

KEY STRATEGIES APPLIED TO ESP TEACHING

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Abstract

This paper deals with the issues, tasks and challenges of the ESP teaching. It presents some basic concepts of ESP, analyzes some issues of ESP teaching effectiveness, teaching strategies and objectives, as well as the ESP teachers' role. Also, the tasks of ESP curriculum developing, course designing, performing needs analysis and assessment are explained.

Keywords: ESP course, effectiveness of ESP, methodology, communication skills and competences, specific 'professional' information, authentic materials, professional terminology, vocationally oriented tasks.

INTRODUCTION. English for specific purposes (ESP) as an academic subject was developed and introduced due to some factors caused by the effect of the worldwide interest in the study of English. Among them, Kennedy and Bolitho [5, p. 138] include:

- the introduction of governmental mass education programs “with English as the first, and sometimes only, foreign language;
- the need of English as a common medium of communication as a consequence of the growth of business and increased occupational mobility;
- the facilitation of access to scientific and technical literature.

Teaching ESP at university greatly contributes to raising students' professional competences and skills. The main goals of the university ESP course are to provide students with the clear knowledge of practical applications and fundamental concepts of professional communication. The course gives students the opportunity not only to develop their language skills but also acquire specific 'professional' information and get familiarized with new technologies, scientific hypotheses, trends and outstanding innovations; establish contacts with foreign companies and educational institutions. This

issue is especially relevant to technology universities that train experts in different fields of engineering. Creating effective professionally oriented ESP courses is particularly important for achieving the above mentioned goals.

METHODOLOGY. The ESP course has to develop students' communicative competence, their ability to communicate orally and in writing within the particular professional field and in accordance to the internationally established norms and traditions [1, p. 234]. Future professionals have to develop skills for reading professionally oriented texts which will allow them to support their academic knowledge and achieve great success in their career. For their job, they have to read professional texts, the latest scientific and technical publications that are available in English only. In addition, reading is a very important skill for all students. It provides them with the possibility to further improve the language knowledge and continue their personal education.

The vital component of the ESP course efficiency and success and one of the main teacher's responsibilities is selecting the relevant authentic materials. Using such learning resources in teaching ESP is particularly important for achieving communicative purposes. Authentic materials are taken from the real life world and reproduce realistic work environment. They can link the formal, and to some extent artificial, environment of the classroom with the real world in which we hope our students will eventually be using the language they are learning [3, p. 53]. Classroom problem solving tasks which are based on authentic materials, have realistic context and are close to the learners' target situations, which enables teachers to relate the classroom activities to their learner's needs.

RESULTS. When selecting authentic ESP course materials, the following aspects have to be taken into consideration, such as students' age, background knowledge, cultural aspects as well as learning and teaching styles. One of the main goals of the ESP is developing skills of reading professional texts. The peculiarity of teaching ESP is using professional context of a particular specialty for mastering professional

terminology and developing skills of using special vocabulary when performing vocationally oriented tasks [2, p. 114]. A lot of students face the problem of understanding what they are reading. There can be two main reasons for that. Firstly, it is because of the lack of their special terminology knowledge. Secondly, and mainly due to the limited general English vocabulary they have as it is quite problematic to achieve one of the main goals of ESP without a solid base of general English. Thus, the teacher should develop learners' awareness of the meaning and functions of the key words, the main grammar and the particular coherence and coherence tools in the text.

Professional vocabulary content presents the main concern of students' needs. In order to enlarge student's professional vocabulary with new terms and definitions when reading texts, they are encouraged to keep their own thematic vocabulary or glossaries. The process of developing skills of reading professional texts, as a rule, involves the following stages:

- pre-text vocabulary introduction to build the thematic terminological minimum;
- individual reading of the authentic text;
- classroom text reading, followed up by a series of tasks for text comprehension;
- analyzing the text functional structure for its further summarizing.

Teaching students how to summarize information is essential in ESP. Students have to develop their skills and abilities to condense information from different sources, distinguish the major issues from the minor ones, discern the most important ideas and ignore irrelevant information in order to fulfill certain assignments and do research in their field of study [4, p. 108]. The task of summarizing is a highly productive one as it develops not only students' reading abilities but their writing abilities as well.

A discussion can be another effective form of working with professional texts. The tasks must be closely linked to students' future professional activities, thus, they must be interesting and motivating. Throughout their professional lives students will need present differing opinions and perspectives on an issue. That is why it is important for students develop their skills to look at both sides of an argument objectively, considering

all positives and negatives before making their final decision.

As for importance of teaching and learning grammar in ESP, it should be mentioned that low grammatical competence can create some difficulties for professional communication and comprehending authentic texts. ESP students are supposed to use grammar knowledge they have learnt to solve some problems in their ESP reading comprehension. The teacher's role is to enable students to acquire knowledge of the basic functional grammar structures presented in a meaningful context and develop students' awareness how to comprehend the meaning of some complicated sentences in the text by analyzing the sentence structure, the functions of the sentence components and their interrelations.

CONCLUSIONS. Teaching ESP in the university classroom poses a lot of challenges. It is much more complex and responsible than teaching General English. The ESP teachers also provide materials, designs a syllabus, collaborates with subject specialists, conducts research and evaluates the course and the students as well as create learning environment where students can concentrate on language in context in order to acquire a set of professional skills and particular job-related functions. They need to design courses which meet requirements of the nature of the particular professional target. Still, the ESP teachers are not specialized in the field, but in teaching English.

References

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