TEACHING SPEAKING TO ESP STUDENTS (ECONOMY FACULTY): PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Yakubov Muzaffar Kamildjanovich,
PhD, Assosiate professor, Dean of Philology faculty
Mamun University, Uzbekistan
muzaffarbek.yakubov0055@gmail.com
Masharipova Sadoqat Abdullajonovna,
The English Language teacher,
Mamun University, Uzbekistan
masharipovasadokat347@gmail.com

Abstract. *Current academic paper is aimed to introduce a reader the process of teaching one of productive skills as Speaking. Furthermore, as a reader you will get enough information regarding to the challenges that teachers are highly likely to face during their teaching career. Not only issues are going to be discussed in this paper, but also several effective methods of overcoming those problems will be given further.*

Key words*: ESP, speaking, teaching, students, methods, differences, challenges, struggle, barriers, opportunities.*

Introduction

Teaching speaking to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students is highly relevant for several reasons. ESP focuses on the specific language needs of students based on their professional, academic, or vocational goals. As a result, the need to teach speaking skills in ESP is driven by the practical and communicative demands of various fields such as medicine, business, engineering, law, and others. The importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in today's globalized world cannot be overstated, as it prepares students to meet the linguistic demands of specialized fields such as business, medicine, engineering, and law.[7] While much focus has been placed on reading and writing skills in ESP curricula, speaking skills are equally crucial, particularly in professional settings where communication is one of key factors in future professional promotion. However, teaching speaking to ESP students presents unique challenges due to the specialized nature of their language needs. While the theoretical underpinnings of teaching speaking in ESP are clear, the actual implementation in the classroom is fraught with challenges. [10] These challenges arise due to various factors, including the complexity of professional communication, individual learner needs, and the constraints of educational environments. This research aims to explore the common problems encountered by instructors and ESP students in teaching and learning speaking skills. [8] It also seeks to identify effective

solutions to address these challenges and improve speaking proficiency in ESP contexts.

Literature review

Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (1998).

"Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach" This book is one of the foundational texts in ESP teaching and discusses various aspects of ESP, including challenges related to teaching speaking. [2] It covers the importance of integrating professional communication skills into ESP courses, advocating for a balance between written and spoken language skills. The authors highlight how ESP students often lack opportunities to practice speaking in realistic professional contexts and how this can be addressed through task-based activities. [1]

Robinson, P. (2005).

"ESL/EFL Pedagogy for the 21st Century: Theories and Practices" Robinson's work provides a comprehensive overview of teaching English as a second language, including ESP. It emphasizes the need for teaching speaking within the context of specific professions and fields. [16] The author also discusses the need to incorporate real-world scenarios and professional interactions into the teaching of speaking in ESP contexts to enhance students' communicative competence.

Basturkmen, H. (2010).

"Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes" Basturkmen focuses on the development of ESP courses, including speaking activities, and highlights the necessity of integrating authentic communication practices. This work provides practical insights into designing speaking tasks for ESP students, ensuring that they develop proficiency in both general communication and the technical language required for their respective fields. [9]

Understanding ESP and its Importance in Speaking Skills

1. Definition and Scope of ESP: English for Specific Purposes (ESP) refers to the teaching of English tailored to the needs of students who are learning the language for specific fields, such as business, engineering, health sciences, and law and etc. [12] Unlike general English, ESP focuses on language use in particular contexts, emphasizing vocabulary, conventions, and communication practices relevant to each domain.

2. The Role of Speaking in ESP: In ESP contexts, speaking skills are essential for successful professional communication. In fields such as business negotiations, medical consultations, and legal discussions, the ability to express oneself clearly and confidently is crucial. However, ESP programs often prioritize reading and writing, overlooking the importance of spoken language practice.

Problems in Teaching Speaking to ESP Students

1. Limited Vocabulary and Specialized Terminology: One of the key difficulties for ESP students is the limited vocabulary related to their specific fields. Unlike general English learners, ESP students need to acquire terminology that is both field-specific and context-sensitive, which poses a challenge for speaking fluency. [6]

2. Insufficient Opportunities for Real-World Speaking Practice: Many ESP learners do not have regular opportunities to engage in real-world, context-specific speaking practice. This lack of exposure to authentic communication environments means that students often struggle to apply what they learn in the classroom to professional situations. [15]

3. Cultural Barriers: Cultural differences between the student's background and the target language's culture can present barriers to effective communication. [2] In professional settings, understanding cultural norms and communication styles is vital, but this is often neglected in ESP teaching.

4. Teacher Preparedness and Expertise: Not all ESP teachers have the specialized knowledge or training required to teach speaking skills in specific domains. Effective teaching of speaking skills in ESP requires an understanding of both the language and the specific professional context, which can be a challenge for teachers without a background in the target field. [4]

5. Motivation and Student Attitudes: ESP students may feel that speaking is less important compared to reading or writing in their field. This can lead to a lack of motivation to engage in speaking practice. Additionally, students might feel anxiety about speaking in a foreign language, especially in professional contexts where communication is an essential factor. [6] One of the most common challenges in teaching speaking to ESP students is a lack of motivation. Motivation is a critical factor in language learning, and this is particularly true for ESP learners, who often view language learning through a utilitarian lens (Gardner, 2006). Many ESP students are more focused on mastering the technical aspects of their field rather than engaging in communicative practice. As a result, speaking activities that are perceived as irrelevant to their professional goals may be seen as unnecessary or unimportant (Kuo & Lai, 2016). For example, in a study by Akbari and Khajavi (2015), it was found that students in ESP programs often lacked enthusiasm for speaking activities, especially when these activities did not seem directly connected to the specific language or tasks they would encounter in their field of work. Motivation, therefore, is a key factor influencing the effectiveness of speaking instruction in ESP.

6. Pronunciation and Fluency Issues. Pronunciation and fluency issues are also significant obstacles for ESP students, particularly in fields that rely heavily on technical terminology. Studies indicate that ESP learners often struggle with the correct pronunciation of specialized vocabulary, which can lead to misunderstandings or a lack of confidence when communicating in professional settings (Thornbury, 2005).

Furthermore, fluency in professional communication is sometimes more important than accuracy. For instance, in business settings, fluency in negotiating, presenting, and interacting is often valued over perfect grammar (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). According to Bygate (1987), fluency in speaking involves the ability to convey ideas quickly and clearly, often in fast-paced professional environments. However, ESP students often face the challenge of balancing the demands of fluency with the necessity of using precise and correct terminology in their specialized fields.

7. Mismatch between Classroom Tasks and Real-World Communication

Another challenge in teaching speaking to ESP students is the gap between classroom activities and real-world communication. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP teaching should be grounded in the professional needs of students. However, many ESP programs still rely on generalized speaking activities that do not accurately reflect the specific communicative demands of professional settings.

For example, a business student might practice speaking in general conversational scenarios rather than focusing on activities like negotiations, presenting data, or leading meetings. This mismatch can result in students feeling unprepared to use English effectively in real-life professional situations (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Similarly, an engineering student might practice ordering food in a restaurant instead of explaining complex technical concepts to a non-expert or conducting a project update meeting. The lack of authentic, context-specific tasks can hinder the development of practical speaking skills.

8. Classroom and Contextual Barriers

Classroom size and lack of time are additional barriers that impact speaking practice in ESP. Large classes often make it difficult for students to get sufficient individual speaking practice (Breen & Candlin, 1980). In ESP contexts, where the need for personalized and domain-specific communication practice is essential, the traditional lecture-style classroom is often inadequate. In addition, ESP courses may be limited by the time constraints imposed by standardized curricula, making it challenging to allocate enough time for speaking practice (Richards, 2008). Contextual challenges also arise when students' proficiency levels vary. In a classroom of learners from different professional backgrounds, the language needs and communication skills of each student may differ widely. This diversity can make it challenging to design speaking tasks that are relevant and challenging for all students, further complicating the teaching process (Jordan, 1997).

Solutions for Improving Speaking Skills in ESP Education

Despite the challenges, various strategies have been proposed to improve the teaching of speaking to ESP students. These solutions are grounded in the need to make speaking tasks more relevant, engaging, and contextually appropriate for learners. [11]

1. Task-Based Learning and Role-Playing: Task-based learning (TBL) is an effective method for encouraging ESP students to use their language skills in realistic contexts. By designing tasks that simulate real-world scenarios (e.g., business meetings, medical consultations, etc.), students gain valuable speaking practice while developing field-specific vocabulary and communication strategies. [1]

2. Using Authentic Materials: Incorporating authentic materials, such as videos, podcasts, and case studies, into the curriculum can expose students to real-life language use in their field. This helps students become familiar with the language of their profession and gain insight into cultural and contextual communication nuances. [3]

3. Interactive Activities and Peer Collaboration: Interactive classroom activities, such as group discussions, debates, and collaborative projects, can increase student engagement and provide opportunities for speaking practice. [5] Peer collaboration helps students build confidence and refine their speaking skills in a supportive environment.

4. Focused Pronunciation and Fluency Practice: Pronunciation and fluency are critical components of effective speaking. Teachers should integrate targeted pronunciation exercises that focus on the specific challenges of ESP students. Fluency-building activities such as quick-response exercises, storytelling, and debates can help students become more confident in spontaneous speaking. [13]

5. Integration of Technology: Online platforms, mobile apps, and language learning tools can be used to enhance speaking practice. Virtual discussions, video conferencing, and speech recognition software offer students additional opportunities to practice speaking outside of class. [7]

6. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

As mentioned earlier, TBLT is one of the most widely recommended approaches to teaching speaking in ESP contexts. By focusing on tasks that mimic real-life professional activities, TBLT provides students with the opportunity to practice speaking in a context that reflects the situations they will face in their careers (Ellis, 2003). For instance, students can participate in role-plays that simulate business negotiations, medical consultations, or technical presentations. These tasks not only improve fluency but also encourage the use of domain-specific vocabulary and communication strategies.

7. Use of Authentic Materials

Using authentic materials, such as professional documents, podcasts, videos, and recorded interviews, can expose ESP students to the language used in real-world professional settings. Authentic materials are valuable because they introduce students to the discourse and communicative conventions of their field, which is vital for both comprehension and production (Gilmore, 2007). For example, a medical student might

listen to real-life doctor-patient consultations or watch videos of surgeries to become familiar with medical terminology and the tone of communication in clinical settings. Similarly, business students might watch videos of corporate presentations or read case studies on business negotiations.

8. Pronunciation and Fluency Practice

To address pronunciation and fluency issues, targeted activities that focus on the accurate pronunciation of specialized vocabulary are essential. Research suggests that ESP students benefit from specific pronunciation training that addresses the unique challenges of their field (Derwing & Munro, 2005). For instance, medical students might practice the pronunciation of medical terms, while business students could focus on the intonation patterns used in formal presentations or negotiations. Fluency development can be supported through activities such as timed speaking tasks, where students are encouraged to speak freely on a topic related to their field, helping them to overcome hesitation and improve their ability to convey ideas quickly and coherently.

9. Integration of Technology

Technology has proven to be a valuable tool in enhancing speaking skills. Language learning platforms like **Rosetta Stone**, **HelloTalk**, or **italki** offer ESP students opportunities to engage in speaking practice with native speakers or advanced learners, providing exposure to authentic conversational contexts. Virtual reality (VR) technologies have also been explored as a means to simulate professional communication scenarios, such as business meetings or medical interviews, offering students immersive experiences that improve their confidence and competence (Peterson, 2016).

10. Personalized and Contextualized Learning

Finally, one of the most important solutions is personalizing speaking tasks to the specific needs of students. By conducting a thorough needs analysis, teachers can design activities that are closely aligned with students' professional contexts, ensuring that speaking tasks are both relevant and engaging. Personalizing learning also involves taking into account individual proficiency levels and adjusting the complexity of tasks accordingly (West, 1994).

The most effective methods to teach speaking to ESP students:

Immersion: Create an immersive environment where English is the primary language spoken. Encourage students to participate in conversations, discussions, and activities that require them to speak in English.

Role-play: Use role-playing activities to help students practice speaking in real-life scenarios. This can help students improve their speaking skills by practicing different situations and using appropriate language. [14]

Provide positive reinforcement and encouragement to students as they practice speaking. Encourage them to take risks and make mistakes as they work on improving their speaking skills.

Pronunciation practice: Focus on teaching students correct pronunciation and intonation. Provide opportunities for students to practice speaking exercises that focus on specific pronunciation challenges.

Vocabulary building: Introduce new vocabulary words and encourage students to use them in conversations. Provide opportunities for students to practice incorporating new vocabulary into their spoken language.

Fluency exercises: Include activities that focus on developing fluency, such as timed speaking tasks, debates, and discussions. This can help students speak more confidently and fluently.

Error correction: Provide feedback on students' speaking errors and help them learn from their mistakes. Encourage students to self-correct and practice correctly pronouncing words and phrases.

Group discussions: Encourage group discussions where students can practice speaking and listening to their peers. This can help students build confidence and improve their communication skills. [17]

Listening practice: Incorporate listening activities that require students to respond verbally. This can help students practice speaking in response to different listening prompts.

Real-world tasks: Assign tasks that require students to use English in real-world situations, such as ordering food in a restaurant or making a phone call. This can help students apply their speaking skills in practical contexts.

Conclusion

Teaching speaking to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students is a nuanced and vital area of language education, as it directly impacts the ability of learners to function effectively in their professional or academic environments. The challenges associated with teaching speaking to ESP students are manifold, but by addressing these challenges through targeted pedagogical strategies, educators can help students develop the specific speaking skills they need to succeed in their careers. This conclusion aims to summarize the key insights discussed throughout the research on the theme of teaching speaking to ESP students, emphasizing the importance of contextualized, authentic, and communicative approaches to speaking instruction. Additionally, it offers a reflection on the role of the teacher, the importance of motivation, and the integration of technology in facilitating ESP students' speaking proficiency. Teaching speaking to ESP students is a critical, yet challenging, task. It requires a thoughtful, context-specific approach that integrates real-world tasks, authentic materials, and the latest technological tools. By addressing key challenges

such as motivation, pronunciation, fluency, and the mismatch between classroom tasks and professional needs, educators can design effective speaking instruction that prepares students to communicate confidently and effectively in their professional lives. Through methodologies like Task-Based Language Teaching, the use of authentic materials, focused pronunciation and fluency practice, and personalized learning, ESP students can acquire the speaking skills necessary for success in their chosen fields. The role of the teacher is central in facilitating this process, guiding students through the complexities of professional communication and helping them navigate the challenges of learning English for specific purposes. With the right strategies and tools, teachers can equip ESP students with the speaking competence they need to thrive in their careers and beyond.

References:

1) Brown, J. (2015). Teaching speaking to ESP students: An overview of problems and solutions. English for Specific Purposes Journal, 10(2), 45-62.
2) Brown, H. D. (2007). Principles of language learning and teaching (5th ed.). Pearson Education.
3) Basturkmen, H. (2006). Ideas and options in English for specific purposes. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
4) Bell, J. G., & Gavrila, R. E. (2012). ESP targeted speaking tasks: A developmental approach. English for Specific Purposes, 31(3), 190-202.
5) Brown, H. D. (2007). Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
6) Celce-Murcia, M., & Olshtain, E. (2000). Discourse and context in language teaching: A guide for language teachers. Cambridge University Press.
7) Clark, M., & Turner, S. (2018). Developing speaking proficiency in ESP students: A review of current research and practices. Applied Linguistics Journal, 20(1), 34-49.
8) Chen, Y., & Hu, G. (2007). Effects of task complexity on the fluency and lexical complexity in EFL students' argumentative writing. Applied Linguistics, 28(1), 66-86.
9) Dudley-Evans, T., & St. John, M. J. (1998). Developments in English for specific purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
10) Flowerdew, J. (2004). The ESP classroom: Methodology, materials, and learner needs. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
11) Garcia, F., & Martinez, M. (2019). Addressing speaking skills in ESP classrooms: A case study of a business English course. English for Specific Purposes Research, 5(2), 112-128.
12) Holliday, A. (2005). The struggle to teach English as an international language. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

13) Hyland, K. (2006). English for academic purposes: An advanced resource book. London, UK: Routledge.
14) Larsen-Freeman, D., & Anderson, M. (2011). Techniques and principles in language teaching (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
15) Nunan, D. (2003). Practical English language teaching. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
16) Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (Eds.). (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge University Press.
17) Richards, J. C. (2008). Teaching listening and speaking: From theory to practice. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.