ESP AND EMI

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Abstract

Nowadays, English is becoming a medium of teaching other subjects in universities all over the world. It can result in significant difficulties if a student is not prepared for such courses. The strategies for teaching subjects through English Medium Instruction (EMI) had not been analyzed to full extent. The purpose of the present work was to set up the basic principles of successful preparation of students to their further studies in English. An ESP course for Public Administration students aimed at helping students to integrate into the international academic community was designed. The task required target situation and curriculum analyses, detailed description of students’ needs, materials selection and a syllabus design. The methodology applied is based on the student-centered model where language teaching runs parallel to the content and centers its attention on the students. The work resulted in an ESP course for public managers with a special emphasis on administration in public sphere. The article gives and shares practical examples of assignments and demonstrates how the approach increases efficiency in learning English and helps develop and improve the skills which will help students in succeeding in EMI. The experience, however, can be easily extended to students of any specialization.

Keywords: ESP course, EMI, Public Administration, English for public managers.

1 INTRODUCTION

Rapid increase of academic mobility and internationalization creates a bilingual environment, and raises a number of foreign students and global competition among higher education institutions. It all led to the fact that English is becoming a medium of instruction in many universities all over the world. It means that Universities are facing the era of global shift from English being taught as a foreign language along with many other subjects, as one of them, to English becoming a priority language for teaching academic courses [1]. Although the phenomenon is growing rapidly, it has not been studied a lot [2]. It requires a change in creating and developing professional development programmes for university teachers and lecturers as well as English courses aimed at helping students to adapt to the new situation [3]. The purpose of the study is to design a course which can help students to develop their proficiency through EMI learning.

1.1 The EMI Nature

EMI has already been studied by different researchers. The study of the phenomenon conducted in 2013-2014 obtained information on 55 countries. [4] The main findings of the study are that the general trend is towards a rapid expansion of EMI, that the attitude of the local population to the phenomenon is very controversial and that this trend may limit in some sense access to higher education for lower socio-economic groups or the first language or national identity will be undermined. In the present paper, the authors are going to discuss some aspects of the phenomenon. A serious handicap for students, if they have a low level of English is often a case in many non-speaking English countries. In some countries (for example, Turkey) there is an intermediate year of English (between secondary and tertiary education) aimed at preparing students to learn their academic subjects through EMI. The question is how effective this year in preparing students is and how to make English programs effective in enhancing student performance in EMI content learning. Nevertheless, it is one of the possible solutions and measures which can be undertaken. In other countries, there are no preparatory classes for students and this creates significant difficulties for the students with low level of English since they are not able to perceive the information, make notes and/or respond in English even though they reveal strong knowledge of the subject in their native language. Taking such cases into consideration different authors provide the students with intensive support to help them feel comfortable and avoid stress while overcoming difficulties with the foreign language [2].
1.2 Discipline-based English Medium Instruction

Researches proposed different strategies that can be built in the Discipline-based English Medium Instruction. One of these strategies is the blended learning model for English Medium Instruction.

1.2.1 Blended learning model for English Medium Instruction

It is thought that blended learning presupposes students for whom English language competence is problematic for their study. [5] It enables universities to encourage ‘widening participation’ to include students from different ethnic groups and language backgrounds, and those who possess different qualifications prior to higher education. Blended learning particularly suits institutions with a strong commitment to recruiting students from diverse backgrounds [5].

Configurations of blended learning systems will generally combine in various configurations face-to-face teaching and the use of Internet platform/s. Blended learning programs guide learners through the learning process, with teachers acting as mentors [6]. It opens the possibilities to cover learning that is structured and open; formal and real life; institutional and lifelong; and providing institutional knowledge as well as personal development. It can empower learners to “actively define, create and shape their own learning content, tasks and hence their own learning trajectories” [6]. Tutors play a supportive role in guiding the students with new ideas, and a diagnostic role in examining students’ learning directions and outcomes [6]. Features of a blended learning according to assessment model are:

1. Teacher-directed but also Students-centered,
2. A well-integrated face-to-face and online EMI,
3. Interaction could be dual foci, both on the discipline knowledge and EMI knowledge,
4. More opportunities for teacher-student interaction as well as student-student interaction,
5. The full use of information technology in terms of EMI learning,
6. Metacognitive process of the EMI learning and teaching, and
7. Discipline and EMI combined outcomes and assessment.

English Medium Instruction is the model of blended learning. It enables students with low English proficiencies to interact with and be supported by others whose English competency is much higher. As an online resource, blended learning can also reduce the pressure even for the lecturers who themselves may have low English proficiency. There is a model of online and face-to-face learning progress through a five-step teaching and learning cycle. It incorporates engaging students’ previous knowledge, building students’ new knowledge, transforming the new knowledge, presenting the learned knowledge, and assessing the learned knowledge and providing feedback.

1.2.2 Scaffolding for success in EMI classes

To scaffold students’ EMI learning, teachers can modify their English instruction to accommodate students’ unique English expressions influenced by the grammar and discourse of their home language. Tailoring EMI to features of students’ home cultures might make them feel more connected to their classrooms and therefore more highly engaged in classroom learning activities. When EMI is used in teaching students from non-English backgrounds the following points may assist in capturing students’ interest and scaffold their learning in what they are learning:  

1. The language of instruction should suit the students’ language proficiency (e.g., the sentences should be short)
2. Students should be taught to build connections and associations in order to access background knowledge or previously taught information
3. The explanation of the task is necessary to organise in a step-by-step manner
4. Visuals are important to be used: supplement EMI text with the use of outlines, charts, graphs, pictures, and graphic organizers in presentation of information (e.g. maps, graphs, timelines)
5. Students’ attention should be directed to specific texts (e.g. mark essential concepts, vocabulary and texts with a highlighter and/or use word banks) [7].

EMI activities design three types of interactions that can be nurtured to scaffold students’ learning: student-student interaction, student-content interaction and student-community interaction. Students
can be encouraged to interact with their partners in problem-solving or information-gap activities. They can be encouraged to work collaboratively with the teachers and their peers, from both a local community (classmates) and from the global community (international students).

1.3 Designing an ESP course

Taking all the previous studies into account the authors developed a course of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It was based on elements where language teaching runs parallel to content teaching with a specific focus on developing knowledge and skills to use the language so as to achieve higher-order thinking. The model, however, implies that the English course compliments stage-by-stage main higher education curriculum and can be performed by language teachers without their embedding into Public Administration department.

The main objectives of the course development were: to prepare fourth year students (majoring in Public Administration) of National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) for further studies, for internationalization, especially EU integration; to enhance the university profile; to improve overall and specific language competence; to develop multilingual interests and attitudes; to introduce our students to a wider cultural context. The task required target situation and curriculum analyses, detail description of student needs, materials selection and syllabus design and resulted in ESP course with a specific focus on calculus.

2 SUBJECT CONTENT INTEGRATION INTO ENGLISH CLASSROOM

2.1 Content-bound language

The students require knowledge of the content-obligatory language. The term includes the subject specific vocabulary, grammatical structures and functional expressions needed for gaining knowledge of a curricular subject and communicating ideas [1]. Proper defined content-obligatory language helps develop linguistic abilities of the students. To build up a source book for public administrators some written and oral texts drawn from real lectures and seminars on the subject were analysed and the language of interaction in native-language classes was recorded. Developing language through use is challenging: functional and notional levels of difficulty should prevail over the grammatical levels of difficulty. For example, to operate successfully a science student should be able to describe a laboratory experiment or write a report [8]. Learning academic English is always the case in writing extended essays and reports (describing graphs, diagrams and processes). There are also cases when specific grammar is required, therefore, teachers should be ready to change the traditional approach towards the content demands.

2.2 Content-based language activities

The course consists of 12 units; each of the units is either focused on reading or listening texts aimed at the development of all four language skills: reading, speaking, listening and writing. The content of the source book corresponds to general topics of Public Administration course. The reading part is presented by the following topics:

1. Performance Evaluation
2. Administrative Structure in the United States
3. Public Organizations and Public Service
4. Fighting Corruption and Unethical Behaviour
5. Housing and Urban Development

The topics covered in the listening part include:

1. Urban Spatial Structure and Urban Sprawl
2. Freeway Congestion
3. Commercial Property
4. Local Public Goods and Services
5. Finance
All the texts in the source book are authentic and are extracts from the original books on Public Administration.

Such order of the material is familiar to the students and it makes them feel free, comfortable and experience no stress being accustomed to the topics of the core subject.

The Units with focus on reading have the texts with different communicative tasks which are scanning, skimming, reading for detailed comprehension and critical reading. The activities for teaching these tasks are numerous and below some of them are given.

Scanning:
- Short answer questions
- Finding information in paragraphs
- Sentence completion

Skimming:
- Multiple Choice Questions
- Paragraph Headings
- (Yes/No/Not Given)

Reading for detailed comprehension
- True-False Statements
- Sentence completion with a box
- Matching

Critical reading
- Answering questions
- Making up a plan

These reading activities are usually prefaced with some warming-up practice work to find out first of all, how much the learners already know of the subject or topic and what they know about the language of the topic [3]. Secondly, this allows the teacher to organize the further work of the group with the given initial level.

For example, warming up can be in the form of questions on the subject of Performance Evaluation:

1 How much of GDP does government spending consume this year?
2 What is it necessary to take into account when estimating the possible costs and benefits of a measurement scheme?
3 What can real performance improvement turn into taking into account people’ attitude to their work?

Mind maps, asking questions, using visuals which the students are supposed to comment, discuss and explain are effective tools for triggering students’ activity, due to the fact that they major in Public Administration and this is a highly motivational factor. To proliferate teachers’ ideas and help learners remember a new vocabulary learning activities on completion were developed.

For example, the students were asked to fill in the gaps in the exercise on Performance Evaluation, the words were given on the board:

1 Performance measurement and comparison are two ………………….. of the Government’s Best Value programme.
2 When an organization hires special people so that its performance looks better performance presentation turns into a ……………………..
3 People employed to greet patients and ask them some questions were called ……………………………..
To improve students speaking skills the tasks were made very clear and easy to understand, to encourage students to speak and to reward them for their attempts to speak English. The activities on information gaps were widely used to make students perform communicative task in pairs, mini-groups and as a whole class.

As it has been mentioned, the activities of the source book include exercises aimed at developing all four skills. For listening activities, the Economist, BBC and Bized podcasts, and TED.com lectures are actively used. Listening activities of the course also include pre-listening, while listening and post-listening activities. The lectures from Ted.com are videos specially selected to illustrate the topic of listening. This way the students are firstly introduced to the content-based material and vocabulary through watching the film. This pre-listening material was beneficial both for the teacher and the students as it provided an easy way of learning vocabulary. [9] The focus of the pre-listening task example given below is on the linking words:

*Put the sequencing words and phrases in the correct group (some can go into more than one group):*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>during</th>
<th>moving on to</th>
<th>simultaneously</th>
<th>finally</th>
<th>when</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eventually</td>
<td>initially</td>
<td>ultimately</td>
<td>next</td>
<td>prior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>former</td>
<td>meanwhile</td>
<td>the next phase/step</td>
<td>previously</td>
<td>In the end</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

When the task is done and the students listened to the text this exercise can be used for post listening activity,

e.g. *Give summary of the text using the sequences words or phrases.*

This can be done either in speaking or in written form.

Writing activities included a real purpose: summarizing information on the subject using active vocabulary and according to the organisational structure, writing various types of essays on different topics of the discipline, writing an extended essay on the topic of year’s research. This work also gives an idea of different genres [10]. The source book also has some activities on translation since this type of work is considered to be important for the ESP studies. It makes connections between native language environment and knowledge in English. Duff states: “Translation happens everywhere, all the time, why not in the classroom” [11]. Indeed, it can be considered as a kind of a communicative act between languages and cultures. Properly designed translation activities can enhance both productive and receptive skills, develop accuracy, clarity and flexibility [11]. This topic is of great importance and certainly deserves a separate discussion.

### 3 RESULTS

The following experiment was carried out by teachers at the National Research University Higher School of Economics with fourth-year students in the Department of Public Administration. The main idea of the experiment was to develop students’ abilities to perceive major subject authentic material, to use it for reading, speaking and writing. The expected skills of fourth-year students included: specialized knowledge and experience in conveying ideas and information clearly and in a well-organized manner; effective communication skills [12].

Focusing on this primary task, the authors conducted an experiment on helping students to integrate into the international academic community through an ESP course for Public Administration developing, improving, and mastering EMI teaching among the fourth-year students. The 30 students
who took part in the experiment were split into six smaller groups: 15 of them were organised as Group 1; the other 15 comprised Group 2. The instruction in both groups was conducted in English. But while the first group were taught ESP over the previous years, the second group had had only General English during the course of instruction.

To assess students' level of English language competence at the beginning of the course, both groups were given *Objective Placement Test, Variant 3 CUP & FLTRP, 2010* (consisting of 60 multiple-choice questions divided into three sections Language Use (40 items), Reading (10 items), Listening (10 items)) [13].

- the first group of 15 students achieved the following results:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Score (60)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>58-59</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>48-49</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
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</table>

- the second group (whose results were rather close to the first group) achieved the following results:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>49-51</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>47-48</td>
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<td>42</td>
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The pre-test showed that the level of the English language competence was practically equal in both groups.

To accomplish the objective of the study, the authors attempted to verify the role of EMI during the course of instruction in two groups, one of which was introduced to ESP aspect of teaching English and the other took part in the experiment having only General English background. With this task in mind, the authors conducted research with two groups of 30 students. The essence of the study was to evaluate the role of ESP during EMI instruction, which was introduced during the academic course.

Moreover, these methods led to remarkable results in the field of their students' speciality. To evaluate the students' progress in EMI learning (in terms of their major subject) the authors analysed the results of the extended essay. By the extended essay "Project Proposal" is meant, final and the most important type of writing over the 4th year. The research took the students 6 months to analyse, select and verify the literature sources, to write the constituent parts complying with the rules of academic writing.

- the results of the first group were the following:

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• while the results of the second group are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students (15)</th>
<th>Score (10)</th>
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Therefore, the authors were persuaded that EMI instruction had a positive impact on the process of students’ further development in the field of speciality study.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The study showed that English for most people is not just a skill to fulfil different purposes. The most important of that is how successful a professional is at solving his/her professional tasks. Nowadays it is just an instrument, especially if EMI is meant. Therefore, the teacher’s mission is to help their students to acquire the skill, to manage with the instrument as efficient as they can, and here EMI comes to help.

Very often teachers deal with a situation when a cognitive level of science students is far in advance of their linguistic level even in their mother tongue. Besides, even if these students strongly believe that learning English is important for their future, their present priorities and their time are mostly devoted to focusing their intellectual efforts on science, not on language. This situation is challenging for English teachers must develop, create and adapt appropriate learning materials for teaching such students. Thus, the way of teaching ESP courses before learning EMI would reflect real knowledge in their native language would be very much of help: a level of talks, meaningful interaction, and positive attitudes of learners show undeniable advantages of such an approach.

REFERENCES


