

# Multilingualism and Internationalization of ESP Aspects at the Northern (Arctic) Federal University, Archangelsk, RF

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**Abstract.** *The objective of the research is to outline the modern multilingualism and internationalization issues of the educational process through the practical implementation of the new ESP ideas at the Northern (Arctic) Federal University. We pay special attention to the key foreign language competencies and skills development of future professionals. The experimental part of the research included implementation of “The Arctic Quest”, designed by Zhanna Elukova for ESP lessons, and developing criteria for foreign language mastering skills assessment necessary for being involved effectively into the multilingual and cross-cultural educational interaction. The methods used are a pedagogical experiment and the analysis of the experiment results. The results of the research show that implementing Arctic content into ESP lessons and after class activities allows stimulating and motivating the students for the autonomous learning, and involving the undergraduates into the multilingualism education process through ESP class activities.*

**Key words** – *ESP language policy; global and ethnic cultures; Arctic development process; major professional skills; autonomous studies skills; self-assessment skills*\*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Enhancement of the Russian education in terms of globalization implies studying positive mechanisms of the language education implementation. In this context, the multilingualism perspective is significant too. When teaching ESP at the Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov (NArFU) we gained much positive experience concerning major aspects of multilingualism and education internationalization and the acquisition of the foreign language for specific purposes (ESP). The NArFU is an institution of higher education and research, which grants academic degrees in a variety of subjects. The University is located in Archangelsk. It is one of the Federal universities founded in 2009 in Russia.

Curriculum provided by the university is organized in line with the university’s development programme. Therefore, the mission of the university is stated as “...to provide research and human resources for the protection of geopolitical interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic by setting up the lifelong learning system, conducting the Arctic research and innovative technological developments, building strategic partnership with the business community. One of the key strategic goals of the NArFU development is to increase marketability of the university both in Russian and international markets of education and research” [16].

In this connection, the science-oriented activity aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the university and its graduates is currently related to the investigation of multilingualism aspects and internationalization of the NArFU education system. In addition, fundamental principles of its language policy require detailed elaboration and processing with regard to introducing and expanding innovative teaching methods and assessment tools.

After having lectured ESP for more than 20 years, the authors resulted in the deep interest of solving a range of tasks. Firstly, all the indicated points are connected with the need to take into account multinational students’ body in the course of language training. Secondly, interpersonal relationships between students and thus language problems arising because of lingual and cultural differences of students referring to various cultures are an indispensable part of the educational process. Finally, current challenges related to defining the terminology system of the phenomenon of multilingualism and developing procedures of its investigation should be further considered.

Theoretical premises of the research aims are fully consistent with the fundamental principles of the NArFU language policy. Percentage of foreign students from CIS countries<sup>†</sup> is constantly rising and their geography (Kazakhstan, Belorussia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan,

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<sup>†</sup>CIS – The Commonwealth of Independent States formed when the former Soviet Union totally dissolved in 1991. It consisted of ten former Soviet Republics: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and other states.

Moldova, Ukraine, Turkey, Peru, Iceland, Sudan, Nigeria, India, China and other countries) varies increasingly. The reason for that is the students' and states' growing intention for being involved into the educational collaboration.

The undertaken research would provide the algorithm for creating an efficient multilingual educational community at the university. While carrying out the experiment we consider the ESP interaction in the Arctic context as one of the significant factors of preventing aggression and the cross-cultural misunderstanding, minimizing culture shock and technology risks, and globally, terrorism. Consequently, the interaction medium is referred to as an element of the global environment.

Several rather complex educational tasks arise in terms of multilingual interaction control. In this concern, there is a problem of maintaining a balance between erasing national boundaries on the one hand, and preserving the ethnic identity of the international participants of the educational process without damage to future professional activity of the NArFU graduates on the other hand.

To make the multilingual community of a modern university more efficient some issues should be taken into consideration. First of all, it is necessary to elaborate the analysis criteria of students' key language competencies. The language skills development is to be paid special attention too. Moreover, the geography-specific component should be considered in the University curriculum. The specially designed language materials are to be implemented into the everyday ESP teaching and learning practice. Therefore, all the above mentioned could help to meet the University curriculum requirements and integrate foreign students more smoothly.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Today it has become obvious that more than half of the world population use two or more languages for everyday communication, training and solving many professional tasks. As a result, the beginning of the XXI century was marked by the summing up of numerous discussions and debates covering the issues of multilingualism in general, and internationalization of both the international education processes and local ones in particular.

The discussion issues that relate to developing linguistic diversity, careful preservation of the intangible heritage of peoples, as well as the applying of the fair language policy principles have a clear tendency to expand [10; 12; 13]. The reason for this, in our opinion, lies in the lack of knowledge of the multilingualism principles as the basis for the integration of the university students in a foreign social, linguistic and educational environment being not authentic for them. Thus, the search for a solution to the problem under discussion continues to attract the attention of Russian and foreign authors over the past 30 years.

Most researchers point out significant difficulties in communication, even if there is a general intermediate language (e.g. English) [2; 17]. According to E. Sapir

“Human beings do not live in the objective world alone or alone in the world of social activity...”. This fact was confirmed by the authors of the article experimentally while developing the criteria for the cognitive activity assessment of the students in the training of ESP at the NArFU [4; 5]. Sapir continues by stating “the fact of the matter is that the ‘real world’ is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language habits of the group...” so, in this context, it is vitally important to take into account the national background of all the participants of the cross-cultural ESP educational process as “the worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached...” [13, p. 69].

It is obvious all the aspects of the NArFU students' national identity influence the ability of being economically advantageous based on strategic competency. It refers to a combination of schemes including stereotypes as well as algorithms or know-how about the possibility of finding a solution process during class training. It means communicative intention performing or choosing behavioural patterns depending on a particular educational and professional situation [1; 7; 8; 11].

The students face the apparent differences in the patterns of the world language picture and the culture codes when they integrate to the new reality, which is not authentic for them, of the global educational space. Often contradictions arise between implicit cultural components of different cultures representatives. A variety of aspects such as traditions, beliefs, rules and norms of behaviour, cultural concepts (attitude to time, leadership, space etc.) are not shared by all participants of the international educational environment [11]. A relative unanimity among modern researchers about notions meaning the language skills (namely foreign language skills) shows that the basis for the development of students' intercultural competence is the ESP skills.

The interest of scientists and researchers to this issue has not arisen recently and has a deep and solid historical background. Appeal to the historical and pedagogical experience of the education development in France in the XVIII century allowed A. Demidovskaya to study the complex of pedagogy aspects, including the genesis of educators' ideas about the purpose of training, the development of its content based on practical feasibility etc. French education of The Enlightenment era influenced the education system formation in European countries as a phenomenon of social history. Moreover, the study of social, political, and cultural environment of education as a pedagogical phenomenon in France in the XVIII century allows us to draw a comparative analogy with this problem in the Russian pedagogy, to reveal ways to resolve the contradiction between the real social status of language training and its formal representation in society [1; 3].

According to a number of researchers, the processes of constantly globalizing modern labour market as the most prominent representative of multilingualism, determine the syllabus in tertiary education institutions and define new

teaching methods and techniques giving students a competitive advantage in their future professional activity [9]. In other words, cross-cultural competence should be understood by a foreign language teacher as a means and a way of managing the knowledge and skills of students, on the one hand, and it is a powerful resource for the formation of a special type of thinking of a student of the XXI century – *critical thinking*, on the other hand.

Monitoring and implementing the above-mentioned priorities in the test tasks in the ESP lessons lead to increased motivation and the need for self-study and autonomous training of students. However, it requires a detailed answer to a number of questions relating to the assessment criteria of various tasks based on specially designed control objects including the evaluation of the content-related and formal components of tasks. Moreover, when problems appear in the process of training for foreign language professional purposes, the students are required to be able to solve them as a kind of individual training autonomous strategy helping to overcome barriers in professional communication and language acquisition.

Thus, a variety of research has been carried out in linguistics as well as in English teaching methodology [2; 9; 13; 14]. The authors of this paper were thereby motivated to put into shape the data that they had racked up before and start a piece of research, to attract attention of the scientific community to multiculturalism in the context of language training.

### III. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The aim of this paper is to implement the practical English test “The Arctic Quest” which had been developed by Zh. Elukova in 2014 [6] into ESP lessons with the students of the NArFU to explicate the competencies corresponding to the quest tasks and to work out the criteria for the assessment of these competencies. The experiment has been conducted by the paper authors and the members of the English Language Department of the NArFU in 2014-2019. Numerous scientific events, career guidance and development measures, tutorial activities and workshops traditionally being held in the NArFU had accompanied this experimental activity.

The experiment participants are junior students whose future professional activity will be related to the priority sectors of the Russian economy and who come from different countries as well as academic staff. The test is aimed at shaping a systemic skill of language competence increase. The key methods, as well as major techniques of analysis used in the research can be divided into two parts: Part 1 – methods of forming “The Arctic Quest” and Part 2 evaluation methods of “The Arctic Quest” interpretation.

#### Part 1

When creating the test, the essential method is stimulating and also motivating the students to autonomous learning. It is very important to involve the undergraduates into the multilingualism education process of the NArFU in accordance with its mission through English class

activities. Therefore, for this purpose the first group of the “The Arctic Quest” tasks is provided with general use terms related to the development of the Arctic region (*polar, circumpolar, icebreaker, freezing* etc.), and also highly specific terms (*permafrost, glacier, hydrocarbon* etc.) which are absolutely indispensable for understanding special processes.

The proper name Norway is included in this group because an important geopolitical aspect is reflected with it. Awareness of the Arctic strategies of the circumpolar states laying a claim to priority of the Arctic development is the need of the hour. Moreover, Norway is one of the contenders for Arctic mineral reserves having ambitions to extract hydrocarbons. This Arctic European country which is located on the northern and western coastline of Scandinavia, on the Norwegian Sea and the Arctic Ocean, historically puts education, personal development and individuality expressing at the top of state priorities.

Confirmation of this view comes from various scientific researches as, in particular, one of M. Koptyaeva (Kalinina) where she studies the gender-inclusive historical background of creative potential developing of the Norwegians. It is emphasized by the researcher that the impetus for broadening of horizons of Norwegian youth is their desire to obtain highly qualified education [8].

Special emphasis was put on the structure of the Arctic quest. The test includes 4 groups of tasks presenting the level of students’ morphosyntactic, lexical, grammatic, and also translation skills.

The first task (Task 1) – *Word Grid Quiz* – comprises word searching relating to the Arctic in the grid offered. The words are written horizontally and vertically.

The second task (Task 2) – *Matching the photos with the names* – focuses on matching a number of the Arctic explorers’ photos to their names. Among the explorers Julius Johannes Ludovicus von Payer, Matthew Alexander Henson, Willem Barentsz, Roald Engelbregt Gravning Amundsen, Artur Nikolayevich Chilingarov and others are mentioned. The undergraduates are required to share knowledge acquired while dealing with the task with their groupmates within the classroom interaction or reporting activities.

The third task (Task 3) – *Completing the puzzle* – includes crossword doing, e.g., ... *the most abundant element in the universe accounting for 75% of the mass of stars and galaxies is ...*, or... *a temperature scale used in the English-speaking world and parts of Europe, having the melting point of ice at 32 degrees and the boiling point of water at 212 degrees under standard conditions is ...etc.*

The fourth task (Task 4) is an activity where the test-takers are proposed to create the Arctic parable – *writing their own 250 word short story that illustrates a lesson or moral using the patterns given*. Performing this type of activity demands internal encoding of writing skills according to the algorithm provided for the students. This task comprises 6 paragraphs and is structured as follows:

Paragraph 1: The Opener (Starting the story with one sentence), e.g. *“There once was a ..... who... or...Once upon a time .....”*;

Paragraph 2: The Problem (Explaining what challenge your main character has, or what he / she / it would like to change in their lives);

Paragraph 3: First Action (Showing how your character acted and what he / she / it did particularly to find the problem solution or to get what he / she / it wanted);

Paragraph 4: Something Unexpected (Describing the way how the Initial Action led to an unexpected / sudden / unforeseen consequence);

Paragraph 5: The Big Result (Because of the unexpected / sudden / unforeseen consequence in paragraph 4, there will be long-term results)

Paragraph 6: Your parable should have a moral (principles and beliefs concerning right and wrong behaviour from your viewpoint), the lesson that can be easily taken from your parable.

#### Part 2

A wide range of standard methods has been used to evaluate “The Arctic Quest”, including questionnaire survey orally as well as in writing, interviewing learners and academic staff. Moreover, such techniques as observation, description, comparison and other methods of evaluation have been applied while the test assessing.

Summarizing the results of “The Arctic Quest” demands the use of methods which would be more efficient in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at the University. To make it easier to understand the evaluation process further stages of “The Arctic Quest” analysis will be studied and interpreted in more detail.

Stage I – the test is read and evaluated by a teacher and preliminary results are formulated according to meeting the criteria (the tasks mentioned above by which the test may be judged). The test mustn’t fail to meet the requirements of written lexical and grammatical student works in accordance with the Russian Standards of Higher Education.

Stage II – an evaluation and assessment activity of the learners is expected on this stage. The undergraduates are invited to check and evaluate the creative part of “The Arctic Quest” (Task 4 – creating the Arctic parable) of their groupmates. The evaluation criteria must be taken into consideration. Firstly, the test-takers are required to assess whether their groupmates can perform their own assessment of the other students’ information processing abilities. Moreover, they are offered to justify their opinion. Secondly, the “assessors” should notice whether the main idea is highlighted by their partners and which fragments of the parable might focus on this. Thus, explanatory and illustrative methods of analysis are used.

Stage III – a conversation (group discussion, that includes talking stirring up a dispute over the most complicated moments of “The Arctic Quest”). Summing

up is an integral part of the discussion. The students are expected to demonstrate the ability to use a problem-solving method of analysis and also a searching method. The activity mentioned above launches the beginning of research methods of analysis that are widely used in senior courses.

The use of all the methods of assessment simultaneously might be hardly possible and unnecessary. A more complicated task to establish a certain priority of the methods used to optimize the education process at the NArFU arises from “The Arctic Quest” evaluation process.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The experiment described started with the participation in the annual education event “The NArFU Youth Science Month” as its integral part [15]. The authors of the research and also the students whose future occupation is related to priority sectors of the Russian Economy took part in the event. A number of issues related to the central role of young engineers in the development of the Arctic were being discussed in the frame of the Round Table with particular emphasis on the Arctic vector of the NArFU development.

The Arctic vector is becoming a fundamental direction of the NArFU education policy. Special attention was paid to the graduates whose future job is connected with priority areas of the Russian economy being successful in solving the problem of highly qualified personnel lack in a range of fields such as mining, industrial and civil construction, sustainable yield forest management, shipbuilding and ship repairing and other significant spheres of the Arctic North development.

A priori, the use of English is regarded as an efficient tool of multicultural professional Arctic interaction and an important factor of dealing with problems. As a result, an idea of organizing a specific measure started up. Special attention was paid to its regular character as well as to scientific, methodical and educational manner. A suggestion was made about the name of the event: “The Round Table” on “The Importance of Engineers in the Arctic Development”. “The Round Table” was aimed at solving general education issues the academic staff and the student body face. Besides, it was designed to contribute to improving the level of language competence of the abovementioned students, first of all. Moreover, the task was to expand their professional horizons, as well as to encourage them in their linguistic potential application aiming at the development of general and professional linguistic proficiency in the NArFU education process.

During this experiment the students were required to perform a test in English (“The Arctic Quest”) to become the participants of “The Round Table”. Thus, the students had to accumulate related knowledge and their own Arctic background knowledge. Also, they were to improve their level of linguistic proficiency.

Starting from 2016 all the junior students were offered “The Arctic Quest”. This activity had become a significant

moment of the linguistic proficiency improvement measures of the volunteers that took part in the first Arctic Forum “Arctic – the territory of dialogue”, held at the NArFU in 2017. It allowed the undergraduates volunteering for the Forum to be involved in the multilingual interaction activity happening within the international event.

So far as “The Arctic Quest” evaluation criteria determine its analysis, a set of criteria for assessing “The Arctic Quest” was developed by the authors of the research. The criteria were being developed with regard to the latest Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education. In addition, the criteria were being adjusted annually in accordance with the changes made to the state and the University education standards. As a result, 16 objects of the evaluation were selected as shown in Table 1 demonstrating a combination of skills, competencies and abilities depending upon “The Arctic Quest” stages of assessing and its tasks.

TABLE 1. DEPENDENCE OF SKILLS, COMPETENCIES AND ABILITIES UPON “THE ARCTIC QUEST” STAGES OF ASSESSMENT

№	Skills, Competencies and Abilities	№ Stage	№ Task
1	Linguistic competencies (literacy) (morphosyntactic, lexical and grammatical, phonetic)	II, III	1,3,4
2	Linguistic and cultural competency	II, III	1, 2, 3,4
3	Linguistic performance competency	III	4
4	Strategic competency	II, III	2, 3,4
5	Professional activity in multicultural environment learned behaviour	II, III	4
6	Intrinsic motivation for autonomous education skill	II, III	1, 2, 3,4
7	Critical thinking skill	II, III	1, 2, 3,4
8	Target – result bringing into correlation competency	II, III	1, 2, 3,4
9	The ability of being socially involved in a multicultural context	I, II, III	1, 2, 3,4
10	Cultural awareness and tolerance skill	II, III	2, 4
11	Ethical and moral values skill	II, III	2, 4
12	Self-confession skill	II, III	4
13	Cultural identity background skill	II, III	4
14	Autonomous learning formation skill	I, II, III	1, 2, 3,4
15	Core value development skill	II, III	4
16	Project proficiency skill	II, III	4

The article includes a fragment (see the parable below) from students’ Arctic Quest (particularly those by Power Engineering students) papers. The parable was chosen deliberately as the group of students is nationally heterogeneous (they came from Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, etc.). The students’ papers had neither been corrected nor added. The core purpose was to let them be free to express

their viewpoints without hesitating and think critically when performing the task. Moreover, at Stage III (conversation, group discussion, that includes talking stirring up a dispute over the most complicated moments of “The Arctic Quest”) the students had to correct their groupmates’ mistakes.

#### Parable

*There was a wolf in the Arctic. He lived through hunting, but suddenly he had the idea that he did not want to kill other animals for the sake of his survival. The wolf wanted to honestly earn his bread. He needed to find a job. But there was no work in the Arctic. Therefore, the wolf decided to move, as he knew that he did not know where to go, because he did not know the geography. He went to his friend bear, ask for advice. The bear gave him a compass, explained how to use it and sent it east, saying that there is work there just for the wolf. The wolf walked for a long time, where the compass needle showed, for a very long time, and almost despairing, he saw a settlement of people. Without knowing the language of people, he was afraid to approach them, but he felt that his work was waiting for him here. The wolf crept up and began to listen to what they were saying. Patiently waited until I learned the language. And when the hunger completely tortured, the wolf gently went to them and tried to talk. His speech was not understandable to people, but they were surprised at such a humble wolf. People showed on the sledge and the wolf understood what they wanted. He still found a job and paid him, in fact, what would be spent on food. So the wolf thanks to the patience and dedication found what he wanted.*

The practical significance of the main results of the work is expressed in the following highlights, which, in turn, can be interpreted as a starting point for new research in the field of multilingualism. When developing a methodology for studying multilingualism, the solution to emerging language problems arising from cross-cultural characteristics of students from different cultures comes to the fore. To some extent, the use of an intermediate language (English) and a common global theme (the Arctic exploration) contributes to the formation of a global picture of the world.

As a result of the implementation of “The Arctic Quest” by the students whose future professional activity will be related to the priority sectors of the Russian economy, the level of their cross-cultural competence in the field of the Arctic subjects has significantly increased. Specific terminology mentioned in “The Arctic Quest” being a part of the current curriculum at the NArFU is an integral element of the most courses trained nowadays. It is significant since many of the NArFU courses have strong northern focus and provide students with important knowledge in the field of the Arctic subjects.

Evaluation and interpretation of the students’ “Arctic parables” showed the test-takers had used such grammatical structures that are typical for the task. For example, *once upon a time there lived / was, once there lived/was* (introduction); *if you don’t do, no one else will do this, if we have..., we will do...* (conclusion – moral), and

also vocabulary having Arctic meanings or related to the Arctic subjects (e.g. *frost, ice, snow, snowman, polar bear, seagull*). On this evidence, we came to the conclusion that the junior engineering undergraduates' lexical and grammatical skills of monologic speech producing, in the written form included, is formed to the right degree.

According to the majority of students, the test helped to develop the necessary competencies and skills (See Table 1) of future professional activity in a foreign language, in particular, key information-processing skills, autonomous studies skills, and self-assessment skills. Monitoring and assessing activities of junior students form a steady self-assessment skill at senior courses. Students learn to record progress and get motivated to further self-study.

If junior learners have sufficient vocabulary and professional discussion algorithms formed at the early stages of education, they can much easier participate in educational exchange programs and take an active part in conferences, symposia and other educational events, with English as a working language.

Such events may be, for example, the traditional week of "The Arctic Science Summit Week" in 2019, which includes a discussion of the numerous issues in the Arctic interaction. As a rule, the agenda of this event is quite extensive. It includes the Arctic security issues and psychological problems of a person, and, in particular, the group isolation impact. At the same time, it is necessary to mention such expedition as "The Arctic Floating University", which unites students, graduate students, Russian and foreign scientists – representatives of various educational institutions, where students are provided with a unique opportunity to learn about the above mentioned Arctic subjects in practice.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

In the modern multilingualism and internationalization context of the educational processes the development of the key competencies and skills of the future professional activity of students in a foreign language becomes relevant. Special attention should be paid to the ways and methods of the effective integration of the multinational students into a multilingual educational environment of the educational institutions.

"The Arctic Quest" performing showed the modern multilingual community of the NArFU influents efficiently the cross-cultural interaction in the academic medium. A set of criteria for assessing "The Arctic Quest" was developed by the authors according to the latest Federal State and the University Educational Standards of Higher Education. Grading in English was seen as a natural way and also an effective tool to integrate international students into the NArFU educational process.

The practical results of the experiment can be adopted by colleagues in the process of developing work programs for a foreign language at the university. The subject of the "The Arctic Quest" adequately reflects the content of teaching English in the NArFU and corresponds to the mission of the university. Criteria for evaluating the test

can be taken into account when forming the terminological apparatus of the phenomenon of multilingualism and the internationalization of the educational process. The materials of "The Arctic Quest" can be actively used in the study of practical aspects of professional linguistics, in particular, in the study of professional terminology in English related to the development of the Arctic.

The volume of the student's initial linguistic knowledge, the particularities of their culture knowledge as well as the controversial concepts of their picture of the world shape the modern teachers working in the field of ESP practice. The task of forming the student's necessary skills through tasks similar to "The Arctic Quest" with the subsequent access to more advanced levels of proficiency in English is an integrative part of the ESP multilingual communication. Thus, taking into consideration the basic criteria for assessing the quality of the student performance in terms of multilingualism makes it easier to find and define the modern context of teaching foreign languages for specific purposes (ESP).

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