PROBLEMS IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES IN NON-LINGUISTIC UNIVERSITIES

Valentina Normuratova
Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor
Uzbek State World Languages University
Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Aisulu Kinjemuratova
Lecturer
Westminster International University in Tashkent
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Article history:		Abstract:
		Teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) in non-linguistic universities faces a number of challenges that hinder students' language development and academic success. Primarily, this article focuses on four interrelated issues: insufficient opportunities for communication and practice of English, limited student autonomy, lack of creative thinking, and lack of specialized training for ESP teachers. As ESP teaching becomes essential in higher education, more attention is given to creating an academic environment that supports students' independent learning and develops their creative thinking. Therefore, several methodological possibilities have been recommended to foster skills necessary not only for academic life but also for a globalized workforce. Moreover, the article discusses the principles of active authentic communication and student engagement in the classroom highlighting useful activities. Finally, tandem and collaborative ways of teaching have been suggested to blend language-focused strategies with field-specific pedagogies.

INTRODUCTION
At the present stage of the development of society, the main task of policy in the field of language education around the world is to establish mutual understanding in the process of effective communication between representatives of different cultures. The integration processes taking place in the world in recent decades, the new political and socio-economic situation, and the rapid growth of international relations in various areas of the economy, science, culture, and sports determine the need of society for highly qualified and competitive specialists with developed critical thinking and intercultural communication skills in a foreign language. Particular attention is paid to improving the quality of teaching foreign languages for specific purposes in non-linguistic universities since a modern specialist should know the foreign language at the level of being able to choose certain language means and ways of expression by the communicative situations and cultural and social context. The Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On additional measures to improve the qualifications and professional skills of foreign language teachers of general educational institutions" (2015) and Presidential Resolution "On measures to raise to a qualitatively new level the activities on popularizing studying foreign languages in the Republic of Uzbekistan" (2021) aimed at improving methods of teaching foreign languages and developing the foreign communicative competence of students who can discuss critically and understand scientific or technical literature. English as one of the foreign languages taught in non-linguistic universities has become especially in demand for professional activities, as English for specific purposes (ESP) comprises a broad range of spheres such as information technologies, business, economics, banking, tourism, law, medicine, engineering, and architecture. In 2023, around 1.5 billion people spoke English either as a first or second language in the world (Statista, 2024). Subsequently, English is the most popular second language choice in the world. The global dominance of English has led to the inclusion of ESP (English for specific purposes) courses in universities across the globe (Banigas, 2017; Aguilar, 2017; Ochoa Alpala, 2015; Gavrilova and Trostina, 2014; Yang and Gosling, 2014; Aguilar and Rodriguez, 2012;).

According to Belcher (2009), ESP is categorized into English for academic purposes (EAP), English for occupational purposes (EOP) and English for sociocultural purposes (ESCP). The categories demonstrate that learning a foreign language takes place in English classes together with the formation and development of a future specialist's professional

skills. This, in turn, is considered one of the responsibilities of a teacher of foreign languages to combine language acquisition and create an environment/professional activity where students can apply their language skills. Specifically, when teachers deliver EAP seminars, they focus on developing students' language proficiency and specific academic skills such as academic listening and note-taking, critical reading and academic writing, individual and team presentations, and small and big group discussions. As for EOP, teachers concentrate on teaching English for professional purposes, supplying students with effective techniques for using English correctly and confidently in the professional context, for example, in medicine, law, business, and other professional spheres in which they will work. Another category delivered by teachers is ESCP. Teaching ESCP assists students in developing their cultural understanding and navigating social contexts more effectively in language learning. Teachers usually incorporate cultural content such as authentic texts, audio-video materials and games that reflect English-speaking communities' norms, values, customs, and other cultural practices.

LIMITED COMMUNICATION

A crucial aspect of an ESP course is that its objectives and content are tailored to the individual needs of its students. Teaching ESP requires teachers to prepare themselves to develop an understanding of the profession they will have for discussion with the students, consider the relevant vocabulary, authentic texts, and situational cases, and carefully organize the learning process, as the classes involve not only teaching a foreign language but also shaping the professional identity of the future specialist. In this case, ESP teachers have much responsibility in terms of organizing the process where language acquisition is intertwined with mastering the profession. The creation of a foreign environment is extremely important, where students and the teacher should communicate only in a foreign language, since teaching a second language in an environment of non-contact bilingualism, as noted by Tregubova, leads to the fact that a foreign language as a communicative means is used in limited areas of communication (2009). This, in turn, is one of the main problems of teaching a foreign language for special purposes. The learners' interaction with each other and communication with a teacher are momentous to make learning more productive, positive, and enjoyable. This process relates to social constructivism, founded by Vygotsky. Due to Vygotsky (1978), learning is a social, collaborative, and interactional activity (cited in Cohen et al., 2004, p168). Though Piaget believes that a learner is more independent and that development occurs through individual and self-centered activities, Vygotsky indicates the great value of collaboration and support (cited in Pritchard, 2009, p24-25). Specifically, motivating students to work in small groups to stimulate them to share their ideas, discuss different situational cases, analyze and solve problems, brainstorm and create a short story on a stipulated topic or picture has a great impact on a student's active participation in the process of foreign language learning. Importantly, in this case, the teacher is a facilitator who controls the use of English by students during group work. During ESP classes, it is necessary to organize discussions in small groups of four to five students to encourage them to work together, engaging in meaningful and useful interactions. To illustrate this, the topic of *Time Management* can be tasked to the students. In small groups, they should brainstorm all possible effective time management strategies to come up with the five most realistic and practical ones. This method of collaborative learning allows some students to gain more knowledge about a new topic and other participants to share relevant ideas about the topic while practicing the foreign language. Certainly, when introducing new material, the topic is considered, since not all topics may be equally relevant in a particular specialty. For example, for technical specialties, topics such as "Family values", "Online education", "Tourism", "Culture" or "Healthy Eating" may not be in demand. However, these topics can be considered significantly important and relevant for study in professional activities for future psychologists, teachers, employees of travel agencies and anthropologists. Today, most organizations and companies are considering candidates who already have knowledge of a foreign language, for example, English in their field for professional activities, intercultural communication and business correspondence. Also, attention has shifted from defining the formal features of language to identifying ways of using language in real communications, which has necessitated the inclusion of authentic materials and activities that help students to practise the language (Grynyuk, 2016). In this case, a student-centered approach is central to active learning because it encourages students to take a deep approach to study. Throughout the academic year, a language teacher provides students with the material appropriate to their level and designs activities and tasks. Nevertheless, consideration of the concepts of surface and deep approaches to learning is valuable in a teaching process because the effectiveness of learning depends also on what approach a student takes. A surface approach or rote learning leads to poor outcomes, as students are motivated only to pass exams or to meet the course requirements. Students learn facts without a meaningful framework (Fry et al., 2009). A deep approach leads to qualitative learning because a student is motivated by his/her interest based on prior knowledge. Therefore, active learning occurs and maximum knowledge is achieved in this environment emphasizing that a teacher's role is to encourage students to take deep approaches to learning. Biggs and Tang (2011) believe if teaching and assessing are shaped to encourage a positive working atmosphere, so students can make mistakes and learn from them, then they ensure a deep approach. This will in turn motivate students to be open to feedback and use it effectively to achieve depth of learning, rather than breadth of coverage.

STUDENT AUTONOMY

In the student-centered model 'learning is recognized as an active dynamic process in which connections (between different facts, ideas, and processes) are constantly changing and their structure is continually reformatted' (Di Napoli, 2004, p3). These connections are encouraged through communication and cooperation among students. Consequently, the involvement of students in small groups is focal to organizing student-centered learning in which a teacher 'acts as

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a facilitator, helps students access and process information' (Di Napoli, 2004, p4). In this case, another problem is the autonomy of students. The problem can occur, as it can be suggested, there is not a high percentage of fully independent students because attention is paid mostly to what to teach rather than how to teach. Student-centered learning is a time requirement because of the high competition in ELT. It is recommended that foreign language teachers stop seeing students as passive learners where only the teacher is in the spotlight. They should be facilitators, motivators and supervisors, not authorities, and students are active employees who take responsibility for their learning. Being one of the critical principles of social constructivism, scaffolding (a process of supporting a learner) is crucial to making learning effective and successful and encouraging student development. Vygotsky (1978) states that teachers must provide the necessary 'scaffolding in developing and accelerating students' ability to think for themselves, control and take responsibility for their own learning (cited in Cohen et al., 2004, p169). In the classrooms, many ways of scaffolding can be used to simplify the tasks' essence such as group discussions to clarify how well the topic is clear to them and handouts relevant to the topic.

The passivity and dependence of students on teachers is one of the factors, as Kudratova (2020) writes in her work that complicates the entry of our engineering specialists into the world market since this factor leads to a low level of foreign (English) language proficiency. Autonomy, as "the ability to take responsibility for one's learning" (Benson, 2001, cited in Moeller, Theiler and Wu, 2012), is a key factor in establishing student-centered learning which in turn leads to academic achievement. Without a solid foundation that can be formed while studying in schools and lyceums - the autonomy to develop language skills and abilities, it is impossible to develop speaking skills, a terminological base, fluent reading, and other communicative, linguistic, and intercultural competencies (Kudratova, 2020). Autonomous learning enables students to think creatively and reflectively, which will include, as Ferrari, Cachia and Pugni (2009) argue, understanding and new awareness that allows the student to go beyond conceptual acquisition and focus on thinking abilities. Teachers need to motivate their students to be more independent. To increase students' interests and confidence and develop their autonomy, the following methodological possibilities can be recommended:

1. Designing curriculum after needs analysis and benchmarking.

2. Instilling authentic information in the language teaching content.

3. Explaining to students how they could prepare to write their coursework and other course assignments.

4. Giving even more attention to language practice, gradually developing writing, listening, reading and speaking skills.

5. Decreasing teacher-talking time.

6. Practicing how they could make the best use of feedback they receive from their teachers.

7. Using certain positive practices such as offering students to design an activity for their peers with some guidance from the lecturer, blogging, questioning, student workshops, and peer feedback giving.

8. Encouraging students' creative collaboration (group projects, team presentations, debates, roundtable discussions, role-plays and other activities).

9. Integrating technologies in the classroom to let students practice online tests or quizzes, participate in online discussion boards or forums, evaluate online information, and receive electronic feedback.

10. Organising guest lectures/seminars, master classes or demonstrating video interviews with relevant industry/company representatives to expose students to real work-related topics.

11. Recommending Log files to motivate students to monitor, control, and track their progress in completing their assignments. This tool could be utilized throughout the semester. It boosts students' creativity and at the same time helps them to see what they have achieved and what areas they need to give more attention to.

STUDENTS' CREATIVE THINKING
Today universities are modifying their programs and materials to integrate mostly student-centered activities and foster student autonomy, which can result in better academic performance and preparedness for real-life circumstances. In the process of planning and organizing the new material and teaching according to it, it is important to integrate creative thinking into the educational process. Forming and developing students' creative thinking skills have become one of the most significant attributes of 21st-century education in many fields. The importance of creativity has been remarkably emphasized in many research articles and projects by scholars and professionals from various fields (Akpur, 2020; Puccio and Lohiser, 2020; Rus, 2020; Facione, 2018; Benade, 2017; Seechaliao, 2017). Benade (2017) highlights creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration as learning and innovation skills in the 21st century (p30). The importance of developing this skill has also been accentuated in the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan *On approval of the concept for the development of the higher education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030.* (National Information Base of Legislative Documents, 2019). Rus (2020) notes that creativity is now defined

as the basic ability for survival and future success, especially in the context of training specialists, given the speed of technological change and social forms of communication. Thus, one of the aspects of teaching and learning ESP could be stimulating students' creativity, which in turn will assist in encouraging student-centeredness, activating their prior knowledge, and improving academic performance. Creativity can be developed if students can think divergently and outside of their existing habits through various tasks such as making individual and group presentations, doing small-scale research, writing reports, blogs, critical opinions, library logs, reflections, peer teaching, and student workshops. This leads to teachers needing to develop timely, relevant and authentic student materials. One of the characteristic trends in teaching ESP should be an organic combination of the type of professional activity of a future specialist (student), the content of teaching material and a methodological technique corresponding to professional activity. If a student's future professional activity is related to business correspondence or preparation of reports, in that case, the content and key method of teaching ESP are not only teaching business writing and reporting in a foreign language but also encouraging autonomy. Specifically, students can be tasked independently to find and analyze the necessary materials, formulate possible problems, creatively find solutions to these problems, and present the report.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF TEACHERS

Another problem in teaching ESP can be the professional training of teachers. In this case, the focus is on ensuring that the teachers are proficient not only in a foreign language and teaching methods but also have knowledge of the specifics of a specialist's professional activity. Milrud (2013) notes that this problem has not yet been solved, and the system of training teachers of ESP, who have both communicative competence and special competencies, has not yet been developed. Ilyina and Kiseleva (2017) consider the training of teachers to be an urgent problem. The competencies of an ESP teacher include not only conducting classes but also developing a seminar plan, work programs for the discipline, teaching aids and textbooks, using modern technologies for the autonomous work of students, and conducting a high-quality exam to test the knowledge of students. One of the ways to solve the problem of training ESP teachers can become a "pedagogical tandem" of two teachers (Milrud, 2013; Polenova, 2018; Adnan, 2019); one of whom is a specialist in the field of teaching a foreign language, and the other is a professional in a special field of knowledge. Polenova (2018) argues that the basis of this method as a form of partner learning is communicative and meaningful interaction, during which teachers create authentic conditions for language acquisition; go beyond the traditional lesson, using a foreign language in a professional context, taking into account special terms, needs and interests of students. Although the interaction between a subject teacher and a foreign language teacher is considered the most poorly researched tandem field, at the same time "has enormous potential" (p5). Today, given the value of a foreign language, a teaching tandem is becoming in demand in any interdisciplinary field. Tandem learning is one of the innovative methods of intensive learning of a foreign language since it involves maximum immersion of partners in the language environment during the learning process (Polenova, 2018). Moreover, tandem can be extremely effective if language and specific field specialists facilitate the class to provide more meaning and sense in the teaching and learning process. This will enable students to see the practical application of the language in their field and use it more consciously. The teachers are encouraged to reflect later on what works efficiently and what they should consider while organizing the teaching process (Porshneva, et al., 2020). Another method is collaborative teaching, where the language teachers work alongside subject-matter specialists. The language teacher consults the subject specialists to receive information about the relevance of vocabulary or to create a special vocabulary handbook for students, to clarify the content of the specialized text used as the context for language practice, or if there are problems in comprehending specialized texts. Besides, language and specific field specialists can together develop a curriculum that aligns with modern industry standards and practices, identify clear and relevant (language and subject-specific skills) learning outcomes and discuss the relevance of activities targeted at developing students, for example, technical writing, and report writing or presentation skills. For that, both educators can plan regular meetings face-to-face or through online collaborative platforms to maintain constant communication and materials sharing. Collaborative teaching ensures the use of hands-on activities to let students apply their language skills in practical situations that mirror real-life/professional scenarios. Language and subject matter specialists can arrange field visits (workplaces or industry events) to provide opportunities for students to understand their specialty using English for communication. Thus, students may benefit from their teachers' collaborative approach to teaching blending language-focused strategies with field-specific pedagogies.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the high interconnection of the global landscape requires proficient English in various specialized fields. Teaching English for specific purposes urges teachers to develop lesson plans that consider not only the content or language skills but also the stimulation of active learning, autonomy and higher-order thinking. Lack of student engagement, increase in teacher-talking time, students' inability to organize their learning process independently, superficial knowledge, and teachers' limited collaboration with subject matter experts are the challenges faced by ESP educators while creating effective educational experiences for their students. However, addressing these issues by giving students choices, encouraging autonomy and creative collaboration in regular classes and activities, establishing clear communication with specific subject specialists, and implementing co-teaching models benefit teachers and students, fostering more meaningful and efficient language education.

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