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***ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ВЕБ-САЙТОВ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ОБУЧЕНИЯ
АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ ДЛЯ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНЫХ ЦЕЛЕЙ***

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Аннотация

Знание иностранных языков открывает новые возможности и перспективы карьерного роста и развития для будущих специалистов. В данной статье рассмотрены особенности использования веб-сайтов как эффективного средства обучения английскому языку для профессиональных целей студентов лингвистических специальностей. Описываются критерии отбора и оценки содержания веб-сайтов. Приводятся результаты опытного обучения с использованием веб-сайтов.

Ключевые слова: английский язык для профессиональных целей, междисциплинарный подход, личностно-ориентированный подход, веб-сайт.

***USING WEBSITES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONAL
PURPOSES***

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Abstract

Knowledge of a foreign language opens new prospects for professionals in the modern world. This article looks at the ways of using Websites for teaching English for Professional Purposes (EPP) to non-linguistic students as an effective tool and a mean to increase students' motivation in the learning process. It focuses on some features of EPP, which are decisive for materials selection and adaptation. The analysis of websites is based on developed selection criteria. The chosen websites are assessed by the students of Tomsk polytechnic university. The paper suggests that selected educational websites can be the basis for EPP course development for undergraduate students.

Keywords: English for Professional Purposes, multidisciplinary approach, learner-centered approach, website.

English as the language of modern science and technology makes it essential to seek for a certain proficiency level in English for professional communication. In order to achieve effective communicative skills, Bachelor students at National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University (TPU) take a course of English for Professional Purposes (EPP).

Traditionally, EPP is an example of EOP (English for Occupational Purposes), that is a branch of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and covers situations in which learners are studying English for work related reasons. The line between the field of professional communication and that of technical communication is often blurred. However, professional communication covers a wider variety of skills. The essence of EPP teaching as a process consists in ability to focus students on further language learning, mastering their communicative and professional skills.

A good professional communication is identified by Eisenberg as writing or speaking that is accurate, complete, and understandable to its audience—that tells the truth about the data directly and clearly. Doing this takes research, analysis of the audience, and the mastering of the three interrelated elements of organization, language, and design and illustration [2]. Thus, EPP course focuses on developing

communicative competence in a specific discipline. It can be characterized as purpose-oriented (designed to meet the specific needs of the learner), specific (related in content (themes and topics) to particular disciplines or occupations), related in content (themes and topics) to particular disciplines or occupations and use of authentic work-specific materials.

When designing EPP course, the focus is on students' professional needs, hence, it is reasonable to opt for a learner-centered approach to teaching English as a foreign language. According to Nunan, "a learner-centered" classroom is one in which students were actively involved in their own learning processes. This involvement has two dimensions: first, students take charge of their own learning processes, including making decisions, plans and so forth; the other is to maximise the classroom time for students' interactive activities [7].

Learner-centered education broadly encompasses methods of teaching that shift the focus of instruction from the teacher to the student. In original usage, student-centered learning aims to develop learner autonomy and independence by putting responsibility for the learning path in the hands of students [5].

Teachers who emphasize a multidisciplinary approach usually keep the content of each subject intact, but they unite disciplines by organizing the curriculum around complex concepts, questions, themes, problems, or projects to capitalize on connections [1]. Multidisciplinary teaching increases students learning abilities. It helps them to develop not only problem solving skills and critical thinking, but also it gives teachers an opportunity to approach to the subject from different prospectives. The level of students' active engagement essentially increases, which leads to their motivation increase. Cognitive skills can be developed when using multidisciplinary approach and the students can carry out complex tasks.

The central point of EPP course is that English is not taught as a subject separated from the students' interests, wishes and needs; on the contrary, it is integrated into a subject matter area that is important to the learners. Steinberg states that there are six characteristics of an effective multidisciplinary curriculum:

1. Academic and Technical Rigor. Curriculum units are designed to address key learning standards identified by the district.

2. Authenticity. Units use a real world context (e.g., community and workplace problems) and address issues that matter to the students.

3. Applied Learning. Units engage students in solving problems that call for competencies expected in high-performance work organizations (e.g., teamwork, problem-solving etc.).

4. Active Exploration. Units extend beyond the classroom by connecting to internships, field based investigations, and community explorations.

5. Adult Connections. Units connect students with adult mentors and coaches from the community's industry and postsecondary partners.

6. Assessment Practices. Units involve students in regular performance-based exhibitions and assessments of their work; evaluation criteria reflect personal, school, and real-world standards of performance. [7]

Considering characteristics above, it is reasonable to suggest that the objectives of a multidisciplinary approach are:

1. To increase active learning, thereby engaging more students in the learning process. Students become the center of the learning experience by collaborating in real-life career focused projects and problems that connect to their current interests and future pursuits.

2. To develop students' educational and career planning skills. Integration of students' subject area knowledge and skills coherently within EPP course allows students to distinguish the need to perform well in the educational process.

Undergraduate students are in the process of developing knowledge that will give an opportunity to succeed in their future career. When designing the structure and content of an EPP course, consideration must be given to the goals of engineering education and the demand of society towards the experts of a particular engineering field. Students need to develop professional communication skills. However, the significance of students' needs should not be underestimated.

Thus the aim of an EPP teacher as a qualified language educator is to provide support for the student in the following areas throughout EPP course: needs analysis (the specific needs of learners should be clearly identified), learning objectives (learners should have clear, specific and achievable learning goals/objectives based on their specific needs), resources (learners should be provided with opportunities to teach what they learn to others in order to both deepen their learning experience and demonstrate their proficiency).

The activities within an EPP course are designed to support and relate the needs analysis and performance stages. Moreover, the available self-access materials should serve to enrich the experience of the students and promote the accomplishment of their relative tasks in the frames of ESP course. The types of materials required can be divided into the following categories that support the learning interaction cycle: learning needs and objectives, learning resources, performance.

Learning materials are used to stimulate and sustain educational process. Since the objective of EPP materials is to expose learners to real language as it is used in a range of professional and/or academic settings, they are to be closely related to students' target needs [3].

Websites are now used widely by educators, as a source of information due to the following reasons:

1. easy access E-materials,
2. promotion of autonomy and learner control,
3. motivation factor,
4. fostering communication and collaboration.
5. authenticity.

However, it is very important to realize the role of materials selection when developing the course. Websites are designed for multiple purposes: to learn foreign languages, to inform or instruct, to entertain etc. To apply student-centered approach, address specific needs of students and foster

positive dynamics it seems reasonable to set the following selection criteria of the web-sites for EPP course:

1. Coverage. Contents of information should be relevant to the topic. Furthermore, it is necessary to remember, that information should be new and interesting to students. Compliance to age features of students is also very important.

2. Accuracy. One of the crucial criteria for materials selection is reliable information, which is recently updated and error-free. EPP students not only learn language, but also work with some scientific facts and statistic data. Thus, there should be an editor, who verifies the information.

3. Authority. When selecting proper sites for EPP course, I opt for the materials associated with an educational institution or other reputable organization. The highest priority was given to the sites, which perform contact information for the author.

4. Educational value. This criterion involves representation of different forms of the speech: students should have an opportunity to read (practicing different reading strategies), watch videos or listen to podcasts to practice their comprehension skills and get extra-linguistic information. Ability of material to cause a reciprocal emotional response is also of a great importance, as it helps to increase motivation.

5. Technological effectiveness. In the last place I put the workability of the website. What does it mean? The website is good for downloading, web pages are fast. Web pages work properly in all modern web browsers.

Before choosing the websites it is necessary to indicate language level of students. For the EPP course Common European Framework is used. It divides EFL (English as a foreign language) learners into three broad divisions which are the following: basic Speaker (A1, A2), independent Speaker (B1, B2), proficient Speaker (C1, C2). Considering the fact, that authentic materials can become an extra challenge, it is suggested, that websites mentioned below, can be used for teaching B1-C2 students, which correlates with TPU standards. However, it is essential to remember when selecting resources for the EPP course that authentic materials need not be difficult, and they need not be intended for competent native speakers. They may be simplified or adapted for the uses of EPP students. Besides, it is important to

find activities to use more than one skill: listening, reading, speaking and writing to imitate real life situations. Many websites were analyzed, that can be used by EPP students to learn and improve their English and 5 of them were selected as the basic. All websites were assessed in accord with the abovementioned criteria. The sites are as following:

1. www.thenakedscientists.com (this website provides up-to-date information about breaking news and crucial events in the field of modern science and technology; all the authentic and comprehensive materials of the website are thematically-organized, which makes it easy to find necessary resources),
2. www.nobelprize.org (this is the official website of the Nobel Prize, which provides online information about the names of the year's Nobel Laureates just seconds after the prize announcements are made by the Nobel Prize-Awarding Institutions each October; there are educational resources for EPP teachers to use in the classroom to encourage their students to listen, watch, read, write and interact),
3. www.bbc.co.uk/science (BBC Science involves programs, news, clips and activities from the world of science and technology; it contains the on-demand video and radio services; forums of this website can also become a good opportunity to practice writing, acquire new communication skills and extra-linguistic knowledge),
4. www.popsci.com (this site refers to Popular Science (also known as PopSci) - an American bi-monthly magazine carrying popular science content, which refers to articles for the general reader on science and technology subjects; it has a simple interface and students can find there not only articles to read, but also video clips, there are also blogs of the authors relating to different aspects of modern technology and science),
5. www.howstuffworks.com (this is an American edutainment website aimed at providing its target audience an insight into the way many things work, there are various media including videos, diagrams,

animation, which explain concepts, mechanisms and specific terms, covering a wide range of subjects. HowStuffWorks maintains several audio podcasts, hosted by its staff writers and editors. The website offers to do quizzes devoted to different spheres of science, technology etc.)

A small-scale study of EPP students' opinions on the effectiveness and usefulness of authentic websites was conducted by using a questionnaire. The students of the 3d year of studying were asked to express their opinion after they had four course sessions (2 semesters, 72 academic hours each). A total of 25 students (two groups), 13 male and 12 female, and age ranging from 18 to 21 completed the questionnaire. Related to the students' views on the websites, the questionnaire contained 7 statements based on the materials selection criteria (mentioned above) to which the students responded with Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Uncertain, Agree and Strongly Agree. To assess the results we use five-point (evaluation) scale: 1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Uncertain, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree. The results of the students' responses to the questionnaire are summarized and given in Table 1.

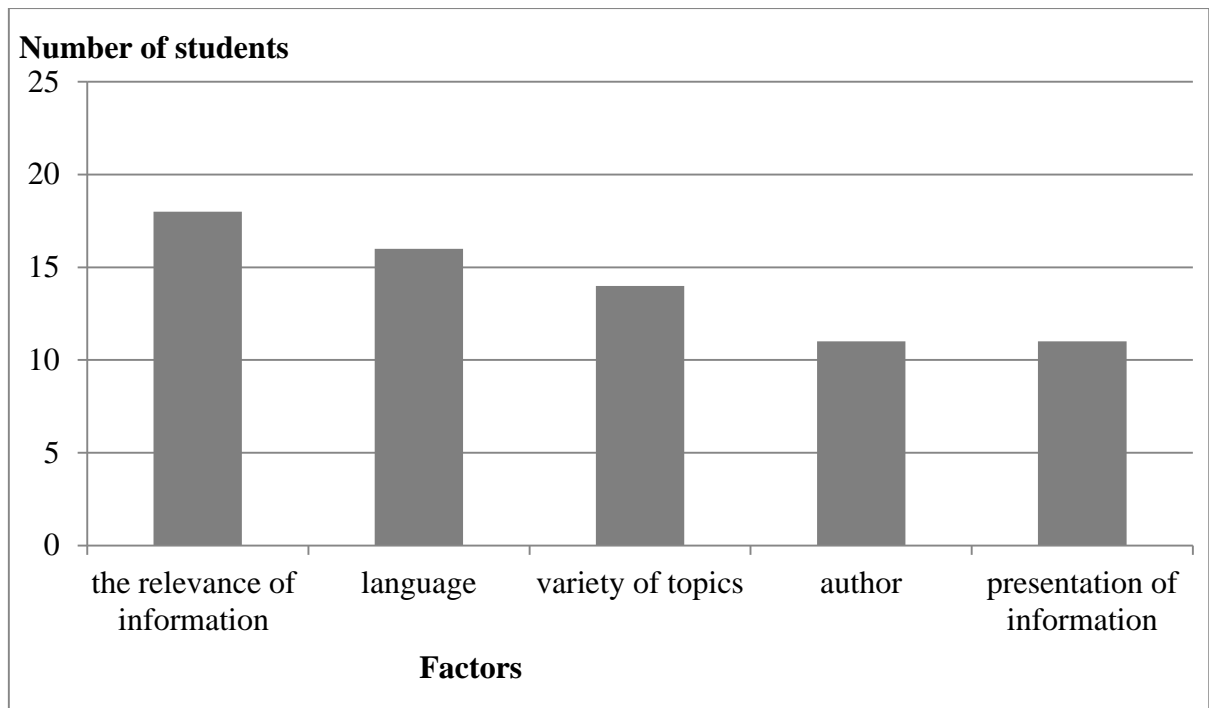
Table 1. The results of the students' responses to the questionnaire.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average Ratings
I find the information useful and relevant to the topic	0	0	1	6	18	4.68
I enjoyed the activities	0	0	0	9	16	4.72
I learned a lot from the course	0	0	3	9	13	4.48
I gained confidence in my ability to use forums and blogs for professional communication.	0	0	3	7	15	4.2
I would like to use web-sites during class time.	0	0	0	9	16	4.64
I would like to use web-sites myself outside class time for learning English.	0	0	1	8	16	4.60

The first statement on the relevance and usefulness of the websites for EPP course shows that all students find using web-sites for EPP course relevant and useful (4.68 out of 5). 16 students strongly agreed and 9 agreed, that learning professional foreign language (English) can be enjoying with websites resources (4.72). 13 students are confident, that they learned a lot and 9 students indicated their agreement, while 2 students were uncertain about that. To the fourth item about the improvement of their confidence in using blogs and forums for professional communication in English, 15 students out of 25 indicated their strong agreement. The item about their intention to use websites resources during class time also had a positive response of the students (4.64). Concerning students' willingness to use websites outside class time only 1 person was uncertain, while 16 of them showed strong agreement and 8 agreed (4.60).

As the EPP course is based on learner-centered approach, it seemed necessary to conduct a survey, which aim was to indicate students' attitudes towards factors of learning materials selection and how these factors influence them (comparing websites and textbooks), considering the fact, that students have been studying at the Tomsk Polytechnic University for 3 years, they have already had an opportunity to use textbooks in their learning English. When students were asked to choose study materials, it was found that the relevance of information is of the utmost importance for the students. 18 students out of 25 answered that the relevance of information is very important for the choice of study materials. Other important factors are the language (16 students) and variety of topics (14 students). The presentation of information and the author matter to some extent to the students (11 students each). Figure 1 below depicts the survey results:

Figure 1. Factors of learning materials selection.



The research results showed that the selected websites can be used in the frames of EPP course successfully, as they correspond to students' needs and interests; they cause emotional response and increase students motivation in learning English.

Teaching EPP should be in correlation with teaching a professional subject. However, they should not be confused. The relevance between professional needs of the students, their interests and language level refers to one of the aims when designing a course.

EPP course to the large extend depends on the integrated Multidisciplinary approach as a mean to maintain a balance between teaching an academic subject and a foreign language. Having set the aims of EPP course, it is reasonable to opt for authentic materials, Websites in particular, as they are easy to access, motivating, facilitating students' self-study, fostering communication and collaboration in a classroom.

The results of the student questionnaire indicate that using websites for the EPP course gives students an opportunity not only to confidence in improve their language skills, but also to gain confidence in using science and technology forums and blogs, that is very important for their professional communication.

The survey, conducted in order to specify the factors, which influence students throughout their learning process, showed, that among these are the relevance of information, language, variety of topics, author and presentation of information. The first three are considered to be the most important. To clarify the students' attitude toward websites as the study material, they were asked to use their previous experience of using textbooks. The most part of the group find information from the chosen websites more relevant, diverse and well-presented. Thus, websites can effectively be used as study materials in the frames of English for Professional Purposes.

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