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INTRODUCTION

As part of English curriculum development at the graduate level, we interviewed science professors and graduate students to clarify the present problems and set goals to be attained at the end of Master’s course and Doctoral course in molecular biology and genetics. The study included English proficiency tests taken by both professors and graduate students, questionnaires, and interviews.

Diagnostic Test Score Range (First test / Second test)

| CEF | ALTE level | TOEIC     | TOEIC Bridge | C  | M1     | M2    | D     |
|-----|------------|-----------|--------------|----|--------|-------|-------|
| C2  | Level 5    | 910 +     |              |    |        |       |       |
| C1  | Level 4    | 701 - 910 | 172 +        | 10 | 0 / 3  | 0 / 2 | 0 /   |
| B2  | Level 3    | 541 - 700 | 158 - 170    | 2  | 4 / 4  | 3 / 3 | 3 / 2 |
| B1  | Level 2    | 381 - 540 | 140 - 156    | 2  | 14 / 9 | 4 / 4 | 6 / 5 |
| A2  | Level 1    | 246 - 380 | 100 - 138    |    | 2 / 2  | 5 / 2 | 2 / 2 |
| A1  |            |           | -98          |    | 0 / 1  |       |       |

(www. ets. org, 2007)

TOEIC Bridge Average Scores:

|       |             |             |             |
|-------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 176.9 | 147.3/150.8 | 147.7/150.2 | 146.7/150.8 |
|-------|-------------|-------------|-------------|

The first diagnostic test was conducted in April, 2008. The second test was conducted in September, 2008.

According to conversion more than 2/3 of professors are competent English users while most of the students were placed as threshold users.

Participants

C = Life science professors (14)  
M1 = First year Master’s students (20)  
M2 = Second year Master’s students (12)  
D = Doctoral students (11)

Description of ALTE Levels

|         |                  |   |
|---------|------------------|---|
| Level 4 | Competent User   | An ability to communicate with the emphasis on how well it is done, in terms of appropriateness, sensitivity and the capacity to deal with unfamiliar topics. |
| Level 3 | Independent User | The capacity to achieve most goals and express oneself on a range of topics.  |
| Level 2 | Threshold User   | An ability to express oneself in a limited way in familiar situations and to deal in a general way with non-routine information.                              |

(Council for Cultural Co-operation Education Committee, Modern Languages Division, 2001)

RESULT 1 Surveys (Professors)

How often do you  
participate in international conferences?  
publish on international journals?  
correspond with your colleague via e-mail?  
When you read journal articles do you  
pay attention to language features?  
make note of useful phrases?  
Do you feel you need to improve your English skills?  
Do you take time regularly to improve your English skills?

Listening to lectures and presentations within the research topic  
Reading research articles within the research topic  
Priority on content comprehension  
Note useful phrases  
Participate in peer-review process in international journals  
Participate in international conferences  
Research article writing 1 to 2 times in last 3 years.  
3 - more publication at present  
4 - more publication after getting PhD.  
E-mail correspondence with colleagues  
Pay special attention to write English correctly  
Less confident with active communication and strive to improve English proficiency

RESULT 2 Surveys (Students)

What kind of self-study do you do to improve your English skills?  
How often do you consult English instructors?  
Have you received any support in oral presentation, poster presentation, abstract writing, or full research paper writing?  
Have you participated in group discussions after attending corpus-building seminar?  
Do you feel English ability is necessary in your field of study?

Self-study in reading research articles within his / her research topic  
Consulted with English instructor on  
Oral presentation: 38 (33 for the class)  
Poster presentation : 13  
Abstracts : 18  
Research article : 3  
Need to improve proficiency, but difficult to find time for regular English study.

Needs for the Students

Communicative Competence in  
Reading and writing research articles  
Corresponding via e-mails  
Scanning / skimming websites  
Communicating during conferences and research training  
Conference presentations

Goal & Future Suggestions

Target Level : ALTE 4 or 3  
Increase Listening exposure  
Incorporate Corpus Building & Concordance Exercises  
Support and Suggest Self-study Materials

Please Leave Questions and Messages