

INTRODUCING SPECIAL COURSES INTO PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

Traditionally, pre-service professional development of future English teachers at many Ukrainian Universities starts in their third year of studies when they take courses in foreign language teaching methodology. During the lectures future teachers obtain theoretical knowledge of basic methodological problems which they discuss afterwards at their seminars.

Their academic background is considerable, but very few of them have teaching practice and hardly know how to teach English effectively to children of different age groups. Due to the lack of their teaching experience, many of them show interest in practical aspects of teaching a foreign language and are enthusiastic about it. The combination of these two factors call for a new approach, which can enable the students to upgrade their knowledge with new innovating techniques of teaching a foreign language and to use them in their independent teaching at school. Our 30-year experience of pre-service teacher training proves that the introduction of some special courses on the most important and less developed issues of foreign language teaching methodology may be effective.

In Ukraine, where the reform of secondary education is still going on, introducing novelties and changes in foreign language teaching, such special courses are simply indispensable, because the basic course of methodology, consisting of about 60 hours, can't cover all new requirements.

Let's have a close look at the problem. Since all six year olds of Ukraine started to learn English in 2012, we find it necessary to have a special course "The peculiarities of Teaching English to Young Learners". In 2013 the second foreign language was introduced to the pupils of the 5-th grade, thus dictating the necessity of one more special course "Teaching English/German as the Second Language".

Our practice shows that the best time to offer the special courses is at the students' fourth year of studies, when they are already well acquainted with the basic knowledge of forming all the components of communicative competence, are well aware of differences in the use of teaching aids and teaching materials and are able to select and compare them for teaching purposes.

Besides, a special course should mainly consist of practical classes, at which a University methodologist will emphasize the main 'hot points' of the question under study and encourage future teachers to reflect on practical applications of the ideas in their future work at school.

Conducted in an interactive manner, such courses will elicit much more interest on the part of the students who'll try to find the answers to the issues that worry them themselves, analyze or comment on them, thus, overcoming 'mistake making fright'.

Finally, after such courses future teachers are well-armed and are not afraid to start their first teaching practice at school.

References:

1. Cardelle-Elawar, M. (1992). The metacognitive teacher as a multicultural educator. SCOPE, 91 (3), 5 p.
2. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. (2001) – Cambridge University Press, – 124 p.