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## STUDIES BY PH.D. STUDENTS AT FA STU

Each issue of this professional magazine has presented the studies by PhD students in English. This tradition supports the students' ambition to use their foreign language skills on probably the most sophisticated level of language skills, namely the academic language. The opportunity to publish a specific field-oriented study in English is for most PhD students also the first serious attempt to formulate specific research tasks in a professional form. This is also their first time of using the skills of academic language, learned in their PhD language course. For most of them this task turns to a "devil's job".

Currently, the hard economic situation in state subsidies for Slovak Universities is the reason for numerous economic steps and decisions. Courses of foreign languages for PhD students have also been subject of discussions and restrictions. Previous years of unclear position of foreign languages in the third level of university education (PhD study) have led to compression of classes at the Faculty of Architecture thus pushing the students to more intensive individual work. Long-term practical experience of language instructors proves that specific foreign language skills are very difficult to learn without guided practice and help provided by the teacher. And, at the same time, mastering the academic language cannot be a matter of a short-term course. An efficient academic foreign language communication requires, apart from clear professional ideas, aims and argumentation within the given research topic, pertinent language skills in reading, writing and speaking. It is our experience, that even those PhD students whose foreign language skills (English) considered as upper intermediate or advanced at their entry to PhD study may have serious problems in coping with the tasks of academic language. One of more reasons to this situation is the character of previous technical education. Education leading to architecture profession is a technical type of education with main attention to technical, aesthetical and

environmental aspects. Humanities and the respective skills gained at these studies are not in the foreground of technical education. As a result, skills of academic language (relating to text composition aspects, text style aspects or different language functions e.g. agreeing and disagreeing, comparing and contrasting) cannot be considered as well developed even in native language, not speaking about foreign language communication.

Once the future Slovak professional specialists in fields of architecture and design will want to efficiently communicate with their European counterparts and colleagues at work, they will have to be able to clearly express their own standpoints, reasons and solutions and at the same time understand the same of the others. Writing of research studies and their publication in professional journals belongs to one of the academic language branches. It requires among other skills: study of particular aspects of the searched topic in foreign resources, analyses, gathering and classifying of numerous standpoints of other specialists to the pertinent topic, confrontation of the learned ideas and standpoints with the author's professional experience or standpoint, logical argumentation for or against certain standpoints, selection of the most interesting / strong arguments, formal text-building techniques, techniques of text style and different language functions use of pictures, figures, tables, graphs, etc., skills in citing and paraphrasing, knowing the norms in referencing and annotations.

It seems that for the PhD students at the Faculty of architecture, STU, the least mastered are the skills of studying, analysing and confronting the ideas as well as the skills of formal text building, citing, paraphrasing and referencing. Taking the

others' pieces of text over and including them into one's own text is a frequent practice that violates the ethical code of professional writing. This is the most frequent way of substituting the insufficient mastering of foreign language. It also often proves the insufficient practice in building one's own ideas to the given topic. So it is namely the two levels of problems that have to be overcome on the way to a good study: production of professional standpoints in the given topic, and their proper expression in English language.

Namely the second level of problems is the task of English language seminars and consultations.

The following published studies by PhD students present the results of English language classes in 2002 - 2003. Each study should, in general, state the introduction to the studied (searched) topic, then present the access to the topic by other specialists (studied from foreign resources) and confront the others' ideas with the author's own access to the topic. The study should also present the expected solution or researched results and their contribution to the given area.

Each PhD student writes the study in his or her thesis topic. Each of them starts this process on a different level of English knowledge and skills. Therefore the results are of different quality. The presented studies also reflect different level of practical professional skills or different access to the searched topic. Three of them (by L. Šoltésová, P. Olah and L. Paluchová) are oriented to design related topics, one (by M. Slabeyová) deals with a historical topic in architecture, and one (by M. Uhrík) presents a rare topic of philosophy in architecture. They all should be understood as first attempts of their authors for the written professional presentation in English language.

At this point, I would like to wish the authors many happy returns to academic writing in their future careers.