



INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM TEACHING

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INTRODUCTION

English for specific purposes is closely connected to language for professional purposes, where speakers of English as a foreign or second language have to learn how to use language in areas where they are going to work. Courses in ESP focus on the specific vocabulary and the unique language skills those in a given field are likely to require.

The most important difference between ESP and General English (or ESL, English as a Second Language) lies in the learners and their purposes for learning English. ESP students are usually adults who already have some acquaintance with English and are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular job-related functions. An ESP program is therefore built on an assessment of purposes and needs and the functions for which English is required. ESP has been referred to as 'applied ELT' as the content and aims of any course are determined by the needs of a specific group of learners.

ESP concentrates on language in context. The ESP focal point is that English is not taught as a subject separated from the students' real world; instead, it is integrated into a subject matter area important to the learners.

In English for special purposes, content is interpreted as the use of subject matter as a vehicle for language teaching and learning. Content – based instruction has multiple benefits. Learners are exposed to language through stimulating content, they are engaged in appropriate language-dependant activities and language learning becomes automatic. Through content-based instruction, the appropriate context is emphasized, learners are taught useful language that is embedded within relevant discourse contexts rather than as isolated language fragments. Thereby, students make greater connections with the language and what they already know. Furthermore, complex information is delivered through real life context for the students to grasp

well and it leads to intrinsic motivation.

It is necessary that the curriculum be flexible and adaptable according to the students' interest. Students learn through doing and are actively engaged in the learning process. They do not depend on the teacher to direct all learning or to be the source of all information.

STUDENT – CENTERED TEACHING IN MEDICAL CONTEXT

In a traditional classroom, both learners and teachers were accustomed to a high degree of teacher control. Students may have deeply rooted beliefs about the roles of teachers and students, which may slow down the process of achieving independent learning. It is crucial to show students the range of autonomous options and raise their awareness of the different learning strategies that are open to them. Students need to take responsibility for their own language development, which would in turn prove useful when they have to use English in their professional lives.

The most successful language learning is connected with assuming responsibility for learning (Naiman et al, 1978). Taking responsibility for learning is the first step towards autonomy. A 'good language learner' (Rubin & Thompson, 1982) is one that finds his/her way, asks a lot of questions, makes guesses, organizes his/her information, takes every chance to use the language. Learners are individuals with very different learning styles and needs. Learner strategies aim to help learners acquire the knowledge and skills they need to plan and implement effective language learning, help them discover how they learn and apply the most effective method for them. Learner strategies can also help teachers maximize their input and increase the chance of long-term learning. Students' autonomy presents a necessity

in society which puts great emphasis on lifelong learning. Since teachers cannot provide the students with all the skills and knowledge they would like to have, the best way to help students is by providing them with strategies on how to learn by themselves. The first step towards autonomy is encouraging the students to take responsibility for their own learning. The concept of student autonomy and successful learning are closely connected.

It can be expected that language teaching responds to the demands of the new world and hence shifts the authority away from the teacher and hands it to the learner (Britten, 1988). Teachers cannot learn for students and in order to increase learner independence and responsibility for learning, the traditional roles need to change (Stevick, 1981).

The shifting of authority from teacher to student is the most important thing that ESP teachers must learn and accept. Such a situation inevitably imposes a change of the role of language teachers. In this context the teacher is to take on the role of an organizer, a facilitator whose task is to create conditions and opportunities for learning, who is responsible for giving the students help with acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to reach their goals. The teacher is an organizer and a coordinator rather than a director of learners' activities. She/he is an advisor and a consultant who understands and supports students and creates the most favorable conditions under which learning may take place. The teacher shows great patience, makes all the students participate and has the same interest in all students.

Probably the most important issue is developing in teachers the understanding and techniques for delivering effective learner strategy instructions to students (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Learning how to learn a language is a complex skill to acquire. It involves focusing on the process of learning as well as on the content of the learning. It is concerned with being informed about the language itself, about oneself as a learner – through self-assessment, reflection and experimentation – and therefore involves training in independence.

As it has already been said, the modern English language course is student-centered which helps develop student autonomy and learning continues even after the end of the course since the aim of instruction is to develop the capacity to learn (Widdowson, 1981). Language teaching should be based on the process itself, not on the final product. If the teaching process is in accordance with the students' needs, the final product, communication in English, will be successful. Therefore, ESP courses present a challenge for teachers because they have to learn how to share their power with the students, to cooperate in decision-making and constantly adjust to changes.

CONTENT – BASED INSTRUCTION AND THE ROLE OF STUDENTS IN EMP

ESP teachers are in a special position among language teachers as they do not only teach language but also content to a certain extent. However, content, in our case medicine, is taught secondarily as a means to an end which is to train our students for acting in medical context in English. The relationship be-

tween the ESP teacher and the students is different than that in General English classroom: the student is an expert in the field in which the teacher has very little knowledge. This special relationship influences the methodology. For instance, in ESP/EMP, communication is more often initiated by the student. Contrary to the General English teacher, the ESP teacher holds a background position and this is one of the most difficult lessons he/she has to learn.

The question that inevitably arises, concerns the level of knowledge that language teachers should have about their students' specialized subjects. It is believed that an EMP teacher should have some general knowledge of the students' specialist subjects, take advantage of his/her linguistic knowledge and use it in the context of medicine with the aim of constant development. ESP teachers have great responsibility – they should be more flexible and willing to cooperate with both experts in the field and students. Interdisciplinary team teaching is another characteristic of ESP methodology and it is crucial for a successful ESP course. Tandem teaching introduces the necessary contents and promotes the relationship between subject teacher, ESP teacher and students. Such coordination, which can be represented in the form of a functional triangle, or a three-way dialogue, promotes the status of a foreign language as university subject. The language teacher acts as an intermediary between the students and the subject teacher. In team teaching, the language teacher acts as a person who is knowledgeable about communication, about the way that the language works and he/she does not have to deal with the actual subject content. This approach integrates medical knowledge and English language teaching, students learn language in context and they are motivated to apply the medical knowledge they possess during language classes. The teacher does not have to be an expert in the field of medicine but should show interest and positive inquisitive attitude towards the medical content. The EMP teachers need to be flexible in teaching and prepared to take risks.

Medical students are adult learners who are highly conscious of themselves and their purpose. For this reason, it is important to make use of what they bring to the class and nourish their interests and motivations. In our case, medical English is taught from the perspective of medicine and health care first and foremost while reinforcing vocabulary acquisition, grammar and structure secondarily to avoid a mismatch between what is learned in class and its usefulness in the workplace (DeBeaugrande, 2000; Fincham, 1982; Mavor and Trayner, 2001). Students in ESP courses should be prepared 'for the realities, rather than merely the theories, of the workplace' (Mavor and Trayner, 2001).

Students' interests are maintained because they can readily appreciate the relationship which is established between the English class and what goes on at the workplace, such as medical laboratory. In this way the authentic world is brought to the students and they learn to interact with the language as it is spoken and written in target situation. In order to make this possible, the ESP/EMP teachers must be willing to interact with both experts in the target situation and with the students.

Some of the strategies for promoting student autonomy in EMP include constructive dialogue between the teacher and students, preparation of adequate teaching materials, cooperation with specialized subject teachers, continuous evaluation. Auton-

omy comes into play when students are allowed to choose what topics to deal with in details and what activities to engage in, when setting problem-solving tasks or when familiarizing students with appropriate learning strategies that enable them to learn independently after accomplishing the course.

Students are actively involved of students in a number of ways because they find themselves in the area of expertise they are familiar with, and, simultaneously, are in a position to practice both their medical knowledge and improve their English skills. They have full initiative to direct the teaching/learning process. What is more, they gain insight into social and communicative skills that are of utmost importance for their practice. Students are shown a range of autonomous options and have their awareness raised through different learning strategies that are open to them.

Interdisciplinary team teaching is a characteristic of ESP/EMP methodology and it is crucial for a successful EMP course. EMP courses are best conducted when all three parties are involved in realization because team teaching introduces the necessary contents and promotes the relationship between subject teacher, ESP teacher and students. Such coordination, which can be represented in the form of a functional triangle, or a three – way dialogue, promotes the status of a foreign language as university subject. On the one hand, teachers of specialized subjects bring their expert medical knowledge which emphasizes content and context-based teaching. On the other, the language teacher acts as an intermediary between the students and the subject teacher. In team teaching, the language teacher acts as a person who is knowledgeable about communication, about the way that the language works and he/she does not have to deal with the ac-

tual subject content. The EMP professionals have a unique opportunity to make a contribution to medicine as experts in the art of communication. Finally, the students also play an important role since they bring their medical knowledge and put it into the context of English language teaching and learning. This approach integrates medical knowledge and English language teaching, students learn language in context and they are motivated to apply the medical knowledge they possess during language classes.

CONCLUSION

Focus on the learners' needs and designing specific courses to better meet the individual needs of students in ESP is of paramount importance. ESP classes are content-based. Content, in our case medicine, is integrated in language teaching. Content-based syllabus implies cooperation between language teacher, specialized subject teachers and students. Also, students learning medical English are more motivated to learn, acquire and use language when the entire context of the learning is within the field of their interest, medicine and healthcare.

EMP teachers should increase their knowledge of the content area, find materials and resources that generate student interest and involvement and build intrinsic motivation and knowledge. Methodology of ESP/EMP puts great emphasis on student autonomy and on providing students, the future doctors, with strategies for lifelong learning.

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THE STUDENTS' ROLE IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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In recent years, throughout Europe and in our country, the importance of student participation in activities in the field of security and quality in higher education institutions is absolutely clear and necessary. Bologna process has highlighted the importance of student involvement in quality assurance in higher education. Ministers of Education of the signatory countries have stressed the great importance of establishing a partnership of higher education institutions, teachers and their students in reaching its objectives in improving the quality of higher education institutions across Europe.