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Task-Based English for Specific Purposes Teaching

In university language classrooms, tasks are the key elements of TBLT (task-based language teaching) as long as they provide a context that activates learning process and boosts foreign language learning. Some scholars define “task” as a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically to achieve an outcome [2], and some – as any part of classroom work that involves students’ comprehension and interaction in the foreign language, focusing primarily on meaning rather than form [6].

During the above-mentioned teaching, attention is paid to the relationship between target language perception, processing, production, and language learning, thus, teaching becomes student-oriented. Tasks can be: educational and real-world ones. The former are tasks aimed at teaching or enhancing knowledge of grammatical or lexical forms, whereas the latter are targeted at emphasizing skills, which students need in the real life, specifically communication with people from other countries or their future colleagues in the professional sphere. Therefore, the tasks to which teachers of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) pay most attention at their lessons nowadays are communicative ones, the main goal of which is to help students use the actual, real-life language in authentic communicative situations. Foreign language studying requires from students to do learning activities through interaction, active partaking and use of the TL (target language) in a more authentic context [5; 8]. It should be noted that pedagogical and real-world tasks should be connected at foreign language lessons (the pedagogical tasks will act as a bridge to real-world ones), but the latter ones should still play a bigger part in the learning process in the class, developing students' communicative skills [1; 4].

The stages of a task-based lesson [7, p. 5; 3, p. 80]:

- Pre-task (introduction of the lesson's subject, aims and main terminology, if needed);
- During-task, i.e. a task itself (working with the target language);
- Post-task (students are building their personal dictionaries of professional and general words and practice communication in the foreign language).

Pre-task exercises are important for development of technical students' confidence and strains relieve at lessons, and so, promoting professional foreign language acquisition. They provide necessary words, phrases, models or ideas, which can be used while doing main tasks. For these kinds of exercises audio records and videos are the most suitable aids, but any brainstorm activity will be beneficial at this stage.

Post-task exercises are also important for consolidation of received knowledge, the lesson's terminology learning and its actual practice in conversation. Without post-tasks almost half of the foreign language lesson's efficiency is lost [7, p. 7].

According to R. Ellis [2], a task can be evaluated using the following criteria: 1) student-based (the degree to which people who study found the exercise beneficial and/or entertaining); 2) response-based (comparison of the forecasted task outcome to the actual one); 3) learning-based (estimation of the degree to which learning took place as a result of the task).

The key features that should be present at a task-based English for Specific Purposes lesson are: abundant use of the foreign language, and rare use of the native language (only when necessary); provision of useful words and/or ideas to foster students' further discussion, i.e. doing communicative tasks; making sure that tasks, especially communicative ones, are relevant to students' speciality in terms of vocabulary used in them and/or provided speaking situations; the teacher's constant monitoring of students work during their fulfilment of main tasks.

To sum up, every English for Specific Purposes Teacher should remember that his/her students need even more thought-through tasks at lessons than students-linguists as they should learn English terminology, grammar and communicative strategies to be

able to interact not only with common people in other countries but also with fellow professionals in their future work sphere. Therefore, the task-based teaching is beneficial because it provides a student-oriented education, which gives opportunity to practice authentic, i.e. real-life, intercourse, and thus, the main attention is paid to words, phrases, communication strategies needed for their future, creating hands-on experience and not just knowledge of a foreign language for general purposes.

References:

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