

Olena Volkova

Senior Teacher, National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute", Kyiv, Ukraine

Svitlana Boiko

Teacher, National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute", Kyiv, Ukraine

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDENTS' LANGUAGE NEEDS ANALYSIS IN TEACHING ESP

Keywords: *language needs research, students' ESP needs, ESP course design*

Introduction. In the modern system of higher education in many countries, students' needs and employers' requirements are regarded as the main criteria for the designing of course outlines and study programs. When a language course is being planned and designed, its developers should take not only students' language knowledge, skills, and abilities into account, but also have full comprehension of their needs, ambitions, and expectations which in turn depend on the current labor market and employers' demands. The procedure, methods, principles, and strategies of students' needs research must be determined for its successful application in the process of designing an ESP course.

Methodology. The term '*language needs analysis*' appeared in the late 1990s and quickly became popular in the literature on teaching languages. In 1998, T. Dudley-Evans and M.J. St John stated that language course developers should keep the following procedure in their research: collecting, processing, and analysis of students' language needs. Among the key components of an ESP course development they point out: 1) the objective of studying ESP by students and 2) the way students will communicate in ESP in the future (by phone, by mail, face-to-face) (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998, pp. 121-140).

Later on, it was proposed by S. Burgess and K. Head (2005, p. 15) that *needs analysis* should also include the objective of doing a language course, the number of students in the class, their age, and peculiarities of their native language and culture.

The researchers L. Alekseeva (2007), S. Burgess (2005), K. Head (2005), and O. Tarnopolsky (2011) agree that the analysis of students' language needs plays an important role in course design and should be done before the planning and development of a course program since it directly influences course planning and content selection. In turn A. Davies (2006, p. 10) and J. Harmer (2007, p.368) recommend analyzing students' language needs several times: before designing a language course, during its running, and after passing the course by students, in order to estimate and introduce improvements in language programs on the basis of the obtained information.

According to the current National Curriculum for Universities in Ukraine (Bakayeva, 2005, p. 6), the content of teaching ESP should be developed using the comparative data analysis of obtained results of 1) surveys and interviews of students, employers, lecturers of professionally-oriented courses and ESP teachers; and 2) testing the level of students' language proficiency on the basis of the international levels of language proficiency of the Common European Framework. It should also

consider the previous experience of students, their requirements, ambitions, expectations, and needs for language learning.

Consequently, teaching ESP will be successful, provided that the content, structure, and organization of the language course will correspond to the real abilities, skills, needs of students and the requirements of their future profession (Alekseeva, 2007, p. 9, p. 14). The special attention should be paid to mastering ESP that relates to a certain future specialty of students and their professional ESP communication skills. For that reason, the distinctive characteristic of ESP teaching is that each professional domain can have its own unique ESP course characteristic only of this branch of science.

We totally agree with L. Alekseeva (2007, p. 14) and O. Tarnopolsky (2011, p. 23) who propose an interdisciplinary design of an ESP course with the content reflecting different disciplines of students' specialty. In this case, the analysis of students' needs is performed only at the stage of themes choice. The selection of all other components (language materials, tasks development, setting strategies) should be made by program designers on the basis of a scientifically proven methodology.

Results and discussion. To summarize, performing the analysis of students' ESP needs involves the following procedure:

- to find out the objective of taking a language course, the number of students in the class, their age, and peculiarities of their native language and culture;
- to identify the students' ESP needs through in-depth analysis of their future responsibilities and competencies required by employers in their professional domain;
- to evaluate students' ESP knowledge, skills, and abilities;
- to analyze the final processed results.

The first part of research involves the investigation and analysis of the situations of professional communication of specialists and the determination of the peculiarities of their ESP needs.

The second phase of research allows testing and assessing the real students' knowledge of ESP, in order to identify their level of language proficiency in all types of receptive (reading and listening), and productive (speaking and writing) activities. This phase of analysis significantly depends on the quality of ESP placement tests.

The final stage of research represents an overall evaluation of gathered data on students' ESP needs including all the information necessary for an ESP course design and the further development of teaching/learning materials. An ESP course program will be successful on condition that it is developed taking into account the results of language needs analysis based on the students' subjective opinion and objective employers' and markets' demands considering the peculiarities of communication in the professional sphere. All mentioned above, in turn, determine the structure and content of the course program, expected outcomes and even methods of teaching methods.

It should be highlighted when we conduct ESP needs analysis the whole teaching process becomes student-centered and, undoubtedly, conducting and systematizing the results of this analysis is an essential part of ESP teaching/learning, process. To collect the information, we can use objective sources as well as

subjective. Needs analysis can be conducted in a form of surveys, observations, interviews, and questionnaires involving all participants of a study process as well as future employers in the chosen professional sphere in order to develop the program which will meet the needs of all stakeholders. The obtained data affect the selection of methods, means of teaching, language material, and are also used in the development of ESP course programs in technical colleges and universities.

Conclusion. All things considered, the development of an efficient ESP course program should be grounded on the in-depth detailed investigation of specific professional requirements and language needs of students. Consequently, the success or failure in ESP teaching/learning largely relies on the effectiveness and quality of such research. And ESP course designers will be capable of creating a particular course program with realizable objectives for studying ESP only due to the comprehensive research of target language peculiarities of the whole domain of students' future professional activity and the full set of their both language and professional abilities, skills, and knowledge, required for successful professional communication in a foreign language.

References

- Aleksyeyeva, L. Y. (2007). *Metodika obucheniya professionalno orientirovannomu inostrannomu yazyku [Methods of teaching a professionally oriented foreign language]*. St. Petersburg: Philological Faculty of St. Petersburg State University.
- Bakayeva, G., Borysenko, I., Ivanischeva, V., Khodtseva, A., Klymenko, L., Kostytska, S., Kozymyrska, T., Skrypnyk, T., Todorova, N., & Zuyenok, I. (2005). *English for Specific Purposes (ESP). National Curriculum for Universities*. Kyiv: Lenvit.
- Burgess, S., & Head, K. (2005). *How to teach for exams*. Harlow: Longman.
- Davies, A. (2006). What do learners really want from their EFL course? *ELT Journal*, 60(1), 3-12. doi:10.1093/elt/cci076
- Dudley-Evans, T., & John, M. S. (1998). *Developments in ESP: A multi-disciplinary approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Harmer, J. (2015). *The practice of English language teaching*. Harlow: Pearson/Longman.
- Tarnopolsky, O. B. (2011). Content-based instruction, CLIL and foreign language immersion in teaching foreign languages for specific purposes at non-linguistic tertiary educational institutions. *Inozemni Movy [Foreign languages]*, (3), 23-31.