



UDK 811.1181-373.611

Teaching English for Specific Purposes: theoretical and practical dimensions



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The article deals with the issue of teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The study aims at characterization its theoretical basis, main peculiarities as subcategory of English for Academic Purposes, and effective methods for practical teaching it. The important question about essential competences of ESP teachers has been revealed.

Keywords: *English for Specific Purposes, professional training, ESP teachers' competence, forms, methods, techniques of ESP teaching, constructivism approach, creative teaching.*

Introduction. Expansion of European Union results in considerable changes in different spheres of human life, and in the field of education as well. Common European space puts forward important tasks as for the increase in students' mobility, establishment of international contacts, free access to information in any part of the Union, and communication with the representatives of other countries. In this space expansion of international business contacts and cooperation in the different spheres of human activity require the use of foreign language as means of cross cultural contacts of specialists of any occupation.

The English language as the main language of international communication has been in the center of scholars' attention for a long period of time. Its different aspects have been the object of scientific studies. In the result of the researches scientists came to the conclusion about the existence of two approaches to teaching English, which are focused on the special needs of students and improvement of a learner's communicative abilities for his professional performance in foreign language environment. No wonder that nowadays the amount of educational establishments

which offer the English language courses is increasing steadily in those countries, where the English is studied as a foreign language. Learning ESP is considered the necessary prerequisite of high professional competitiveness and further promotion [4, p. 1042].

Literature review. Today, in leading Ukrainian scientists' opinion (V. Andriushchenko, P. Beh, I. Ziaziun, V. Kremen, G. Onkovych, and others) the quality of higher education largely depends on university graduating students' language proficiency. More attention is paid to the aspects of studies of a foreign language as a language of professional communication, because in professional development of future specialist professional communication together with professional activity is determining factor of his or her successful career. The issue of teaching foreign language for specific purposes is revealed in the works of such scholars as T. Hutchinson, O. Petrashchiuk, O. Poliakov, I. Velnyk, A. Waters and others. A number of researchers (Y. Avsiukevich, O. Bigych, Y. Degtiarova, T. Karaeva and others) devoted their work to language training of future specialists in one particular sphere of industry. Scholars insist on the importance of innovative techniques in language teaching. Some of them (N. Bibik, D. Bubnova, V. Martyniuk, J. Richards, O. Savchenko and other) consider projects and gamification a good opportunity to combine learning and professional environment. The use of modern multimedia technologies in teaching a foreign language is the object of study such researches as N. Klevtsova, T. Kolesova, O. Tarnapolsky.

The aim of the study is to work our theoretical basis and characterize peculiarities in practical teaching ESP with the focus on effective methods and ESP teachers' necessary competences.

Discussions. The beginning of 1960s was the time of active increasing specification of content in English teaching curricular. During this period ESP did not have logical and planned teaching methodology as its appearance was the prompt respond to market demand.

Later on teaching ESP methodology was recognized as subcategory of methodology of teaching foreign languages. Under the influence of such factors as globalization, socio-economic development of society ESP as a language that comprises specific professional needs of learners and changes from teacher-centered to learner-centered approach shows steady dissemination and is in growing demand among students.

There are several definitions of ESP. According to one of them ESP is a «variety of English that can be observed in a given perimeter of society, delineated by professional or disciplinary boundaries» [1]. It demonstrates interdisciplinary character of ESP that attracts researchers due to the combination of linguistic peculiarities of language and specialized content of training. Ability to use ESP may be considered as «a professional macro-skill comprising knowledge and competencies related to disciplinary, academic, or professional domains, and to particular modes of communication and relationships typical of each» [1, p. 37–38].

The main aim in teaching ESP is to help learners acquire communicative skills together with and as a component of vocational knowledge. Designers of ESP curricula observe main rules of their efficiency: learner's needs analysis (before, during, after training); design or adaptation of learning materials for the training according to learners' needs; acquisition of new vocational knowledge [4, c. 1043].

According to analyzed material, theoretical basis of language teaching as well as ESP teaching is constructivism approach. Constructivism approach to teaching any subject may be determined as approach that allows students to construct their knowledge and skills by means of practical actions in real-life or simulated environment. Constructivism approach is very effective in ESP teaching as it doesn't require intentional drilling. With it memorizing occurs subconsciously in the process of creative communication on vocational topics in simulated situations. It is important that in the process of communication students obtain new vocational knowledge and skills. It allows designers to integrate ESP course with specialized courses. Such integration raises students' motivation as they can see benefits of ESP learning for their future career. Teaching with constructivism approach is based on learning autonomy and in the case of professional communication in simulated environment this autonomy becomes creative, taking into consideration the fact that professional communication, even simulated, means problem-solving activity. It turns ESP teaching into problem-oriented one that enhances efficiency due to overall students' involvement.

Problem-oriented and autonomous learning forces students to search specialized information, do creative professional tasks. Practical realization of constructivism approach in ESP teaching is observed in experimental teaching with the use of experimental types of activity, which simulate extra linguistic professional reality. This guarantees functioning learners' target language. In such a way the skills of professional

communication are subconsciously constructed in the process of quasi professional experience. Their acquisition is the result of direct involvement in professional communication [7, p. 160]. Thus, experimental learning with simulated situations is the basis for constructivism approach. Others widely spread approaches in ESP teaching are functional and communicative approaches, which appeared as respond to ESP needs and which, in fact, were the basis for modern Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) [5, p.151].

Another problem in ESP teaching is students' insufficient proficiency level of general English that prevent them from acquiring ESP. In such cases ESP teachers have to review general English and it hinders progress in ES teaching. According to many scientists the use of appropriate teaching techniques can help overcome this problem. Communicative approach is considered the most effective, though speaking skills are the most difficult to get as it needs a learner's self confidence in knowledge. Some practitioners say that enough amount of reading and listening tasks inspire students with self assurance by offering necessary speech patterns and models. There are some most effective techniques for ESP teaching. The first is learner centered teaching that gradually ousts teacher-centered one. Collaborative teaching that means cooperation at lesson between language and vocational subject teachers goes the second. In this case they mutually reinforce their activity. From personal experience the author can advice cooperation between language and specialized departments in designing curricula, approving useful and interesting topics for learning. On the other hand it may be cooperation between ESP teacher and students. In this case ESP teacher gets new knowledge from students [2, c. 72].

Complex nature of ESP required determining its characteristics, which are divided into absolute and variable. To absolute characteristic scientists refer: its orientation on a learner's special needs; the use of methodology and types of activity of adjacent subject; orientation on linguistic skills which are appropriate for these types of activity. To variable characteristic they refer: special design for vocational subjects; adult learners of ESP courses; medium and advanced proficiency level [3, p 25].

As we have already mentioned, success in ESP teaching depends greatly on needs analysis and it results in focused ESP course. Needs analysis must be the first step in designing the course, search for learning material, test construction. In the end of the analysis we can obtain informative data base about learners, sponsors, industry specialists. Main tools in this analysis are questionnaires, discussions, structured interviews, observations and assessment. One of main components of the needs analysis is analysis of target situation. It requires a learner's needs in professional or academic environment; analysis of current situation (weak and strong sides in learners' skills, their learning experience); analysis of teaching methods for

designing an effective course; language audit (deep analysis of language requirements that helps determine the role of the language in activity).

Taking into consideration importance, complex character of ESP and necessity of ESP teaching improvement, ESP teacher and his/her knowledge, skills and competences attract scientists' attention. The main problem is seen in ESP teacher's insufficient readiness for teaching professionally oriented language. ESP teacher should continuously learn new information, and improve his/her knowledge in the sphere which is not his occupation. Pedagogical institutes equip future teachers with necessary knowledge and skills, and they have to apply them in ESP teaching. But main problem lies in fundamental difference between English for academic purpose (EAP) and ESP. ESP teachers often face the problem of adjusting EAP forms and methods.

With complex character of ESP in mind it is important to determine necessary competences of ESP teachers. And the first question that raises disputes is the question about who is a better ESP teacher: language teacher who learned necessary knowledge from the professional sphere or industry specialist who has high language proficiency level. Industry specialists consider themselves in better position due to deep understanding of industry that must be in the center of ESP lessons. In this case we should bear in mind that language teaching is a brunch of scientific knowledge with its own methodology and techniques that are unknown for industry specialists. But researches show that ESP teachers are better in this role as Functional academic literacy (lexical information processing, preparation of presentations etc) is their main skill, necessary for language teacher activity. That is why due to special training for these functions ESP teacher is more efficient [4, p. 1054].

Quite logical in this context is the question about necessary for ESP teacher competences. According to some scientists ESP teachers should have learning skills as they continuously have to acquire new knowledge. In this process they take up new occupation as a novice in which they have to learn fast.

ESP teacher should be a good communicator and establish good relations with students who inform him about news in the industry. And in the course of a lesson the teacher should be ready for unexpected questions that can interfere with the planned scenario. On the other hand it is students who can help find the correct answer and offer their explanations. Communication and cooperation skills are necessary for modification of the course design according to students' needs [2, p. 86].

ESP teacher needs multitask solving skills as he has to do several things simultaneously, like react to unexpected situations, learn new information and offer explanations etc. Such skills are usual for any teacher (observation, supervision, assessment of students' activity). But ESP teacher besides it often has to change the planned course of the lesson, find more

appropriate examples, control students' understanding and check his own understanding the material that is being taught [2, p. 87].

It is necessary to stress that in ESP teaching students' assessment is somewhat different from usual one. Traditionally EAP teachers use tests, exams, tasks, control papers. In case with ESP learners who work they can be assessed by a number of people: ESP teacher, learner himself (for example in communication with foreign partners), supervisor [2, p.91].

ESP teacher should be a good presenter to show learning material in a structured way, to be able to explain differences in languages, in speech patterns and lexical units. ESP teacher should skillfully choose forms and methods of teaching, and even body language, manner of speech are considered to be important factors in teaching process. It is relevant to general English as well, but for ESP teacher it is important to make most of it, adding information and communication technologies, hand out materials for better illustration of key points of the lesson [2, p. 90].

Besides, ESP teacher should be a problem-shooter and be able to offer quick solution to a problem (for example, to name another modification of a product, to know faults in models etc). There is even an idea that content of training should be designed from the engineer's point of view.

ESP teacher should be a good manager to manage unexpected situations in a classroom and to define the most important skills for students. On this point ESP and EAP teachers' functions are similar, but in case with ESP teacher probability of unexpected situations is higher as there are much more information in professional sphere in which ESP teacher may not knowledgeable enough. These very situations need his managerial skills to modify planned course of a lesson.

Among other essential skills for ESP teacher scientists mention his ability to create learning environment. Creativity of ESP teacher is considered as his efforts to bring up creative thinking. It is an agreed point that in order to become ESP teacher on should always search motivation, inspiration and creative techniques appropriate for certain learners. Attempt to teach creatively is more suitable for ESP lessons and unlike traditional and widely used techniques can not destroy desire to learn [6, p. 175].

More frequent use of ICT, creation of interactive atmosphere, students' creativity development, an inclusive character of such lessons confirms the statement about efficiency of creative teaching. Among its disadvantages such things are mentioned as unexpected character, necessity of diligent preparation and detailed planning. But in spite of these disadvantages creative teaching remains the most challenging approach in ESP teaching. As ESP is meant mostly for adults, creative teaching opens opportunities for discussions, expression of personal points of view, introduction of new ideas, values etc. It also widens limits of free and objective interaction and in such a way enriches all participants with new ideas [6, p. 176].

In creative teaching ESP teachers often use such technique as supposition (certain variants are offered for a situation, negative brainstorming is conducted) which integrates scientific learning with interesting narrative that encourages learners to study scientific details connected with unreal situation. In this case learners get skills of problem solving and deductive reasoning.

Role playing technique allows students to use practically learned material and gives opportunity to step in the shoes of main characters of the imaginary story. For example in case with future teaching air traffic controllers in National Aviation University the imaginary situation offered for students may be an air crash. The students offer their ideas about the reason of the crash, among which is equipment failure. They study equipment that most often fails, its technical characteristics and functions, draw diagrams etc. In role playing they simulate the situation, produce dialogues between pilots, pilots and air traffic controllers. As home task they may be offered to write a report with detailed analysis of the crash.

Thus, ESP has a complicated character and needs further researches about its peculiarities for better teaching results. As ESP teaching is designed according to professional learners' needs, it makes use of most effective approaches, methods and techniques. Creative teaching needs proper preparation as ESP teaching suggests deep analysis of the subject a teacher does not always know. The most useful skills are managerial skills and innovative and creative approach especially on the level of problem presentation for raising students' interest and their motivation.

Further researches in ESP teaching should be conducted in the sphere of modern methods aimed at improvement language proficiency level of future specialist.

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Н. ПАЗЮРА

Викладання англійської мови професійного спрямування: теоретичний та практичний виміри

У статті зазначено, що розширення міжнародного співробітництва в різних сферах діяльності під впливом глобалізаційних тенденцій, стрімкого розвитку міжнародних ділових контактів актуалізують питання володіння іноземною мовою, зазвичай, англійською, як засобом міжкультурного спілкування спеціалістів будь-якої професії. Розкрито міждисциплінарний характер професійно-орієнтованої англійської мови, основна мета навчання якої полягає у набутті навичок іншомовної комунікації разом із професійними знаннями. Досліджено теоретичні засади навчання професійно-орієнтованої англійської мови: застосування конструктивістського, комунікативного, центрованого на студенті підходів, що забезпечують його можливість конструювати знання та розвивати навички шляхом реалізації набутих знань у реальній або змодельованій професійній ситуації. Розглянуто практичні методи та технології, що сприяють удосконаленню процесу викладання професійно-орієнтованої англійської мови, як-то: проблемно-орієнтоване та автономне навчання, що спонукає студентів до пошуку професійної інформації, виконання креативних професійно-орієнтованих завдань. Виявлено необхідні компетентності викладача професійно-орієнтованої англійської мови. Серед них: спеціальна, методична, управлінська, комунікативна, креативна. Підсумком статті є настанова щодо необхідності дослідження особливостей викладання професійно-орієнтованої англійської мови з метою підвищення ефективності курсів навчання.

Ключові слова: професійно-орієнтована англійська мова, професійна підготовка, компетентності викладача професійно-орієнтованої англійської мови, форми, методи, педагогічні технології, конструктивістський підхід, креативне навчання.

