CURRENT ISSUES IN TEACHING ESP AT UNIVERSITY

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ANNOTATION

The work reveals the specifics of professionally oriented training for university students, which is implemented in the process of organizing foreign language training, in particular English for special purposes.

KEY WORDS: *English for specific purposes, communicative needs, absolute characteristics, variable characteristics, teaching English, specifics of vocational training.*

АКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ ESP В ВУЗЕ

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Аннотация

В работе раскрыта специфика профессионально ориентированного обучения студентов вуза, которая реализуется в процессе организации обучения иностранному языку, в частности английскому для специальных целей.

Ключевые слова: *английский язык для специальных целей, коммуникативные потребности, абсолютные характеристики, переменные характеристики, преподавание английского языка, специфика профессионального обучения.*

INTRODUCTION

Modernity places increasingly high demands on the teaching and practical mastery of foreign languages in everyday communication and the professional sphere. Due to the globalization of professional communication processes, the English language is becoming increasingly widespread and important in almost all areas of specialized knowledge, as it is widely used as a means of communication in areas of interaction between people of different nationalities. Communication skills in English are in demand in almost all areas of human activity. English is widely used in professional discourse, being the official language of most international conferences, symposia, and meetings. The ESP course expands the goals of teaching English and necessitates an effective approach to the learning process, creating a model of language education that integrates linguistic, cultural and social aspects. Taking into account all the listed requirements and challenges that reality puts forward to us, the need to rethink some aspects of teaching English for special purposes is becoming increasingly urgent. Only the complete mastery of competencies that ensure high-quality communication between future specialists and their foreign colleagues in various academic and professional situations is a key factor in the productivity and success of specialists' work activities. That is, a specialist must have knowledge and skills of a foreign language (in our case, English), not only spoken (General Language - GE), but also a language for special purposes (English for Special Purposes - ESP). Moreover, now that English is increasingly seen not as a foreign language, but as a means of international communication, we need to learn to think in English, and not just speak it.

Proficiency in English for specific purposes determines success in overcoming both language and cultural barriers in the field of professional communication. Therefore, issues related to teaching English for specific purposes in a modern university are the focus of attention of researchers and practitioners of foreign language teaching. It can be said that today English is the basis of international communication and an integral component of a successful professional career, promoting effective cooperation in science and various fields of production in the modern world.

METHODOLOGY OF THE PROBLEM

At the beginning of the last century, scientists came to the conclusion that it was necessary to teach a "functional language" that included terminology for description and use in certain areas and situations. At the same time, attention was focused on the communicative role of language and its stylistic functionality (Prague Circle, L.V. Shcherba).

Later, in the 60s, with the growing influence of the English language in the international arena, the term appeared in English-speaking countries: English for Special/Specific Purposes—ESP (English for Special Purposes). This term simultaneously defined both the scientific direction and the type of English language teaching that met the needs of students. Currently, the direction of specialized English language training (ESP) is rapidly developing in accordance with the specific needs of professional activity; English has become the generally accepted international language of technology and economics [8, p. 6]. The development of applied linguistics has given impetus to the development of new methodological and didactic approaches to organizing the process of learning English for a certain group of students, taking into account the specifics of their professional activities. New developments in the field of educational psychology determined the development of ESP; the students themselves and their attitude to learning were brought to the fore [13, p. 34], as well as their needs and interests, which influence the degree of motivation and the level of learning effectiveness [8, p. 8]. All these factors determine the need for targeted specialization when learning a language [8, p. 8]. The ESP course itself is presented as a teaching system for which the curriculum and materials are determined depending on a preliminary analysis of the student's communicative needs [11, p. 2]. This learning process is characterized by its own emphasis and priorities. Being a way of teaching a foreign language, it is at the same time a separate specialized discipline or academic subject [10, c, 18; 11 p. 2]. ESP is an approach to teaching a foreign language in which all aspects of teaching, such as content and methods, are based on the students' motives for learning a foreign language" [8, p. 19]. Thus, the focus of teaching a foreign language is the goal for which students learn the language, and not the linguistic features [9, p. 3].

In practice, in the process of learning a foreign language, it is sometimes difficult to clearly distinguish between GE and ESP. It should be noted that with all its specificity, ESP cannot but rely on the common and scientific base of the English language.

Therefore, for effective teaching of ESP, it is necessary to identify its specifics, which consists, first of all, in the fact that the basic language skills (speaking, reading, listening, writing) of students are updated, expanded and deepened based on the material of the specialty. Hence, the teacher of the ESP course must not only be an English language specialist, but also have knowledge in the field of special disciplines that underlie the students' future profession. From this we can conclude that the problems of language for special purposes are very multifaceted and limitless. It includes a synthesis of various methodological and linguodidactic aspects: lexicology, the theory of intercultural communication, functional stylistics of speech, interdisciplinarity and, of course, the availability of trainees.

STUDY

The study is based on the author's more than 30 years of experience teaching English at a university level; The leading research method was the general scientific descriptive method, which includes such components as observation, generalization, interpretation, and comparison.

When developing the structure and content of ESP for a particular specialty, certain parameters that underlie the organization of this course are certainly taken into account. According to the majority of scientists (Dudley-Evans T., St John M., Foster P., McDonough J., Robinson P., Chilingaryan K.P., Panferova I.V.), they are divided into two groups, one of which characterized by absolute characteristics, the other by variables. The first (absolute) includes the development of an ESP course taking into account the professional needs of students, methodological, linguistic and communication skills, as well as the discursive specifics of the English language (grammar, vocabulary, registers) corresponding to the chosen professional field. Most researchers include the following as absolute characteristics: 1) ESP is aimed at meeting the specific needs of the student; 2) ESP implies the use of a certain methodology, taking into account the specific professional orientation of the discipline within which ESP is studied; 3) ESP is focused on linguistic phenomena (grammatical, lexical, stylistic), on speech skills and abilities (listening, reading, writing, speaking), on the features of discourse, styles and genres corresponding to certain professional activities. In the second group, scientists include variable (variable) characteristics that are influenced by specific disciplines of the professional cycle, features of the ESP methodology, the age of students, and the level of knowledge of the general practical English language course. Variable characteristics usually include:

1) Direct connection of ESP with specific disciplines of the specialty; 2) the use of a specific methodology different from the general principles of GE training; 3) age of the trainees. ESP training is mainly designed for students with an intermediate or advanced level of knowledge of a foreign language, that is, most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system when students have already mastered the GE course (Dudley-Evans T., St John M., Parfenova I .V., Chiligeryan K.P.). However, in some cases, an ESP course can be created for the entry-level, if it is necessary to prepare "beginner" students for professional communication in English [5, p. 4–5]. Based on my experience, I can say that such training is not very effective, since students do not have sufficient

knowledge and skills of general basic English. They have a poor vocabulary and a low level of grammatical knowledge and skills, which significantly impedes communication, including on professional topics.

At the same time, we take the position that ESP is not a special variety of English, although it certainly differs from GE. General English content must be integrated into the ESP course throughout the course, since the target language cannot function without General English content. The ESP course aims to prepare students for specific situations in their professional communication using relevant industry vocabulary, including terms, professionalisms, and jargon. The goal of teaching ESP is more specific, takes into account the needs of students, and corresponds to the nature of the focus of the educational process on future professional activity, in contrast to the goal of studying GE, which implies mastering language skills and abilities for communicative needs at a conversational everyday level. It is the analysis of the goals and needs of students, as well as the features of the formation of professional foreign language competence that should be taken into account when creating training programs. Moreover, the optimization of the ESP course is facilitated by the use of the latest methodological developments, as well as the use of modern information communication technologies to create learning situations.

The widespread introduction of information technology into the process of teaching ESP accompanies its optimization and creates additional opportunities for searching for professionally oriented materials and integrating them into the educational process. The use of information technology reveals the enormous potential of the computer as a teaching tool. Its use allows you to intensify the educational process, increases the efficiency of the learning process, promotes the growth of creative activity of students and provides opportunities for quickly updating educational materials for professionally oriented training. The computer has a number of advantages: it combines video and audio information, the ability to record your own voice and further correct pronunciation. It also provides enormous opportunities for testing, repetition of material, and practicing missed material [1, p. 12]. A teacher can use a computer to optimize learning, increase the efficiency and objectivity of the educational process, while significantly saving time and organizing teamwork. The creation of a worldwide computer network, called the Internet, is of great importance for the educational process.

As practice shows, multimedia programs best fit the ESP structure. They bring the process of learning a foreign language as close as possible to real conditions. Multimedia technologies combine various methods of learning: texts, graphics, music, video in an interactive mode. They ensure the quality of training, increase visibility, intensify the work of students, and contribute to the organization of independent work of students. However, in our opinion, computers and multimedia technologies should serve as auxiliary teaching aids; they are only teaching methods, the effectiveness of which depends on the teacher's ability to use them to achieve certain pedagogical goals. The computer in the educational process is not a mechanical teacher, not an analogue to the teacher, but a means that enhances and expands the capabilities of his teaching activities. The advantages of Information Technology include access to worldwide information data banks; the opportunity to participate in real intercultural communication; creating a learning environment with visual presentation of information; the ability to register and save the results of students' educational activities.

In modern conditions of the rapid development of science and rapid updating of information, it is impossible to teach a person for life; it is important to develop in him an interest in accumulating knowledge and continuous self-education. Self-educational competence is the ability to maintain and increase the level of professional language proficiency in the process of self-education. The need to solve the problem of self-educational competence is directly related to the issues of organizing students' independent work, its improvement and systematization.

The main system-forming factors, generally accepted, are the learning goals, which, in turn, are: achieving the appropriate level of foreign language communicative professional competence; preparing graduates to conduct effective self-educational work on a foreign language even after graduation. In the course of practical implementation of ESP goals, the course includes a whole range of tasks:
- ♦ Tasks aimed at developing students' English speaking skills (discussions, debates and round tables);
- ♦ Tasks that expand students' industry vocabulary (industry vocabulary, terminological units and expressions);
- ♦ Speech tasks that develop communication skills in English using appropriate grammatical structures, vocabulary and communicative formulas;
- ♦ Tasks for various types of reading;
- ♦ Role-Playing games and cases simulating situations during which students solve certain professional problems and improve communication skills in English. Of course, when preparing and completing the tasks listed above, the level of English language proficiency of students should be taken into account.

Thus, in classes with students whose knowledge of English corresponds to level B1 (or pre-intermediate), more attention should be paid to the development of everyday informal English communication skills, reading authentic texts in English and listening. Over

the next year of study, it is necessary to develop students' communication skills at this starting level in a professional environment, expand their industry vocabulary and create conditions for its use in speech practice. With students with a B2 (or upper-intermediate) level of English proficiency, already from the first year of study at a university, it is advisable to practice communicative situations characteristic of professional communication, discuss issues related to their future field of activity, while simultaneously expanding the students' industry vocabulary in relevant grammatical contexts and genres of professional discourse by expanding areas of professional knowledge. It is important to note that the effectiveness of the ESP course largely depends on how much it overlaps with the disciplines of the professional cycle of the entire educational program. Of particular interest at this stage is the work with terminological units (vocabulary and set expressions) of professional discourse, which were formed thanks to such cognitive mechanisms as conceptual metaphor and metonymy. Studying such a layer of industrial vocabulary with the help of conceptual schemes significantly improves the results of students' mastery of it [4, p. 191].

Certain difficulties in working with students studying a foreign language for special purposes may also be associated with updating the English language in the field of highly specialized professional communication. This state of affairs often requires the teacher to develop original materials that would fully meet the academic needs of students. Solving such problems caused by the specifics of the professional field and the individualization of approaches in education is possible through the use of various authentic materials in English on the specialty profile, the use of English-language websites, television shows, and feature films in English on professional topics. All of these resources appear to be extremely valuable for developing an appropriate ESP course. Starting from the first year, the Department of Foreign Languages conducts tests to determine the level of English language competence of students; based on the test results, students are distributed to the appropriate programs. Depending on the level of the group(s), the department chooses the "pace" of teaching, both general English and ESP. The course content also includes certification (measuring what students know and what they can do) and evaluation (an indicator of the productivity of the work performed) [2, p. 36].

CONCLUSION
Taking into account all the above definitions of ESP, we can come to the conclusion that, firstly, despite their versatility, they all show that ESP is part of ELT (English language teaching); secondly, in the process of teaching ESP it is necessary to use a certain methodology, developed taking into account the specifics of future professional activity. The ESP course poses new challenges for the teacher: not only to know a practical foreign language, but also to be sufficiently competent in the professional field of the course. The creation of an ESP course focused on the set educational objectives contributes to the formation of conditions favorable for the development and strengthening of foreign language professional communication skills of future specialists. Specifically selected tasks allow students to simultaneously deepen their knowledge in the professional field and develop professionally oriented speech skills, taking into account the structural, semantic and pragmatic aspects of the English language, as well as in accordance with their communicative goals.

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