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ON ADVANTAGES OF USING DIFFERENT TECHNOLOGIES WHEN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

The role of technology in ESP learning has significantly changed in recent years. Technology has evolved and is found everywhere both in everyday life and in the professional world.

The internet has a particularly strong impact on ESP. As ESP puts emphasis on the needs of learners, and authentic materials and tasks, information technology has become a very suitable tool for ESP [3 ; p. 92]. As Arnó-Macià stresses, online language learning goes beyond language learning by focusing on culture and social discourses and allows ESP learners to collaborate and engage in authentic communication in their professional discourse community, to access up-to-date information relevant to their profession, and to publish their ideas, which can all give them a sense of empowerment as learners [1 ; p. 91].

According to Nergiz Kern, the internet has taken centre role and allows, in an increasingly globalised world, fast and efficient communication and collaboration, information generation, exchange, and management in professional life. The professional world today would not be possible without information technology. He underlines that this fact places a challenge on teachers who need to prepare their ESP students to deal with global communicative practices online, in all their complexity [3 ; p. 92].

A lot of teachers have integrated the word processor, email, simulation software, the internet as a source for authentic material and place for authentic communication, virtual conferencing platforms, mobile technologies. Students may use all these means in their future profession.

Many authors point out that some benefits of technology in language learning are the same for ESP learners as for general English learners. They mention the

following: finding native speakers as learning or communication partners; reading or watching the news in the target language for those who do not have easy access to these locally, etc.

Besides that, technology in the form of videos or on the internet, etc., may be the only means for ESP students to access the specific language they need in order to communicate appropriately [3 ;p. 93].

Butler-Pascoe states that it is the 'hybrid nature of ESP', having to teach both the language and the 'field-specific content' that makes it challenging for teachers, who often do not have the field-specific knowledge to teach. Although it is not usually the case that teachers also have to teach the content, especially when teaching adult professionals, they do need to teach the field-specific language, which they might not always know, and which changes and develops over time [2 ;p. 1].

It is necessary to use authentic tasks, tools, and context when teaching professionals, that is the needs go beyond the language itself.

There are 14 advantages of technology for ESP according to Butler-Pascoe. They are the following. Technology:

1. Provides interaction and communicative activities representative of specific professional or academic environments.
2. Fosters understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of the language as practised in various fields and professions.
3. Provides comprehensible field-specific input and facilitates student production.
4. Provides sheltering strategies for language development and content-specific understanding (modelling, bridging to students' background experiences, contextualising, metacognitive activities, etc.).
5. Uses task-based and inquiry-based strategies reflective of tasks in discipline-specific settings and situations.
6. Uses authentic materials from specific disciplines and occupations.
7. Supplies authentic audiences, including outside experts in specific fields.

8. Supports cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills required in the disciplines.

9. Uses collaborative learning.

10. Facilitates focused practice for the development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills across the curriculum and disciplines.

11. Is student-centred and addresses specific needs of students.

12. Uses multiple modalities to support different learning styles.

13. Meets affective needs of students: motivation, self-esteem, and autonomy.

14. Provides appropriate feedback and assessment of content knowledge and English skills [2 ;p. 2–3].

Quite a lot of different technologies are successfully used in ESP courses. We can name a traditional tape recorder, a CD player, as well as interactive whiteboards, Information and Communication Technology, Web 2.0 tools, mobile technologies, 3D virtual environments, etc.

Therefore, when a teacher decides to use a certain technology, he/she should remember it does not mean it will automatically improve language learning. To get such result it is necessary to consider it properly, as well as to devise appropriate tasks so that it becomes valuable for language learning.

References:

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