



## Strategic Significance of English in Self-Education of the Students of Socio-humanitarian Specialities for Fundamentalization of University Education

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### ABSTRACT

The article deals with the English language significance in self-education of the students of socio-humanitarian specialities for fundamentalization of university education. The aim of the article is to track and validate the influence of the English language knowledge on the effectiveness of self-education of a future specialist in the process of fundamentalization of academic learning. Combination of self-education with a high level of knowledge of English for fundamentalization of education at a high school allows students to successfully implement their expertise both in the changing conditions of the modern world and in future professional activities. Our hypothesis that self-education contributes to formation of students' scientific worldview on the basis of critical analysis of contemporary English scientific literature was verified by the experiment which was conducted in November 2017 in the form of a sociological survey of the first year students specializing in "Social Work" on the basis of the Ternopil National Economic University (30 people) and the Ternopil National Pedagogical University (14 people) who studied English at the secondary school. The analysis of the respondents' answers confirmed students' persuasion that reading of professional foreign literature in English would allow to get access to contemporary international scientific achievements in the field of future professional activity, and thus to acquire comprehensive knowledge. The final results of the study convincingly prove that students of both universities read foreign-language professional literature in order to familiarize themselves with modern world achievements in the field of social and human sciences (33.4% of respondents (6 people) in each the group). English is also used for finding useful information to expand own professional outlook (50% of respondents in each group (9 people)). It is concluded that teachers need to direct the educational motivation of students to expand their vocational thinking, as a significant part of respondents are aware of the prospects that knowledge of English may open in acquiring professionally significant information.

## **1. Introduction**

Knowledge of English in the system of professional training serves to meet the requirements of the time. University education plays an important role in the development of modern society and directly affects the competitiveness of future professionals. Students need to use not only domestic but also foreign literary sources to master the latest scientific achievements in the area of future professional activities. Knowledge of English, as the most universal and widespread language, helps to receive and comprehend the latest information about the significant modern world scientific achievements in the rapid conditions of changes in the social life of mankind in a timely manner and to comprehensively integrate the growing flow of professional and scientific information.

The content of the theoretical material in higher education institutions is rapidly becoming obsolete, which causes the delay in students' training in social and human sciences. It is possible to solve the above-mentioned problem by the fundamentalization of education based on the use of knowledge of foreign languages and communicative skills of students. The combination of these components positively affects students' self-education and promotes the adaptation of future specialists to dynamic transformations in social conditions based on the use of universal, general-methodological knowledge and skills (Semerikov 2009). Those students, who combined their self-education with a high level of knowledge of English in the conditions of fundamentalization of university education, could become professionals in the future. Therefore, our goal is to comprehensively track and validate the influence of the English language knowledge on the effectiveness of the self-education of a future specialist in the process of fundamentalization of academic learning.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Fundamentalization of university education**

Fundamentalization of university education plays an essential role in the organization of professional education. It enables students of different specialties to find creative approaches to work in the specialty in the future and to solve the contradictions between higher academic education and traditional practical vocational training. The problems associated with fundamentalization of education are urgent not only for Ukraine but for the whole world. Different approaches to their solution can be found in numerous scientific researches, which will be discussed further.

Conceptual foundations of fundamental education were mostly formulated at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by V. Humboldt (2002, pp. 25-33). According to him, the subject of fundamental education is the knowledge, which should "turn" into scientific research, if necessary. In 1852, J. Newman predicted the emergence of education fundamentalization, which allowed the student to plunge into science for the development and acquisition of the "atmosphere of intelligence", subtle mind and noble manners as natural qualities of great knowledge (1907, pp. 120-121). The history of the movement for "fundamentalism" is described by A. Laats (2010, p. 176), who indicates that fundamentalization has undergone an active educational impact (educational activism) in the 1920s-1930s in the USA.

Increased interest of scholars to the problem of fundamentalization in the 1990s was determined by the dynamic changes in both modern societies of the world and educational technologies and science as a whole. Such professional qualities, that could provide the students with their harmonious inclusion to all socio-economic spheres during active life, have become popular in society. Focus on fundamentalism has always been characteristic of the Ukrainian system of higher professional education.

The fundamentalization of education was earlier "externally introduced" and implemented mainly on the "know-how" level, according to Ya. Fruktova (2013). However, nowadays, the fundamentalization of education is directed at the mastering of gnoseological and socio-cultural foundations of knowledge and ways of their

assimilation, the development of students' skills and abilities to perceive, understand and use the stream of new information (including the data from foreign sources).

At the same time, as noted by O. Yazvinska (2011, p. 34) that fundamentalization reflects the general patterns of the development and functioning of a particular subject area and is revealed in the process of carrying out professional activities through the competent use of the basic knowledge and skills. Thus, fundamentalization ensures high mobility and successful adaptation of the university graduate to the dynamic conditions of modern society.

Thus, S. Kalashnikova (2012, p. 80) considered fundamentalization of higher education with the help of the triangle of knowledge: "education, research and innovations". According to her, professional education generates not highly specialized, but methodologically-systematic knowledge.

As defined by G. Vaskivska, the important factors of education fundamentalization include: the preservation and intensive development of mankind through the accumulation, reproduction and transfer of social experience throughout generations; the ability for self-organization and self-development of each individual; the acquisition of the most important and long-term scientific knowledge as a result of socio-humanitarian and technical activities, etc. (Vaskivska, 2013).

The experts of the "Roman Club" (Political Encyclopedia 2011, p. 639) attribute fundamentalization to system-proactive innovative education, because a significant amount of knowledge loses its relevance over the next few years. An important condition for the implementation of systemic advanced education is its close relationship with scientific research all over the world. A. Pokhresnyk emphasizes in this context, that the knowledge, received by students in the process of education in the conditions of the fundamentalization of education, contributes to accession of Ukraine to the European domain of scientific research and higher education and has a significant influence on the prediction of the future (Pokhresnyk, 2014, pp. 27-28). Therefore, self-education of students takes an important place in the educational process designed by a teacher.

### **Self-education as the main component of the educational process fundamentalization**

Self-education plays an important role in the training of students in socio-humanitarian specialties. If students realize that they do not have a sufficiently high level of knowledge and skills in relation to a particular problem, they might be forced to improve their knowledge and skills independently through the ability for self-education (Vaskivska 2013).

The development of the readiness of the future specialists for self-education for fundamentalization of training is facilitated by students' individual and independent study of the works of leading domestic and international scholars. Updating of professional knowledge and formation of students' scientific worldview is performed on the basis of critical analysis of modern domestic and foreign research works, which are covered in the world scientific literature in a foreign language, mostly in English. This is manifested in the ability of students to analyze, evaluate, compare, summarize and formulate conclusions that are the result of self-educational work with scientific national and foreign literature.

Thus, the fundamental nature of self-education is directly related to the knowledge of a foreign language. The use of English at a professional level allows a future specialist to plunge into the "world" of the latest scientific achievements in the professional field and achieve the desirable training goals in the short term.

### **The meaning of English for the self-education of students**

Fundamentalization of university education acquires new vertices, provided that students can use their own knowledge and English language communication skills in the process of self-education. Nowadays, when there

is a need to turn to the latest world achievements in the field of socio-humanitaristics, knowledge of a foreign language helps students in preparation for classes. The importance of knowledge of English is treated differently by scholars. Ukraine's external priorities for the European Union and NATO, as noted by O. Lahodynskyi and I. Semeniako (2018, pp. 107-114), clearly demand from future Ukrainian specialists not only a high level of professionalism, but also proper linguistic knowledge, skills and abilities in working with foreign counterparts. Other scholars, namely I. Bloschynskyi (I. Bloschynskyi, 2017) emphasized the significance of IT and communication technologies usage (e.g. Anki specialized program application) during future Border Guard officers' independent foreign language professional training for state examinations.

According to E. Belyaeva (2018), English has become important linguistic-academic environment and educational tool for the training of students at foreign universities. It is also an important condition for gaining the status of an international university, which becomes a constant trend (Belyaeva 2018). According to L. Stepanchuk (2015), it is useful to acquire a foreign language, as this grants quick access to global internet sites and publications in other languages. Language skills make it possible not only to read and write, but also to think in a foreign language, that enables students to participate in the international conferences and trainings, maintain business correspondence and online communication. According to I. Melnychuk (I. Melnychuk, 2016), it is necessary to take into account the peculiarities of professional-lingual future specialists' training in the use of professional terminology, which is based on many foreign words.

However, despite the popularity of English-language knowledge in society, the problems associated with the broad use of English by students during self-education remain unresolved. This indicates a shortage of research on this issue. Therefore, we intend to use the in-depth study of this problem to track and test how English knowledge and skills influence on the self-education of a future specialist for the fundamentalization of university education.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Participants**

##### **Study of the importance of linguistic skills for self-education of students of the socio-humanitarian major**

Indicated problem can be revealed in each institution of higher education in Ukraine. Therefore, we carried out a thorough research in the educational process environment. This allowed us to obtain statistical data directed at confirming or refuting our hypothesis about the importance of foreign language linguistic skills for self-education of students of the socio-humanitarian speciality. So, in November 2017, we conducted a sociological survey of the first year students of the "Social Work" specialty on the basis of the Ternopil National Economic University (30 people) and the Ternopil National Pedagogical University (14 people) who studied English at the general secondary school.

#### **3.2. Materials**

The questionnaire, developed by us, consisted of the following questions:

1. Evaluate your level of English from 1 to 12 points.
2. Do you need to increase the level of English?
  - a) for basic training at the university (yes, no);
  - b) for future professional and personal growth (yes, no).
3. Do you use English to read specialized literature? (yes, no).
4. What purpose do you read foreign literature for, if you answered "Yes" to question number 3?
  - a) to get acquainted with modern achievements in the scientific world (yes, no);

b) to familiarize with professionally relevant information in order to expand your own professional worldview (yes, no).

Students were informed that research results would be used only for scientific purposes. We recorded 44 responses (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** *Distribution of marks according to the level of English of students*

<b>Question 1</b>												
Evaluate your current level of English from 1 to 12 points												
<b>Points</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Respondents</b>					3	11	9	8	5	6	2	–
<b>Percentage</b>	–	–	–	–	6,8%	25%	20,5%	18,2%	11,4%	13,6%	4,5%	

### 3.3. Procedure

#### **Discussion of empirical data and formulation of generalized conclusions**

During a discourse with the students, we found out that freshmen studied English at school in accordance with different curricula and textbooks; some of them took additional private lessons. Three people, out of the 44 respondents, who took part in the survey, attended specialized schools with in-depth study of foreign languages from the first grade, all the others (41 students) studied at secondary schools, eight of which studied English from the second class (18.2%), while the remaining 33 (75%) studied it from the fifth grade. It follows that all students at the beginning of the first year of studies at the university have a different level of the English knowledge acquired at school.

The statistical analysis of the obtained empirical questionnaire data on the first question shows (see Table 1) that none of the students assesses their level of English as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 12 points. A high level was reported by 8 students (18.1%), sufficient was reported by 22 (50.1%) students and 14 (31.8%) students are considered to have an average level of English. Thus, a high and sufficient level of English is prevalent in 30 (68.9%) first year students.

The distribution of opinions of student on the second question was as follows: 24 people (55.5%) do not believe that they need English for better mastering of fundamental knowledge, however, the majority of students - 32 (72.7%) – noted that a foreign language is needed to a greater extent for future professional and personal growth (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** *Influence of educational and personal needs of first year students on increasing of the level of English*

Question 2	Number of respondents, (%)
Do you need to increase the level of English?	
a) for fundamental training at the university, yes	20 (45,5%)
a) for fundamental training at the university, no	24 (55,5%)
b) for future professional and personal growth, yes	32 (72,7%)
b) for future professional and personal growth, no	12 (27,3%)

The answers of students to the third question of the questionnaire (see Table 3) indicate that 18 (40.9%) students use their own knowledge of English to work with specialized literature, although the majority of students – 26 (59.1%) – think that they do not need English for effective preparation for university studies.

**Table 3.** *Relationship between knowledge of English and the study of specialized literature*

Question 3 Do you use English to read specialized literature?	Number of respondents, (%)
a) yes	18 (40,9%)
б) no	26 (59,1%)

Only those 18 respondents, who gave positive answers to the third question, could answer the fourth question of questionnaire. The data given in Table 4 indicate that first-year students read special literature in English, mainly for information on current achievements in world science (12 people that is 66,7%). However, for all 18 students (100%) foreign language literature gives professionally relevant information for expanding their personal and professional outlook.

**Table 4.** *Relationship between the reading of foreign literature and professional orientation*

Question 4 (18 people answered) What purpose do you read foreign literature for?	Number of respondents, (%)
a) to familiarize oneself with modern achievements in the scientific world, Yes	12 (66,7%)
a) to familiarize oneself with modern achievements in the scientific world, No	6 (33,3%)
b) to familiarize oneself with professionally relevant information in order to expand your own professional worldview, Yes	18 (100%)
b) to familiarize oneself with professionally relevant information in order to expand your own professional worldview, No	–

#### 4. Results

The results of empirical data (see Table 5) revealed slight differences between the two groups under the study. An indicator of higher and sufficient level of English of the first year students of the Pedagogical University is 21.5% and 50% respectively. As for the students of the Economic University, this indicator is 17% and 49.3% correspondingly. However, the average knowledge of a foreign language is prevalent among students of the Economic University (33.6% versus 28.6%). This data shows that the level of the English language acquired at school does not differ significantly for future social workers who study at either University.

However, the answers to the second question (see Table 5) convincingly prove that students of the Pedagogical University have a greater need to increase their level of English for fundamental university training (64.3% versus 36.7%). This need is more significant for them for future professional and personal growth (78.6% and 66.7% respectively for students of the Economic University).

**Table 5. Summarized results of the survey of the first year students of Economic and Pedagogical Universities (Social Work specialty)**

Respondents and their number	Question 1 points from 1 to 12 (there are no points 1-4 and 12)							Question 2				Question 3		Question 4 (18 respondents)			
								a)		b)				a)		b)	
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	y e s	n o s	y e s	n o s	y e s	n o s	y e s	n o s	y e s	n o s
Respondents of Economic University (30 people)	2 (6,8%)	8 (26,8%)	7 (22,5%)	5 (16,8%)	3 (10%)	4 (13,5%)	1 (3,5%)	11 (36,7%)	19 (63,3%)	20 (66,7%)	10 (33,3%)	9 (30%)	21 (70%)	6 (33,4%)	6 (33,3%)	9 (50%)	1
Respondents of Pedagogical University (14 people)	1 (7,2%)	3 (21,4%)	2 (14,3%)	3 (21,4%)	2 (14,3%)	2 (14,3%)	1 (7,2%)	9 (64,3%)	5 (35,7%)	11 (78,6%)	3 (21,4%)	9 (64,3%)	5 (35,7%)	6 (33,4%)	1	9 (50%)	1

Positive answers to the third question of the questionnaire revealed higher rates among students of the Pedagogical University (64.3% vs. 30%), as they are more likely to use their knowledge of English for reading of specialized literature than their fellow-students from the Economic University.

The data of Table 5 testify that the students of both institutions of higher education read foreign-language professional literature in order to obtain information about modern world achievements in the field of socio-humanitarian sciences (33.4 % / 6 students in each group). English is also used by 50% of the respondents (9 students in each group) to find useful professionally significant information and to expand their own professional worldview.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

According to the data obtained from the questionnaire, all first year students who studied in the specialty of "Social Work" at Ternopil Economic and Pedagogical Universities studied English at secondary schools. However, not all first-year students were aware of its importance for personal self-education. Students of both universities confirmed that improving of their level of linguistic knowledge is necessary, for future professional and personal growth rather than for obtaining fundamental knowledge directed at the development of professional and standardized skills. The answers of respondents indicate the problem of modern higher education regarding students' misunderstanding of the educational goal, which involves competent specialist formation, competitive in the labor market that is impossible without developing the skills of using English for effective self-education. After all, reading of foreign professional literature allows each student to familiarize themselves with modern scientific world achievements, and thus get fundamental knowledge. Less than half of the students (40,9%) consider usefulness of their knowledge of English for gaining access to professionally



relevant information which is a prerequisite for expanding their own professional outlook.

It should be noted that students of the Pedagogical University mostly use their knowledge of English for self-education and fundamentalization of professional training. This is explained by the fact that they are more motivated for future professional activities at school teaching pupils who usually have good knowledge of foreign language and the ability to communicate in it. Students of the Economic University are convinced that their future professional activities of a social worker will not require profound knowledge of a foreign (English) language; therefore, they are less motivated for its study. To sum up, the empirical data gives grounds to highlight the problems associated with the meaning of English in self-education of the students of socio-humanitarian specialties for the fundamentalization of university education.

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