NEW APPROACHES AND TRENDS
IN TEACHING AND LEARNING LSP/ESP

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Developments in the field of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) and its leading branch English for Specific Purposes (ESP) are changing approaches, the context and methods of LSP/ESP teaching and learning. The analysis of recent trends has been outlined with the view of their potential assessment and introduction into LSP courses.

Key words: LSP areas and categories; the problem of specific purposes; genre approach in LSP; computer assisted language learning in LSP.

The role of foreign languages in the acquisition of expert knowledge and achieving professional goals is getting more prominent and acclaimed.

Fundamentals of language for specific purposes (LSP) began to develop in the 1960s as a part of the communicative approach, which focused on the communicative function of language and discourse features. English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which is a leading part in the international movement of language for specific purposes (LSP),could be subdivided into two main subcategories - English for Occupational Purposes and English for Academic Purposes with their further subdivisions into Vocational ESL, Professional English, English for Science and Technology and English for Academic Purposes (other than EST) [Johns, 1991]. ESP went through several stages of development from the level of sentence to the use of psycholinguistics and cognitive sciences and is considered interdisciplinary at the current stage. The main areas of ESP research have embraced traditionally terminology and genres, now they cover such areas as sociolinguistics, sociology, psychology, cognitive sciences and cultural aspects of communication.

Current developments in LSP / ESP reflect the changing role of the teacher and the student in the learning process. The student-centered learning is replacing the teaching-centered approach. The similar terms: learner-centered or learning – centered teaching are used with this approach which focuses on learning process and emphasizes a variety of different types of methods that shifts the role of the instructor from a giver of information to facilitating student learning [Blumberg, 2008]. Learner- based approach to language studies has been advanced in ESP since it appeared on the scene, with the focus on learners' needs being an important LSP component. Since the very beginning ESP advancers insisted that the curricula should be based on systemic and empirical measures of learners needs and of language they required by the tasks they have to perform in particular environment. It was both the ESP greatest contribution to language teaching and the problems for ESP practitioners. Precourse analyses were often completed by teachers before the development of course materials. Later they included different sources of needs indicators: students themselves, the students' employers and teaching organizations. The studies completed for the Council of Europe determined threshold level materials which formed a basis for language teaching in Europe. In the United States needs assessments included surveys of experts to determine what tasks students must perform in a particular language context. The needs assessments have become more sophisticated under the influence of new methodologies and assumptions breaking with the traditional precourse assessments. A survey of methods which were introduced in later periods included a process approach to syllabus design in which evaluation of teaching materials by students and teachers became essential to the continuing development of an ESP curriculum. Needs assessments have relied upon teachers and experts in course design however involvement of students becomes increasingly pronounced in learner-centered approach [Johns, 1991].

The debate over needs assessment or how specific LSP purposes are has been a longstanding one. Recently this problem received some critical reasoning as it was argued that the field of

LSP drifted away from specificity, becoming too generalized and vague and that generalized LSP can fail to reveal distinct linguistic and rhetorical features of specialized discourses. Huckin T.N. in his work "Specificity in LSP" [2003] provided arguments for this and other views. While agreeing with some critics of wider approach he pointed out limitations of "narrow-angle" position, which can lead to teacher-centered prescriptivism. Furthermore narrower approach could fail to prepare students for the new situational forms of communications in their professional career. The role of teacher as a facilitator has been enhanced in learner–centered approach, it has been emphasized that facilitation can occur through imaginative course design and curriculum design.

The problem of specific purpose seems to be related to Russian universities, as the LSP needs may seem even more vague than in those countries where English is studied as a second language, where distinction between professional and academic goals were expressed clearly enough: learning language for studying at university or for working.

Foreign language learning at Russian universities tends to be professionally targeted and focused on professional terminology and specialized texts. Study of professional language and professional communication remains one of the main ESP goals. Professional communication is based on the use of specialized genres. The advent of new technologies introduces changes into the existing genres and creates hybrid or new ones, such as blogs, e-zines, web pages etc., the ways of creating genres and their functions are changing, a concept of collaborative authoring has emerged [Rowley- Joliver, Campagna, 2011]. There has been a shift of emphasis in genre theory from text to context which led to the following developments in genre analysis. It is becoming multidisciplinary, integrating professional and disciplinary practices with discursive practices of the professional and disciplinary communities which made genre theory more acceptable in ESP and professional communication practice. As a consequence of genre analysis contextualization, more attention is devoted to the complexities of professional genres and necessity to incorporate a multidimensional and multi-perspective framework for the analysis of academic, professional, institutional and other genres. The further possible development in genre studies has been a shift towards critical genre analysis, in which the objectives for research of opportunities and the impact of new technologies in the professional field have been set out. Bhatia V.K. investigated how language and information technologies can be used to achieve professional goals and argued that these changes should be reflected in the theory of genres [Bhatia, 2004, 2008].

Recent ESP approaches to genre study recognize interactive nature of genres and complexity of their communicative purposes. Genre competence involves knowledge not only of individual genres, but also of how genres interact with one another, thus official written genres could contain elements of spoken language to achieve communicative purpose and vice versa. For example, lawyer's speech in the court often includes citations of legislative acts and regulations.

The issues which cause a lot of discussion in the development of LSP are related to a socio-cultural aspect of communication in the information environment. It was pronounced that LSP should be reconsidered as Communication for Specific Purposes (CSP), which requires investigation of the social aspect of communication and socio-constructivist perspectives of culture [Engberg, Petresen, 2011].

The role of new technologies in LSP has been a topic for consideration at various forums approached from pedagogical and applied linguistics grounds [Arno Macia, 2011]. New technologies have been advocated as tools that facilitates learning process. LSP/ESP similar to other approaches to language learning is integrating a new development such as «Computer-Assisted Language Learning» (CALL) which became popular in the 1960s-70s, when computers were mostly used for drill-exercises and testing. The CALL approach has undergone important transformation since then, and within a socio-cognitive paradigm and further development of new technologies the goals of CALL became broader including computer-mediated communication, collaborative learning, the use of virtual environment, on-line learning, research etc. Alongside with this the notion network-based language teaching came into use, focusing on human-to-human communica-

tion via the Internet. Pedagogical implication of using the new technologies in LSP was to provide variety of the Internet applications, multimedia and hypermedia as tools to create contextualized learning environment relevant to different types of LSP students. These learning instruments are intended to achieving educational goals and developing different types of cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies, to familiarizing students with the electronic literacies they need for their studies and autonomous learning. Much attention is paid to the role of new technologies in ensuring the autonomy of learning in LSP. The principle of autonomous learning ensures greater independence and freedom in the organization of the educational process, nevertheless it has to be task-oriented and regulated by the teacher [Luzon, Gonzales, 2006].

Nowadays when we see close interrelation of academic studies and research, on the one side, and research and professional development on the other, ESP should be targeted at achieving both academic and professional goals. Learning a foreign language should be aimed at the acquisition of both specialized and scientific knowledge, at studying the specifics of professional and scientific communication, since the integration of science and education is one of the strategic directions of modern society development.

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