Technical English an a US – Slovak Collaboration

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Abstract

Described is a project between students in Slovakia and the United States aimed at improving both technical communications and cultural understanding between the two groups. The Slovak students were Ph.D. candidates from the Faculty of Materials Science (MtF) at the Slovak University of Technology (SUT) studying Material Science, Plant Management, Automation and Control, and Machine Technologies. The students in the United States were seniors in a two-semester capstone design sequence in Electrical Engineering Technology (EET) at Purdue University. The MtF students were enrolled in a course entitled "English for Specific Purposes", allowing all communications to be in English. The students were paired and exchanged resumes (CVs), biographies, and technical works such as research abstracts and design proposals. Internet cameras facilitated on-line meetings throughout the yearlong project. The two groups were from different disciplines, thereby requiring clear English communications. Both groups benefited by practicing reading, writing and speaking in English through their correspondence and online meetings. One advantage of this collaboration is that it is not constrained by curricular discipline, making it easily adaptable by other disciplines. Although we did hold a one-week student exchange, a secondary advantage of the project is that the students gain international experience while avoiding the travel expense.

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