

Key Issues of English for Special Purposes (ESP) Competence in Adult Education and Career Development

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Abstract: The main aim of the foreign language learning is to form the foreign language communicative competence. The reality is such that we could not even imagine what jobs will appear on the labour market in the nearest future in the conditions of increasingly developing information society. There is a kind of a gap between the demand and offer of language skills and this gap should be bridged if want to integrate as equal members of the European community. Currently we can distinguish three paradigms of professional education: cognitive-oriented, activity-oriented and personality-oriented. But currently there is also competence-oriented paradigm, where the main priority is not a mere knowledge accumulation, but the *formation* of various skills, wish and ability to study life-long. Nowadays there is a variety of innovative language education types which appeared in response to social and economic needs: online education, distance learning, electronic learning, cross-cultural learning, multi-lingual learning, resource-based learning, virtual education, problem-based learning, technology-based learning, project-based learning, flexible learning, active learning, case-based learning, discovery learning, digital learning, blended learning, web-based learning, computer-aided learning, situation-modelling learning, debatable issues learning, content-based instructions method and many others. The main distinguishing feature of the foreign language teaching for special purposes is its communicative bias, based on the following methodological principles: authenticity, informative richness, novelty, functionality, actuality. The processes of globalization and internationalization influence the system of higher education demanding changes in syllabuses and curricula structures and contents, especially of foreign language for special purposes.

Keywords: language learning; English for special purposes /ESP; English for Academic Purposes /EAP; professional education; needs analysis; placement test; language skills.

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1. Introduction

Language learning has become an indispensable part of an integrated education of new generation specialists as well as a part of a life long education. A well-educated specialist should have access to the newest information which raises his competitiveness on the modern labour market.

The objective of the research is to view and to investigate some of the existing approaches and methods of foreign language for special purposes teaching as well as knowledge and competence acquisition by non-linguistic students. *The tasks* are: to analyze the special literature and summarize the key findings on most used methods of foreign language teaching to non-linguistic students. *The object* of the research is the variety of methods in foreign languages training; *the subject* is methods giving foreign language communicative professional competence, non-linguistic students, ESP. The research involves describing, analyzing and interpreting the obtained information, data and practical experience.

2. The Aim of the Foreign Language Learning

The main aim of the foreign language learning is to form the foreign language communicative competence. Employers are looking for people who can apply language skills to a variety of different work situations. The reality is such that we could not even imagine what jobs will appear on the labour market in the nearest future in the conditions of increasingly developing information society. The essential idea of professional training lies in the ensuring high level of professional qualification and motivating the flexible adaptability and ability to possible changes of their major during the working career. Companies and various businesses are in search of good communicators with cultural competence, ability to work in multilingual and multicultural teams, flexibility and international experience. In other words, employers now emphasize fluency rather than accuracy. There is a kind of a gap between the demand and offer of language skills and this gap should be bridged if want to integrate as equal members of the European community. English for Special Purposes is a lingua franca in the technology, education, science, business and it has become an important and integral part of English language teaching.

2.1. Paradigms of Professional Education

Currently we can distinguish three paradigms of professional education: *cognitive-oriented*, *activity-oriented* and *personality-oriented*. It is considered, that at each stage of a specialist's training, the certain paradigm prevails, starting with cognitive-oriented at the very beginning and

finishing up with personality-oriented at the graduation stage. But currently there is also *competence-oriented* paradigm, that is predetermined by the transition of the world community to informational society, where the main priority is not a mere knowledge accumulation, but the *formation* of various skills, wish and ability to study life-long, and ordinary “knowledge pedagogics” is losing its significance. The variety of professional functions demands certain competences, which in turn can be widely divided into three categories: socio-cultural, professional and personal competences.

In today’s dynamic global world, the skills that are highly valued are creativity, adaptability, critical reasoning and collaboration. It is impossible to foster these vitally important skills in the classroom during some certain classes, the best effective way is integrated studies (or, in other words, interdisciplinary studies), helping students develop multifaceted expertise and meaningful understanding of the complex associations and influences within a topic. So, the modern society requires flexible, adaptable systems of education, which can prepare even to a quick change of a profession, and, moreover, give students a right direction to self-education, to develop their cognitive activity.

At the turn of the XXI century Europe and many countries worldwide experienced the formation of so-called *competence approach* to education standards modelling. And this approach has become the most extensively used in the system of higher education due to its applied character and practicality. The variety of professional functions demands certain competences, which in turn can be widely divided into three categories: socio-cultural, professional and personal competences, a foreign language competence is a constituent part of each of them.

According to the principles of current pedagogics, every student should master a certain set of skills and the most essential knowledge, which is reflected in same syllabus and curriculum, and the methods of teaching and then assessing the results are also nearly unified. In general, it is not bad to have unifications and standards, especially when students pass tests and get degrees or even some certificates showing their language level proficiency. But on the stage of the teaching there should be variety and the possibility to find the best way to motivate students, to reveal their abilities, potential and to encourage their studies. New and innovative methods and approaches have become the subject of research interest for many educators. The ways may be different, but in the result should graduate a competitive specialist, motivated to improve his skills, to develop professionally, with a profession-related foreign language communicative competence.

2.2. *English for Special Purposes. Types of ESP*

ESP emerged as a result to meet the specific needs of learners, usually adult learners needing English for their professional activity or students of tertiary level of education, using English in their academic studies, especially as a Medium of instruction (EMI). Accordingly, ESP may be distinguished as the sub-branch having the following peculiarities as: 1) ESP may be related to the specific subjects; 2) It may use teaching methods and situations different from General English (GE); 3) It may be designed for adult intermediate or advanced learners.

Generally, ESP is divided into English for Academic Purpose (EAP) and English for Occupational Purpose (EOP), both of which are subdivided further on into English for science and technology, English for law, English for vocational purpose etc. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) divided ESP into three types: English for Science and Technology, English for Business and Economics and English for Social Science, each of which is subdivided into EAP and EOP. Teaching methodology specialists consider that the end purpose of both EAP and EOP are one and the same but the means to achieve this is very different) It is supposed that an EAP course “usually consists primarily of study skills practice (e.g. listening to lectures, seminar skills, academic writing, reading and note taking, etc.) with an academic register and style in the practice texts and materials” (Hamp-Lyonos, 2001, p. 127). English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) EOP is taught in such a situation in which learners need to use English as part of their professional activity.

The role of an ESP teacher changes, she should be knowledgeable and experienced in material development, be able and willing to provide specific oral or written discourse (using role play, case study situations and simulation play), should be flexible and creative. A teacher has to modify the available materials to match the learners’ needs, as there doesn’t exist a universal ESP textbook that suits all the demands, all professions and majority of learners. Materials which are perfectly selected should be based on various interesting texts and activities developing all the language skills. Whereas, in teaching English for General Purposes, it is possible to find a suitable universal textbook and the choice is much wider.

2.3. *Peculiarities of ESP Teaching*

Nowadays there is a variety of innovative language education types which appeared in response to social and economic needs: online education, distance learning, electronic learning, cross-cultural learning, multi-lingual learning, resource-based learning, virtual education, problem-based learning, technology-based learning, project-based learning, flexible learning, active learning, case-based learning, discovery learning,

digital learning, blended learning, web-based learning, computer-aided learning, situational-modelling learning, debatable issues learning, content-based instructions method and many others.

Due to the fact that ESP covers a wide range of various specific purposes, a teacher should keep in mind that different purposes require different materials and perhaps different teaching procedures. Some students need only speaking and listening skills, e.g. working as a receptionist, without writing skills, whereas others need improved reading and writing skills, to work with professional literature, to make reviews. So, the first step is to make a needs analysis, then it may be expedient to reconsider the materials and methodology to be used in language teaching and learning process.

Needs analysis is an integral part of ESP and it is an ongoing process because students are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse, their objectives and the levels of academic literacy are different. The methods of doing need analysis have become more sophisticated due to the development of new technology. The most common ways of doing need analysis are questionnaires, surveys, interviews and observations. Need analysis is asking questions about students' needs and wants, there exist special sets of questions, a teacher doesn't have to create them from a scratch. The learners' needs or goals form the foundation of the course. ESP teaching should start with a properly performed need analysis. Need is defined as the reason for which the learner is learning English, which varies from learner to learner, context to context and discipline to discipline. It is important that needs detected before the course might change during the course and the teacher has to take note of those changes. Mostly, learners' needs can be divided into two main categories: immediate and delayed needs. Immediate needs refer to those needs which students have at the time of the course, whereas, delayed needs refer to those ones that students will have with a time being after the course. ESP teachers should be aware of the options and limitation which are due to the learners' expectations and requirements. An elaborate and properly performed needs analysis is very helpful and essential in ESP teaching. Needs analysis is an initial constituent part of syllabus design, the other two being content specification and syllabus organization.

Teaching ESP starts with needs analysis which is carried out by the ESP teacher. Needs analysis should be the starting point for devising syllabus, course material and the kind of teaching and learning that are going to take place in the ESP course. To be exact, needs analysis includes: necessities, demands, wants, likes, lacks, deficiency, goals, aims, purposes and objectives. It is obvious that a typical needs analysis should include the following constituent items: job contexts and academic contexts; learners'

multiple intelligence; learning styles and ways of working in a particular job, target needs, learners' interests. Sometimes it is advisable to design a personal profile chart for each student in order to individualize the learning process and to achieve better results.

A placement test is used at the beginning of the course to place the learners in the course which suits their needs the most and where they will feel comfortable and the learning process will be the most beneficial. Placement test determines the learners' language proficiency, finds out their four language skills, and enables designing a suitable syllabus and choosing proper materials, both in professional content and linguistic level.

The main distinguishing feature of the foreign language teaching for special purposes is its communicative bias, based on the following methodological principles: authenticity, informative richness, novelty, functionality, actuality. We should bear in mind that peculiarity that in large parts of Europe and beyond, English is already considered as a basic skill not as a foreign language, it is becoming a basic component in curricula in many countries, so English for general purposes (EGP) is one of the commonplace competences.

Course "Foreign Language for Professional Communication" (or ESP, what is more common) which is taught in institutions of higher education of Ukraine, takes a kind of intermediate place between theoretical and practical subjects, as it requires considerable amounts of skills (as a practical discipline) alongside with the amount of knowledge equal to theoretical disciplines. Due to this, considering these peculiarities, the final goal of education should be defined elaborately, not only the learning material should be profession-related, but the learning activity as well, that consists of operations and acts which form professional skills. The very essence of profession-related foreign language learning is in its integration with special (major) subjects aiming to get more professional knowledge (in this sense *profession-oriented foreign language learning* is more expedient and logical than ESP, to my mind). So, all the educational material should be relevant to the principles of systematic and perspective approaches, the process of education should be individualized and with the elements of differentiation, with the emphasis on the development of foreign language communicative skills. In many companies English training is needs-based. Courses are provided in response to requests from the company's employees, and the content is chosen on the basis of what the learners need in their jobs.

Sometimes students majoring in non-linguistic disciplines (nature sciences, applied sciences, arts, information, economics and other sciences) are not so highly motivated in their foreign language studies, and, besides, they get discouraged rather quickly at the slightest failures in their

language acquisition process; but learning activity process could not run smoothly as the clockwork, learning should go through practice, mistakes, failures, with subsequent understanding and correction of mistakes, and consolidation of the necessary amount of knowledge. But at the same time students want to use and apply a foreign language, not merely to know and to get some grade.

Professional foreign language competence (ESP competence) is gained through a complicated and multi-tiered process, it comprises the knowledge of special vocabulary and terminology, translation of texts on specialty, skills to use and apply information found in the information networks, to conduct oral and written negotiations with foreign partners, to represent own country at the international conferences, to participate in cross-cultural communication in order to carry out professional tasks. Taking into consideration the amount of contact hours (so-called *practical classes*) allocated for the foreign language teaching at the non-linguistic higher education establishments and the amount of the material planned for teaching, it becomes obvious, that there is a need to plan elaborately the individual (independent) studying activity of students, to customize and adapt (within the program limits) the amount of thematic vocabulary and grammar tasks in correspondence to the needs of a particular group, to differentiate the ways and tempo of teaching. And, moreover, the tasks and the whole language learning process should enhance the development of the communicative foreign language competence. So, the tasks should be of various types – that suit the personality types of students, their major activity, their level of language knowledge (proficiency). Tasks may be of a project type, presentation type, role-playing that model the situations of their professional activity, tasks to make up some reviews, maybe even costumed performances (to immerse into some historic age), to make an annotation of an authentic text on the student's major, to compile some glossary or thesaurus on a specific, very peculiar field of knowledge or its subdivision – the main requirement is that they should be filled and even saturated with profession related vocabulary. Teachers should also vary the teaching and learning methodologies and give enough rooms to practical oral and written exercises. If it happens that there is a need to study material outside the teacher's competence, the methodology of group cooperation and co-working may be applied. As it is specified, ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English (Augsburg T., 2006; Morena B., 2014). Much attention should be paid to the integration of studying and scientific research. And apart from language knowledge the educators should remember about cross-cultural communication, its peculiarities, main directions, ways to teach it in the classroom in the best possible way, combining language and culture simultaneously. There exist

the socio-cultural and ethno-national peculiarities in the perception of the surrounding world, when it is vital to know mimics and gesture codes used by the representative of different ethnical and linguistic communities.

2.4. Results. Future of ESP

In the globalized world the demand for English language proficiency is growing worldwide alongside with ESP competence. Working with authentic sources of information will increase as well as the need in specialists able to work with original materials. It is predicted that developments in applied linguistics will certainly influence ESP teaching in particular.

3. Conclusions

Considering that the results of the ESP course are the main goal and are of utmost importance, teachers should choose methods of implementation which suit particular students and certain demands according to the needs analysis and their initial level of language proficiency determined by the placement test. Sometimes teachers face the necessity to be eclectic; other times, they must be teacher-centred, or vice versa, student-centred. They may be concerned with the subject matter and still other times concerned with the process.

So the language learning process is rather diverse and complicated and the best way to get the desired results is to apply all the innovative methods and techniques and:

You should *individualize* your teaching as much as possible. The cookie-cutter attitude "one size fits all" does not work effectively, you should learn as much as you can about each student (do not forget about *needs analysis*) and teach each student in the most comfortable and effective for him way. Sometimes "to individualize" means "slow it down", or "simplify" or Break instructions into different sized segments", it goes together with "personalizing" to help students survive and thrive in today's hectic classrooms. It is clear that it is better accomplished with smaller classes (groups). While organizing language study groups it is worth remembering the "numeric limit of manageability" which exists in social psychology and science of labour management and is expressed as a ratio 1/7. These numbers mean that one effective manager can manage not more than seven persons, the same ratio may correspond in general to the educational "management" or teaching. So, we should strive to minimize the extended number of students in some groups.

You should *pluralize or diversify* your teaching. Important materials should be taught in several ways, not just one, so that you can reach the students who learn in different ways.

The current general tendency of development of disciplines can be described in terms of integration of different fields of knowledge and it is interdisciplinary approach that will enhance the formation of the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities.

The processes of globalization and internationalization influence the system of higher education demanding changes in syllabuses and curricula structures and contents, especially of foreign language for special purposes.

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