

CURRICULUM PLANNING AND COURSE CONTENT IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

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The role that foreign languages, especially English, play in the professional development of future specialists is recognized by the education authorities. Courses of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) are introduced in higher education institutions. However, theoretical framework for ESP curriculum planning is still under development. While general language instructors have fairly detailed curricula and national guidelines, ESP teachers need to construct their own goals, objectives, and create learning materials. On the one hand, ESP courses are supposed to meet the needs of the students as future professionals. On the other hand, university students often lack work experience in their field of specialization and language classrooms are very different from real work settings. This research focuses on the content of ESP courses at tertiary level. The objectives of the study are: 1) to establish characteristics of ESP courses; 2) to determine the role of specialized discourse, terminology, and vocabulary; 3) to study the correlation between contents of target (professional) subjects and ESP courses. The study views ESP as a course that includes both specialized and general English content and helps to develop students' skills for research purposes in specific disciplines as well as skills to meet demands in professional settings [Dudley-Evans & St. John 1998]. This approach is goal-directed and aimed at preparing students to function adequately in target (academic or professional) situations. There is an ongoing discussion among researchers concerning the specificity of ESP content. Scholars stress that course materials should reflect students' interest in the target subject and introduce language using authentic material. Content-based approach can help motivate learners because they will clearly see how foreign language can be used in their professional setting and facilitate language instruction since students are already familiar with certain underlying concepts described by foreign language. However, ESP course should not be limited to specialized content or discourse. To avoid the extremes in ESP course planning instructor should focus on three abilities suggested by ESP researchers [Gatehouse 2001]. Among students' abilities are: 1) ability to use special jargon, 2) ability to use general academic or business skills, 3) ability to communicate in other social settings. In this view, ESP course is a way of organizing language instruction, not the end product of language teaching as a sum of specific terms and language patterns. The content of instruction should be determined by the prospective needs of the student, not the narrow limits of a single discipline or profession.