
English for specific purposes (ESP) for low proficiency students

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Résumé

Is it possible to teach English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to low proficiency students? One of the definitions of ESP recommends that it is taught to intermediate and advanced and not to beginner students (Dudley Evans, St. John, 2003). What can be done to reach a compromise between the need for specialization in the language context, following the EU 2020 Smart Specialization Strategy, and students' low proficiency in the target language? The aim of this paper is to try to find answers to these questions and to make recommendations how to synthesize the professional context and the ability to use the language for communication and professional purposes in university settings where there are no language entry requirements.

The Language Center (LC) at the South East European University (SEEU) in Macedonia has a specific role: it has to improve students' language proficiency in the three languages of instruction being Albanian, Macedonian and English. This is a kind of unique situation because students can be enrolled at the University no matter how well they master any of these three languages. There is no exit language test or certification either and this situation creates dilemmas about the language progress they achieve during their studies.

In addition to this, in the three year professional programmes, quite a significant number of European Credit Transfer System points (ECTS) are allocated to the language courses and the Faculties management is constantly fighting against this policy. They claim that they are aware of the benefits of knowing more languages especially in a multicultural and multilingual society such as the Republic of Macedonia, but on the other hand they think that this knowledge should be more professionally focused and should prepare students for their future careers and jobs. So, finding a solution and matching the needs for fluency in the language to be used in the professional context would be beneficial for all involved parties: students, their future employers, language professionals and the University management.

Our purpose is to present an overview of the general setting and conditions in which the LC of the SEEU operates, describe its curricula and the ways of tracking students' progress and based on this information to try to make changes that would satisfy the European trends and recommendations for specialization in all spheres that coincide with the institutional requirements. All this is targeted towards better preparation of students for the international market needs and development of their professional careers.

Key words: language, professional, specialization, proficiency, change

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