ESP Curriculum Design: Postgraduate Study

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ABSTRACT

The paper considers the problem of designing ESP curriculum for postgraduate students. The role and potential of ESP teaching has a state meaning for Ukraine and many other countries. The key point in ESP teaching is curriculum design. To design a curriculum, the paper determines the postgraduate students' needs and formulates certain objectives and tasks for postgraduate ESP study. Four content modules are elaborated involving language materials and four types of speech activity.

Introduction

The task of a higher school is to train professionals with high level of professional competence and ability to solve theoretical and practical problems with creative approach. Nowadays, the integral component of professional training is the English language competence and professionally oriented English competence. These processes are closely associated with the increasing role of English in the international communication and have an impact on teaching process at secondary schools and, especially, higher schools. There are a set of reasons to have a language of international communication; and the most important one is the close relations of professionals all over the world, in the society of integration and globalization. This reason is, at the same time, the stimulus for the development of English for Specific Purposes and Professionally Oriented English in various fields.

Literature Review

The role and potential of ESP teaching has a state meaning for Ukraine and many other countries. ESP has undergone several stages of development since 1960s with certain peculiarities in different countries. In Ukraine, the process concerns with the development of professionally oriented English over some last decades. The key point in ESP teaching is curriculum design (course design). This process is considered from different points of view. The traditional viewpoint considers course design as a process consisting of a set of steps: diagnosis of needs, formulation of objectives, selection of content, organization of content, selection of educational experience, organization of educational experiences, evaluation and assessment [1].

Another point considers it as rather the process of development itself than the final result focusing on in the program design. This approach depends on the interaction of learners, teachers and knowledge during the design of a course curriculum [5].

Another concept shows the process of a course design as a flow-chart with non-linear character and a definite freedom of a teacher in course components [2].

The most recent approaches focus on specific role of a teacher as a guide and students' autonomy in learning process.

Materials and Methods

The traditional first step of designing an educational programme is the study of students' needs. In postgraduate study, students' needs in English involve reading professional and scientific articles, discussing the obtained results and communicating ideas with colleagues, writing formal and informal letters concerning professional and scientific activity, writing scientific papers, participating in scientific conferences, using English as a language of international communication, etc.

These needs stipulate the formulation of certain objectives. Teaching ESP for postgraduates is based on the acquired language knowledge and skills and aimed at acquiring skills necessary for the scientific activity. It focuses on academic writing, professional presentation with further discussion, lexical and grammatical aspects which are not involved by traditional courses. Students learn main linguistic and stylistic features of academic English, the means of creation integral oral and written text produced in the process of scientific findings [3].

We determine the following goals of teaching ESP for postgraduate students: the improvement their skills to acquire English, to get and communicate professional and scientific information in English, to solve the problems of scientific activity, to apply oral contacts in the situations of scientific and professional communication, to implement written contacts in the situations of scientific and professional communication, to read and comprehend professionally oriented and scientific literature in English, to use it in social and professional spheres, to annotate scientific articles and to substantiate research [4].

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-We distinguish the following tasks of ESP teaching for postgraduates:

- to develop general competences of postgraduates, to promote their abilities to self-estimation and self-education;

to form general and professionally oriented speech competences of postgraduates in order to provide theirefficient communication in academic and professional environment;

- to help postgraduates in forming general competences to develop their personal motivation and positive attitude to learning foreign languages;

- to promote the development of critical self-awareness and abilities to communicate and make essential contribution to the international environment;

- to achieve deep understanding important international socio-cultural problems to act properly in the cultural diversity of professional and academic situations.

Results and Discussion

To achieve the goal and to solve these concrete tasks, we develop the curriculum for the course "English for Specific Purposes" for the postgraduate students of Natural Sciences. The course programme is designed for 80 hours during two academic terms and consists of four content modules: (1) "Science and Technology", (2) "Scientific Papers", (3) "Scientific Method", (4) "Modern Science".

The first module, in its turn, involves four themes including "Science Definition", "Science History", "Mathematics and Formal Sciences", "Technology as the Application of Science". This module contains lexical exercises on words, word combinations, terms and terminological expressions concerning science in general, and communicative exercises on discussing some scientific problems in pairs and groups. It is appropriate to add some materials of generally oriented language since communication of scientists includes different topics. The first module includes the following discussion points: "Languages and Language Learning", "Ages of Man", "Professions and Jobs", "Travel and Transport". Taking into account different levels of postgraduate students' language competence, we include the following Grammar revision in the first module: the Noun (Singular, Plural), the Adjective (Degrees of Comparison), the Verb (Simple, Continuous, and Perfect Tenses of Active Voice).

The second module focuses on scientific papers and involves the following topics: "Introduction to Journal-Style Scientific Writing", "A Strategy for Writing the Paper", "The Sections of the Paper", "Revising Paper". Postgraduate students learn some rules of writing scientific papers, the style and language of writing. Although scientific journals differ somewhat in their specific requirements, there is a general format that would be acceptable for most biological journals. Postgraduate students read the text and listen to the dialogues and discussions about different sections of scientific papers and their specific features and perform various language and communicative exercises.

Besides reading and listening, postgraduate students are involved in other kinds of communicative activity, such as writing and speaking while performing various exercises and tasks concerning scientific papers. General aspects of the module include the following topics: "Health and Balanced Diet", "Colours and Person's Nature", "Ocean's Colour", "Colour Study". These topics are encouraging and interesting for discussion and expression of students' views. Postgraduate students learn to use phrases to present their

opinion. Since Grammar material is selected according to the needs of communication, the second module involves Grammar themes concerning Passive Voice and Infinitive. Grammar skills of students are practices while performing various types of Grammar exercises.

The third module focuses on the scientific method involving the following topic: "The Key Elements of the Scientific Method", "The Design of Scientific Experiments", "Types of Scientific Experiments", "Steps of Scientific Investigation". The module represents articles, text and various exercises on the material concerning key steps that tend to characterize the scientific method, namely, question, hypothesis, experiment, observations, collecting data, data analysis, conclusions. While training various types of speech activity, at the same time, graduate students receive important information on their scientific activities using foreign language resources. This process has features of content and language integrated learning (CLIL). As CLIL is an approach for learning content through an additional language (foreign or second), thus teaching both the subject and the language, postgraduate students acquire both scientific activity and English as a foreign language. Besides, the module includes General English aspect to practice language and speech skills involving the following topics: "What does the future holds?", "Describing people", "Describing things", "Time and Interpretations". To practice Grammar skills of postgraduates, the module represents various Grammar exercises focusing on the themes Participle I, Participle II and Participial Constructions.

The fourth module focuses on the modern science and recent scientific advances. As the most prestigious scientific prize is Nobel Prizes, the module material involves some articles concerning the achievements of Alfred Nobel and Nobel family, the Nobel Prizes and winners. Since one of the most significant awards in computer science is Turing award, the module material includes articles on Alan Turing, Turing award and its winners. Inventions and discoveries in applied sciences are just as important as the achievements of pure sciences. The role of inventions in people's lives is properly appreciated by the Draper Prize, the materials about which are presented in the fourth module.

The course programme involves educational experience of the language materials (phonetic, lexical and grammar) and of all four types of speech activity (reading, speaking, listening and writing).

Conclusions

Therefore, the key point in ESP teaching is curriculum design. The following steps are considered for developing course curriculum: diagnosis of needs, formulation of objectives, selection of content, organization of content, selection of educational experience, organization of educational experiences, evaluation and assessment. The study of students' needs is traditionally considered to be the first step of designing an educational curriculum. The following activities are among the needs of postgraduate students: reading professional and scientific articles, discussing the obtained results and communicating ideas with colleagues, writing formal and informal letters concerning professional and scientific activity, writing scientific papers, participating in scientific conferences, using English as a language of international communication, etc.

The following objectives are stipulated according to postgraduate students needs: academic writing, professional

presentation with further discussion, lexical and grammatical aspects which are not involved by traditional courses.

Therefore, developing the curriculum for the course "English for Specific Purposes" for the postgraduate students of Natural Sciences, we designed it for 80 hours during two academic terms consisting of four content modules: (1) "Science and Technology", (2) "Scientific Papers", (3) "Scientific Method", (4) "Modern Science".

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