



Get ready for EURO 2012

THE WEEK OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AT POZNAŃ UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

As the European Football Championships are approaching there are more and more initiatives aimed at celebrating the event and therefore the Department of Modern Languages at Poznań University of Technology has decided to join in and present the importance of learning foreign languages and using them in practice. That is why from 28 May to 31 May "The Week of Foreign Languages - Get Ready for EURO 2012" was held, organized by the employees of the Department of Foreign Languages in cooperation with FIJED Foundation for Quality in Education, Association of Academic Foreign Languages Centers SERMO, Polish Association for Standards in English PASE and the International Advertising Association in Poland. These celebrations were part of a countrywide social campaign "Language is the basis. Learn languages."

The employees of the department decided to organize actions "Let's Play", "Let's Talk" and "Let's Check" in two most commonly taught languages: English and German.

28 and 30 May were devoted to quizzes, riddles and tests of general and sports knowledge in English and German prepared by language teachers under the supervision of Ms Izabela Cichocka, M.A. and Ms Iwona Flieger, M.A. In the Lecture Centre a stand was organized and decorated with posters, photos of the stadiums and sports equipment. Everyone who took part in competitions was awarded a special sticker with the writing "English" or "Deutsch" on it. The aim of this action was to encourage participants to show their language skills. It is also hoped that people will wear the stickers and help foreign tourists during EURO 2012.

29 and 31 May were "Let's Check" days, which means that everyone who enrolled could pass an online test in English and German and obtain a free certificate from the Department of Modern Languages. The tests were organized by Ms Edyta Olejarczuk (English) and Mr Michał Lichocki (German). This initiative was met with great interest by our students and university employees and was a great success.

To sum up, the Week of foreign Languages was an opportunity to practice using foreign languages in a fun and informal way. The organizers hope that it has promoted the use of foreign languages and EURO 2012 Championships.



at Poznań University of Technology

BULATS test is used by many of the world's leading professional and commercial organisations. The test offers a quick and reliable way of assessing the language ability of groups of students. It was introduced at Poznań University of Technology in January 2012. It can be used as a placement test, to measure progress or as preparation for studying abroad.

It has become very popular among students of PUT for many reasons. One of them is that it is a computer-adaptive test, which means that the computer selects questions according to how well the candidate answers previous questions and generates results immediately when the test is finished. Time required for the test is maximum 75 minutes but it usually takes no longer than 60 minutes. Test components that are available at Poznań University of Technology are Listening, Reading and Language Knowledge. What is worth mentioning is that when a student passes the test at level B2 or higher in terms of the six levels of the Council of Europe Framework (A1-C2), he/she is excused from taking the writing part of the final exam of English and automatically gets an A grade.

There were three sessions of BULATS test organized by the Department of Modern Languages at Poznań University of

Technology in April and May, 2012. The total number of students taking the test was 34. Most of them were students studying Information Technology who passed the test at levels B2 and higher. This means that there are more and more students whose level of speaking English is fluent and we are very glad about this fact.

We are planning to conduct BULATS tests in the academic year 2012/2013. All BULATS tests are available not only in

English but also in Spanish, German and French. Therefore, we encourage all students to take the test, especially those who desire to assess their language skills and those who would like to demonstrate their language ability to potential employers.

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W O R K S H O P 7 - 1 1 M A Y , 2 0 1 2 :

PROFESSIONAL WRITING IN ENGLISH

Diane Boehm, Director of the University Writing Program at Saginaw Valley State University, Michigan, USA, gave a workshop titled "Professional Writing in English" for our university staff. She agreed to give an interview after the workshop.

Here is the interview with Diane Boehm:

**Lilianna Anioła-Jędrzejek (LAJ):
This isn't the first workshop on
improving writing skills that
you've given at Poznan University
of Technology, is it?**

Diane Boehm (DB): I've done similar faculty and staff workshops twice previously. As PUT has expanded its English-language courses and more faculty and staff wish to write and publish in English, I'm happy to be a resource for them. I've also given feedback on multiple grant-funded projects, so I've learned a lot about Polish users of English.

**LAJ: What was your focus this
time? Was it based on your**

**experience and feedback after the
previous workshops?**

DB: Previous workshops have always had a very diverse group in terms of language expertise, courses taught, and age and background, so my goal was to provide a framework that would offer valuable perspectives to all the participants. The workshops had two sessions each day: the first presented perspectives on writing in the sciences and technical fields, the second focused on English grammar and usage.

**LAJ: What were your steps of
preparation for the workshop?
Can you share your procedure?**

**I think it might be helpful in
general for any of us, who have
to give extended series of lectures
and/or workshops.**

DB: For the writing in the sciences sessions, I began by reading three recently-published books on technical and scientific writing, to be sure my information was current. This, along with some suggestions based on your seminars, helped me decide what to include in the workshop. Then I sought out some excellent models of scientific communication, so we could use these as examples (I think of these as "mentor texts"). I used online TED talks and journal articles from Donald Sadoway at MIT; video and an article from Sandra Postel, a world expert on water issues; and examples from some of my SVSU colleagues like engineering professor Alan Freed, physics professor Matthew Vanette, and chemistry professor Ken Kearns. This gave us a wide range of styles and documents: professional papers, business correspondence, abstracts, proposals, and multimedia presentations.

For the second sessions, focused on grammar and usage, I worked from the

research you and I have done to identify typical errors of Polish speakers writing in English. The attached chart was the basis of these workshops, as I focused on those issues that create the most difficulty (e.g., word order, coherence and connectives, it vs. this, articles, active and passive voice, use of semicolons, etc.)

LAJ: Which of those worked the best?

DB: Given the wide range of participants, I'm guessing what was most useful varied from one person to the next. People enjoyed getting answers to their personal questions.

LAJ: Which of the themes of the workshop worked out the best?

DB: What was most useful, I think, was to help participants recognize that writing is not about following a set of rules. Writing begins with having something valuable to say. It builds from a dialogue between our conscious and subconscious mind. As this dialogue continues, we clarify what message we wish to communicate and we get ideas down on paper. As our content develops, we revise the way we express our ideas: adding, deleting, rearranging, rewording. When we have said what we wished to say, we then begin to revise our language to make it more effective. Strong writers know their "pattern errors," the errors they are most likely to make, and develop strategies to address them. "Rules" will vary according to the type of publication, the purpose, the audience: sometimes passive voice will be appropriate -- at other times it will create wordy and awkward constructions; in most instances in American English, contractions are completely appropriate -- but in British English more formality is expected. So effective writing is shaped by our rhetorical situation: our audience, our purpose, our context.

LAJ: What was the most difficult/toughest element of the workshop for you?

DB: The biggest challenge was to be ready to answer any questions that

might come to me. In the case of articles, for example, I used a PowerPoint that illustrated how challenging articles can be, even for someone who has a lot of experience writing in English. English has enough inconsistencies and variations that there is NO rule that can govern all situations! My native speaker's ear makes articles easy for me; they will never be as easy for someone learning English as an adult.

LAJ: We've identified typical pattern errors Polish writers make and created a template. You've come across writing texts of other nationalities. Can you find a common area which most nations are likely to struggle with?

DB: Linguists and psychologists have found that when we are children, we are capable of learning any language; during adolescence, however, our brain begins to discard those language features we no longer use. Thus writers from any language who learn another language after adolescence are likely to struggle with those aspects of the new language that are most different from their native tongue. Their first language will cause interference with the new language, and they will "write with an accent." A native speaker is likely to recognize immediately that this other person's writing has something "different" about it, but may not know how or why those differences exist. Once second language writers begin to identify and recognize the error patterns, they can develop their personal radar to pay attention to those aspects when writing.

LAJ: Did you get any feedback from the participants?

DB: People are always very kind! They expressed appreciation for the fact that I helped them see "the larger picture" of professional writing, rather than just drilling them on rules. I have also given online feedback to several participants since the workshops, so the dialogue continues.

LAJ: This workshop was held on Piotrowo campus premises

in several buildings. What are your impressions concerning our teaching environment? Have you observed any changes since your first visit? How would you compare your university with ours?

DB: The new classrooms are a joy to teach in; I very much like architecture that uses wood and glass to create a light and natural environment. The one thing I wasn't accustomed to was having to bring a laptop to every classroom. I usually teach in classrooms that have instructor podiums with computers and projection systems built right in. Fortunately, Henryk Szymanski and the technology people made sure I had what I needed.

LAJ: And the last question: What is one piece of advice that you give Polish writers of scientific English?

DB: Get feedback on your writing and learn to know yourself as a writer. Don't worry about errors with early drafts; just give your ideas time to develop. Then identify your strengths as well as your pattern errors when you edit; that will enable you to approach errors more systematically. And don't worry too much about writing with an accent -- nearly all of us do so when we cross language boundaries. If you care about your writing and have something valuable to say, it's likely that your reader will pay more attention to your ideas than to an occasional error. Communication is what matters -- not technical perfection!

LAJ: Thank you very much for sharing with us your methods and observations. We hope to see you in the future again.

Template for Self-Analysis of Common Errors in English that Occur With Speakers of Polish

Category	English	Polish	Error Examples	Correction
Sentence structure errors				
Typical errors: Word order Placement of adverbs Use of prepositional phrases	SVO (Subject Verb Object) standard word order conveys meaning Adverbs and prepositional phrases have defined positions in a sentence	*Variable word order; inflections of nouns and conjugations of verbs convey meaning *Placement and use of adverbs and prepositional phrases becomes a problem *This/it interchangeable in subject position	*We will have tomorrow an exam in Room 202. *Am going to the movies. *The correct configuration requires usually a few attempts. *It proves that procedures worked correctly.	We will have an exam tomorrow in Room 202. / Tomorrow we will have an exam in Room 202. I am going to the movies. The correct configuration usually requires a few attempts. This proves that procedures worked correctly.
Grammar errors				
Verb errors: Verb forms and tenses Modals and linking verbs Passive voice Phrasal verbs (e.g., sign up, put up with)	Verb conjugations must often be learned individually, since there are many irregular verbs (e.g., go, went, gone) Passive voice often used in sciences based on context Phrasal verbs common	*-s endings on verbs are frequently omitted *Use of passive voice is rare *No phrasal verbs	The graph show . . . The paper summarise . . . A few errors are identified.	The graphs show . . . The graph shows . . . The paper summarizes . . . (with American English spelling) Leaders identified several errors. To register, participants will need to fill out this form.
Subject-verb agreement Collective nouns vs. individual nouns Possessives	Subject and verb may be separated in a sentence Collective nouns may be singular or plural, depending on usage Possessive forms vary ('s, s', ')	*All collective nouns are considered singular *Possessives are handled differently	Plenty of fish was caught that morning. The citation in the scientist's paper . . .	Plenty of fish were caught..... The citation in the scientist's paper . . . / The citation in the scientists' paper . . . Both of these are correct, depending on whether scientist refers to one or several
Wrong word errors (e.g., few/several) Collocations (e.g., comparable to)	Usage and connotations of synonyms are part of native speaker understanding Collocations are common	*Fewer synonyms than English *Collocations are frequent, L1 interference regarding the use of prepositions (see last row "other errors")	Explain shortly the function of each part. The process varies depending of designer skills. They attended in the conference.	Briefly explain the function of each part. The process varies depending on designer skills. They attended the conference.
Article errors	A, an, the follow rules, but rules are not easily applied to all situations	*Polish lacks articles	She has worked very hard few last days. Several factors affect the second language acquisition.	She has worked very hard the last few days. Several factors affect second language acquisition.
Spelling and punctuation errors	Many spelling irregularities Semicolons commonplace Commas have defined uses	*Semicolon is rarely used *Commas less commonly used	The results of the study support the hypothesis, however further research is necessary. If this parameter is increased it will affect the efficiency of the process.	The results of the study support the hypothesis; however, further research is necessary. If this parameter is increased, it will affect the efficiency of the process.
Other errors	Prepositional phrases common	Prepositions are used differently	On the party you will meet . . .	At the party you will meet . . .