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ACADEMIC LECTURING THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF A NON-NATIVE LANGUAGE: A COLLABORATIVE ENDEAVOUR OF LECTURERS AND STUDENTS

Abstract. Academic lectures are implemented as a basic genre in developing students' disciplinary knowledge in higher education settings. Frequently appearing in their traditional monologic form, they tend to be more interactive nowadays, due to the use of a variety of activities that accompany them, including new technologies. With the internationalization of higher education, numerous lecture attendees are now multilingual students learning through the medium of a non-native language. The aim of this paper is to explore the most vital issues that emerge when lectures are delivered to non-native students at lower language proficiency level so as to enable them to meet their study goals as well as develop their intellectual and language potential. The author argues for the need of effective collaboration between lecturers and their students, based on a better understanding of the complexity of the instructional situation in which students' language problems can be dealt with by making appropriate adjustments that can improve both lecture comprehensibility and knowledge acquisition.

Key words: education internationalization; non-native language; academic lecture; lecture delivery styles; structuring lecture discourse.

1. INTRODUCTION

Undeniably, with the extending development in higher education internationalization, educators and policy makers worldwide have heightened the awareness of the fact that teaching and learning objectives in particular areas of study can be reached only if the language of instruction adequately serves the process of building disciplinary knowledge. Over recent years, numerous language and education specialists all over the world, for example, Fortanet-Gómez (23–5) and Naves (24), have emphasised the increasing provision of

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academic courses through the medium of students' non-native languages, typical of bilingual and multilingual contexts. Higher education authorities thus have become responsible for pursuing optimally effective pedagogic practices so as to ensure students' integrated development of discipline-dependent knowledge and skills as well as their progress in target language competencies.

The present paper aims to examine selected problems that can arise when academic lectures are delivered to students in their non-native language. The spread of study abroad and internationalized programmes, with English widely adopted as a medium of instruction, means that lecturers and students have to make a shared effort to successfully communicate to reach their academic goals. The present author argues for the need of better understanding of the complexity of instructional situations when the weaknesses of students participating in academic lectures demand that appropriate adjustments in lecture structure and performance should be geared towards better content comprehensibility and learning. Most essential lecturer and student factors are discussed in more depth so as to delineate their contributory role in achieving the ultimate teaching and learning outcomes. Some implications of the problems raised for the efficient delivery of academic lectures to non-native language speakers are also addressed.

2. THE MANY-SIDED PROBLEM OF USING A NON-NATIVE LANGUAGE AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS

The teaching and learning through the medium of a non-native language at all educational levels, be it assigned the status of a second, foreign, additional, vehicular or just the target language, is an increasingly widespread instructional practice in recent decades, which has been investigated from a number of angles. Much interest in the issue comes from the proponents of Content Based Instruction in North America and Content and Language Integrated Learning in Europe (for further discussion of terms and concepts see Chodkiewicz). Promoting the goals of discipline studies enriched with the attainment of the communicative oral and written skills in an additional language appears to be one of major requirements of present-day educational policies (see Coyle et al.; Genesee and Lindholm-Leary; Mehisto et al.). As noted by Naves, this is not to undermine a continuous development in learners' academic performance in the native language (27–8).

Although discipline-based education through the medium of an additional language may concern different languages, Björkman subscribes to a general view that it is English that has become a lingua franca of the globalized world and the most frequently chosen language of higher education in Europe (“English as a Lingua Franca” 80). The introduction of English-medium discipline studies, however, has generated a variety of organizational problems, such as the need for properly qualified teaching staff able to cope with students with lower level language abilities, or making a decision when the language of instruction is to be treated as a core or auxiliary competence.

Simultaneously with the recognition of the role of English as a medium of instruction, the issue of its use for academic purposes has become lively discussed. English for Academic Purposes, as a branch of English for Specific Purposes, tackles many facets of teaching general academic skills defined in terms of learning or studying, while leaving sufficient space for the implementation of more specific disciplinary skills. Hamp-Lyons describes tertiary education EAP courses as a combination of different uses of the target language oral and written skills in parallel with subject-specific practices (89). Highland and Shaw confirm the view that EAP stands for a particularly broad scope of activities “from designing listening materials to describing the discourse of doctoral defenses”, which involve all literacy skills drawn upon in higher education contexts (1).

Apart from establishing some definitional issues concerning teaching English for Academic Purposes, it is important to identify discrepancies that exist between academic contexts in which English appears as a prevailing language. Out of the four basic options described by Dudley-Evans and Johns, the first two concern teaching in English as a first or a second language in English-speaking countries (UK or USA), that is in the countries where English is an official language. The third situation refers to teaching selected subjects in English (engineering or medicine) with the remaining ones taught in the national language, and the fourth one to using English for some additional, yet important educational purposes, which determine the kind and scope of the targeted language skills (35). Hence, in the case when only limited use of English is expected in the students’ home country, their decision to pursue studies in an English speaking country demands that they attain a much higher level of proficiency in both spoken and written English. According to Gnutzmann, of significance is here the fact that whereas English has become a world-wide tool for communication in natural sciences,

mathematics or medicine, such domains of knowledge as law, social sciences and the humanities are typically accessible to students in their national languages (519).

A continuing debate on the international use of English in academic settings labelled *lingua franca* has made it possible to assemble some of its marked characteristics (House 572–4). Hyland underlines the fact that the use of English has been separated from its traditional anglophone aspects, that is, its dependence on the dominant standard British and American varieties of English. Instead, non-native users started to be seen as learners whose primary task is to acquire “new norms of international academic communication” (“English for Academic Purposes” 29). Gnutzmann adds that it is “a form of English that will more and more derive its norms of correctness and appropriateness from its own usage rather than native British or American English” (534). Such is, for instance, the situation when Polish universities and their teaching staff offer a range of disciplinary courses to international students through the medium of English. Björkman finds it to be now a typical case when the vehicular language in higher education settings is neither the native language of the lecturer nor that of the audience (“So You Think You Can ELF” 78).

3. ACADEMIC LECTURE AS A GENRE

For many years, an academic lecture has been seen primarily through the lens of the academic listening skill to be developed at tertiary level apart from reading, writing or seminar skills, rather than the ability of comprehending and learning from lecture content. A typical form of academic lecture is traditionally associated with a monologue presented to a relatively larger group of students. Carkin makes a valid remark that academic lecture is, in fact, recognized as a genre, along with academic textbooks or research articles, whose communicative purpose is expressed with some audience in mind, and whose style, structure, and content receive some conventional presentation (92). Similarly, Rost finds a lecture to be “the main genre in academic settings [which] represents a clear listening target for many learners” (162), and adds that “academic lectures are a prime example of a communicative situation in which a speaker aims to ‘influence with intent’” (162).

Bhatia notes that while academic community tends to emphasize similarities between lecture discourses across disciplines, differences identified

through genres and disciplines should not pass unnoticed. The researcher expounds that when discourse is perceived as a generic variation, it is placed within social space, however, when put in practice, it gains a socio-critical perspective. Disciplinary variations define discourse as a text and a pedagogic concept (30). Likewise, Crawford Camiciottoli and Querol-Julián argue for adopting the term "pedagogic discourse" (309). Research into a variety of uses of academic discourse as well as academic lectures has confirmed the need for recognizing disciplinary discourses associated with subject-matter instruction characteristic of higher education environment (Duff 170).

Indeed, content-based teaching requires that the core elements of academic discourse should be known to students before they encounter its discipline-specific features. From the pedagogic standpoint, familiarizing students with the structure of an academic lecture as a genre can assist them in improving their lecture comprehension level (Rogers and Webb 166).

4. MAIN FACTORS IN STRUCTURING LECTURE DISCOURSE

As follows from scholarly debates on academic instruction in both native and non-native contexts, there are a number of general factors which clearly contribute to lecture organization as well as its reception by the audience. What is imperative, however, Paltridge and Starfield note, is that lecture-based practices be more widely explored with regard to the complex nature of discourse processing with the double focus on lecture comprehension and disciplinary knowledge gains (220–23). A further problematic point, mentioned by Rogers and Webb, is connected with the tendency to limit the scope of the concept of 'academic listening' to students' general listening skills employed for the purpose of lecture comprehension (165).

It is of high significance that in academic settings listeners get actively involved in processing the overall structure of the lecture in order to both identify the meanings conveyed and accomplish a communicative purpose. That is the reason why listeners do not provide a simple response to speakers' intentions, but create a text base guided by their own goals by selecting, integrating, and storing the information accessible at the micro- and macrostructure levels of discourse. An interaction between the bottom-up and top-down processing of discourse input enables listeners to tap into

their background knowledge and construct the mental model of the lecture content (see Gernsbacher; Field; Kintsch; Rost; Vandergrift and Goh). Field finds it worth emphasizing that even at the stage of deriving and storing literary meanings from lecture input, listeners increase the number of operations connected with making inferences, overcoming ambiguity, differentiating between relevant and redundant information, connecting ideas, and recognizing the argumentation of the speaker (*Listening in the Language Classroom* 85).

In her theoretical interpretation of the process of structuring discourse overall argumentation, Dakowska points at the constructive role played by formal schemata developed by lecturers. Adequate schemata are triggered by activating such cognitive mechanisms as planning, monitoring, feedback, anticipation, and retrospection (201–5). Taking a pragmatic stand, Young has sought a universal formal pattern of a university lecture. The investigation of some lecture corpora enabled her to identify six phases (strands) which interweave and reappear throughout a lecture. While the three major phases of a lecture entail ‘discourse structuring’, ‘conclusion’ and ‘evaluation’, the remaining ones are assumed to prepare lecture content for transmission and learning, and are defined as: ‘interaction’ (maintaining contact with the audience), ‘theory/content’, and ‘examples’ (166–72).

What plays a facilitative role in academic lecture delivery and its processing by the audience, apart from the lecture’s structure, is the use of metadiscourse signals. Defining metadiscourse as “a set of features that together contribute to the interactions between text producers and their texts and between text producers and users”, Hyland forcefully asserts that it can offer many useful ways for expressing the same propositional content across different domains and genres (“Metadiscourse” 1). The model he proposes accounts for the implementation of the so-called interactive and interactional resources. Whereas the former are claimed to support structuring an academic lecture as a monologic genre, with some guidance given to the listener, the latter create proper grounds for establishing a relationship with the audience (3). Both logical and persuasive presentation of lecture input can help students respond to the target content and in efficiently manage of their learning process.

In order to more cogently appeal to the audience, lecturers can add an emotional emphasis or express their attitudes to the topic discussed. What is more, they can raise students’ awareness when informing them or attempting to influence their attitudes (Rost 49). Morrell’s ethnographic studies have

demonstrated that interpersonal factors incorporated into an academic lecture successfully enhance students' participation and learning outcomes ("Interactive Lecture Discourse" 327). On balance, as advocated in this paper, academic lecture discourse is not to be evaluated narrowly in terms of its comprehension, but also looked at from the perspective of domain knowledge acquisition and the target language learning experience.

An overarching view of basic functions of academic lecturing adopted by Derooy and Taverniers has brought about a further exploration of lecture genre and its disciplinary variations. A thorough study of samples of authentic lectures in the area of Arts and Humanities, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences enabled the researchers to compile a list of functions referring to generic lecture descriptions (5), which sound like a summary of the issues dealt with in the present discussion. They are: (1) informing — disseminating subject information, (2) elaborating — exemplifying and reformulating it so as to clarify meanings and respond to students' needs, (3) evaluating — expressing the speaker's attitudes and viewpoints, (4) organizing discourse — pre-planning, guiding listeners through the lecture, structuring it, (5) interacting — creating some speaker-listener relationship conducive to learning, and (6) managing the class — controlling lecture organization, delivery and the audience (5).

5. DEFINING BASIC STYLES OF ACADEMIC LECTURES

The actual delivery of a lecture constitutes the final stage of lecture organization and it is a consequence of a multitude of decisions the lecturer has made so far. There is no denying that the way in which an academic lecture is presented orally influences its reception by the target audience, and is particularly vital for non-native speakers. In natural conditions of academic lecturing, even if lecturer-students interaction is not deliberately planned for, the process of lecturing cannot be fully understood without considering its addressee. In order to define oral production of the lecture text aurally received by an audience (at least one person) the authors of CEFR put forward the category of activities named "addressing audiences" and included a category of a university lecture. Lecture presentation is described as "reading a written text aloud, speaking from notes, or from a written text or visual aids (diagrams, pictures, charts, etc.), acting out a rehearsed role and speaking" (58).

As early as 1981, Dudley-Evans and Johns classified lecturing styles to reading style (reading from one's notes), conversational style (speaking informally, yet with some support of notes), and rhetorical style (performing with some digressions added), in which no role was assigned to lecture participants (34). Mason, on the other hand, incorporated the element of listeners' cooperation by suggesting three lecture forms: (1) 'talk-and-chalk' — a slightly outdated use of the blackboard as a teaching aid, (2) 'give-and-take' — lecturing with some discussion and student questions and comments, (3) 'report-and-discuss' — some presentations of topics prepared by students before the lecture (203).

The interactivity of a lecture, brought to the fore by more recent literature, has even served as a main criterion in classifying lecture types. Morrell, for example, suggests a broad division of lectures into reading (non-interactive) vs. conversational (interactive) ones, the latter being less formal due to students' interventions ("Interactive Lecture Discourse" 326). In a similar vein, Lynch draws a difference between one-way listening, that is listening to a monologic lecture accompanied by note taking and two-way listening, a reciprocal procedure typical of small-group discussions or seminars where students get an opportunity to respond ("Academic Listening in the 21st Century" 79). Interestingly, Morell notices that incorporating reciprocal discourse, which has been found to foster the comprehensibility of academic lectures, is particularly beneficial for students of other languages ("What Enhances EFL Students' Participation" 223). Yet, it is worth noting that while lecture interactivity is typically associated with teaching small groups, this does not always have to be the case – some interactive tasks, as will be shown in the sections to come, can also be exploited with larger groups of listeners.

It goes without saying that contemporary academic lecturing continues to evolve since the emergence of new technologies in education, be it video, PowerPoint presentations, or different kinds of multimedia. As commented by Rogers and Stuart, "The widespread use of PowerPoint and other recently developed software has changed the nature of what students do in a lecture" (166). Nevertheless, the obvious fact remains that a particular way of lecture input presentation, with non-native speakers being of special concern, needs to be determined with regard to both the content area taught and the listeners' knowledge and language proficiency level.

6. ENHANCING COMPREHENSION OF LECTURE CONTENT IN NON-NATIVE LANGUAGE CONTEXTS: LECTURERS' AND LISTENERS' PERSPECTIVES

Despite generic processes underlying academic listening as a collaborative experience of lecturers and students, there are a number of aspects which are relevant to non-native language contexts (see Crawford Camiciottoli; Field; Lynch; Vandergrift and Goh). This section will concentrate on selected variables that can advance the improvement of processing lecture discourse by non-native language users at lower-proficiency levels.

Major factors identified to impact the comprehension and learning from academic lectures presented to non-native students include primarily: the rate of speech, accent, unfamiliar content, insufficient knowledge of vocabulary, in particular terminology, as well as cultural references (see Field; Lynch; Vandergrift and Goh). In order to respond to their students' potential perceptual, cognitive or discourse processing problems, lecturers will therefore frequently introduce adjustments of a simplification or elaboration type. This is a common way nowadays to help students receive and organize the target information for future purposes of some kind of recall or assessment (Rost 234).

One type of proposed adjustments is connected with making the actual oral performance of the lecture more comprehensible. Even though lecturers cannot eliminate typical features of their authentic oral language production, such as hesitation fillers, false starts and back-tracking, which are part of their academic listening competencies, they can deliberately increase pausing, as well as slow down the rate and pacing of lecture presentation (Buck 38–42). Another pertinent issue concerns students' perception of the non-native accent of a lecturer. The easiest accent for L2/FL students to understand is that of a lecturer coming from the same language background. Then come the accents of the model language variety students have been taught (Flowerdew "Research of Relevance" 24–5). As for such non-verbal means of communication as the individual lecturer's gestures, facial expressions, body movements, eye contact and positioning (the so-called 'kinesic meaning'), which may play a critical part in comprehending lecture content, no facilitative modifications are possible (Flowerdew and Miller "Second Language Listening" 45; Vandergrift and Goh 220).

What can prove useful support in lecture processing by L2 /FL listeners is also the implementation of discourse markers (see Crawford Camiciottoli; Rodgers and Webb; Vandergrift and Goh). Field proposed adopting the so-

called 'linker approach' in order to help L2 students discern how logical connections can explicitly mark lecture framework (*Listening in the Language Classroom* 250). The goal of some other modifications may be to simplify spoken language used by the lecturer by using shorter thematic units and clauses, well-formed standard forms of language, as well as by highlighting selected critical lecture points.

Undeniably, a decisive factor in lecturing to L2/FL students which can influence lecture content, its presentation and reception is the cross-cultural dimension. Delivered in particular academic settings, the way lectures are organized and presented is determined by the discourse community they are part of. In order to help L2/FL students avoid a strong perception of a cultural distance and elucidate the topic under discussion, lecturers can incorporate some local examples (Flowerdew and Miller, *Second Language Listening* 146). Furthermore, as elucidated by Field, adding some content redundancy to lecture material can give non-native listeners an opportunity to process cultural meaning more fully, providing that they understand that reiterated and rephrased statements are simply revisited information (*Listening in the Language Classroom* 246). As for culturally-based humour, lecturers have to understand that despite being a good tool in releasing tension and making formal lecturing more approachable, it may cause some misunderstanding or even distract students from following the lecture content (Flowerdew and Miller "Lectures in a Second Language" 87).

Another perspective into the supportive assistance of non-native speakers' pathway of the development of academic listening skills emerges from listening strategy instruction. Many specialists in the area (see Buck; Field; Flowerdew and Miller; Vandergrift and Goh) accept a general adherence to the well-established general taxonomy of language learning strategies, grouped under the headings of metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies. A remark of caution, however, is made by Field, who underscores the specificity of academic lecturing, typically extensive and non-participatory in its nature (*Listening in the Language Classroom* 61).

Referring to non-native speakers of English preparing for academic lecturing tasks on EAP courses, Field recommends that in order to cope with their weaknesses in academic listening they should adopt pro-active rather than just repair strategies. Pro-active strategies aim to help listeners: (1) evaluate their tasks in terms of the comprehension level needed to perform them, (2) create their mental sets before listening, (3) record specific lexical items and pieces of information while listening, and (4) review and

reflect on the information to better retain it at a post-listening stage (*Listening in the Language Classroom* 321). Flowerdew and Miller, on the other hand, have set up detailed guidelines on how to conduct listening strategy training practice with as many as 35 metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies and described thoroughly how teachers and students can collaborate in different types of strategy training tasks (*Second Language Listening* 73–81). Nonetheless, despite all the listening strategy-based instruction recommendations that have been formulated so far, Vandergrift and Cross are of the opinion that no fully established principles for listening strategy pedagogy are available yet, and, what is more, long-term effects of listening strategy training studies have often proved to be inconclusive (81).

7. ACADEMIC LECTURES AND OTHER ACCOMPANYING ACTIVITIES

When one looks more closely at the form of academic lecture delivery in contemporary classrooms, it becomes evident that oral presentations often refer to or are even based on visual texts, be it PowerPoint, handouts, or other media (Duff 177). Having analyzed activities integrated with academic lectures in L2 tertiary settings, Flowerdew and Miller developed “a contextualized model of listening to lectures.” The model takes into consideration such relationships as those between listening to the lecture while looking at visuals and note taking, as well as writing assignments to recall the material before students take their course exams (“Second Language Listening” 90–91).

Note taking strategies have long been used as a supportive aid in listening to academic lectures. According to Kiewra, they constitute the basis for external storage of lecture information to be reviewed by students and retained for further use. Of special importance is the fact that the process of information encoding ensures that all the items of interest to a particular student can get synthesized in a personalized way (150). The qualitative examination of lecture listeners’ notes in their written form has concerned, among others, processing of main vs. subsidiary ideas, as well as their organization at the macro and micro levels. Carrell has acknowledged a facilitative role of notetaking especially in the case of compensating for L2 learners’ language deficiencies (4). Obviously, apart from their individual notes, today’s lecture listeners take down notes also on lecture handouts or printed copies of slides (Rogers and Webb 169).

Numerous suggestions have been provided to incorporate additional activities into conventionalized lecture form with the view to making academic lectures more interactive. Huerta, for instance, proposed the following kinds of lecture modifications: ‘question-based outlines’ — questions answered by students on the basis of some restructured lecture material, ‘discussion question prompts’ — answering lecturers’ questions on some issues beyond basic lecture material, and ‘small group discussions’ during lecture time — answering questions and commenting on them (240). Campbell and Mayer introduced new technology equipment so as to involve listeners in answering adjunct questions while participating in a large lecture class. Students use a technology-based personal response system (PRS), which requires pressing a button on a remote control device in response to a set of multiple-choice questions (748). Chodkiewicz and Kiszczak conducted a study in which English philology students performed an interactive task in pairs at a post-lecture stage. Such a procedure had a double role of giving students an opportunity to practice generating their own questions on lecture content to be discussed with other students as well as enhancing their achievement in learning lecture material (252).

Last but not least, it is visual elements that have been assigned a special place in academic lectures. Flowerdew and Miller describe their role as that of complementing verbal information presented by the lecture by further illustration of relevant concepts (*Second Language Listening* 193). Field maintains that Powerpoint slides are effective since they are summative in nature, serve distinguishing the main points from subsidiary ones, as well as highlighting key terms. All this helps listeners recognize lecture organizational patterns and discern any inconsistencies in its reception (“Into the Mind of the Academic Listeners” 106). Nevertheless, the use of Powerpoint presentations is not without its problems. For instance, paraphrasing the information shown on the slides during lectures may not be an efficient procedure when a lecture is delivered to non-native lower proficiency listeners who need to see a close link between visual and oral contents of the presentation. Coyle, et al. underline the fact that understanding a continuous text presented orally requires more advanced listening skills than those needed to understand single phrases or sentences shown in bullet points on the slide (96). Finally, Vandergrift mentions students experiencing difficulty in concentrating on the information presented in the spoken mode while copying the information from visual material (5).

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The current discussion of a range of substantial problems concerning academic lecturing in diverse discourse communities, including multilingual and non-native language speakers, has highlighted the importance of a lecture as an academic genre and a pedagogical tool characteristic of tertiary education. Crawford Camiciottoli and Querol-Julián point out that despite its generally known shortcomings, a lecture “remains a core teaching genre of higher education” (310), especially in the case of teaching large classes. Even though lectures cannot be claimed to be most effective in developing all academic skills, such as critical thinking or problem solving, teaching and learning the target course material through a sequence of lectures may prove successful if it is based on lecturers’ and students’ understanding of their roles, as well as on close collaboration in reaching their mutual goals. The present author has argued that it is in particular non-native students at lower language proficiency levels who need considerable focus on the development of their academic listening skills so that they are able to acquire subject-matter knowledge from lecture content more efficiently. With the assistance of their lecturers, they can foster their intellectual and language competencies, and become more conscious and successful tertiary learners.

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WYKŁAD AKADEMICKI W JĘZYKU NIERODZIMYM
JAKO FORMA WSPÓŁPRACY MIĘDZY WYKŁADOWCĄ I STUDENTEM

Streszczenie

Wykład akademicki odgrywa nadal kluczową rolę w przyswajaniu wiedzy dziedzinowej w środowisku akademickim, zarówno w bardziej tradycyjnej formie monologicznej, jak też w formie interaktywnej, wprowadzającej użycie nowych technologii. Umiędzynarodowienie szkolnictwa wyższego sprawia, że w kontekście wielojęzyczności adresatami działań akademickich stają się osoby, które nie zawsze osiągnęły dostatecznie wysoki poziom kompetencji w języku docelowym, niebędącym ich językiem rodzimym. Niniejszy artykuł podejmuje dyskusję na temat najbardziej istotnych kwestii wynikających z potrzeby opracowywania i prezentacji wykładów w taki sposób, aby tacy słuchacze byli w stanie nie tylko skutecznie opanować wiedzę przedmiotową, ale także potrafili wykorzystywać swój potencjał intelektualny, jednocześnie doskonalić niezbędne umiejętności w zakresie języka docelowego. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono potrzebie współpracy między wykładowcą a studentem poprzez wykorzystywanie optymalnych rozwiązań dydaktycznych, dostosowanych do możliwości studentów w sytuacji pojawiających się trudności na płaszczyźnie językowej.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja międzynarodowa; język nierodzimym; wykład akademicki; style wygłoszenia wykładu; struktura wykładu.