

Artículo de investigación

Teaching English in the higher education institution: teachers and students perspective**Преподавание английского языка в вузе: перспективы преподавателей и студентов**

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Abstract

The purpose of the given study is to provide description of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course implementation in Russian higher educational institutions. The authors consider the experience of ESP training at Ogarev Mordovia State University (Saransk, Russia) and outline the most typical issues faced by ESP teachers in real-life conditions of education process. The following problem aspects are pointed out: appropriate selection and use of training materials for the educational course, multilevel groups issue, necessity of due ESP course design etc. The authors also provide the results of the survey for students of some departments of Mordovia Ogarev State University listing the most relevant issues and challenges faced by them while taking an ESP course. The creators of the paper suggest several ways of solution for the issues stated and provide possible directions for the development and quality improvement of ESP courses in the higher education system of Russia.

Keywords: English for specific Purposes, English for General Purposes, professional-oriented language learning, modern teaching issues.

Аннотация

Цель данного исследования - дать описание реализации курса английского языка для конкретных целей (ESP) в российских высших учебных заведениях. Авторы рассматривают опыт обучения ESP в Мордовском государственном университете имени Н. П. Огарева (Саранск, Россия) и выделяют наиболее типичные проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются преподаватели ESP в реальных условиях образовательного процесса. Выделяются следующие проблемные аспекты: надлежащий подбор и использование учебных материалов для учебного курса, многоуровневая организация групп, необходимость должного проектирования курса ESP и др. Авторы также приводят результаты анкетирования студентов некоторых факультетов Мордовского государственного университета им. Н. П. Огарева, перечисляя наиболее актуальные вопросы и проблемы, с которыми они сталкиваются при прохождении курса ESP. Авторы статьи предлагают несколько путей решения обозначенных проблем и предлагают возможные направления развития и повышения качества курсов ESP в системе высшего образования.

Ключевые слова: английский язык для конкретных целей, английский язык для общих целей, профессионально-ориентированное изучение языка, современные проблемы преподавания.

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Introduction

At present any professional in any field of activity is demanded to receive higher professional education to go up their career ladder. Proficiency at foreign languages is becoming an obligatory tool for specialists willing to stay competitive in the labor market. New requirements for graduates of nonlinguistic institutions lead to the need of mastering a foreign language at a certain level of proficiency (no lower than B2 according to the general European competence of foreign languages proficiency). Due to appearance of new educational standards and their requirements, all students of non-linguistic departments are required to master all kinds of translation, speech activity, lexical, listening and grammar skills for their academic and occupational activity. Consequently, foreign languages proficiency is one of the components of individual professional development.

Due to the increasing globalization trends of globalization and development of scientific cooperation and modernization of the Russian educational system, ESP (English for Special Purposes) training is becoming an increasingly important and challenging task for many professionals in this field.

The scientific novelty of the study provided is as follows:

- The overview and systematization of ESP teaching methodology and practical experience applied both at the higher education institutions Russia and worldwide;
- The identification of the most current issues of ESP training at Ogarev Mordovia State University (due selection of educational resources, heterogeneous groups issue);
- Pointing out and emphasizing the problem of ESP course design;
- Providing the results of Ogarev Mordovia State University student survey devoted to most relevant challenges faced by them when doing an ESP course.

The aim of the given study is to consider the practical aspects of ESP teaching process along with several most typical challenges and issues faced by ESP teachers and learners in the course of educational process in both foreign and Russian higher institutions. The research also deals with the determination of the specific tasks

that teachers and students are currently facing providing several possible solutions at the same time.

The importance of the problem stated is closely connected to the fact that nowadays the level of students' linguistic abilities and skills (of those studying at non-linguistic specialties and training fields) does not always correspond to the necessary requirements and educational standards. This phenomenon calls for making several changes in the traditional methods of teaching (consistent and tedious drilling of lexical and grammar schemes, lexical units, translation of professional texts in any chosen field of knowledge); it calls for some restructuring of classroom management in favor of using more modern and innovative methodological techniques aimed at the increase of professionally-oriented communication skills while taking an ESP course. This fact creates the certain challenge of rethinking the existing techniques and methods of ESP teaching.

Literature review

Theoretical and practical issues of ESP training process are stated in numerous works dealing with the problems and challenges faced by ESP practitioners. They are widely considered by multiple researchers, most significant of those being Dudley-Evans & St John (1998), Hutchinson & Waters (1987), Hess (2001) Ferguson (1997), Cenaj (2015). Various Russian researchers such as Mitrofanova (1973), Polyakov (2003), Ter-Minasova (2000) considering the importance of communicative approach in teaching ESP deserve mentioning as well.

Considering the necessary conditions for successful accomplishment of occupational language courses, the founders of the modern professionally oriented approach Hutchinson and Waters stress out the necessity for thorough study of learners' needs demands and requests. They point out that the difference between General English and English for Specific purposes implies not "the existence of a need as such but rather the awareness of that need" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Provided all participants of the ESP teaching process are well aware of the purposes learners actually study English for, this knowledge will be of great use and significantly influence the selection of necessary contents of the ESP training course and provide for the successful development of its potential.

Researchers come to the conclusion that the contents of the ESP course (e.g. Science, Medicine, Business, Tourism) appears to be secondary to its most significant characteristic - the ability to successfully establish the need to learn English for special purposes (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

In that regard, it should be pointed out that when starting their career as an ESP teacher, most of university practitioners are challenged with difficulties in analyzing students' needs, demands and requirements. The primary reason for that is believed to be the difficulty for students to predict their future goals and needs, they do not have a clear understanding of what skills they might need to use in their future professional sphere. The lack of student motivation can also be a major disorienting factor that might lead to further difficulties in the educational process.

Having studied the issue of analysis of learners' needs, the researcher M. Cenaj states that inaccuracies and mistakes may prevent them from the successful achievement of the learning goals, and therefore the choice of appropriate teaching techniques, methodology and contents of ESP course may result in ineffective outcomes.

Accordingly, the inaccuracies mentioned can be a huge factor of the students' demotivation and consequently the study course might not be able to fully meet their current and future needs (Cenaj, 2015).

Another important issue frequently mentioned by the researchers in the field is ESP appears to be some ESP practitioners' insufficient awareness of subject methodology. Lack of substantial subject knowledge may lead to problems and situations that are increasingly complicated to deal with. Hutchinson and Waters portray this condition of ESP teachers as 'a new environment for which they are usually poorly prepared' (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

For instance, teaching starting to teach business English can prove to be a challenging task for a specialist who previously only had teaching experience in the field of linguistics, requiring them to broaden his/her knowledge in this professional field over a relatively short time limits.

According to scientist Ferguson (Ferguson, 1997), the shortage or lack of substantial subject knowledge should not affect the self-esteem and

motivation of the ESP teacher. He points out that the ESP teachers should mainly act as 'experts in the field of language, not in the subject area'. Researchers also state a rather disproportional number of roles demanded from ESP practitioners involved in the teaching process. One of the most recognized ESP theorists T. Dudley-Evans uses the term "ESP expert" (a professional fulfilling five roles). The roles are as follows:

- 1) teacher, 2) employee, 3) course and educational materials creator, 4) researcher, 5) evaluator (a specialist whose task is to assess the knowledge during the course) (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). The ESP practitioner not only directly organizes and implements a foreign language course for Specific Purposes, he or she takes control of the course design course, is responsible for selection and, sometimes, significant adaptation of methodological materials for the course, has to deal with the design of the above mentioned materials, assessment of the knowledge acquired, is involved in cooperation with teachers leading the subject courses. Under those circumstances, the task of successful implementation of an ESP course for any practitioner in the field becomes extremely challenging.

Teaching tasks and challenges

The international experience of teaching ESP and the problems arising during course of training clearly demonstrate certain resemblance of a number of pedagogical problems to the teaching experience of many Russian specialists. However, we would like to distinguish several certain aspects that depend on the peculiarities of a national system of higher education and some characteristic features of the teaching process.

Significant ESP teaching experience and regular practical involvement in English for Specific Purposes training provides the lecturers of Ogarev Mordovia State University with an excellent opportunity for identification some of the most up-to-date and serious problems currently existing in the field of teaching ESP.

The issue of materials selection

One of the most challenging tasks in ESP training is the process of selection the necessary methodological materials for the study course. According to researcher K. Hyland, educational contents fulfill a unique role in ESP, and the choice of those primarily depends on the accepted methodology creating a certain

“interface between teaching and learning, or certain contact points, in which the goals and objectives of the course become tangible for both students and teachers” (Hyland, 2006). The researcher points out that methodological material is used for stimulation and more effective implementation of the teaching process, and their design (and frequently) adaptation represent an important component of ESP practice. Despite the prevalence of printed teaching resources, the overall teachers’ tool set can also include various audiovisual materials, special internet or computer simulators, actual real-life objects and case studies of professional activities in the chosen knowledge area (Hyland, 2006).

An issue of huge importance connected with selection and adaptation of teaching materials for an ESP course is the question of balance. What should the correlation be between the pure language sources of information and subject-focused resources selected for the course? Primarily linguistic materials are able to most effectively contribute to the training of foreign language communication skills, while subject-focused sources of information are directed on students receiving the knowledge needed for their future professional activity.

Implementation of ESP courses by lecturers of Ogarev Mordovia State University demonstrates that searching for and gaining this balance is rather individual for ESP teachers and depends on the language training level and special needs of every individual student group. In case of insufficient language training level by the first-year students, this balance tends to shift towards pure linguistic sources of information at the initial stage allowing to train students for work directly in the subject field in the future.

When speaking about choosing the printed materials for course of English for Specific Purposes, it can be noted that the process in general does not vary from the situation with the course of General English taught by lecturers of Ogarev Mordovia State University. As a rule, they carry out individual selection of necessary language and specialized subject-focused educational materials in the necessary subject area taking into account the special characteristics of all aspects of speech activity (writing, reading, listening and speaking skills). However, a significant number of methodological problems connected to the selection of training materials are to be mentioned in this regard:

- Occasional shortages of the necessary numbers of specialized methodological materials for some training areas. For instance, such a shortage is traditionally observed when working with training fields 54.03.01 - Design, 42.03.05 - Media communication;
- Level of school language training required to work successfully with some textbooks may not correspond to the language abilities and skills of certain academic groups. In this case, the lecturer is faced with the necessity to adapt the existing teaching materials substantially;
- Overall number of classes provided by the course book might not correspond to the duration of the ESP course. In this regard, the language teacher should determine the modules that are to be excluded from the course or added into it.

We would also like to point out the huge significance of using the Internet during the ESP course, as Ogarev Mordovia State University ESP teachers have constant access to the Internet and apply it in the educational process. The Internet provides new promising opportunities that are able to greatly increase the benefits and outcomes of modeling professional communicative situations for students.

For instance, it might be used as a perfect tool to model authentic communication situations, establish a context that represents practical speech situations; it provides students with the access to a vast number of discipline-related and relevant language resources of information.

It should be pointed out that currently Ogarev Mordovia State University students and lecturers have constant access to educational environment and electronic databases, including several Russian ('ZNANIUM.COM', 'eLibrary', EBS 'Lan' etc.) and foreign ('Springer link', 'Freedom collection eBook collection', etc.) library systems and information storages. This opportunity significantly facilitates the selection of necessary training materials for almost all specialties and areas of training.

Thus, by naming the relevant problems concerning the selection of appropriate ESP teaching materials, one should pay their biggest attention to the following important steps happening during this process:

- ESP teachers have to take into account the overall size of the course and its quite possible adaptation to the real number of curricula study hours;
- Thorough analysis of the ESP course target audience (students' expectations, needs and goals) is demanded;
- Objectives of ESP course should correspond to its structural organization: students must have clear understanding of their education final goals, teaching process is to set the target of step-by-step mastering the skills and competences mentioned in the curricula;
- Glossary of ESP course has to be authentic, useful and frequently mentioned by experts in the field;
- Appropriate use English idioms is a must;
- ESP course materials need to be as 'live' as possible, they should serve as visual and motivational means for students to deepen their knowledge in the needed field;
- The use of the Internet during the ESP course implementation provides an excellent opportunity to model situations of professional communication for learners.

The problem of heterogeneous groups

The issue, concerning the study of heterogeneous groups (also known as multilevel groups), has been studied by multiple scholars (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hess, 2001). The scientists note that this issue appears to be one of the most relevant and might greatly influence the successful implementation of the ESP course. At the beginning of their training ESP students differ from each other by their entrance level of language competence, learning styles and habits, linguistic abilities, age, motivation levels, self-organization.

The mentioned problem is apparently one of the most relevant among ESP specialists at Ogarev Mordovia State University, as it makes the task of choosing the necessary educational materials for the course much more complicated. The majority of teachers emphasize the low level of student language abilities and skills especially in the first year of their studies. One of the possible solutions we would like to propose is the identification of learners' individual needs, and subsequently the creation of appropriate subgroups within every individual academic group. After that, some individual students or

subgroups created are to be provided with due materials or projects in accordance to their language training levels. The ESP practitioners should ensure the involvement and interest of every single student in the educational process and give much attention to the advanced students.

Nowadays, the so-called 'entrance test' or 'placement test' for checking the foreign language abilities skills is taken at Mordovia State University on a regular basis. It takes place before the process of formation of academic groups is initiated in almost all faculties academic departments. The results of those tests allow to assemble student groups in accordance to the level of students language training. However, in some fields of training and specialties these tests are not possible because of the insufficient number of students. For example, the number of students at '40.03.01 - Jurisprudence' is quite sufficient for this test, whilst having it '54.03.01 - Design' it is not feasible.

In addition to the 'entrance tests' some intermediate or so-called progress tests are regularly organized to monitor students' progress and adjust the pace of implementation to the necessary modules of the training course.

It should be also mentioned that multiple modern educational materials take into account the possible scenario of ESP training that happens in a diverse group, which greatly facilitates the teacher's work and provides for the successful achievement of learning goals.

The issue of course design

The final problem to be mentioned this article is the design and development of the ESP course and the issues related and arising during this process.

According to scholar Cherkashina the most significant reason for insufficient effectiveness of ESP training in a non-linguistic higher education institution is the lack of due attention, which is paid to students' psychological and physiological characteristics (Cherkashina, 2015). The researcher pays attention to the difference between the language system and the system of exact sciences, which also can lead to differences in consciousness and thinking.

According to Cherkashina, ESP practitioners of the humanities have to take into account that ESP training consists of some major restructuring of

cognitive systems in linguistic competence. As the solution to this issue, the author mentions the use of a project model that involves the characteristic features students' thinking and professional consciousness.

It should be pointed out that the ESP teacher takes full responsibility for the course developed by him/her, he or she is the one to make the final decision on grammar, lexical and communicative skills taught to learners, it is his/her obligation to decide which language sections or modules should be included into it or excluded out of it. However, even the successful fulfillment of the stated requirements does not guarantee the student successful language training.

Implementing ESP courses at Ogarev Mordovia State University, lecturers take into account several major factors: the existing Federal Standard for Higher Education and the provisions of it, the possible scenario of doing master's degrees by some of the students, feedback received from local employers and university graduates, student ambitions and needs along with teachers' enthusiasm. Skills that are normally trained and emphasized by most teachers involve the ability to reproduce oral summaries of the texts in the subject area, the ability of the speaker to respond adequately in multiple situations of everyday professional communication, ability to participate in business correspondence, working on a project in the chosen fields of professional activities etc. The design of an ESP course must be developed taking into account all of the considerations concerned.

Another useful ESP teaching practice applied at Ogarev Mordovia State University is the organization of debates. At the initial preparatory stage students are offered to mobilize their linguistic abilities and skills, make use of their critical thinking, develop their non-lateral thinking (Halpern, 2013). At the debates students are to demonstrate not only language training, but also professional skills and competences. At the Department of English for Professional Communication of Ogarev Mordovia State University the debates on wide range of professional topics are organized on a regular basis. The topics for them include: 'Capital Punishment: For and Against,' 'Our Votes: Do They Really Matter?', 'Can Financial Problems Destroy a Country?' etc.

The lack of motivation

Another issue, which is worth mentioning, is the problem of motivation among ESP students. Motivation has become the most significant subject of multiple scientific studies as certain aspects of motivation may greatly influence the acquisition of any foreign language or contribute to successful implementation of an ESP course. Trying to assess the success of learners' outcomes the term itself is used by a number of language teachers such as Z. Dörnyei, R. Gardner etc. "Why people decide to do something, how hard they are going to pursue it and how long they are willing to sustain the activity" are some of the questions addressed by multiple motivation theoreticians (Dörnyei, 2001). According to another recognised motivation researcher Gardner "the motivated individual is goal directed, expends effort, is persistent, is attentive, has desires (wants), exhibits positive effect, is aroused, has expectancies, demonstrates self-confidence (self-efficacy), and has reasons (motives)" (Gardner, 2007).

Considering the issue of motivation in more detail, we would like to speak of two factors, preventing the students from successful acquisition of a foreign language. First of all, students of non-linguistic directions tend to have unclear goals for the future, since they do not consider themselves to be future English speakers. Students are often unsure of how they will apply their foreign language skills in the real-life situations or some possible future professional activities. Secondly, there is a significant lack of English-speaking environment in the Russian society nowadays, which means that the opportunities for applying students' knowledge in everyday real-life and vocational communication are very limited. These factors greatly decrease the motivation of learners and effectiveness of their ESP training.

Analyzing the motivation issues at Mordovia State University, we can conclude that the solution for those involves dealing with multiple tasks concerning both students and lecturers. The students are required to make a lot of effort, whereas the lecturers have to provide a significant range of innovative methods and creative approaches, including professionally oriented projects and presentations able to serve as a catalyst for students' motivation, development of critical thinking and language proficiency. The creation homogenous groups of students (and subgroups depending on the level of language proficiency) can also be of great use as this allows low-level students to keep their motivation on a required level.

Issues of teaching and students feedback

It is difficult to deny that the level of English proficiency in the Russian Federation remains at low level among various age groups. In terms of English proficiency, Russia ranks between Ecuador and Mexico with an index of 51.59 (according to Educational First - <https://www.ef.ru/epi/>). Surprisingly, command of English is better in women than in men, and the proficiency varies depending on the country region. The majority of the population feels predicaments in expressing themselves in any foreign language including English, although language education and learning is common and can be found at the majority of institutions. The language proficiency is required to apply for a high-paid and prospecting position. There exists the above-mentioned gap between secondary and higher schools. The first-year students are expected to have a B1/B2 level upon entering the university, while in reality they possess a significantly lower level of proficiency. It is also widely believed that it happens due to the disadvantages in teaching at all stages of learning English and negative side-effects of the transition between the old and the innovative teaching models. Some people associate the low level of language with the cultural isolation of this country in the international arena. Others connect the difficulties of teaching with the students, they note the reluctance and disinterest, lack of respect for teachers, the low prestige of this profession; thus, the knowledge received from them is not taken seriously.

It is worth mentioning that Russia adopted a number of teaching methods from the Soviet era, which are now considered obsolete and incompatible with the contemporary requirements in advanced educational institutions both in Russia and abroad. This teaching paradigm includes:

- The particular emphasis on grammar and theoretical foundations of the English linguistics (e.g. transcription, vocabulary classes etc.), the lack of communicative approach;
- The focus on "text-based" course-books which feature high-literature of "bookish" styles, insufficient role of spoken or colloquial English;
- The concentration on words memorization and less attention to the context. Excessive memorization leads to "assessment-oriented", rather than "result-focused" education, i.e. students

seek teacher's assessment rather than achieving goals in learning itself;

- The domination of reading and writing aspects of the English language mastering.

In our opinion, this paradigm was conditioned by the lack of contacts with the native speakers, shortage of authentic resources and overall ideological pressing and cultural isolation. While providing students with decent theoretical framework and bookish style of English (although, not applicable in the real-life circumstances), the so-called "Soviet foreign language-learning approach" proved to be out-of-date under the current conditions, whereas the contemporary situation requires communicative approach.

Notwithstanding, some old teaching materials and techniques are still used despite the availability of multiple resources and accessibility of valid on-line tools. Besides, the younger generation of language learners and prospecting pedagogical experts find it unappealing to enter a teaching career due to low wages, high requirements and psychological pressure of working with younger children and other responsibilities. The career growth for teachers seems slow and unpredictable, while the "burnout" danger is real and supported by many examples when prospecting "would-be teachers" shift to business, freelance and other types of career paths. Thus, the teaching staff is increasingly "aging" in many institutions which is slowing down the transition to a new paradigm. Innovative and constantly developing world requires teaching experts' rotation.

Consequently, many students of ESP and English for General Purposes (EGP) suffer from "the generation gap" between them and teachers, as many language trainers are unable to connect with their students on emotional and intellectual levels. This leads to the lack of motivation and the perception of the language learning as unpractical and unsatisfying. Students do not see the prospects of learning English; they do not experience the benefits of its knowledge. It is vital to show students all the advantages of knowing a foreign language, the practice of its real application and implementation.

The authors have conducted the survey based on questioning students of the department of law, the institute of national culture and the department of foreign languages at Ogarev Mordovia State University. The students were asked to list the issues, modern challenges and

possible solutions in the area of the English language teaching. We grouped the received response into the following categories.

Edutainment

A major role is played by the lack of balance between educational game forms of training and regular assignments. Most students (80%) point out that learning English is “dull” with “obsolete textbooks” and based on out-of-date textual resources that have no connection with real-life situations and their professional fields. They demand “to include more relevant audio-video materials from native speakers, English songs and language games / puzzles / trivia quizzes which are conversational and not too bookish and formal” (70%). Besides, the majority of students demand sufficient knowledge in spoken and even colloquial English as they want to immerse into the modern youth culture and mass media sphere. The contemporary concept of “edutainment” (simultaneous education plus entertainment experience) is becoming increasingly popular and widely used in teaching context (Kostikova et al., 2019). The use of audio, video, interactive software and e-learning platforms (also, feature and biography films, music, mass media extracts etc.) is the norm of modern education paradigm (Bryantseva et al., 2019); however, it is not regularly used in the teaching process due to the lack of adequate facilities (e.g. Internet access, computers, interactive boards, digital devices etc.). English learning is still associated with paper books or photocopyable materials which update at a slower pace than digital resources and online materials. Besides, multimedia provides better comprehension, it increases efficiency and visually (or schematically) represents complicated topics, serving as a powerful teaching tool to increase motivation in students.

Teacher vs. Guide

Nowadays we face the changing of the teacher's image – from the teacher and instructor as such to the guide that leads students through the material making them active members of the educational process rather than passive “receivers”. The English language as a discipline requires constant interactivity and students' feedback. Students (35%) point out that the modern generation possess a different mode of consciousness, which is “goal-oriented” rather than “knowledge focused”. i.e. the success in learning is identified with interest, motivation and necessitation rather than the accumulation of knowledge and “getting marks”. In this case, the main task of a secondary school teacher / higher

education instructor is to “lure”, motivate and encourage students in learning English showing that it is informative and prospective to possess language proficiency skills. A teacher is increasingly seen as a mentor and a guide to form the professional competencies rather than “a judge to be afraid of as I make too many mistakes” (20%). One of the keys to effectiveness in learning a foreign language is regarded as “creating an atmosphere of cooperation and social partnership in foreign language classes for students of non-linguistic specialties”. However, some students feel that “teachers work only with their favourite students while ignoring the others” (30%). They mention that the classroom layout should be more “roundtable”, “discussion-oriented” and not “teacher-centered” (25%). Another discussed issue is the “classroom equality”, as some students (30%) point to the teachers working only with “advanced” individuals or even “pets” rather than involving every person into the classroom work. However, teachers are increasingly considered to be “digitally accessible” as they answer questions in “social media” and personal accounts on the official university web-page (www.mrsu.ru).

Education Structuring and Inclusion

Some students (20%) claim that there exist certain barriers in education for certain students' groups: people with disabilities, hearing and visual impairments, etc., general lack of inclusive education development, issues with accessibility of special facilities and general personnel unawareness of how to educate persons with special needs. The survey also determined the opinions (15%) on the lack of a structured approach to learning, the usage of language proficiency in the manner prescribed by the international classification. A small number (5%) of students demand TOEFL and IELTS as an objective assessment tool for their examination upon graduation from the university.

Teachers are seen as “having too much workload to have an opportunity to apply an individual approach to each person in the classroom” (50%) and “not taking into account the characteristics of students” (e.g. different approaches to those with insufficient vocabulary, communicative problems, lack of writing skills). This can create psychological tension in the classroom, when more trained students will feel less motivated to develop their skills, while their peers may remain disoriented and demotivated due to the low level of their training. Consequently, some students (20%) suggest to enroll students in groups

according to their knowledge level. Most of the questioned point to the lack of academic hours for the English language as a higher education discipline (85%). They suggest to introduce a strict division of the class into sections so that in each group there are no more than 10-12 people. A considerable amount of university students (60%) point out that the majority of materials are look “artificially simplified” and “lack authenticity”. Teachers are expected to “create an atmosphere of deep language immersion”, implementing a communicative approach in class, rather than traditional theoretical linguistic “incomprehensible” teaching and “not overloading students with excessive homework but giving more creative tasks and goals”.

Secondary – higher education transition

Most non-linguistic students (80%) claim that within the specialties not directly related to learning English they feel “reluctance to learn the language due to the fact that we have already chosen a specialty and want to brush up on other subjects and focus the occupational disciplines”. This sentiment is conditioned by the generally inadequate secondary school English learning results among in the majority of students; the lack of language practice (both in and out of school) in the framework of training, as such. There is no elaborate connection between secondary and higher education standards to provide “seamless” language learning where secondary education is focused on EGP (English for General Purposes) while universities are to be more ESP-oriented. However, insufficient language basis acquired over the school years makes it difficult to obtain ESP competences in higher education institutions. Thus, the most significant negative factor are low self-esteem and inadequate level of motivation in studying which results in a decrease in academic performance.

Relevant Topics and Authenticity

More than half (65%) of the questioned students pointed to the fact that class themes and units` titles are based on topics that are “uninteresting”, “dull” and “irrelevant in the modern world”. Students demand the following topics to be discussed: artificial intelligence, fashion, job interview, cloning, trade, finance, relationships, travel etc., in the form of discussion and case-studies that broaden their outlook and include lexical and grammatical sections adapted to this or that unit. They suggest to devote more time to reading books, watching films and analyzing songs in foreign languages using authentic, “not

adapted” material intended for native speakers. Having encountered real-life conversation situation, students note that “they get lost in understanding and find difficulty to keep the conversation going”. They feel demotivated by “detachment from reality” and “inadequacy” of the majority of classroom material that prevent them from “entering into the language world naturally”; students prefer various games, debates and quizzes to be conducted. Some students (45%) suggest to increase the number of foreign exchange and e-learning classes with native speakers to provide authenticity. Half of the questioned are dissatisfied with the competence of teachers as “English is almost never really spoken in the classroom”, while the other half supposes it is spoken too much, especially for elementary students.

Advantages of English Learning

In addition to the shortcomings and challenges to the contemporary language education, students mention several advantages. More than half of the students (55%) highlight “teachers` loyalty to their work” despite low wages and considerable psychological pressure. Some students (30%) mention the increased opportunities for the teachers to participate in the conferences, forums, webinars and professional training seminars. Up to 25% mention that their teachers and university professors “instill love for the language”, “inspire further language learning” and “motivate independent study of English”. This group of students feel “obliged” to the individual teachers who were efficient, creative and informal in their work. They also note that linguistic specialties and the choice of “language career” motivate teachers to be more “motivated”, “creative” and “generally knowledgeable”.

Conclusion

As noted above, student needs analysis plays a key role in ESP. Therefore, prior to designing the course it is necessary to carry out a full observation of the students` needs. Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) propose a comprehensive study of the environmental situation, personal information, language training of students and its weaknesses, their expectations from the course, professional information about students and their ability to communicate in the target situation.

In addition, due to several changes in educational standards and curricula currently taking place in higher education institutions, all ESP practitioners must be prepared to adapt the

content and the duration of their courses to the new requirements.

It should be also stated that regular international conferences on ESP teaching practice and methodology, development of new curricula, creation of multiple teaching aids, systematization of existing ESP materials could significantly contribute to improving the language and professional skills of future specialists in various areas. This might create new promising possibilities for students of non-linguistic directions of training and help them get new skills, take part in numerous international projects, scientific conferences, and foreign internships and, consequently, provide for establishment of international contacts. The mentioned education methodology focuses on the latest scientific developments; it helps to shape the professional interests and provides an opportunity for further professional growth of students.

In conclusion, we would like to point out that quality teaching of English for special purposes is vital in institutions of higher education due to the great demand for professionals in the relevant fields. In the process of ESP training teachers need to pay special attention to the correspondence of materials to the subject area of knowledge. On the basis of student needs' analysis teachers need to highlight the skills that will be most demanded in the labour market. As noted by Lebedev and Tsybina, "According to the requirements of the new educational standards, students of non-linguistic departments are to master oral and written translation, all kinds of speech activity, listening, lexical and grammatical skills for academic and professional activities." (Lebedev & Tsybina, 2018). Consequently, foreign languages proficiency is one of the components of individual professional development. This leads to some problems in ESP teaching. We have considered the importance and complexity of selecting the training materials used in the course, challenges of multilevel groups and the importance of well-designed ESP course providing some possible solutions. In addition, it is worth noting the important role of the ESP teacher, who also acts as a researcher, teaching methods developer and organizer of the educational process.

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