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AGE PECULIARITIES OF THE I-II YEAR STUDENTS AND TEACHING SPEAKING TO ESP STUDENTS

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У статті розглядаються психологічні характеристики студентів 1-го та 2-го курсів, а також наводяться результати опитування, проведеного у 2010–2011 навчальному році. Мета опитування – з'ясувати фактори, завдяки яким студенти юридичної спеціальності говорять англійською мовою більш впевнено та правильно.

Ключові слова: англійська мова для професійних цілей, студенти юридичної спеціальності, впевненість у собі.

В статье рассматриваются психологические характеристики студентов 1-го и 2-го курса. Тут же представлены результаты опроса, проведенного в 2010–2011 учебном году. Цель опроса – выявить факторы, благодаря которым студенты юридической специальности беседуют на английском языке более уверенно и правильно.

Ключевые слова: английский язык для профессиональных целей, студенты юридической специальности, уверенность в себе.

The article is a discussion of age peculiarities of the first and second year students. It presents the results of a survey conducted in the 2010–2011 academic year. The purpose of the survey was to understand the factors that help law students to speak accurately and with self-confidence.

Key words: ESP, law students, self-confidence.

The whole way of human development consists of different sections. Each section is characterized by definite peculiarities. Internal as well as external factors affect age peculiarities. The change of existing connections between these factors causes transfer to the following age group and new characteristic features are acquired (Gogichaishvili, 2005 : 59; Nepomniashchaia, 1977 : 41–42). While teaching it is necessary to take into consideration students' age peculiarities, together with their language proficiency level and sociocultural, political or institutional contexts of teaching (Brown, 2007 : 100–101).

Nowadays, in Georgia any person can become a student at the age of 18. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is taught to the first and second year students. For this reason, it is very important to pay attention to the psychological peculiarities of 18 and above year old students.

Various scientists distinguish different age groups. Harmer (2007) differentiates the following groups of learners: children, young learners, adolescents, young adults and adults. Adolescence is characterized by physical and emotional changes. This age group is comprised of students whose ages range from 12 to 17, whereas young adults are considered to be from 16 to 20 (Harmer, 2007). Brown (2007) distinguishes three main groups of learners: children, young adults

or teens and adults. Young adults or teens are thought to be from 12 to 18 or so. The following age group is mentioned as adults. The author defines adults as “persons beyond the age of puberty” (Brown, 2007: 101–106). According to Brown's (2007) age groups, the first and second year students belong to “young adults” and “adults” age groups. Hence, it is essential to take both sets of age group characteristics into consideration.

Brown (2007) describes young adults (12–18 year-old learners) as “terrible teens” and defines this age as the age of “transition, confusion, self-consciousness, growth, and changing bodies and minds” (p. 106). Learners of this age worry about their appearance, being accepted or even about a weekend party. Learners of this age begin to use abstract operational thinking. They can solve problems with the help of logical thinking. The success of their performance is a factor of the attention that learners pay to the task. Young adults' attention spans increase, though their attention can easily be diverted because of different factors existing in their lives. Young learners are ultrasensitive, therefore teachers should:

- avoid embarrassment of students at all costs,
- appreciate each person's talents and strengths,
- allow mistakes, errors to be accepted,

- de-emphasize competition between classmates, and
- encourage small-group work where risks can be taken more easily by a teen (Brown, 2007 : 106).

Persons whose ages range from 18 to 20 are mentioned as adolescents by Asatiani (2008). According to Asatiani (2008), there is a vital difference between the first and the final year students. The author claims that beginner students are more enthusiastic than final year students. First year students are already aware of their learning goals. Their consciousness increases when they gain knowledge of their most wanted profession and choose subjects (Asatiani, 2008 : 319).

Adults are mentally developed persons. Their cognitive ability achieves its highest level. They use deductive processes with ease. They are capable of performing abstract thinking. Adult learners are able to focus their attention on the material that serves their future objectives (Brown, 2007: 101–105).

Adult learners are not always obedient. Sometimes they act impulsively. Besides, students have a sense of freedom. This may lead to several problems and hamper the learning process (Asatiani, 2008 : 316-319). Teachers have to be aware of how to avoid this type of problems or respond to them appropriately. Brown (2007) presents several “do’s” and “don’ts” that adults’ teacher should follow:

- Though adults cannot express complex thinking in the new language, they are nevertheless intelligent grown-ups with mature cognition and fully developed emotions. Show respect for the deeper thoughts and feelings;
- Don’t treat adults in your class like children;
- Give your students as many opportunities as possible to make choices about what they will do in and out of the classroom;
- Don’t discipline adults in the same way you would children (p. 105).

Adults may also have strong views. In this case teachers have to take them into consideration (Harmer, 2007 : 15).

Adult learners have high self-confidence, though we should remember that they are still shy. Their level of

shyness can be equal to or greater than that of children (Brown, 2007 : 104). Sometimes students’ negative learning experience that happened in the past may hamper their learning progress (Harmer, 2007 : 15). From my point of view, these two factors, shyness and negative experiences, significantly hinder students in speaking the foreign language.

In the academic year of 2010–2011 we conducted a survey. The purpose of the survey was to understand the factors that help students of the Law Faculty to speak accurately and with self-confidence. We asked the first and second year students learning English for Law to fill in a questionnaire. In total, 42 students from two Georgian state universities completed the questionnaire. The results showed that:

- Law Faculty students speak accurately and with self-confidence when they have short-term period or group work before public speaking (56% of respondents);
- 35% of law students mentioned other factors, including regular practice in speaking and speaking with native speakers.
- 4% of law students usually speak accurately and confidently in public.

The final figure might be caused by the high language proficiency level.

In conclusion, the first and second year students are intelligent and mentally developed grown-ups. They have longer attention spans and can focus on material that does not hold immediate rewards. First and second year students are highly motivated enthusiasts. Students of this age have clear academic goals and definite views on learning. The first and second year students are self-confident and have a sense of freedom. However, they are quite shy. Consequently, teachers have to be aware of the age peculiarities and take them into consideration as much as possible. To avoid factors that hamper speaking English, teachers should encourage teacher-student, as well as student-student interaction, use small – group work and design speaking activities on the basis of familiar and controversial events. Thus, teachers will be able to avoid student shyness and actively involve them in speaking activities.

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