ESP IN THE CLASSROOM:STUDENT AND TEACHER COMPETENCIES IN MODERN COMPUTER AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

DANICA MILOSEVIC
College of Applied Technical Sciences, Nis, Serbia

Abstract:*This paper is going to present an approach to developing language competencies both in teachers and students on the example of the Technical College of Applied Sciences in Niš, Serbia at the departments of Modern Computer and Communication Technologies with the idea to draw attention to the advantages of this approach which has been tested in practice over the years.*
Keywords: *evaluation, skills, student competencies, teacher competencies*

1. Introduction

With rapid technological development, English for Science and Technology (EST) has become one of the areas in ESP that is constantly undergoing changes in its content, trying to keep up the pace with the trends in modern technology. Students who study at Modern Computer Technologies and Communication Technology Departments at the College of Applied Sciences in Niš, Serbia as members of the large EST family are also affected by the needs of the technological market which has a demand for highly skilled and competent young workers who among other qualifications should have high level of proficiency in English as lingua franca of today. Building student competencies in the second language thus proves to be the key component in EST quality tuition which is to enable students to take chances at the competative professional market. In order to be able to provide good quality tuition, we as EST practitioners at the College know that we must be aware of our competencies as teachers all the time, striving to improve them in order to achieve better perfomances in the calssroom. We are fully aware that teaching ESP requires a determination to get involved in a life-long learning process and start with constant work on developing personal language competencies and the competencies in methodology and techniques of ESP. However, there is a pedagogical opstacle which has paradoxically led to the phenomenon that ESP teachers are expected to design ESP courses and define student competencies although their personal competencies in ESP have not been firmly and clearly established at the level of higher education.

Defining student competencies is not a difficult task if there is a clear vision of the market needs and good collaboration between higher education institutions and the representatives of the market field. What is a more difficult task for us is to have a clear picture on teacher competencies in ESP, bearing in mind that there is not even a specialised training in Serbian higher education system for the practitioners of ESP. Current education and training is available in the fields of linguistics, literature, methodology and translation studies but not in the field of ESP. Usually, the teachers who work in the area of ESP are forced to find out on their own how they should be teaching ESP courses, which gives them a lot of freedom on one hand but also brings many doubts and uncertainties on the other hand. An ESP teacher thus must develop

his/her own set of competencies which is going to be tested in practice and get positively evaluated by students who give significant contribution to the quality assurance policy at the College through their feedbacks. The aim of this paper is to present a set of competencies developed both for teachers and students at the College of Applied Studies in Serbia first and foremost to inform newcomers in ESP on the topic of competencies but also to assist other practitioners who are facing a similar problem in their system of education.

2.Student and Teacher Competencies

2.1. Student Competencies

Although we as ESP teachers at the College insist on integrative methodology model proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1990:140-160) which combines all the four skills in the second language acquisition, we put special stress on communication competencies of students.

Speaking skills of EST students after completing the course should be the following:

-to be able to start and lead converstaion on professional topics

-to participate in debates and discussions on different professional topics providing enough arguments in conversation

-to be capable of giving oral presentations in English on job-related topics

-to be able to defend seminar papers on specialized EST topics

-to be able to use adequate registry, discourse markers and grammar construcions in professional communication

- to know how to describe processes, define terms, explain procedures, and give instructions related to the profession

To achieve this goal, students have a lot of practical activities in class which allow them to practise their conversation in English. Usually, students are given role-plays, for practice, or are expected to participate in discussions on case-studies, simulations and problem-solving tasks. To ensure the quality of their speaking skills, the students are exposed to authentic materials most of the time. All this is part of the strategy of the constructivist learning approach by Oleg Tarnopolsky (Tarnopolsky 2014:14-40) that we have tested in practice and then decided to keep on using in our ESP tuition since the achieved results proved to be extremely satisfactory.

Another aspect to improving conversation in English is the insistence on close observation of peer performance. It can be very useful and instructive for students to listen to their peers when they give their presentations and defend seminar papers. This is a good way for them to learn how to avoid making similar errors and to acquire good language patterns. That is why oral presentations and seminar papers are always given in front of the entire class and not in islolated teacher-student situations.

Writing skills are the second most important skill for EST students at the College.

As far as this skill is concerned, the students should learn how to:

-write a CV in English

-write a project report in English

-prepare seminar papers

- write business letters

-summarize and retell the reading material

-exibit variety of grammatical structures and lexical choices in their writing style

-describe the processes and explain how devices function in the written form

Although translation skills are a separate skill they are also found among writing skills for students since they are being given written texts for translation, from English into Serbian or vice versa.

In order to help students develop their listening skills, authentic materials such as audio-recordings or video clips which deal with Modern Computer and Communication Technologies are used in class.

These teaching aids are applied in the classroom to help students gain good quality listening skills and be able to:

-understand native speakers discussing professional topics

-search for specific information in the listening samples

-take notes on what they hear

-do comprehension exercises related to listening tasks

The last but not the least, the reading skill is developed through constant exposure of students to authentic reading materials to be found in the scientific magazines, textbooks, user manuals, web-sites, etc. These reading skills will eventually enable students to :

-read professional texts

-read info from graphics, diagrams and charts

-do comprehension check exercises after reading

Before their final exam, which consists of the written and the oral part, students have two prelims where they are supposed to present their seminar papers. Usually they are given five different professional topics, one of which is a professional topic of their own choice. First they need to write their seminar papers at home and then they have to defend them orally in front of their peers during their prelims. The work of students is ;however, constantly been monitored. They are given special points for the activity in practical classes, their homework assignements and Power-point presentations. Mock tests are also organised on regular basis to check the students' progress in vocabulary, grammar, spelling and translation. All of the above mentioned teaching activities contribute greatly to the development of students' skills and competencies and expand their knowledge on the target language.

2.2 Teacher Competencies

Since a set of defined competencies for ESP teachers does not exist, we as ESP practitioners have developed our own set of competencies at the level of the College which we use for self-evaluation. With neither a systematic training in ESP during the process of obtaining diploma for English language teachers nor a pre-service training in ESP when becoming a teacher in vocational higher euducation, we felt a need to make a framework of our own in which to operate thus creating a system which can make our tuition purposeful, useful and beneficiary for the students and their target language needs. Due to the fact that ESP teachers are left on their own to design ESP courses, decide upon methods and techniques they will be using, generate and select specialised course materials, competencies of teachers to perform such serious tasks must be on a high level not only in organisation of an ESP course but also later on in conducting it as well. Let alone the high level of the language for specific purposes which is a prerogative for ESP teachers who teach it. Master (1998:27) claimed some twenty years ago that ESP was "concerned with needs analysis and materials development". As the recent research on ESP studies (Stojković 2014) shows, nothing has much changed since Master's statement in 1998. ESP practicioners are still facing the same problems. Thus the analysis of teacher competencies must be done regularly in order to increase self-awareness on skills, knowledge and perfomances to be exibited in the classroom for the sake of assuring a good quality teaching process.

The ones who are competent enough to comment on our teacher competencies are of course our students. They state their personal opinion on their own competencies as well as ours as their teachers in a specially designed evalutaion questionnaire which has been composed at the College.

Owing to the results of this evaluation, we as ESP practitioners can have an insight in students' confidence in their own skills and their personal level of satisfaction with the course but also we can get an idea where we as teachers make mistakes or fail to meet the students' needs and expectations. Thus, the set of teacher competencies that we have generated can be double checked through this evaluation which is administered to the students at the end of their ESP course. We as ESP practitioners are trying to improve ourselves based on the results of evaluation, in belief that we must maintain the high level of the following competencies of ESP teachers:

Speaking competencies:
-to lead and facilitate communication activities
-to use examplary ESP and academic language in the classroom
-to conduct discussions and debates on professional topics
-to conduct mock job interviews
-to teach students how to describe, explain and define certain processes and procedures related to the profession
-to explain technical terms
- to train students to develop professional English presentation skills
Reading competencies:
-to understand professional texts and be able to present them to students
-to identify the main idas in the text on professional topics
-to teach and explain vocabulary items from the texts
-to be able to retell and summarize professional texts
-to be able to recycle and reuse the language from the reading samples
-to read and interpret graphic information
Listening competencies:
- to be able to understand native speakers discussing professional topics
- to recognise the information incorporated in intonation, pitch and accent of native speakers
- to listen for specific details, constructions or ideas
- to take notes on listening samples
- to prepare transcripts of the listening samples
Writing competencies:
-to train students how to write CVs, business letters, project reports, professional Power point presentations, seminar papers
-to teach students the specifics of the writing style commonly used in their profession

3. Conclusion

The competencies for teachers and their students that have been developed at the College of Applied Technical Studies in Niš in the field of EST specialised language can be applied with some minor changes or no changes at all to other areas of ESP teaching as well. For that reason these lists of competencies may serve as check lists for the ESP practitioners in the process of their self-evaluation which can help them to get a more clear picture of the effects and the results

of their tuition. Personal development is a necessity for ESP practitioners and this is one of the ways how to strive for that perfection.

References:
Hutchinson, Tom and Alan Waters. 1990. *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning Centered Approach.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Master, Peter. 1998.*Responses to English for Specific Purposes.* San Jose: San Jose State University.
Stojković, Nadežda, (Ed.). 2014. ''Journal of Teaching English for Scienific and Academic Purposes''. Available: http://espeap.junis.ni.ac.rs /index.php/espeap/issue/archive. Accessed [2014, July 3].
Tarnopolsky, Oleg. 2014. ''Constructivist Blended Learning Approach to Teaching English for Specific Purposes''. Available: http://www.degruyter.com. proxy.kobson.nb.rs:2048/view/books/9788376560014/9788376560014.228/9788376560014.228.xml?format=EBOK. Accessed [2014, July 1].

Note on the author
Danica MILOSEVIC is a teaching assistant at the Technical College in Nis, Serbia. Her main fields of specialization are English Teaching Methodology, Business English and ESP.