

ESP TEACHING: TRADITIONS, INNOVATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The paper highlights innovative approaches to teaching languages, follows the backgrounds of their emergence, and considers their connections with linguistic and psychological scientific developments. The aim of the paper is to point out the issues applicable in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at Technical Universities of Ukraine to answer the modern challenges. The authors analyze the existing situation and problems in teaching and learning process organization and suggest some classroom activities to enhance foreign language education at Technical Universities. Diglot-weave technique is examined in particular. Not widely used in teaching routine today Diglot-weave approach can be successfully applied to develop and upgrade ESP students' reading competence as well as to arouse and maintain their motivation. Providing massive amounts of information Diglot-weave technique allows even the beginners to work with large comprehensible input, it can also yield impressive results in teaching terminology and other specific vocabulary. The above mentioned technique can be used within ESP classroom framework along with cloze exercises which focus students' attention on simple reading strategies. Another up-to-date challenge is teaching academic writing and rhetorical features of scientific discourse. The authors also touch the issue of efficient collaboration with subject matter experts at ESP classes.

Keywords: teaching approach, method, ESP, language acquisition, Diglot-weave technique.

Various branches of modern descriptive linguistics deal with the various aspects of language use. The first large-scale attempts to unite pure scientific research

with the needs of teaching methodology were Leonard Bloomfield (“Language” in 1933) and most notably Charles Fries (“Teaching English as a Foreign Language” in 1945). The latest areas like pragmalinguistics, socio and psycholinguistics, cognitive and narratological approaches have overcome the dogmatism and excessiveness of traditional “pure science”. It has become obvious that linguistics can supply all the needed answers establishing the integral body of facts about language structure and function. Hence teaching languages can be regarded as a mere appendage of linguistics. Recent linguistics developments tend to contain seminal ideas applicable to instructional purposes and can be taken into the classroom.

The ties between teaching methodology and psychology are ingenuous, close and beneficial. The brightest experiments in language instruction are rooted in psychological theory fundamentals concerning mental and behavioral processes. Psychological backgrounds allow experts to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of suggested teaching approaches, methods and techniques. They provide better understanding of the human element in the language teaching and learning processes. Psychologists of different schools have arrived at the common conclusion that the speaker does play an important role in the generation of human speech and meaningful discourse function. A work to be distinguished in this respect is “Principles and Practice of Second Language Acquisition” by Stephen.D.Krashen [6]. S.D.Krashen’s second language acquisition theory, his hypotheses pursue the goal “to introduce teachers to theory and hopefully to gain their confidence” [6, 7].

Modern methods of language instruction show diversity, but according to Marianne Celce-Murcia the notorious and best-established are Cognitive, Affective-Humanistic, Comprehension and Communicative approaches. Cognitive approach that language is rule-governed cognitive behavior and not a habit formation. The cornerstone of Affective-Humanistic approach is that learning a foreign language is a process of self-realization and of relating to other people. The central tenet of Comprehensive method reads that language acquisition occurs if and only if the learner comprehends meaningful input. The communicative approach dictates that the

purpose of language and the goal of language teaching is communication in all variety of its forms [5, 8].

The current method of ESP teaching in most Ukrainian technical universities is the Communicative approach with some traits of the other three. Aimed at developing communicative professionally oriented foreign language competence, ESP courses embrace all language activities manifested in appropriate grammar, vocabulary and style. The dominant approach is actually an integrated approach which includes attention to the rule formation, affect, comprehension and communication, which would view the learner as someone who thinks, feels, understands and has something to say. In fact many teachers would find such an approach, if well-conceived and well-integrated, to be very attractive” [5, 9].

Considering an approach as the most general direction of teaching we can identify a method as a set of procedures coordinated by and associated with the approach and a technique is traditionally defined as very specific activities used in teaching practice. These three manifest themselves through curriculum and syllabus which enumerate the peculiar things students are supposed to master. The courses are designed and the materials are developed taking into account all the given factors. As for the ESP syllabi they are also compound: partially structural, partially text-based. A structural syllabus which comprises a list of grammatical constructions, vocabulary and word-combinations to be taught and learnt proves effective at the initial stages of ESP courses. The text-based syllabus focused on text organization, specific vocabulary items and minor attention paid to grammar appears successful while reading authentic materials on science and technological research.

Innovative approaches to teaching English emerged in response to the need to better facilitate and accelerate learning. It was caused by the growing popularity of English in the world going globalized. The claim for a single all-purpose method though advertised from time to time has not been satisfied and will hardly ever be. Innovative unconventional approaches rose “as a reaction to conventional assumptions about such things as the structure of the various components of language or of various kinds of text, about how language is processed in the brain and how it is

used in interpersonal communication; about the nature of human learning in general and of language learning in particular; about the nature of younger and older language learner and such parameters as memory, emotion, readiness, motivation and perception [5, 24].

A lot of innovative approaches are worth considering while designing a certain ESP course. Elements of storyline, case-study, role-play, delayed oral response methods, of the Natural approach, even silent way learning can be used in class when the teacher strives at interacting and modifying the process in accordance with actual situation. One of the less known is the Diglot-weave Input, evidently based on Comprehensive Approach. Proceeding from the assumption that the teachers' task is to provide comprehensible input in massive amounts Robbins Burling, an anthropologist at the University of Michigan, developed his diglot-weave model based on code switching [4]. At his experimental classes in French reading R.Burling changed the lexical and grammatical expression of several pages of a French novel into a form of English heavily influenced by French syntax, which was weird but understandable. Then the researcher started modifying the text adding more and more French features to it. The objective was to keep the text comprehensible. So making the text of the novel more and more ruled by the French language grammar and full of completely French vocabulary the students could read the novel. Sprinkling foreign language elements wherever the context made their meaning clear turns learning into fun, especially scaffold with pictures and body language. Obviously it is motivating at the initial stages of learning as it allows even the beginners to work with large amounts of comprehensible input.

The method was strongly criticized by the scholars who put accuracy and correctness in focus, as such deliberate mixing two languages and producing strange looking and sounding texts can lead to violation and corruption of both native and target languages [7, 3]. Hardly applicable as a method Diglot-weave input technique can be used within ESP classroom framework along with widely known cloze exercises.

An experience of using mixed language texts with EFL University of Florence students majoring in biology was described and analyzed by Carol Bradley in 2003 [3]. Teaching her ESP course she found her low-level students facing a stressful challenge to pass an intermediate level in grammar and reading comprehension. Both the students and the teacher had to reveal inventiveness, patience, stamina and persistence. C.J. Bradley was inspired by the well-known expert Mario Rinvolucri's workshop which claimed that teachers need exercises that use both languages in ways that skillfully move the students away from their mother tongue. So the teacher referred to oral two-language story-telling as a variant of the "sandwich" method and used diglot-weave input to teach reading. Like R. Burling himself C.J. Bradley focused on developing reading competency following Burling's four-step program of systematic intermixture of language systems. Step one provided word-for-word translation emphasizing assimilation of syntax. The second step introduced grammatical markers (aspect, tense etc.). "Smaller class of morphemes" like pronouns, conjunctions are presented at the third step. And the final step focuses on learning vocabulary. Grammar is also taught through mixed diglot-weave two-language contexts. The students' reaction to the suggested methodology was positive and the group worked through a set of twenty-one types of diglot-weave exercises followed up by cloze and multiple choice.

Carol Bradley's experience proves the efficiency of diglot-weave technique in ESP classroom. Rather cumbersome and time-consuming at first, it can yield compelling results in teaching terminology, reviewing special grammar and vocabulary.

The so-called humanistic and psychosuggestive approaches draw the attention to such long-neglected issues as learner environment, ways to increase students' receptivity and reduce the anxiety in class, to eliminate the psychological barriers that slow the learning down and foster the so-called affective filters. The proliferating idea of humanistic holistic approaches is to keep classes pleasant, nonthreatening and fun, to encourage and support students, create businesslike but mild and congenial atmosphere.

Today much attention is given to the use of information communication technologies in ESP teaching. Computer assisted language learning (CALL) has got a new dimension due to the rapid development of new up-to-date technologies. M-learning, e-learning, u-learning are getting more and more popular because they provide access to authentic language environment 24 hours a day. Educative platforms, all sorts of dictionaries and thesauruses, international tests training programs have become available to everybody anytime. CALL seems to be a powerful tool for self-dependent learning first of all. The crucial role of language instructor is not being to be diminished at all.

Today ESP courses are gaining more and more popularity in Ukrainian educational paradigm. The generally accepted definition determines English for Specific Purposes as “the branch of English language education which focuses on training in specific domains of English to accomplish specific academic or workplace tasks”[8, 9]. One of the branches of ESP is English for Science and Technology, or EST. It is just the compulsory course taught in Ukrainian Technical Universities at the Bachelor level, and as such it is further subdivided into English for Computing, Mechanical, Power, Civil Engineering etc. It takes 182 academic hours and depending on the University lasts either four or eight semesters.

The course is aimed at developing students’ competence in all kinds of reading research literature specific to their major fields, communication (including writing) with colleagues all over the world. To achieve the goal students are supposed to learn the appropriate grammar, vocabulary and pragmalinguistic or rhetorical elements. The focus is on recognition, identifying and understanding the English language discourse of science and technology through developing and enhancing comprehension of the materials published in the most popular and important journals and other scientific and technological editions.

The first stumbling block English teachers encounter starting their EST course is the inappropriate extremely low level of language competences of their first-year students. Presumably since 2015 Ukrainian school leavers’ language proficiency

should meet B1 requirements, but actually most students possess elementary language skills, the poorest among them being in grammar.

The results of diagnostic testing carried out at the Foreign Language Chair of VNTU at the beginning of each academic year show that only 12-15% of first year students have acquired the school curriculum satisfactorily. This figure tends to fall down with every upcoming year. The situation is approximately the same in the majority of Ukrainian Technical Universities [1, 185]. Leaving the reasons for such situation at that English teachers have to take into account the low language level of most freshmen and manage their multi-level groups.

In most cases the approach is based on the thorough selection of authentic (sometimes adapted) reading materials that are relevant to students majoring in a certain technical area, interesting and at the right language level. Reading (all kinds of it) is combined with activities that explain specific rhetorical and discourse characteristics in order to facilitate comprehension. Such activities and supporting materials “serve as scaffold that builds on students’ existing language and content knowledge to enable them to comprehend increasingly more complex research in science and engineering journals” [9, 33].

EST students in their early years at the university (and these are the years of foreign language course) are seldom aware of their real need for English language proficiency and have to be motivated by teachers of English as well as of special subjects. With time they advance their scientific literacy as they develop critical understanding of peculiar linguistic regulations that govern and organize scientific and engineering discourse. Their awareness of discourse and rhetorical elements lets them develop strategies in comprehending authentic texts and in academic writing. Rhetorical conventions in science and engineering include some basic generative elements, such as classification, comparison, cause and effect, exemplification, definition, description, hypothesizing, deductive and inductive reasoning, the statement of research or project problems, prediction and reporting [10, 167]. They all should be presented, demonstrated in appropriate texts and rigorously practiced at the levels from sentence to integral textual entity. Students complete exercises to

demonstrate that they can recognize, understand, analyze and use these elements. Carefully selected short scientific articles along with worksheets elaborated by teachers can be analyzed in class and given for homework. Worksheets can include such tasks as writing short summaries, identifying content elements or cloze exercises.

Cloze exercises are worth special attention. They focus students' attention on simple reading strategies and while considering words to fill in the spaces students review the surrounding text and employ their general knowledge of engineering to complete the exercise. The optimal amount has proved to be 20 important concept words deleted from a text of about 500 words [9, 36].

While doing their Master program students have another EST course connected with Business English. Students work with authentic texts in the fields they are majoring at not only aiming comprehension but completing also academic writing tasks: summarizing (written as well as oral), creating abstracts and reviews. Scrupulous working out the structural, rhetorical, linguistic features of writing article abstracts, conference summaries, synopses, essays etc. becomes the focus of EST classes. Although most students performing Masters' program have some experience in academic writing in Ukrainian they have never been taught how to make up successful compositions either in foreign or native languages. Students tend to preserve their Ukrainian culture-specific rhetoric features (learnt from reading scientific papers in Ukrainian journals, dissertations, etc.) when writing in English.

Strange as it may seem teaching neat and well-organized writing using specific thoughts in specific language structures proves to be a tough problem. Students' writing skills being immature in most cases teachers have to start with elementary general advice on text organization and writing process.

One of the constantly disputed questions is of how much knowledge of the students' field of study the EST teacher needs to have. D.Bell notes that the relationship between the teacher and students in the ESP classroom is more equal than in ordinary English language settings. While teachers are considered language experts, students have related expertise in their own fields of study. Therefore, the

teacher should be willing to learn from the students and “the issue is not so much one of how much the teacher knows about students’ subject, but a matter of knowing what questions are right to ask” [9, 77]. So the teacher should be curious, confident and committed in order to set the collaboration in class going. Cooperation with subject matter experts has proved to be helpful and seminal.

Alexander von Humboldt is said to have noted that language cannot be taught and one can only create conditions for learning to take place. These ones are English teachers who will ever remain in creative search of better ways to make their classes impressive, inspiring and efficient.

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ПРЕПОДАВАНИЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОЙ НАПРАВЛЕННОСТИ: ТРАДИЦИИ, ИННОВАЦИИ И ВЫЗОВЫ

В статье рассматриваются инновационные подходы к преподаванию языков, прослеживаются обстоятельства их возникновения, исследуются их связи с лингвистическими и психологическими научными разработками. Цель статьи – выделить элементы, которые могут быть применены в процессе преподавания английского языка профессиональной направленности в технических университетах Украины в условиях современных вызовов. Авторы рассматривают современные проблемы в организации учебного процесса и предлагают некоторые пути усовершенствования обучения иностранным языкам. В частности, проанализированы возможности метода смешанного двуязычного учебного контента Р.Берлинга.

Ключевые слова: учебный подход, метод обучения, английский язык профессиональной направленности, усвоение языка, метод смешанного двуязычного контента.

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ВИКЛАДАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО СПРЯМУВАННЯ: ТРАДИЦІЇ, ІННОВАЦІЇ ТА ВИКЛИКИ ЧАСУ

В статті розглядаються інноваційні підходи до викладання мов, простежуються обставини їх виникнення та їх зв'язок з науковими розробками в галузях лінгвістики та психології. Мета статті – визначити елементи, які можуть бути використані в процесі викладання англійської мови за професійним спрямуванням в технічних університетах України в умовах сучасних викликів. Автори розглядають актуальні проблеми організації навчального процесу та пропонують деякі шляхи удосконалення навчання іноземних мов. Зокрема проаналізовано можливості метода змішаного двомовного навчального контенту Р.Берлінга.

Ключові слова: навчальний підхід, метод, англійська мова професійного спрямування, засвоєння мови, метод змішаного двомовного контенту.