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FIGHTING PLAGIARISM: CULTURAL PATTERNS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE EAP/ESP CONTEXT

Rationale. The phenomenon of plagiarism is an act of fraud that involves buying, stealing or borrowing someone's ideas and passing them off, deliberately or accidentally, as one's own. It has always been the top issue in ethical debates, frowned upon and despised. Western universities have very strict internal regulations concerning those who dare plagiarize in their academic papers. A new wave of debate around plagiarism has been caused by the ease of and opportunities for plagiarism provided by the Internet. There appeared 'copy-and-paste' generation who download information published in the Web and submit it as their own original work. Educationalists everywhere admit that "the phenomenon of cyber-plagiarism is affecting Universities around the globe" [10].

Since recently the issue of plagiarism has been hotly debated in the educational domain of Ukraine as well. This debate was heated by the inflow of the Western academic culture due to the Bologna process, which runs counter to some culturally determined domestic approaches [7]. Plagiarism is recognized as a cross-cultural phenomenon [6] that should be properly understood to be eradicated. As E.Nikolayev maintains, the Ukrainian understanding of plagiarism proved to be much narrower than that of the West, where it is not just borrowing somebody's ideas without proper reference to the original, but some other practices that nobody used to consider plagiarism in Ukraine [9]. Modern developments in domestic education made university administrators, such as S. Kvit, the president of the National University "Kyiv Mohyla Academy", acknowledge that plagiarism had become part and parcel of the academic life in Ukraine [8, p.13].

Summarizing the results of the round table "The Contemporary State of Ukrainian humanities and Ukrainian language studies" (Chernivtsy, 2002),

Yu.Chorney quotes N. Yakovenko from NaUKMA, who is convinced that there are three kinds of plagiarism spread in Ukraine: complete plagiarism, partial plagiarism and indirect plagiarism, national scientific community being indifferent to them [11].

Undoubtedly, plagiarism, both in its Ukrainian and Western interpretation, is a negative phenomenon that should be eliminated from the academic practice. According to Elaine S. Barry, who analyzed the Western publications devoted to plagiarism, scholars mainly focus on: (a) plagiarism as a professional ethics issue, (b) unintentional plagiarism as a result of memory processes, (c) plagiarism by using the Internet, (d) identifying students who are likely to plagiarize, or (e) describing of frequency and reasons for plagiarism [1]. A number of domestic publications are also devoted to attracting public attention to this phenomena and analyzing its roots. Yet as a teacher, I am interested in finding the answer not to the question *who* is to blame for growing popularity of plagiarism among the Ukrainian students, but to the question *what* practically can be done against it.

Definition of the Problem. This paper is to answer the question “how can the skills-based EAP/ESP university course help students avoid plagiarism in their assignments?” With this purpose in mind I am first going to look at the causes of plagiarism among the Ukrainian students’ population and then to discover the pedagogical potential of the foreign language training for solving the problem of plagiarism in the Ukrainian non-linguistic universities.

Social and Cultural Background. The Internet resource of the East European Development Institute gives a comprehensive analysis of typical causes for plagiarism [10]. Among the *external factors* mentioned by the authors of this resource are:

- competition for a high ‘grade point average regardless of what is learned’, focus on getting the ‘paper’ to certify the qualification not on the learning process;
- lack of awareness of what academic dishonesty is: any behavior which results in good grades is appropriate;

- viewing education as a commodity: higher education degree is valued as an imminent requirement to go up the career ladder not as personal professional development.

Poor time management and lack of organizational skills are mentioned as the *internal factors* that make for plagiarism.

At the same time the experts underline that attitude to plagiarism is culturally determined. The mentioned Internet resource of the East European Development Institute quotes that what Western cultures would call plagiarism is a ‘high form of flattery’ in other cultures. Strong feelings against plagiarism are rooted in the notions that ‘words can be "owned"' and ownership ‘(language included) makes up one’s personal identity’ that are inherent in the Western culture [10]. Ukrainian education, however, is still dominated by reproductive learning when the best students are those who have the best memory and can reproduce the teachers’ words or theories from the textbooks in the most complete and accurate way. As a result, majority of Ukrainian students are sincerely surprised at being blamed for plagiarism in their papers. Their previous learning experience made them believe that their written assignment is to show that they opened the books recommended, and read the lecture texts, not to reflect their analytical research skills and independent way of thinking supported by the publications that have been critically processed.

I am not talking in this paper about the cases of deliberate plagiarism, when the authors are not interested in their learning process and professional development. My interest is focused on those cases when plagiarism is inadvertent due to lack of awareness and skills, due to bad course management, in other words, when the teachers’ efforts can meet the learners’ understanding and needs to remedy the situation.

Despite the existing evidence for growing plagiarism among the Ukrainian students I incline to believe that it is inadvertent plagiarism that plagues the universities in this country. This happens because of the following reasons:

- *lack of writing skills*: with growing popularity of testing, computer and copying technologies the students do not have enough training in how to formulate their own ideas and put them on the paper;
- *lack of awareness concerning plagiarism* and ways to avoid it: due to lack of experience and knowledge students cannot differentiate between plagiarism and paraphrasing, and cite sources incorrectly;
- *lack of research skills*: as I said above, owing to the reproductive nature of learning students mistakenly interpret the educational purpose of the written assignments and do not dare critically analyze the sources of information they use.

These lacks are supplemented by the low ability to evaluate the quality of information one has access to. The academic tradition of Ukraine, which roots in the Soviet Union times, got accustomed to trusting the published sources as they used to undergo peer reviews and publisher's strict censorship. Nowadays anyone can publish anything for money, and the Internet, which brings loads of information to our fingertips, contains data of different quality. For that reason, it is imperative to be able critically evaluate all information one applies for research.

Besides, relying on the opportunity to copy any material needed, the students deprive themselves of a chance to learn some basic skills of working with the original text, such as taking notes and summarizing. Even if notes are taken, they can be quite careless due to the lack of student's awareness; thus, there remains a chance that at a later stage students fail to distinguish clearly between a word-by-word citation and their own paraphrased wording. Besides, very often the students record the bibliographic description of a source inaccurately, so they cannot find the original later to check their writing for proper citation.

Thus, the factors mentioned depend on humanitarian skills the students have to master, and this is where the ESP teachers could bring themselves in.

Pedagogical Implications.

The National ESP Curriculum for Universities (2005) subscribed to the practical aim of proposing learners to acquire professional and functional communicative

competence in English by integrating language skills and knowledge [4]. Any professionally-oriented and skills-based ESP course should be organized according to generic job-related skills required in a variety of professional areas and situations which determine definite types of language behavior. A skill of being able to write without stealing somebody's words and ideas proves to be indispensable for modern professionals competent enough to phrase their ideas critically and independently. In fact, mediating language activities, such as reprocessing a source text by means of paraphrasing, summary or record, are typical of normal linguistic functioning in the professional environment.

The fight against plagiarism may start in the ESP classroom with developing general language competencies. Among them is declarative socio-cultural knowledge [2] which deals with values, beliefs and attitudes, and which in our case is to raise learners' awareness of what type of behavior is accepted or is unacceptable in the globalized academic/professional culture, how the Ukrainian academic tradition differs from or similar to that of the Western countries. Now, when the academic mobility has become the usual practice in the leading Ukrainian universities, the learners' practical skills and know-how are to include the ability to act in accordance with the relevant types of convention set out by a certain culture and to perform the expected routines, in so far as it is considered appropriate by the international academic community.

Skill-oriented language classes also have the opportunity to develop the learners' heuristic skills, which include their ability to appropriate new academic language experience and to find, understand and convey new information, as well as the ability to use new technologies (e.g. by searching for information in databases, hypertexts, etc.) by critically evaluating their content.

While raising the students' awareness of plagiarism it is the task of the ESP teachers to debunk the learners' misconceptions concerning plagiarism. With Ukrainian collectivism the first step is to promote the idea that plagiarism involves stealing or absence of attribution for someone else's words and ideas. Unfortunately, the learners in this country hardly differentiate between the data in the public domain

and the information that is someone's intellectual property, or copyright, and thus requires proper attribution. The students should also be taught to distinguish what materials, facts, and ideas are considered common knowledge, and may be left without references. It is especially essential for online information, as it is often perceived as public knowledge and is not properly referenced.

In order to arm the ESP learners with the transferable skills that will help them avoid plagiarism the teachers should focus on training the skills of note-taking, summarizing, and paraphrasing. These skills often remain beyond the classroom attention in this country because the learners do not feel any immediate need in being able to take notes in English, as English is still rare as a means of instruction at Ukrainian universities. Moreover, note-taking, for example, is included in the descriptors of the language competence only at the level B1 (*"Can take notes as a list of key points during a straightforward lecture, provided the topic is familiar, and the talk is both formulated in simple language and delivered in clearly articulated standard speech."*); the same is true for the skills of text processing: *"Can paraphrase short written passages in a simple fashion, using the original text wording and ordering. Can pick out and reproduce key words and phrases or short sentences from a short text within the learner's limited competence and experience"* [2, p. 96]. This may also explain the low level of these skills among Ukrainian students, for many of whom the level B1 is not the one to start higher education with, but the target to be attained by the graduation time.

At the same time it should not be forgotten that according to the National higher education standard the target level of language competence for bachelors is B2 [4, p.9], which, in terms of processing the source text, means that the learner should be able to *"take notes on points which strike him/her as important, <...> which are precise enough for his/her own use at a later date, provided the topic is within his/her field of interest and the talk is clear and well-structured,"* and to *"summarise extracts from news items, interviews or documentaries containing opinions, argument and discussion <,...> collate short pieces of information from several sources and summarise them for somebody else"* [2, p. 96]. Besides, to support these skills the

learners have to have a sufficient range of language to phrase the main points in an idea or problem with reasonable precision. So, however distant the need to process a source text in the foreign language may seem to a student, the ESP teacher's efforts on raising the students' awareness of the plagiarism issue are sure to bring additional benefits for the EAP/ESP learning process:

- critical thinking skills in reading;
- language productive skills in summarising and note-taking;
- a wider lexical and syntactical repertoire of a learner;
- developed compensation strategies in language production.

The lack of awareness and training in productive text-processing skills mentioned above can also be explained by the fact that ESP classes at universities are usually focused on speaking and receptive skills development and do not involve academic research writing. Thus, the ESP teachers' activity on developing the learners' skills to prevent plagiarism would benefit greatly from integration of language and content instruction. Team-teaching as the highest level of collaboration of the subject specialist and the English tutor while teaching self-contained courses is considered to be "ideal" for learners' overall professional development [3]. It is also essential to bridging the gap between foreign language theoretical competencies mentioned above and students' immediate needs by means of simulating the authentic academic communication environment in the non-English-dominated countries. Even though Ukrainian students do not study at the university in English, universal text-processing skills acquired on the ESP course will help them produce competent discourse in any language within the convention that is considered appropriate by the international academic community.

Conclusions.

Summing up, this paper was to prove that the skills-based EAP/ESP university course has a significant potential for helping students avoid plagiarism in their assignments. With the overall number of humanities being rather limited in the Ukrainian non-linguistic universities, an ESP course may raise the learners' general awareness of the causes and features of plagiarism and empower them with the

competences and skills to produce the professional discourse in any language of communication. The ESP teachers can back up the specialist subject lecturers by teaching the students the internationally accepted procedures and routines of referencing and processing the subject-specific information, thus widening the sources of data the learners can competently use and raising the students' motivation to apply English for actual professional communication.

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