

UDC [378.016:81 243](410)

О. С. Частник, кандидат мистецтвознавства, доцент, Національний юридичний університет імені Ярослава Мудрого, м. Харків

РОЗВИТОК КОМУНІКАЦІЙНИХ НАВИЧОК У БАГАТОМОВНІЙ ЄВРОПІ (НА ПРИКЛАДІ БРИТАНІЇ)

Наведено огляд публікацій, у яких досліджено кризу щодо викладання іноземних мов у Великобританії та способи її подолання. Розглянуто причини скорочення чисельності кафедр британських університетів, де студенти вивчають іноземну мову як основну спеціальність. Описано заходи, спрямовані на розвиток функціонального білінгвізму серед випускників вищих шкіл, зокрема, заохочення вивчення мов на факультативних курсах різного рівня акредитації та різної тривалості. Проаналізовано дані опитувань слухачів таких курсів. Виявлено, що більшість слухачів обирають кредитні курси або курси з правом одержання сертифікату. Особливо висвітлено роль університетських мовних центрів у забезпеченні викладання іноземних мов студентам немовних спеціальностей.

***Ключові слова:** комунікаційні навички, студенти немовних спеціальностей, університетський мовний центр, кредитні курси, некредитні курси.*

А. С. Частник, кандидат искусствоведения, доцент, Национальный юридический университет имени Ярослава Мудрого, г. Харьков

РАЗВИТИЕ КОММУНИКАТИВНЫХ НАВЫКОВ В МНОГОЯЗЫЧНОЙ ЕВРОПЕ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ БРИТАНИИ)

Приведен обзор публикаций, в которых исследуется кризис в преподавании иностранных языков в Великобритании и способы его преодоления. Рассмотрены причины сокращения числа кафедр британских университетов, где студенты изучают иностранный язык как основную специальность. Описаны меры, направленные на развитие функционального билингвизма среди выпускников высших школ, в частности, поощрение изучения языков на факультативных курсах разного уровня аккредитации и разной длительности. Проанализированы данные опросов слушателей таких курсов. Выяснилось, что большинство студентов выбирают кредитные курсы или курсы с правом получения сертификата. Особо выделена роль университетских языковых центров в обеспечении преподавания иностранных языков студентам неязыковых специальностей.

***Ключевые слова:** коммуникативные навыки, студенты неязыковых специальностей, университетский языковой центр, кредитные курсы, некредитные курсы.*

O. S. Chastnyk, Candidate of Art Criticism, Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, Kharkiv

DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN MULTILINGUAL EUROPE: THE CASE OF BRITAIN

This paper presents a review of publications exploring the crisis in foreign language teaching in Great Britain and the ways of overcoming it. The author investigates the causes of a reduction in the number of British university departments where foreign languages are taught as a major. The article also describes the measures aimed to develop functional bilingualism among university graduates, especially teaching

languages at optional courses of various duration and accreditation status. Data from various surveys involving people attending such courses have been analysed. It appears that most of the students choose credit or certified courses. Particular attention is paid to the role of university language centres in teaching foreign languages to non-specialist students.

Key words: *communication skills, non-specialist language students, university language centre, credit courses, non-credit courses.*

British educators are worried about the alarming shortage of people in the United Kingdom able to speak at least one foreign language. Rather frequently academic journals publish articles bearing eloquent titles such as “Why the British do not learn languages?” [5]. The British Council has defined 10 foreign languages (Spanish, Arabic, French, Chinese, German, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Turkish, Japanese), the knowledge of which “...will be of crucial importance for the UK’s prosperity, security and influence in the world over the next 20 years”. A YouGov poll (2013) found that 75% of adult respondents were unable to speak any of these 10 languages well enough to hold a conversation. Only 15% of the UK population could hold a conversation in French, 6% in German, 4% could converse in Spanish and 2% in Italian. According to John Worne of the British Council, failure to act in this direction risks the UK losing out “both economically and culturally” [2].

The purpose of this article is to review the situation with non-specialist foreign language provision in Great Britain, as well as the measures aimed at overcoming the crisis in this sector of higher education. Taking into account the fact that the foreign language proficiency among Ukrainian students is rather low, drawing on European experience seems very *relevant*.

In Great Britain the term “non-specialist language provision” has two meanings. On the one hand it refers to the language teaching provided for students who are not doing a full language degree. On the other, it encompasses a wide range of university courses attended by students wishing, for example, to increase their chances of getting a job in a global labour market [7]. In this paper, this term is used in its second, narrower, meaning.

According to The Guardian (2013), by 2000 the number of universities offering modern language degree had dropped from 105 to 62. If this tendency continues, in 10 years’ time as many as 40% of university language departments will close [8]. As a result, British schools do not get enough foreign language teachers holding a university degree. These circumstances enhance the indifference to language learning prevalent in British society. Numerous studies showed that English pupils were

significantly behind their international peers in terms of foreign language proficiency [2]. This indifference is caused, in particular, by the insularity syndrome, the high worldwide popularity of English as an international language, and the wrong notion of languages as the most difficult school subject [8].

The alarming situation with language learning in Britain was deteriorated by the government decision (2004) to make languages optional at GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education). This decision deepened the general conviction that studying languages was a luxury and that corresponding financial resources should be allocated to other sectors. Even before the legislation became statutory, 60% of state comprehensive schools had already made languages optional for pupils after the age of 14 [4]. Through the lack of motivation, most British pupils lost interest in learning languages.

However, the realities of life have proved that the 2004 decision was erroneous. It turned out that it was hard for monolingual Englishmen to find a job in international organisations [1]. Besides, EU policy is aimed at developing academic mobility, particularly in the framework of the Erasmus exchange programme. Specialists possessing language skills are needed in industry and the financial sector. According to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), in 2011 only a quarter (27%) of businesses say they have no need for foreign language skills among their employees [6]. A revised GCSE curriculum for primary schools was approved in 2014; an exam in a foreign language was again made compulsory at GCSE level. Pupils at the age of 11 are expected to be able to hold an elementary conversation in French or German. At the same time, the document does not foresee any concrete measures aimed at implementing this decision, which is why many schools still consider this subject important but not vital [8].

Of course, such state of affairs affects higher education as well. Classic philological education is losing popularity. To get a degree in Modern Languages, students have to acquire linguistic skills as well as attend numerous lectures on literature, culture, history, political life of the country or countries where the target language is spoken. Professors at language departments are engaged in serious scientific research in theory and history of literature; they are experts in the theory of grammar, phonetics, stylistics, but they are not interested in modern communicative methods and technical aids. There is a disagreement between the teachers' academic tastes and the students' wish to learn languages for practical purposes. Nowadays even prestigious British higher schools have to react to the demands of our time. 47 UK university French departments have re-

duced the literary content of degrees. Pre-twentieth century texts, poetry and drama have been squeezed out. Some people even suggests that literature should be given up altogether as a discipline. “The teaching of literature does not do much to help students learn a language. [...] I don’t think that many student tears would be shed if literature disappeared completely from the syllabus of most institutions of higher education”. At some institutions, Modern Language Departments have dissolved, their academics absorbed into Cultural Studies, European Studies or Politics [4].

There is evidence that Modern Foreign Language graduates have lower salaries than the average graduate, are more likely to be unemployed and less likely to be in full-time employment, are less satisfied with their career, and are less convinced that their degree was good value for money or that they were well prepared for a career. [6].

The so-called “new universities” (ex-Polytechnics) successfully compete with traditional philological education for the wealthy elite. Financially they are more accessible, they respond more actively to the needs of job market, where practical skills are preferred over theoretical knowledge. The general attitude of modern employers was voiced by a high-ranking official from the CBI: “Of course we always want people to go to uni and study Molière, but we also need engineers who can go to Toulouse and converse with engineers there.” [8]. Universities gradually reject the idea of educating specialists, for whom languages represent all or most of the degree programme (Single Honours). In 1994 the proportion of Single Honours students was only 25%, fell to 15% by 2000, and has continued to decrease. Instead, many universities offer Joint Honours – combinations of a non-linguistic discipline and a foreign language, such as French and Business, Economics and German, Finance and Spanish, etc. Degree programmes, the titles of which include a “language component” (for example, Machine Building with German, Journalism with French) are popular as well. Such courses concentrate on developing practical skills rather than theoretical knowledge [4].

It is worth mentioning the so-called Flexible Combined Honours (FCH) programmes at Bachelor level which allow students to acquire knowledge and skills in line with their own interests and career objectives (as, for instance, at the University of Exeter). Usually students start with a combination of ‘officially approved’ subjects and then make their choice from their second year.

Some universities provide optional courses of “professional foreign language” (Language for Special Purposes) for students studying medicine, economy, law, business. At such courses, students are taught not the

language as such, but the foreign terminological system of the relevant area of knowledge.

Today it is obvious that learning a language by non-specialist students requires many years of hard work. Universities have to concentrate their efforts on educating specialists in various areas of activities with *functional* linguistic skills sufficient for professional international communication. Said J. Worne: "... it is functional skill rather than fluency that counts." [2].

To achieve this aim, the so-called University Language Centres proved to be the most acceptable tool. Each centre is located on campus and is well equipped with all modern IT learning facilities. As far back as in the 1960s and 1970s leading universities established open-access language laboratories with audiovisual and printed media for students to practise their applied language skills.

Oxford and Cambridge, the universities of Manchester, Leeds and Sussex were the first to recognize the importance of new ways of teaching languages. At the same time, some universities such as Bradford, Sheffield and Bath introduced Bachelor language degrees with a focus on developing applied language skills and invested considerable sums in the technical equipment language centres. Serving as an additional resource for the study of languages for linguist students, the new units became the only means of creating a language environment for future engineers, lawyers, businessmen, journalists. And when in the 1990th traditional philological degrees began to lose their attractiveness, the position of language centers became much stronger; now a university with the most up-to-date equipment for the study of languages has a substantial advantage over the rivals.

Non-specialist language provision at university language centres is carried out at different levels and in different formats. Most institutions offer credit-bearing modules, which count towards each year of study (from 5 to 25% from the total number of credit hours in the degree programme). Many universities also run non-credit language courses, which are generally priced low enough to attract as large an uptake as possible. These courses do not count towards a degree but they are certified and quality controlled by the host institution. The course grades or statements of attendance appear on students' transcripts, which can be advantageous when looking for a job. Besides, the tuition fees for such courses are comparatively low [7].

The popularity of of the new format of learning can be attested by a poll conducted by the Association of University Language Centres (2003). 44 institutions claimed expanding non-specialist student num-

bers, 2 steady, and only 1 falling numbers. In 2007/08, a total of 58,900 undergraduate and postgraduate students from non-language disciplines were recorded to be studying a language at university, not at degree level, but as an accredited language course [7]. Some Language Centres aim to recruit as much as 20% of the entire student body [2].

Two surveys involving non-specialist language students were conducted in the UK in 2010 and 2011 (The Open University was not examined). The following parameters were studied: target language; respondents' gender and age; curricula characteristics; connection between the acquired skills and the prospects of employment; emotional component of the learning process; tuition fees; course accreditation; student majors; quality of teaching. According to the University Council for Modern Languages, the results of these polls can be summarized as follows. The total number of languages studied by non-specialists: 21. The most popular languages: Spanish (296 respondents), French (279), German (195), Italian (103), Chinese (86), Japanese (83), Arabic (52). Women make up the majority of non-specialist language learners; they outnumber men in all age groups and in all the most popular languages. Almost half of respondents were under 25. Practically all respondents aged 18-21 were full-time undergraduate students. Senior age groups were made up by postgraduates and teachers. Almost a quarter of respondents were non-UK citizens. 84% of learners of French reported that they had studied the language before, 71% of learners of German and 61% of Spanish. Arabic, Japanese and Chinese attracted mainly beginners. It was found that some respondents (mostly learners of Oriental languages) had little idea of their competence level by the time they complete their studies. A large majority intended to continue language study to a higher level. 78% of respondents were convinced that foreign language skills would be an advantage when seeking a job. However, only 2% of part-time students were funded by their employers. 67% stated that language competence was not essential for their present job. 96% were satisfied with their studies, and 89% considered their course good value for money. 58,2% paid for their studies from their own pocket.

A majority of undergraduate students reported that they could receive credits, a qualification or a certificate from the university upon successful completion of their course. It sounds strange, but around one in five learners did not know if there was any form of accreditation. Language courses were most popular with students of Sociology and Political Science (16%) followed by Business and Economics (15,9%).

On the whole, most comment on teaching quality were positive, but some respondents complained of the absence of native speakers, and the unavailability of higher-level courses [3].

A typical example of a modern unit for learning languages is the language centre at the University of Leeds. As the centre serves both British and international students, English is also taught here besides European and Oriental languages. The centre includes two digital language laboratories with interactive study programmes, two computer classes, five audiovisual classes, a resource centre, 17 classrooms, etc.

Conclusions.

1. The government and academic community of Great Britain are aware of the necessity of developing linguistic communication skills in order to be successful in the globalised, multilingual world.

2. The following steps are taken in the United Kingdom with the aim to meet this challenge: a) introducing obligatory study of foreign languages in primary schools; b) reducing the number of university departments teaching specialist linguists; c) providing opportunities for non-specialist language students to learn foreign languages at universities.

3. Language teaching provision for non-specialists is conducted at university language centers; students can choose optional courses of various duration and various accreditation status.

References

1. Boffey D. Modern languages and linguistics / D. Boffey // The Observer. — 17 August 2013.
2. Burns J. BBC News — ‘Alarming shortage’ of foreign language skills in UK, 20 Nov 2013 / J. Burns / www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-25003828.
3. Canning J. A survey of non-specialist language learners in UK higher education 2010 / J. Canning / Published by the University Council for Modern Languages and the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, 2011. — www.ucml.ac.uk/.../non-specialist_language_learners_UCML.pdf.
4. Coleman J. Modern Languages in British universities: past and present / J. Coleman / Arts and Humanities in Higher Education. — 2004. — Vol. 3(2). — London: The Open University. — P. 147–162.
5. Coleman J. Why the British do not learn languages: myths and motivation in the United Kingdom / J. Coleman / Language Learning Journal. — 2009. — Vol. 37, Issue 1. — P. 111–127.
6. Coleman J. Non-specialist linguists in the United Kingdom in the context of the Englishisation of European Higher Education [Електронний ресурс] / J. Coleman. — <http://periodicals.narr.de/index.php/flul/article/.../>
7. Good news for universities? / 14 The Linguist // Nick Byrne on the increase in non-specialist language provision. — <http://thelinguist.uberflip.com/i/288462/13>
8. Ratcliffe R. Why is UK language teaching in crisis? / R. Ratcliffe // The Guardian. — 11 Sep 2013.

Надійшла до редколегії 12.05.2015 р.