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РАЗВИВАНЕ КОМУНИКАТИВНАТА КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТ ПО АНГЛИЙСКИ ЕЗИК НА СТУДЕНТИТЕ ПО ИКОНОМИКА И ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИ НАУКИ ЧРЕЗ ИНТЕРАКТИВНО ИЗПОЛЗВАНЕ НА СПЕЦИАЛИЗИРАНИ ТЕКСТОВЕ

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Анотация. Статията има за цел да разгледа съвременното развитие на преподаването на английски език за специални цели (АСЦ) и да представи нови техники на преподаване, прилагани с цел усъвършенстване на комуникативната компетентност на студентите по АСЦ чрез интерактивно използване на специализирани текстове. Новите поколения се учат по различен начин в сравнение с предишните и за да се постигнат ефективност и ефикасност на курса, преподавателите и образователните експерти трябва да вземат под внимание този факт заедно с възможностите за преподаване и учене, които предоставя прогресът на науката и технологиите. Обучаемите са по-мотивирани да учат и показват по-голяма заинтересованост, когато учебният процес включва интерактивност по отношение на мултимедия и сътрудничество между студентите. Интерактивните задачи и проекти, разработени от автора за студенти по икономика и политически изследвания, са описани и илюстрирани, за да разкрият потенциала на специализираните текстове за улесняване на балансираното овладяване на всички компоненти на комуникативната компетентност по АСЦ на студентите.

Ключови думи: комуникативна компетентност, английски за специални цели, специализирани текстове, английски за икономисти, английски за политически науки

HONING STUDENT COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH FOR ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL STUDIES: USING SPECIALISED TEXTS INTERACTIVELY

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Abstract. The article aims to discuss the recent developments in the teaching of ESP and present new teaching techniques applied in order to hone student communicative competence in ESP by using specialised texts interactively. New generations learn in a different way compared to previous ones and to achieve course effectiveness and efficiency, lecturers and educational experts should take this fact into consideration along with the opportunities for teaching and learning optimisation provided by the advance of science and technology. Students are more motivated to learn and show greater engagement when the learning process involves interaction in terms of multimedia and peer cooperation and collaboration. Interactive tasks and projects developed by the author for students of economics and political studies are described and illustrated to reveal the potential of specialised texts in facilitating the balanced acquisition of all components of student ESP communicative competence.

Keywords: communicative competence, ESP, specialised texts, ESP for economics, ESP for political studies.

РАЗВИТИЕ КОМУНИКАТИВНОЙ АНГЛИЙСКОЙ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТИ СТУДЕНТОВ ЭКОНОМИКИ И ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ НАУК С ПОМОЩЬЮ ИНТЕРАКТИВНОГО ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ СПЕЦИАЛИЗИРОВАННЫХ ТЕКСТОВ

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Аннотация. Статья направлена на обсуждение последних достижений в обучении английского языка для специальных целей (АСЦ) и представление новых методов обучения, применяемых для повышения коммуникативной компетентности учащихся в системе АСЦ с помощью интерактивного использования специализированных текстов. Современное поколение учится по другому чем предыдущие, поэтому для достижения эффективности и результативности курса преподаватели и эксперты в области образования должны учитывать этот факт наряду с современными методиками преподавания и обучения, обеспечиваемые развитием науки и технологий. Учащиеся более мотивированы к обучению и проявляют большую вовлеченность, когда процесс обучения включает взаимодействие с точки зрения мультимедиа и сотрудничества между коллегами и совместной работы. Интерактивные задания и проекты, разработанные автором для студентов, изучающих экономику и политологию, описаны и проиллюстрированы, чтобы раскрыть потенциал специализированных текстов в облегчении сбалансированного приобретения всех компонентов коммуникативной компетентности студента в системе АСЦ.

Ключевые слова: коммуникативная компетентность, английский для специальных целей, специализированные тексты, английский для экономистов, английский для политологии.

INTRODUCTION

Preparing students to function successfully in a professional context is no longer possible with the use of course books or course packs only. The design of new materials is needed in order to optimise student performance in terms of specialised communicative competence – the one in English for specific purposes (ESP). Communicative competence has gained the importance of a buzzword owing to its considerable contribution to an individual's career prospects. Doing their bachelor's or master's degrees students need to acquire the specialised linguistic knowledge and skills that will enable them to communicate effectively

with their teammates, partners, clients and customers worldwide. This involves the development and improvement of all components of their communicative competence based on the work with a variety of specialised texts.

In contemporary contexts, specialised texts mean not only what we watch in the news, read in the newspapers or produce as a piece of business correspondence, but also what we hear, read, produce or interpret in the social media. Modern generations grow up using modern technological gadgets and devices and perceive in a way which differs from the way we as their teachers or parents perceive. It is, therefore, worth adapting to these new circumstances and

taking them into account when aiming at optimised ESP course results. This is the rationale behind the author's work presented in this study and focused on honing ESP communicative competence in an academic context by using specialised texts interactively. The set of tasks developed by the author can be used not only in courses for students of economics and political studies, but in a wider context including students of policing, law enforcement, agriculture, medicine, etc.

Communicative competence in a modern academic context

The concept of communicative competence was introduced by Hymes in the 1970s and was defined as the complex of grammar knowledge and social experience related to the appropriateness of a particular utterance. Unlike Chomsky, Hymes considered communicative competence not as an innate ability but as an ability acquired through the individual's interaction with the social environment and comprising of four components: grammatical accuracy, appropriateness, feasibility and attestedness [1, pp. 277-284]. The idea of communicative competence was further developed and elaborated by a number of scholars such as Bachman [2], Canale [3] and Swain [4], Habermas [5, 6, 7], Cummins [8], Palmer [9], Gumperz [10], Van Ek [11], Bell [12], Klyuev [13]. Each of them contributed to the comprehensiveness and clarity of its definition and model. Van Ek suggested a model including six components:

- linguistic competence – the linguistic knowledge and skills related to the production of grammatically accurate structures;
- sociolinguistic competence – the ability to select the appropriate grammatical form in terms of the particular communicative situation – goal, participants, speaker intent, etc.
- discourse competence – the ability to choose a particular strategy for text structuring and interpretation;
- socio-cultural competence – the awareness of the national and cultural specific features of the speech behaviour of the language native speakers;
- social competence – the ability to orient in and manage a communicative situation;
- strategic competence – the ability to compensate some communication deficits in terms of linguistic knowledge, speaking and social experience [11, pp. 374-380].

Van Ek developed this model with Trim and it was embedded in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) of the European Union (1991) that Bulgaria as an EU member country applies as well. Van Ek and Trim's definition was expanded by Himenes in an updated version of CEFR where general and specific linguistic competences were distinguished [14]. All competences are developed through the development of the four basic skills – reading, speaking, listening and writing within social contexts. These social contexts are classified into four categories: educational, professional, social and personal. The ability to communicate in each of these specific communication contexts is called functional communicative competence. Therefore, when discussing student communicative competence in ESP, we speak of their functional communicative competence in their professional area.

ESP courses

English for specific purposes was defined by Stevens (1988) in comparison with English for General Purposes or General English and by outlining its absolute and variable parameters [15]:

The teaching of ESP:

- absolute parameters – aims to meet specific learner needs; is content-related with regard to the discipline it serves; and pays special attention to the language this discipline and the activities related to it require in terms of vocabulary, syntax, discourse, etc.; is based on the comparison with General English.
- variable parameters – can, but does not have to, be restricted within the scope of the specific skills to be acquired

and use a predetermined methodology, [15, p.7].

Later on, this definition was revised by Dudley-Evans and St John [16] with the parameters being classified as follows:

The teaching of ESP:

- absolute parameters – aims to meet specific learner needs; applies the methodology and uses the activities of the discipline it serves; pays special attention to the language this discipline and the activities related to it require in terms of vocabulary, syntax, discourse, etc.
- variable parameters – can be related to or focused on specific disciplines; can apply a methodology different from that of General English; is aimed at adult learners from a higher education institution or a professional area, but it is possible to be aimed at high school students; is usually intended for advanced or intermediate learners; and is based on the assumption that learners are familiar with the structure of the language, but it is possible to aim it at beginners [16, pp.4-5].

The specific features of ESP determine the key components of an ESP course and in 1983 Carter defined them: authentic materials, specific purpose and self-direction [17].

Authentic materials provide the texts characteristic of a particular professional and occupational context by giving learners the opportunity to familiarise with the terminology, discourse, genres, specific text organisation, etc. of the field. The specific purpose is contextualised as well and is closely related to the specific skills a learner needs to acquire. For instance, the listening skills involving the comprehension of texts on stock exchange data, commodity prices and trends analysis and description. Self-direction is the learner's ability to make decisions related to their learning – what, when and how to acquire or improve. It means that the learner has already attained a level of competence that has transformed him/her into a proficient user [17, p.134].

Specialised texts

As already noted, the authentic materials used in ESP are texts typical of the discipline students are majoring in. In the case of the author's focus, these are students of Economics and Political Studies. Referring to Dobрева and Savova [18] and according to the type of information exchange, the authentic specialised texts are informative texts with a clearly expressed cognitive function and can be classified into the following categories:

- scientific – the category includes all academic, research, descriptive and applied texts and its readers have extensive background in the respective area of specialisation. Its genres include monographs, summaries, reports, scientific article, etc.
 - didactic scientific – this is the category focused on teaching a particular audience which is why such texts offer scientific information adapted to learners' needs and characteristic features. The genres typical of didactic scientific texts are dictionaries, textbooks, handbooks and reference books.
 - popular scientific – these are the texts aimed at a wide audience without any specialised background and preparation. They are aimed at familiarising the audience with a certain issue and include a lot of illustrations or examples. Among the most popular genres of didactic scientific texts are documentaries and public lectures.
 - journalistic – the texts that present an issue of public social or economic interest and include commentaries. These texts are aimed at a wide audience that has some specialised preparation on the matter discussed. Unlike the other categories, they involve the position of the author or an institution and have a degree of subjectivity. An example of this kind is the official statement.
 - informational texts – a multitude of texts whose main cognitive function is only to inform about events and issues. They include the news, reports or bulletins [18, p.121].
- All kinds of specialised texts are characterised by a certain degree of specialisation and profiling. They can be oral or written and in academic education they are used

according to the learner age, degree of specialised preparation or educational goals. When developing the specialised receptive skills for reading and listening, students acquire specialised vocabulary along with linguistic and socio-linguistic knowledge. When developing the productive skills for writing and speaking, students consolidate their specialised knowledge and enhance their specialised skills in English for the particular scientific field.

Using texts interactively

The rapid development and advance of information and communication technologies affected human everyday interaction with the invention of the Internet, social media and various devices aimed at facilitating our daily routine and communication. As a result, modern generations grow up spending more time in the virtual reality rather than in real life. This has reflected on young people's way of perceiving, communicating and learning and is the reason why educational experts suggested that new courses should be designed to meet new demands and include relevancy, interaction, exploration, multimedia, instruction [19] and authentic assessment [20]. Therefore, modern courses should provide material that learners perceive as relevant in terms of the content taught and with an explicit relation to real-life professional and occupational contexts. They should ensure a learning process based on the encouragement of exploration and interaction meaning that learners are given the opportunity to work in different configurations and use various databases in order to learn along with the use of multimedia – the means of information exchange modern generations are accustomed to. In addition, instruction should be based on teacher-student and peer cooperation, consultation and collaboration. Last but not least, authentic assessment should be customised to meet the requirements of the new courses and involve tasks and activities similar to the ones performed in class.

These changes emphasise the need for the introduction of new teaching techniques - tasks and activities in the learning process. To achieve course effectiveness resulting in greater student engagement and improved performance, a textbook or course pack should be used along with carefully selected additional materials – specialised texts and should be based on interactivity. What the author means by interactive is provided by the two definitions in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD, e-version) [21]:

interactive:

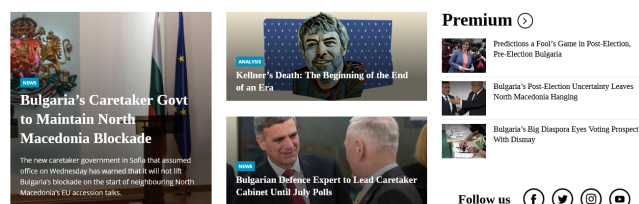
- 1) that involves people working together and having an influence on each other;
- 2) (computing) that allows information to be passed continuously and in both directions between a computer and the person who uses it.

The peculiarities of our modern world and generations of learners led to the idea of using specialised texts interactively: giving the students the opportunity to learn their way and in different configurations – individually, in pairs or small groups, but every time with different partners. They can use their devices and explore the immense databases to conduct tasks and projects, which empowers them to direct their learning, on the one hand, and puts them in a situation similar to real-life situations at work, on the other. By forming the teams for each assignment, the lecturer acts similarly to a team leader or a superior in an occupational context who makes the decisions on teams configurations not based on friendships but on professional qualities and abilities providing for optimal performance and adding a synergistic effect. This enhances peer cooperation and facilitates the honing of specialised skills, especially of the ones that students have had difficulties in acquiring.

The interactive tasks and projects presented in this article can be used for the courses for both specialties – economics and political studies. However, some of the topics are appropriate to one of the specialties only – for instance, the issue of stock exchanges is irrelevant for students of political studies just as the issue of parliament functions, types and structure is for students of economics. In such cases, a

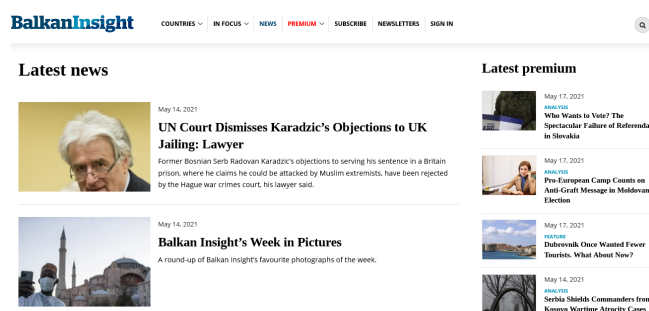
lecturer can make adjustments or if interested in offering the same issue to both specialties, they can think of a socio-economic problem. A good example of such problems can be Brexit, the pandemic, the Middle East or green energy and food miles.

One of the interactive tasks introduced by the author in the courses for students of political studies and economics is related to information processing, summarising, specialised vocabulary acquisition and giving opinions on issues of professional interest. In the beginning of a class, students are asked to use their mobile devices or laptops and find and present to the group the most important country news, local news, or global news – up to three items. They are given 30 minutes to prepare. While presenting, they are expected to justify their news selection and, finally, express their personal opinions on the news that impressed them the most. Students can use the multimedia projector in the room to visualise and illustrate:



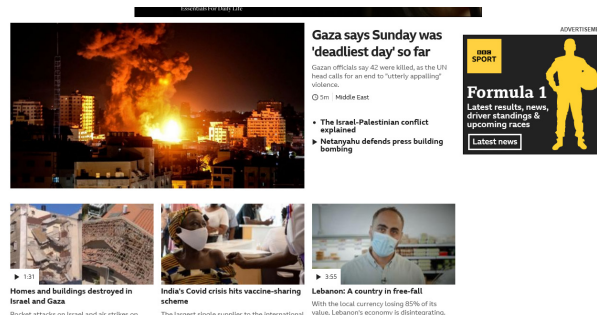
News from Bulgaria

Source: <https://balkaninsight.com/bulgaria-home/>



Local news: the Balkans

Source: <https://balkaninsight.com/bulgaria-home/>



World news

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world>

Another task focuses on the use of motivational or funny video clips related to the course content. For instance, clips on team building and team work or on election campaigns, party pledges, politicians' profiles. Analysing success stories or scenes from popular feature films in which a team is faced with a serious challenge develops the skills for critical thinking and decision making along with the facilitated acquisition of specialised vocabulary and discourse specifics. Furthermore, students feel encouraged to search the Net for similar video clips and suggest them for class discussions. Thus, by increased motivation and engagement, student performance improves and leads to higher results and a stronger feeling of team belonging. In addition, with funny clips, they remember more easily the dos and don'ts of formal commu-

nication or learn how to cope with awkward situations or break the ice effectively. What is more, student creative potential is challenged and revealed because students are given examples on tackling situations and issues of professional interest in an original and hence more productive way, especially in critical times when tension has built up and agreement cannot be achieved based on conventional approaches.



monty python job interview



The dos and don'ts at job interviews
Source: www.youtube.com



Boris v Dave: The history of their rivalry - BBC Newsnight

Presenting politicians in an entertaining way
Source: www.youtube.com

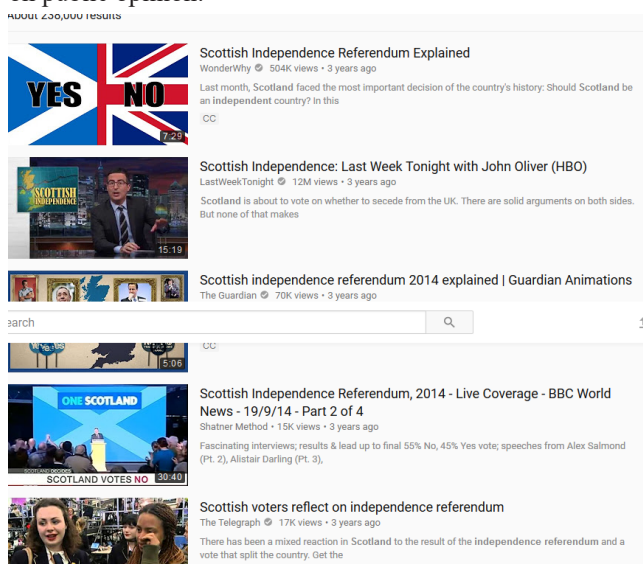
Project work based on interactive tasks is another technique used to hone student communicative competence in ESP by using specialised texts focused on economic and socio-political topics. Projects are usually assigned from the end of the second semester of the two-year ESP course until the end of the last semester. Two types of projects are presented: one assigned to students of political studies and economics and one assigned to students of economics. The former lasts for two weeks and involves the joint efforts of three groups of up to three students within a language group. The number of the students in a group depends on topic complexity and the volume of work to be done by a student. The project involves the following tasks:

- Group 1 does research on the topic and finds information about the arguments in favour related to the issue discussed and given by 1. experts and 2. politicians;
- Group 2 does research on the topic and finds information about the arguments against related to the issue discussed and given by 1. experts and 2. politicians;
- Group 3 does research and finds information about the public opinion on the issue by using viewpoints expressed in surveys, polls, interviews or, if possible, by conducting their own interviews;
- Having found and processed relevant and reliable data,

all groups prepare and give presentations;

- Having presented, each student is supposed to give their justified opinion on the topic;
- Then, each group is supposed to present a glossary of the terms related to the topic. Glossaries can be provided by email, or as handouts;
- Finally, each group's performance is assessed by the rest of the group. Assessment includes the quality of the information, text organisation and design of the presentation, quality of the oral presentation, analysis of the justified opinions – “Were the arguments salient?”, “Did the student use advanced and specialised vocabulary?”, “Did the student use the appropriate register and grammatical structures?”.

Each student is expected to take equal part in each task. By exploring the Internet and searching different databases students learn how to find reliable information and then process it in order to conduct the assigned tasks similarly to what they will be expected to do at work – prepare summaries, presentations, describe trends, analyse, provide solutions to problems, give opinions, express positions. Carrying out the project, they see the relevance of classwork and feel more strongly motivated to accomplish the ESP course goals. In addition, they cooperate and collaborate with their peers and control the learning process by suggesting what to include or improve as well as by cooperating with the teacher towards the optimised performance of the group. They are encouraged to suggest topics of interest that are related to the subject matter of their discipline as well as to provide materials – articles, reports, videos, posters, that can contribute to further ESP acquisition and hone all components of their communicative competence. Meeting deadlines is another advantage of project work for students and groups depend on each other, which is a serious reason to complete tasks on time. This kind of project is illustrated below with the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014. The screenshot shows links to videos on the pros and cons presented by politicians and experts in economists and politics as well as on public opinion:



Source: www.youtube.com

The second type of project is devoted to a global burning issue. Depending on the number of aspects to the problem, students work in pairs or in groups of three. They are given a fortnight to carry out their projects which consist of the following tasks:

- Each pair/group is assigned an aspect of the issue and is required to do research and prepare a presentation on it. This task involves the search of professionally specific information such as demographics, statistics, geographical, economic and/or political data referring to reliable sources such as national and international organisations, governmental bodies and institutes, think-tanks, ministries, etc. The par-

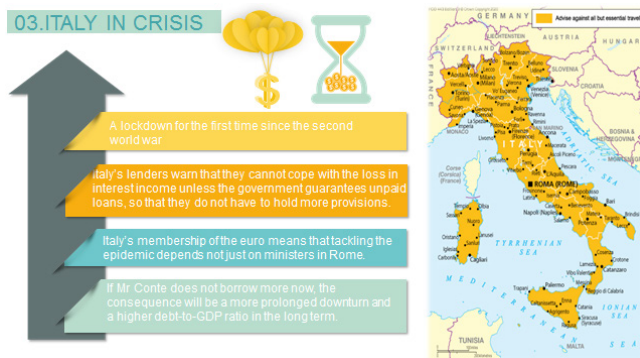
ticular details and presentation details as well as the order of presenting are done by the group members.

- Each pair/group gives a presentation to their group.
- Each student is expected to give their justified opinion on the aspect they presented or any aspect of the issue they are interested in.
- The student group assesses their peers' performance, including the presentation and the opinion.
- A discussion can follow if students are inclined to share or add comments.

Each student is expected to take equal part at each stage of the project in order to have equal opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. Group composition is prepared by the lecturer to make different personalities work in a team and complement each other. If a student is very good at looking for information, they are asked to let another one do the task with their help. Thus students are encouraged to overcome difficulties and hone their ESP communicative competence in a balanced way. Furthermore, consolidation is achieved by repeating similar tasks and activities with a focus on a different topic. Students can explore the vast databases, learn from their peers and improve their presentations or skills for critical thinking and expressing positions. In addition, their performance is assessed by their peers who are therefore given insights into assessment and assessment is among the key factors for a successful career development. Being aware of what and how to assess, they become aware of the ways to improve their own performance and become accustomed to constructive criticism and performance analysis.

The last issue the author's students of economics were assigned was the pandemic and the project was entitled "The economic and socio-political implications of the COVID-19 pandemic". The students worked in pairs and presented the pandemic in different corners of the world: the EU, Asia, the USA, Latin America, Africa, The Middle East, Australia and New Zealand.

Below are two slides from student presentations illustrating the project and students' work:



What is the toll on The Middle East and Africa during covid-19?

What will happen to their economy

- Oil prices
- GDP AND GLOBAL DEBT
- Bank regulation depth

How will society function?

- The measurements taken in :
 - The middle east
 - Africa

CONCLUSION

Teaching has been changing owing to global developments in science, economy and society. New modes, methods and techniques are needed to ensure course effectiveness and efficiency. Course effectiveness and efficiency, in turn, depend on student motivation and engagement in the learning process. If students are interested in learning by being

given the opportunity to learn using modern information and communication technology, they show increased motivation and participation in material acquisition and their performance improves. By using specialised texts interactively students from the new generations are provided with one more way of preparing for a successful career by developing and improving their communicative competence in ESP in an environment similar to their future occupational one and fostering a spirit of team work and cooperation. In addition, teacher motivation is enhanced as well which reflects on the quality of education and academic work. The tasks and projects presented can be adjusted for ESP students of other specialties, for instance Law, Policing, Marketing, International Tourism.

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