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DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF ECONOMICS STUDENTS IN ESP CLASSES

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Abstract. This study investigates the effectiveness of ESP instruction in enhancing the professional communicative competence of economics students. The research employed a mixed-method approach involving classroom observations, surveys, and performance assessments. The findings demonstrate that ESP-oriented activities, including case studies, business simulations, presentations, and problem-solving tasks, contribute significantly to the development of students' communicative abilities. The study highlights the importance of integrating authentic professional materials and communicative methodologies into ESP instruction for economics students.

Keywords: professional communicative competence, ESP, economics students, language teaching, communication skills, higher education.

Introduction. Globalization has transformed the requirements imposed on graduates entering the labor market. Modern economists are expected not only to possess professional knowledge but also to communicate effectively in multicultural and multilingual environments. English has become the dominant language of international business, economics, finance, and trade. Consequently, higher education institutions increasingly emphasize the development of professional communicative competence through ESP courses. The growing integration of national economies into the global market has increased the demand for specialists who are capable of communicating effectively in international professional environments. For economics students, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses play a significant role in developing professional communicative competence required for future careers. Professional communicative competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in professional contexts.

It encompasses linguistic knowledge, discourse skills, sociocultural awareness, and strategic communication abilities. According to Hutchinson and Waters, ESP instruction should be based on learners' specific needs and future professional requirements [1]. Similarly, Dudley-Evans and St John emphasize that ESP courses must focus on the language, skills, and genres relevant to particular disciplines [2]. Economics students often face challenges in using English for professional purposes. These challenges include limited vocabulary related to economics, insufficient speaking practice, difficulties in interpreting professional texts, and lack of confidence in professional interactions. Therefore, developing communicative competence within ESP courses remains an important objective of modern language education. The purpose of this study is to examine effective approaches to developing professional communicative competence among economics students through ESP instruction.

Materials and Methods.

Research design. The study employed a mixed-method research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research was conducted during one academic semester at a higher education institution offering economics programs.

Participants. The participants included 72 second-year economics students enrolled in ESP courses. Their English proficiency ranged from B1 to B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Data collection instruments

The following instruments were utilized:

- Student questionnaires;
- Classroom observations;
- Oral presentation assessments;
- Role-play performance evaluations;
- Semi-structured interviews.

The ESP curriculum incorporated communicative activities designed to simulate real-life professional situations:

1. Business negotiations;
2. Economic case studies;
3. Financial report presentations;
4. Market analysis discussions;
5. Problem-solving tasks;
6. Project-based learning activities.

Authentic materials such as economic reports, business articles, financial statements, and professional correspondence were integrated into classroom instruction.

Data analysis. Quantitative data obtained from questionnaires and assessments were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were examined through thematic analysis.

Results. The results revealed a noticeable improvement in students' professional communicative competence following the ESP intervention.

Improvement in Speaking Skills. Assessment results indicated that students became more confident when discussing economic issues in English. The average speaking performance score increased from 68% at the beginning of the semester to 84% by the end.

Development of professional vocabulary. Students demonstrated substantial growth in their command of economics-related terminology. Questionnaire responses showed that 87% of participants believed that ESP activities significantly expanded their professional vocabulary.

Classroom observations revealed improvements in students' ability to:

- Express opinions clearly;
- Participate in discussions;
- Negotiate solutions;
- Deliver professional presentations;
- Respond to questions effectively.

Positive student attitudes. Interview data suggested that students perceived ESP instruction as directly relevant to their future careers. Most participants reported increased motivation to learn English because they recognized its practical value in professional contexts.

Discussion. The findings support previous research emphasizing the effectiveness of ESP instruction in developing professional communicative competence. The improvement observed among economics students can be attributed to the use of authentic materials and task-based communicative activities. The results align with the view that language learning becomes more meaningful when instructional content reflects learners' professional needs [1]. Economics students

were particularly responsive to activities that simulated real business situations. Such tasks provided opportunities to apply both language skills and professional knowledge simultaneously.

Furthermore, the integration of presentations, negotiations, and case studies facilitated the development of discourse competence and strategic competence. These competencies are essential for future economists who may participate in international business communication, financial negotiations, and economic decision-making processes. The study also confirms the importance of learner-centered approaches in ESP education. By focusing on real-world professional communication, instructors can create learning environments that promote active participation and practical language use.

Despite these positive findings, several challenges remain. Some students experienced difficulties with specialized terminology and complex economic texts. Additional support mechanisms, including vocabulary development programs and scaffolded reading activities, may help address these issues.

Conclusion. The present study has demonstrated that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction plays a crucial role in the development of professional communicative competence among economics students. In the context of globalization and increasing international cooperation, economics specialists are expected not only to possess strong professional knowledge but also to communicate effectively in English within academic and professional environments. Therefore, the integration of professionally oriented language instruction into economics education has become an essential component of higher education curricula.

The findings of the study indicate that communicative language teaching methods, authentic professional materials, and task-based learning activities significantly contribute to improving students' language proficiency and professional communication skills. Through participation in discussions, case studies, presentations, simulations, and collaborative projects, students gain practical experience in using English for real-life professional purposes. These activities encourage active learning, critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and confidence in professional communication. Furthermore, the use of authentic materials such as economic reports, business articles, financial documents, and professional correspondence helps students become familiar with the terminology and discourse patterns commonly used in their future careers. Such exposure enables learners to bridge the gap between theoretical language knowledge and practical professional application. As a result, students develop not only linguistic competence but also intercultural awareness and the ability to function effectively in international professional settings.

Despite the positive findings, the study has certain limitations, including its reliance on existing literature and theoretical analysis. Future research may involve empirical investigations with larger samples of economics students to examine the effectiveness of specific ESP teaching techniques and instructional models. Additionally, further studies could explore the long-term impact of ESP instruction on graduates' professional success, workplace communication, and career development. Another promising area for future research is the integration of digital technologies, online learning platforms, artificial intelligence tools, and virtual communication environments in supporting the development of professional communicative competence.

In conclusion, professionally oriented ESP instruction serves as an effective means of preparing economics students for the linguistic and communicative demands of the modern global workforce. By fostering professional communication skills, enhancing language proficiency, and promoting practical application of knowledge, ESP education contributes significantly to students' academic achievement and future professional success.

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