

Key Principles And Features Of The National Esp Curriculum: A Move Towards Modern Methodological Picture Of The World

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The purpose of this article is to reveal the factors necessitating the ESP curriculum design for technical & classical universities of Ukraine & principles this curriculum should be based on.

Teaching ESP (English for Specific Purposes) in Ukraine has a long history though a unified approach has not been worked out yet. Moreover, there is neither a general understanding of the needs of ESP students, nor of the scope of language material to be taught or teaching methods & class hours, to say nothing of a unified Ministry approved & mutually implemented ESP curriculum. The latest initiatives of Ministry of Education & Science, IATEFL events, the Conference for teachers of English “English Language Teaching Reform in Ukraine (Ministry of Education & Science & the British Council, Kyiv, 27 April 2002), the Presentation of the results of Baseline Study about ESP teaching, learning at tertiary level in Ukraine (Ministry of Education & Science & the British Council, Kyiv, 30-31 May 2003), demonstrated educators understanding of the urgent need of cardinal decisions in teaching ESP and their readiness to participate in working out a new ESP curriculum.

A working team comprising eleven lecturers from the eight higher educational institutions of Ukraine was formed to develop the Baseline Study & to design the ESP curriculum. As one of its members I'll limit myself to analyses of the principles this curriculum should be based on & its key features.

In the interest of quality and credibility, validity and transparency, the new National Curriculum, should take into account modern tendencies in language learning and teaching and the findings of the Baseline Study. It should thus be based on the following principles:

Internationalism and plurilingualism

The new National Curriculum will be a document with an international orientation, promoting the concept of European citizenship. It will provide students with a solid foundation of learning and open up international professional opportunities to them. A plurilingual approach emphasizes the fact that an individual's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples. The learner builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact [1; 4].

Democracy and equality

If it is agreed that all languages and cultures in the 'House of Europe' (and outside) are equal and that no language or culture will be discriminated against, the new National ESP Curriculum must aim at creating interest in the cultures of European neighbours and developing democratic citizenship and an attitude of openness, tolerance and respect for 'otherness' and difference. As a consequence, in the European context, the new Curriculum will aim not only at developing pragmatic skills, but also comprise the socio-cultural background of the community which learners are to function in. Democratisation of language teaching and learning ensures that all students will have equal opportunity and access to quality education irrespective of their social and educational background. The new Curriculum will

provide Higher Educational Institutions nationwide with a generative framework within which they will be able to organize quality language teaching/learning, which will enable learners to satisfy their communicative needs.

Innovation

The innovative character of the New National ESP Curriculum stems from the pioneering nature of the Common European Framework of Reference from which it derives. The Curriculum is based on the successes of – and takes into account the flaws which have existed in – Ukrainian EFL/ESP teaching and learning practice. It will reflect the latest national and international methodological development, such as learner – and learning-centred approaches, communicative language teaching and learning, task-based and project-based approaches, etc. The new document will make use of modern didactic principles of tertiary language teaching/learning:

- **by developing:**
 - language awareness;
 - intercultural awareness;
 - awareness of language learning;
- **by emphasizing:**
 - comprehension;
 - sociocultural content;
 - the textual nature of communication;
 - methods of teaching and learning that activate learners' interest. [5, 14]

The New Curriculum will be a synergistic document incorporating the best from international and national language teaching and learning theory and practice. The New National ESP Curriculum will lead to.

Transparency and Flexibility

It will be a flexible document incorporating a set of common features, which will necessitate tailoring ESP syllabuses to meet diverse learners' and teachers' needs. It can be applied, with necessary adaptations, to specific situations and needs. It will be capable of further extension and refinement, a continuous evolution in response to the experience of use. It will be a positively formulated, user-friendly document of non-prescriptive character, with a clear description of language proficiency related to professional qualifications to make it recognizable and comprehensible within Ukraine and across Europe.

Plurality

It should take into account the diversity of learners' needs according to age, learning purposes and contexts, and background (i.e. create a solid foundation for developing appropriate distinctive ESP syllabuses for learners of various specialisms), whilst ensuring mutual recognition of all syllabuses and continuity between different educational institutions, sectors, regions and countries. It will value the full range of the learner's language and intercultural competence and experience, regardless of whether these were acquired within or outside formal education. The new document will allow the creation of syllabuses at various levels of complexity. It will offer a framework within which teaching can be diversified with respect to target competence levels, types of competences, types of discourse to be mastered, timing, etc. This plurality of ESP courses, competences and levels is the basis on which plurilingualism can be organized.

Integration

There are two domains in which the New ESP Curriculum will achieve integration: language learning and content:

- the new ESP Curriculum will shift the emphasis from knowledge as isolated constructs to the notion of curriculum content standing in a necessary and natural interrelationship. It will reflect a change in educational philosophy that considers language teaching as a homogeneous, diversified education in language. Language learning is seen as acquisition of knowledge and integrated skills as they interact in real-life situations;
- the new document will aim at developing integrated skills and be designed to cohere as closely as possible with the goals and content of the learners' areas of specialism. Integrated teaching of macro-skills will be valid when seen in their natural context of the respective professional settings. The market demand for such skills is illustrated by the growing trend of using English as a medium of instruction. The new Curriculum document will bring about such integration at the level of objectives and teaching methods, and by coordinating syllabuses.

The new ESP curriculum should:

- **be relevant** to the professional needs of learners and societal expectations, and relevant to the target situations in which ESP students will function as specialists.
- **encourage life-long learning and autonomy.** It is obvious that learning a foreign language, especially in the European context, reaches far beyond compulsory education. Since the active use of procedural knowledge ('learning to learn') is the basis for efficient and autonomous life-long learning of languages after school, the development of procedural knowledge is an essential objective within the framework of a the new approach. The National ESP Curriculum will become a tool for promoting learner autonomy and critical awareness of their learning. By focusing on the generic skills of critical thinking, problem solving, presenting ideas, etc., the New ESP Curriculum will help to assess ESP students' language and intercultural competence, and thereby develop their capacity for independent language learning.
- **follow a modular design.** The ESP Curriculum will be multidimensional (taking account of the different dimensions of the reference framework) and modular in the organization of learning and evolution. This will permit, synchronically (i.e. at a given moment in the learning path) or diachronically (i.e. through differentiated stages along this path), the development and recognition of the components and structure of the Curriculum and subsequent syllabuses, which vary in different Higher Educational Establishments and change over time with varying learners' needs [1, 175]. The Curriculum will be a competence-based document, modular in nature, in order to present the options and forms of differentiation for managing the development of a diversified competence for particular learners. It is aimed at improving learners' proficiency in a restricted area for a particular purpose and providing continuity, variability and individualization of teaching and learning. Each of the characteristics of language teaching may be given

different specifications, which means that an enormous number of practical forms of language teaching may be imagined, capable of developing specific linguistic repertoires and according to learners' specialisms, life plans and needs. The modular approach of the Curriculum helps to introduce key skills and competences into subsequent syllabuses, taking into account the learners' needs, initial and target proficiency levels, and the number of hours allotted for ESP (ELT).

- **the first module** of the New National ESP Curriculum will comprise the Core Syllabus (a compulsory minimum) of EAP with elements of specific specialisms. It will identify common, highly useful language features to be included in all syllabuses, irrespective of learners' specialisms. The Core Curriculum will be based on skills integration and a task-based approach. The Curriculum will become more specific and specialism-focused as graduation approaches, on condition that more hours are allotted.
- **the second module** – the Skills-oriented syllabus – will focus on the development of skills relevant to groups of adjacent specialisms, such as Social Sciences, Applied Sciences, Pure Sciences, Business and Law. This module becomes more specific and comprehensive in skills and competences required in the world of work.

The two modules (EAP and subject-specific ESP) can be run concurrently or consecutively, depending on the various factors that influence the Curriculum and Syllabus designs.

- **the third module** will further deepen the ESP knowledge and skills that have been acquired during the previous two modules. It will be defined by syllabuses generated by the Core and Skills-oriented Modules. The third module of narrow specialism will not differ much from the previous two in skills areas but will focus more on the lexis and specific professional skills of the particular specialism – such as microbiology, power engineering, etc.

Each Module of the National ESP Curriculum will be completely self-contained, with a reasonable overlap between modules, allowing for natural recycling as learners move through the courses. The modules will give greater overall coherence and transparency to the underlying curriculum choices. Multidimensionality and modularity thus appear as key concepts in developing a sound basis for linguistic diversification in the curriculum, course design, materials and assessment.

The principles & key-features focused upon in this article are accordingly to give a hope, that the new ESP Curriculum will satisfy the demands of the day.

Literature

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Анотація

Відчувається нагальна потреба створення типової програми з англійської мови спеціального вжитку. З'ясовуються принципи, які мають бути покладені в основу цієї програми та її основні риси.

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