

Language Centre, Faculty of Humanities, Tomas Bata University in Zlín

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Tomas Bata University in Zlín (TBU) is the youngest Czech public university. It was established in 2001, when two faculties (Faculty of Technology and Faculty of Management and Economics) were separated from Brno University of Technology. Since then, four more faculties have been set up, and the scope of disciplines covered by TBU has been extended with multimedia communication, applied informatics, humanities and health care, and logistics.

From the very beginning, one of the priorities of the University's top management was to create multicultural environment, the basics of which is communication in English, the *lingua franca* of the present. Actually, this is even confirmed in TBU Statute – the communication languages are Czech and English.

In early days of the University, foreign languages were taught by the Language Centre, which was later split into two departments – the Department of English and American Studies and the Language Centre, which dealt with all other foreign languages. Since it was necessary to support research activities in philology, in 2013 the language section of the Faculty of Humanities was reorganized into the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, and the Language Centre. Even if the name of the latter remained the same, its area of interests changed; now it is responsible for teaching foreign languages at all faculties in Zlín.

Keeping in mind the requirement to produce graduates with good communication skills, UTB approved a new policy of foreign language education, which will be followed in the coming years. It sets the minimum outcome levels of students in individual degrees. Thus, bachelors will be on a minimum level of B2 (by CEFR), master's degree students then should learn technical vocabulary so that they can lead professional communication in English. And finally, doctoral students develop academic and scientific speaking and writing skills on C1 level. In individual study programmes, the number of semesters when the language is taught varies. Even the number of foreign languages differs, which is given by the characteristic of the discipline, e.g. in management and economics, two languages are compulsory. English, however, is obligatory for all students.

What is also worth mentioning is the fact that at TBU even doctoral students have regular English lessons where the tuition focuses on communication skills in scientific fields of students. This concept requires increase effort from the teacher, as he/she has to spread the focus to very specific topics of individual students.

The importance of foreign language knowledge is also supported by the fact that before any faculty applies for accreditation or its renewal, the relevant guarantor comments on the extent of the foreign language lessons and assesses if the required level could be reached in the given time.

At present, there are 22 teachers at the Language Centre, 20 women and 2 men, the proportion that is more or less common at similar departments. Regarding the organization, individual members of the staff specialize in the technical language for individual faculties. Moreover, some of them have previous education also in the expert field, so they can successfully apply elements of CLIL in lessons.

Beside teaching students in regular courses, the Language Centre also carries out other activities, the most important of which are Show Off and Summer English School. The former has been carried out for 12 years and developed into an excellent event. It is a competition in presentations delivered by university students of any degree, and is also intended for secondary school pupils. Through the time, it has grown into a whole-university event with a strong cooperation with business partners, who support the competition with valuable prizes. Furthermore, the University contributes with scholarships for the winners. Representatives of the partner companies are also members of the jury that assesses the presentations, so it is also a chance for the people from practice to offer future jobs to the best students.

The latter mentioned main event, as the name indicates, takes place in summer, and is aimed at pupils from elementary and secondary schools, in different groups. In a relaxed atmosphere, often via games, children practice their skills in communication. They frequently come repeatedly, which proves the popularity of the event.

For more than 15 years, the Centre has been participating substantially in the University project which develops language communication skills of employees, both academic and administrative staff. This is the way in which the Language Centre contributes to the policy of bilingual communication at Tomas Bata University.

The Language Centre is now part of the Faculty of Humanities, which is located in a very new and modern building designed by a famous Czech architect Eva Jiřičná. As most of similar premises, the classrooms are equipped with all necessary technology enabling application of ICT in the teaching process. Thus, for communication between the teacher and the student, MODLE, Teams or other platforms can be used.

With perspective teachers of a suitable age structure, the Language Centre at the Faculty of Humanities in Zlín has a good potential to further develop and fulfil its mission.



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Anežka Lengálová has been working for over 30 years at Tomas Bata University in Zlín, now at the Language Centre. She deals with teaching communication skills in English to future pre-school teachers and especially to doctoral students in technical fields. She publishes in English both in the field of materials and technology and in foreign language teaching.