



Abstract

The aim of the poster is to share the authors' experience on the influence of teaching business English in companies to tertiary education ESP courses. The authors are ESP lecturers at the University of Latvia and simultaneously have extensive practice of teaching outside the university. In the first section of the poster the authors have intended to summarize the contribution from the professional to academic environment by comparing the students in both of them in terms of their personal maturity and language learning awareness. In the next section the needs of the in-service and academic students shall be compared as well as the challenges confronting the teacher in meeting them. Further the authors have planned to deal with the contribution in the area of skill development by stressing the role of various social skills apart of the four language ones and the teacher's confidence in training them. The fourth section shall consider vocabulary development as another challenge is presented by the lack of the actual terminology translation in language textbooks as well as in the available dictionaries and the teacher might be unaware of the specific terms used professionally. Finally the authors will deal with the comparison of the character of study materials necessary in each of the teaching environments and pose a question about ESP as a marginal area that requires a lot of additional knowledge and skills apart of the language ones to contribute to the study environment.

Introduction

The authors of the paper represent the Language Centre of the University of Latvia and mainly work with the students of the Faculty of Economics and Management.

The aim of the report is to share the experience regarding the influence of teaching ESP to professional students to ESP in higher education. The authors have aspired to classify their experience by dealing with the essential areas of teaching methodology which most expressively present the likely contribution from the professional environment to the academic one in terms of teaching English for Specific Purposes. The paper presents an empirical framework for further research of the marginal, however crucial area for bringing foreign language studies closer to the requirements of the professional life.

The authors represent teachers of English and the language is their main object and tool of teaching, however, it is certainly not enough for achieving success. Taking into account the specifics of ESP both linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of teaching will be discussed in the report.

1. Study needs

The authors do their best to place the personality of a student at the basis of the teaching process and thus have to adjust to various degrees of maturity and life experience as well as general linguistic competences. Generally professional students have established themselves as personalities, however, in higher education students not always have achieved maturity as personalities which means that the teacher constantly faces the challenging task of adjusting the professional saturation of the language taught to the perception ability of students. The actual language needs of students can then be determined based on their level of maturity. The authors' experience proves that the needs of three basic types should be taken into consideration:

1. Macro needs – needs of society
2. Needs of the particular organization and group of students
3. Individual needs

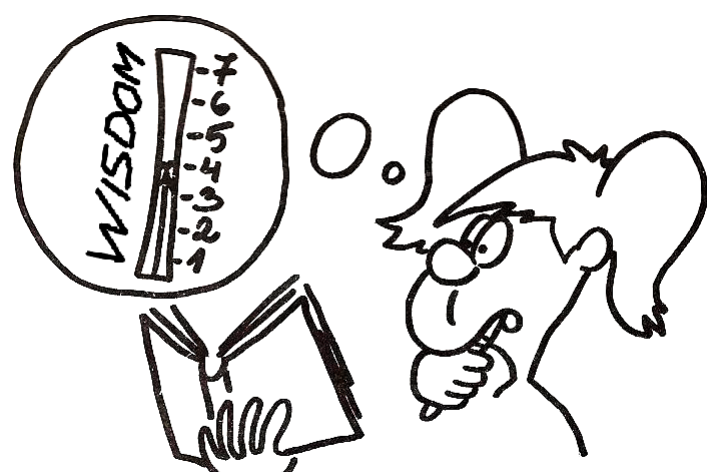
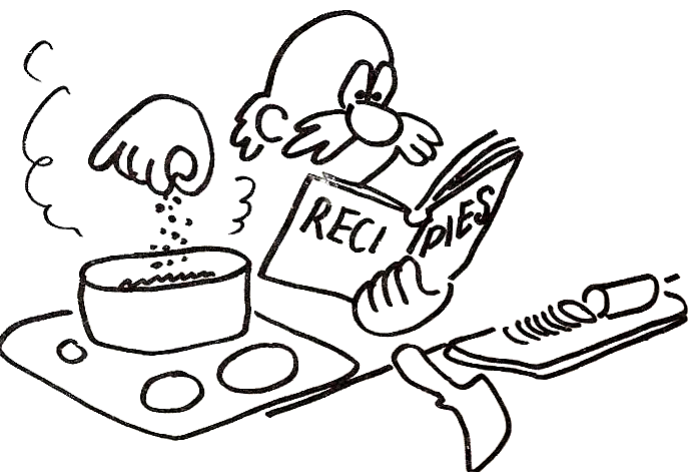
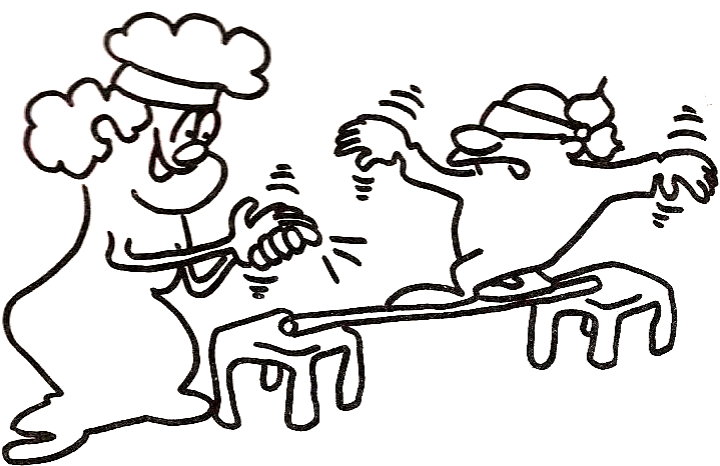
Society/ community define the overall direction of the teaching process. Teachers have to transform these general directions to be implemented in the particular teaching environment with particular personalities. Thus these days the society requires practical knowledge applicable immediately in particular professional situations, easy to perceive and supported by the latest technologies which implies that the teacher has to be aware and open for the current developments in the public space.

Although the authors appreciate the fixed curricula always present in universities and common for professional language teaching, experience shows that we realize what is actually needed only during or even after the course. Moreover, as ESP teachers the authors realize what exactly is needed for the students of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Latvia only thanks to extensive practice in professional organizations. Therefore the authors believe that teachers must retain the possibility to be

Learning from Life

Contribution from teaching English for Specific Purposes in the Professional Environment to Academic ESP Courses

Presenters: Liga Belicka & Ruta Svetina both Masters of Social Sciences, lecturers of the Language Centre of the University of Latvia



2. Skill development

As all of us know, the overwhelming majority of students require communication skills which represent a complex phenomenon as apart from the 4 basic language skills they require certain social skills, such as

- Diplomacy skills;
- Ability to react adequately in unexpected professional situations;
- Ability to transfer and apply language skills as well as language material flexibly not only in the classroom and within the confines of the definite topic, but also in the real life situations.

So the teacher's role is to help students become aware of the necessity for developing social skills apart from the 4 basic language ones. The ESP teacher should motivate the students to share their professional issues thus encouraging them to learn the foreign language. Simultaneously it facilitates the development of the sense of security in the process of language learning.

At this stage we would like to emphasize that the teacher of ESP should not be afraid to show that he/she can learn something from the professional audience and then transfer the acquired knowledge to the university students and only after testing the theoretical knowledge and assumptions the teachers of ESP have greater confidence in transferring the social skills.

Guru of ESP Paul Emmerson has pointed out the importance of the social skills which should be practiced by both – teachers and students.

Positive

'Be positive! Look at these words: activity, agreed, evolving, fast, good question, helpful, join us, mutual, productive, solve, team, together, useful.

Now look at these: busy, crisis, failure, forget it, hard, I can't, I won't, impossible, never, stupid, unavailable, waste. The words You use show Your attitude to life.

'E-mail English' by Paul Emmerson

This quote from the book "E-mail English" by Paul Emmerson refers to the writing skills, however the skill or ability of positive interaction could be transferred to the communication as well as to the use of the language as a whole.

3. Vocabulary Development

A major problem in teaching ESP in Latvia is the lack of approved terminology as translations are being adjusted to the Latvian language and the development of unified terminology is very slow. The professional students usually know the actual terminology both in Latvian and English and often help teachers of ESP understand the meaning of the particular term in the particular field. This again helps the ESP teacher transfer the knowledge from the professional to the academic environment. In many text books there are terms which are explained not very successfully or sometimes not explained at all. It is often that the teachers of ESP learn these terms while teaching professionals in the companies. Consequently the teacher feels more secure in discussing these terms with academic students. For example, within the topic "Company structure", the term 'matrix structure' that often presents difficulty.

4. Study material

The experience of working in the professional environment provides the teacher with the competence of selecting a corresponding study material for developing an up-to-date vocabulary and language skills of higher education students as our awareness of the actual needs has increased. As a result, when assessing the material in terms of interest for the students and the relevance of the material contents for the student needs, we suppose that our selection is closer to the actual needs and interests.

Moreover, the teaching of ESP to professional students and discussing of their professional issues provides ESP teachers with authentic case studies for the systematic including in the course as well as unplanned situations in the academic study process. This experience also allows the teacher to present professional solutions for ready case studies and explain them. Here, of course, the question arises about the competence of the ESP teacher as the cases and professional situations differ and as ESP is a marginal area. Here the dilemma lies how far we as ESP teachers should know the respective professional area.

In our practice we have tried various approaches to designing study materials, however, we would like to point out that the book "Business English Frameworks" by Paul Emmerson, which presents a challenge for any teacher of Business English. The book provides just a framework for focusing the student experience for discussing a specific business topic.

Although each unit contains support material for teachers it basically explains the terminology and methodology, not the real business life behind it.

According to our practice this text book is very useful for professional students, however a similar book for academic students is still to be designed. Academic students need a more detailed and explanatory material providing examples of the professional field.

5. Results

And now about the results of the studies. The results of studies can be assessed by the teacher as well as a student him- or herself

1. During the lesson
2. After each lesson
3. Immediately after the course
4. After a certain period – when experiencing the need and along with the personal development.

During the course of ESP we assess the result of teaching based on the skills students have acquired. The skills required by the professional students are complex: the students have to listen, answer, get acquainted with new information and fill their answers with substantial contents. Usually this kind of assessment meets the needs of students and their employers (organizations).

For example, we assess

1. Ability to present a clear, detailed description of the problems of different kind in the particular professional field;
2. Ability to explain their opinion on a specific professional issues by analyzing strengths and weaknesses (the so-called SWOT analysis);
3. The acquired skills used for solving case studies;
4. Presentation skills combining language and social skills as well as the skills of delivering contents.

As a result the teacher of ESP by assessing the student performance is able to make conclusions both on the obtained skills as well as further needs.

In all of the assessment situations it is possible to evaluate the acquired skills as a whole as well as in detail which is also envisaged by the requirements of the Common European Framework of Language Reference although the requirements regarding ESP are still under discussion. Thus, the spoken production requirements of the Self-Assessment level B2 include the presentation skills as follows: I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

We might adjust this general language requirement to ESP needs by replacing the field of interest by 'professional interest'.

With academic students simultaneously with the skills the teachers should assess academic perception as the students lack the professional experience. Similarly with the help of ESP the students acquire not only the language, but also their profession, however what entitles us to teach the professional half?

What the two of us have done is besides the degree in linguistics we have acquired the Master's degree in Public Administration and have dared to face the various challenges of teaching professionals.

Conclusions

1. Developments and processes of society require immediately applicable knowledge that can be used in specific professional situations.
2. Increasingly bigger attention should be devoted to the development of the communication skills by using the language as well as enhancing the awareness of the role of the non-verbal aspects of communication.
3. The vocabulary should be topical and precise and the duty of the university teacher is to provide for that.
4. The language teaching experience to professionals represents a very essential factor for the successful teaching at the university.
5. We would suggest teaching language to professionals with the help of the materials rich in professional contents and terminology. While with academic students study materials should be more explanatory and full of examples and associations.
6. In any teaching process both in professional and academic environment disregarding the well-prepared study material the crucial role belongs to the teacher.
7. The teaching of ESP to the academic students provides teachers with the theoretical experience for teaching ESP to professionals in really existing organizations. In its turn working with professionals allows the ESP teachers to realize what academic students should learn for the successful integration in the professional employment.

