WAYS TO ENHANCE THE ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES CLASSROOM

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Abstract. *A frequent doubt that casts a teacher's mind is "Are my lessons interactive enough for my students?". Educators often struggle to balance factual-based lessons with hands-on experience while providing a safe space where students can express themselves freely and confidently. This seemingly endless labor of creating engaging content for students embeds uncertainties. It lessens the confidence of tutors who find it difficult to manage and meet the expectations of the modern-day classroom. The stressful impact of balancing out different details is further exacerbated when one speaks of more specialized practices, such as Business English, English for ICT, Medical English, etc. Therefore, we have strived to offer an idea that might be beneficial for broadening the scope of knowledge acquisition and reinvigorating one's curriculum through the implementation of roleplaying tasks, online quizzes, practicing paraphrasing, analyzing, and summarising articles, specifically in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classroom.*

Key words: English for Specific Purposes, Teaching methodology, Classroom solutions.

Introduction

As educators, we always look for new ways to make the working environment more engaging for our students. With the rapid development of technology, this has proven to be much more difficult than ever. Although we have resources, we are struggling to keep students' attention. Their attention spans have been waning as a result of cultural and socio factors, such as a steep rise in social media usage and over-reliance on Artificial Intelligence [2, 7] which drives us to pursue innovative ways to enhance the work in the English classrooms in general.

When it comes to teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP), a more tailored approach is required for specialized vocational or professional purposes. In contrast to General English, ESP equips students with

vocabulary and communication skills typical for their respective fields. At Plovdiv University, the knowledge acquired in their General English classes is implemented in the ESP classroom, which improves students' general language skills as well as their knowledge in specific fields. The ESP classroom, therefore, requires more innovative strategies and resource development to provide a well-rounded experience for students – one which activates their prior knowledge, while new skills are being acquired.

Due to our globalized society, English has become vital for the professional success of students and the need for proficiency in one's chosen field is increasing. An improvement in teaching ESP and the overall quality of education of students is necessary for them to reach their full potential. For this reason, the current article aims to provide several examples of strategies for enhancing the English for Specific Purposes classroom, offering insights into contemporary, empirically tested materials and approaches within the field. We aim to provide examples in an indicative rather than exhaustive manner, by focusing on approaches and strategies that have proven effective based on our experience.

Motivation and Related Works

The topic of enriching and revising the coursework of the English for Specific Purposes classroom is widely discussed. Scholars have emphasized the need for a more focused methodological approach in teaching ESP, encompassing the 4 key language skills – reading, writing, listening, and speaking [1, 3, 5, 9, 12]. Unfortunately, these skills tend to be overlooked within the ESP classroom, as tutors cannot spread out the curriculum properly due to a lack of time and available course materials. In such instances, creativity proves to be the best teaching assistant. From Tourism majors attending virtual museums and giving out live presentations to tourists [8], AI tools that can assist the ESP classroom [10], translation as a multi-faceted tool for learning specialized jargon [4], to project-based learning [6] and emphasis on the importance of culture [11], ESP teachers show that they are adamantly trying to ignite motivation within their students through different methodological approaches.

One of the biggest contributors to student success, however, is not only the course material presented but the teachers themselves 14]. While practical knowledge and skill acquisition are chief principles of the ESP classroom, as they provide authentic and engaging student experiences,

the most important role in such an educational environment is played by the teacher who delivers this content effectively. Students appreciate authenticity, encouragement, and sufficient feedback [14].

Research emphasizes the need for a "call to action" – teachers are encouraged to balance and juggle the workload of preparing course materials, assisting students in acquiring new language skills, creating authentic material, and maintaining high motivation which would then translate into the students. By encouraging more hands-on experience in the classroom, we seek to educate better professionals. However, such endeavors can be quite wearisome. Therefore, we would like to offer some inspiration and insights to teachers who wish to expand their syllabi further and effectively hone the skills of their students. To exemplify that, we have relied on the below approaches, which have been utilized by some of the English teachers at Plovdiv University's Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics throughout the last 2 years. The approaches have been implemented for teaching English for Specific Purposes to Computer Science majors during their first year of studies. These approaches, however, are not just limited to ESP for ICT students – they can be administered to students within any ESP classroom, regardless of course content.

Practical Advice and Approaches

Workplace Dialogue – a Role-play Activity

Role-play activities can vary in topics and benefit students of all ages. Implementing the workplace dialogue activity in the English for Specific Purposes Classroom provides examples of how to act in situations where negotiation skills are of particularly high value.

For this activity, the facilitator divides students into two groups, with one acting as the employer and the other as the employee. Students face each other, either sitting or standing (Fig. 1).

The game is played in two rounds. In the first round, employers discuss a rule, problem, or news item and they try to convince employees to agree. For example, the employer states that because of a lack of communication between team members, employees must stay one hour after work each week for unpaid team discussions. Employees, in turn, discuss the problem, question its necessity, and negotiate the schedule by offering feedback or seeking concessions.

Figure 1. Students practicing a role-play activity in the English classroom

In the second round, participants switch roles. The new employers present scenarios, like asking employees to stay late to resolve a serious problem or fix a critical bug. Employees then negotiate things like how long it will take, whether they'll be compensated, and if coworkers can help out.

The benefits are numerous: students get to know each other better, observe different language use, and experience various ways of thinking and communicating. This activity not only helps students practice business vocabulary but also enriches and diversifies the classroom by providing opportunities to maintain eye contact and assist each other with specific terminology instead of relying on mobile phones and Google consultations. Even in the form of a game practice can build students' confidence and quick thinking for real-life situations.

Classroom Trivia

Classroom Trivia is a game-show-based learning activity that implements specific knowledge required in the ESP classroom. It promotes collaboration and friendly competition among peers while providing students with the opportunity to review previously learned material. The game is easily adaptable and offers immediate feedback to students as well as the chance to learn in a dynamic and active environment.

The objective of this game is to assess the students' existing knowledge while allowing them to apply it in a fun and engaging way. The game is adaptable to all levels of English proficiency. It can be played in both

high- and low-tech environments, with categories written on a board or displayed on a screen, and scores tracked with a timer and a document.

Game Setup:

- Create five categories relevant to your field of study (e.g., Professions in Technology, Technical Jargon, Networking Dos and Don'ts, etc.). The number of questions and categories can be adjusted as needed.

- Assign point values to each question starting at 100 for easy questions and increasing for harder ones.

Gameplay:

- Divide students into teams (the number of people per team is flexible).

- Each team selects a category and point value (e.g., "Programming Basics for 300").

- There is a time limit for every question. If a team exceeds the time limit or answers incorrectly, other teams can attempt to answer the question.

- If a team answers correctly, they receive the corresponding points.

- A "double or nothing" category can be added to spice up the game. If a team answers a particularly difficult question correctly, their total score is doubled. However, if they fail, they lose all points.

- The winner is the team with the highest score'.

The game's duration depends on the number of categories and questions. The level of difficulty can be adjusted to the students' language skills. This activity tests learners' knowledge and helps them revise relevant specific vocabulary. Assessment after the game is recommended so students can reflect on their. The game can be tailored to any area of study.

Quizizz

Quizizz is an interactive online platform that serves to enhance the knowledge acquisition of learners (Fig. 2). Through the implementation of online quiz formats, students and learners alike can test their comprehension of different subjects, whether in a classroom environment with their tutor and peers or a more informal, leisurely one, such as at home.

The free version offers a wide variety of tools:

- Quizzes can comprise multiple-choice, open-ended, and fill-in-the-blanks questions (Fig. 2);

- In addition, there is an option to draw answers and vote through polls, as the platform can be used for other means than assessments such as surveys or gathering students' opinions;

- Quizzes can also be generated via AI: to create an AI-generated quiz, a person would simply need to upload a file, which will be fed as a prompt to the AI tool; the supported formats are various – PNG, PDF, PPT, etc. This option makes it easier to generate questions and answers based on existing material, typically covered during class. However, the tool has its deficiencies: it does not always manage to recognize and pinpoint appropriate information for inclusion in the quiz, therefore rendering it a mere helper, rather than a one-and-done solution to creating quizzes.
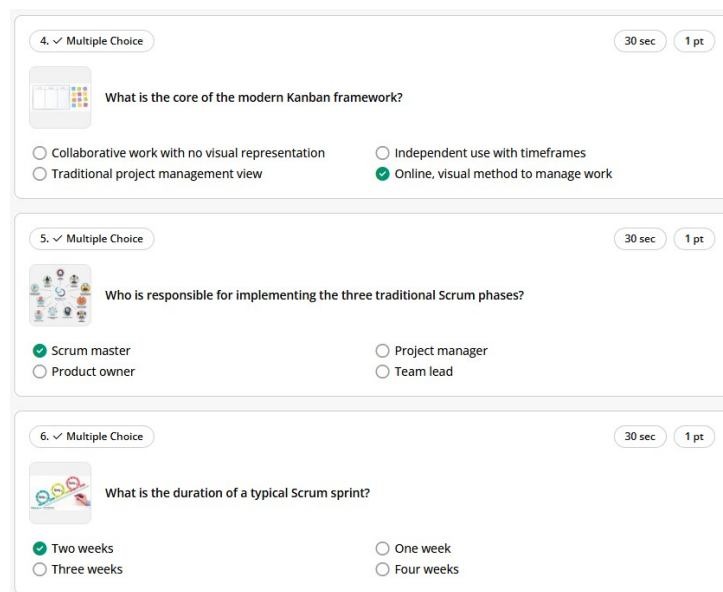

Figure 2. Examples of multiple-choice questions used with 1st year students at FMI

These key features help differentiate Quizizz from other similar platforms. By relying on freely available options, people are more likely to use its services to enhance their lessons and test out their students.

The biggest perk of Quizizz is not only its freely available options but also its ability to enrich a lesson. Implementing such a platform into

the lesson brings about copious benefits. For instance, students can competitively practice the material. Competitiveness in lessons according to Knudsen & Christensen "... is one of the oldest and most common techniques for strengthening discipline and motivation for learning in the classroom" [13]. As long as teachers strive to offer students a safe space to compete healthily, competitiveness is bound to lead to positive results, such as a spike in motivation and engagement.

In addition to competitiveness, students can study and practice at their own pace – they can finish the quiz during individual study time. Moreover, the teacher can assign homework tasks based on the quizzes for students to better understand the course material. This is especially useful for exam preparations as the material covered is more detailed and difficult to grasp compared to General English topics.

Using Scientific Articles in the Classroom

Bringing scientific texts into the classroom offers benefits, too. Students learn specific scientific terms, become acquainted with the structure of research articles, and practice the formal language in these texts. Understanding scientific articles prepares them to work with such texts in the future and even write their own.

To build summarizing and paraphrasing skills, learners first practice with short texts selected by the teacher. This helps them focus on understanding the main ideas and rewording them. After that, they study different writing styles to understand the tone and specific language of formal scientific writing, including grammar and vocabulary. Having grasped the basics, university students read an MDPI article related to their professional field of study, paying special attention to its structure: abstract, introduction, methods, results, and conclusion.

Some activities related to working with scientific articles include:

- Learners paraphrase sentences from an MDPI article in an informal style; other students paraphrase these back into formal style, and finally compare the result with the original text.

- Students make a list of key terms from the article, define them in English, and search for their translations into Bulgarian, thus deepening their understanding of the vocabulary.

- Students read a short article without its title and abstract. Work-

ing in small groups, they discuss and write ideas for a title and abstract for the article. Finally, they compare their versions with the original ones.

By engaging in such activities, university students get more comfortable with the language and structure of scientific articles, learn to read critically, and build skills in summarizing and rephrasing complex ideas. It's a step-by-step way to help them understand scientific writing better and provide them with tools to succeed in their chosen academic or scientific fields in the future.

Conclusions

In conclusion, ESP provides an opportunity to enhance students' ability to grasp new concepts and explore different approaches to learning. It opens doors to knowledge that is widely applicable and can benefit students in various aspects of life, particularly in terms of their career pursuits and professional growth. Students' communication skills, critical thinking, creativity, and other abilities can be greatly improved through ESP. Being an ESP teacher involves not only having the necessary knowledge but also finding effective ways to instill that knowledge and the relevant skills in students.

Creating a positive work environment where everyone can share knowledge and experiences is our ultimate goal as educators. We strive to teach more efficiently, ensuring our students leave with a strong sense of belief in themselves, their skills, and their abilities – a belief that will serve them well in the future. Based on our personal experience, we believe the above tasks would greatly enhance the ESP classroom. We hope the ideas shared in this article are useful, insightful, and practical for fellow teachers looking to diversify their ESP classrooms.

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