the tools of modern scientific work has become participation in specialized seminars, webinars and conferences.

The language of work of most international conferences is English. But even for the majority of specialists who have specialized professional vocabulary, participation in such events is a certain difficulty. The task of university teachers in this regard is to foresee what kind of difficulties their students may have in the future, and make every effort to bring their educational practices closer to the real needs of students studying a foreign language for professional purposes. First of all, these are the skills to present the results of your own research and be able to discuss them with colleagues.

A lot of important words have been said about the benefits of holding round tables, panel discussions, role-playing games. The effect of this kind of work is colossal. First of all, it consists in the transition from working with text and vocabulary to real speech practice. Students learn to represent and argue their position. They learn to listen, understand and perceive a text in a foreign language and ask the speaker some questions.

Invaluable help for English teachers in this regard is provided by working with the TED online platform, which allows you to select video presentations for students on almost any topic based on their professional interests. It must be remembered, however, that working with TED lectures requires special training for students. We distinguish two work plans with similar material: substantive and structural.

If the teacher needs to prepare a basis for discussion, propose options for solving the problem, make



an overview of existing approaches, introduce the speaker's opinion or enlighten students, it is usually only the content side of the lecture that matters to him. However, one should not expect students to perceive the content of the lecture with the same ease as they do in their native language. Skills of taking notes and perceiving information will work here only partially. To achieve the maximum effect from listening, the teacher will have to prepare an entire arsenal of methodological tools, including the well-known pre-listening, while-listening, post-listening tasks. Experience shows that students can adequately assess the content of a lecture only after doing all these types of tasks.

One should also be aware that, unlike ordinary listening assignments, in presentations such as TED, each speaker has a thesis statement, which is substantiated during the speech. Students can often easily define the topic of a lecture, that is, what it is about. However, to single out the idea (thesis / subject matter), that is, why the speaker makes this speech, is often problematic for them. To solve this problem, one must be prepared to do a series of assignments with students to summarize texts.

To teach students to do it successfully it is always better to start with printed materials. To optimize the work with the TED platform, or rather, in preparation for this type of work, we recommend using the well-known courses of Oxford University Press "Lecture Ready" [3], which suggest different levels of training for this type of work: from intermediate (low-intermediate) to advanced (low-advanced). These study guides focus students on the structural features of building a lecture (introduction, plan, conclusion), and gradually introduce vocabulary often used by lecturers to form a common "skeleton" of a lecture (key points, paraphrase, examples, conclusions).

To make a smooth transition from the mini-lectures included in the course to authentic lectures from the TED.com portal we recommend using "TED Tasks" by T. Alieva. and Yu. N. Efremova [1]. In our opinion, this manual can serve as an example of the successful implementation of the use of online lectures in the preparation of undergraduates in the areas of "regional studies" and "diplomacy" at MGIMO University (Russia) as a supplement to the main course textbook. The authors developed a range of exercises aimed at the development of communicative competencies, skills of perception of audio text, summarizing skills, and most importantly, they carried out a selection of lectures in accordance with the topics and needs of the course.

However, the main advantage of this work, unfortunately, is its main disadvantage. If we set as our task the actualization of the studied materials, we cannot rely on the fact that the manuals published several years ago will retain their significance in the next academic year. Materials become outdated incredibly fast. Both in the sphere of international relations and in any other, including medicine or nuclear physics, new materials quickly lose their relevance and significance. Therefore, the teacher has the task of constantly updating the selection of lectures, developing a new set of exercises, without which, unfortunately, listening to materials has limited benefit for students.

The second level of work with TED materials is the structural level, which seems to us even more important than the substantive. The ultimate goal of working with such lectures is the preparation by students of presentations of their own research projects, such as those commonly called the 'Research proposal' in the English-language educational environment. In addition to preparing the actual visual series in Power Point format, which, incidentally, is also often a difficult task for students, they must present the results of their scientific work to the audience.

Such tasks can vary in complexity, from the presentation of the results of a collective study on materials studied in the course of professional disciplines, to the real presentation of master's work in a foreign language. In this type of work students solve primarily language problems. They are required to collect certain language material, develop a practice of working with lectures, and form speech skills. In addition, a successful linguistic experiment may become a sustainable and necessary speech skill in the future.

As an example of working with such problems, we would like to share the practice of holding a student presentation contest in the III and IV years of the bachelor's program at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University).

Unfortunately, not all students see a significant difference between the written text and its presentation. As we already wrote in other articles on this subject [3], for many of them there is simply no phonostylistic distinction between reading and speaking, academic and informational style. Of course, in the framework of teaching a foreign language for special purposes, there is no need to go into details of the features of the perception of the text to the audience. It is much easier to motivate students to take advantage of presentations and speeches on the Internet.

Student presentations are held annually. In the third year, students should make an individual presentation on the problems of diplomacy (for example: types of diplomacy, diplomacy and war, the press and international relations). In addition to the substantive side of the speech, the jury of the competition, which often includes current diplomats and invited guests, evaluates the actual speech



skills. Particular attention is paid to the use of rhetorical techniques, the ability to captivate the audience, to keep the attention of listeners, contact with the audience, the quality of speech.

In the fourth year, the task becomes more complicated: the presentation can no longer be simply descriptive, students must put forward a problem hypothesis regarding the topics being studied (relations with the USA and the European Union, Brexit, human rights, demographic trends in the modern world, etc.) and reinforce or to refute it using the results of their own research (for example, a selection of news or opinion polls). In addition to the research nature, this project involves step by step work on its preparation and presentation. The jury evaluates the relevance of the chosen topic, the development of evidence and the ability to argue their position.

The educational goal of this type of work is the formation of the necessary discursive skills which students will be able apply in exams. Thus, the training program includes monitoring speech in different versions at all undergraduate and graduate courses. The result of the work is the final exam of the masters' program, where students present the topic of their master's thesis in English. Summing up, it should be noted that with the expanding role of a foreign language in further professional education, teachers have new tasks to customize the educational process, that is, to carry out a more thorough selection of relevant language and speech material in accordance with the needs of students. Modern students, young scientists and specialists should have sufficient discursive skills to present the results of their own research and conduct discussions in a foreign language. Such work is to be conducted regularly, since it involves the analysis of the content and structural side of authentic lectures and the synthesis of students' own speeches based on the knowledge and skills developed.

References

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