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**USE OF VISUAL AIDS IN TEACHING ENGLISH
FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES**
**ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ НАГЛЯДНЫХ МАТЕРИАЛОВ
ПРИ ОБУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ ДЛЯ
ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНЫХ ЦЕЛЕЙ**

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Abstract. Most people think that speaking English is the most important language skill, but at the same time speaking English is considered to be the most difficult learning skill. The purpose of this article is to study the application of visual materials in English teaching. Using the teaching presentation method, we discussed the feasibility of using visual aids to solve the problems of poor oral English, poor English expression ability, and lack of English thinking ability. The analysis of the research results shows that the application of visual materials in the teaching process not only enriches the teaching techniques, but also provides a new way of thinking for the teaching and experience of the course.

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается эффективность использования визуальных средств при обучении профессионально ориентированному английскому языку. Использование презентаций по основной специальности студентов призвано решить проблему низкого уровня навыков устного общения, умения размышлять и выражать мысли на английском языке. Результаты исследования показывают, что применение наглядных материалов в процессе обучения не только делает разнообразными методы обучения, но и формирует новые подходы к представлению учебного материала.

Today teaching English is becoming more and more concerned with teaching English for special purposes (ESP). The change from general English to English for special purposes brings the advantage that more tangible aims can be defined, and that student motivation can be increased by presenting obviously relevant materials. The teaching methods can now emphasise communicative competence rather than dwell on grammatical competence, since the teacher realises that the ability to construct correct English sentences does not automatically lead to the ability to communicate.

Teaching English for special purposes, however, is not without its problems. While the overall teaching strategies may be similar (i.e. based on an analysis of both appropriate linguistic items and communicative acts), the teacher will face a number of particular problems depending on the area of specialisation. These problems seem to be: (a) deciding on the exact sequencing of linguistic items, and (b) co-ordinating the teaching of linguistic items with communicative acts. In this article we are discussing the preparation and presentation of English teaching materials for students of economics.

Students at universities that train engineering specialists receive on average four hours of English language a week during the first one-two years of undergraduate study. Although they have undergone a secondary-school English programme, their average level at the end of it is rather insufficient, so the task of raising the standard to one at which they can read English authentic literature in the field of their specialisation and understand lectures in English appears to be quite challenging.

Since the major discipline is taught in national language (Russian), the students' knowledge of the subject outstrips their performance in English. The teacher attempts to remedy this imbalance by providing linguistic items and communicative acts of obvious relevance to the specialist subject. In our case, a general English course, to which a layer of specialised lexis may be subsequently added, is not the solution to this task. After their lack of success in school English courses, the students feel disinclined towards taking a similar course at university and thus they will not reach the stage at which a specialised layer may be added. However, they react more positively towards a course obviously geared to their vocational studies. Here the necessary communicative acts include explanation, description, definition, deduction, prediction, generalisation, etc. The linguistic items are presented and graded in a special way, with those causing the most problems in communication receiving priority. The teacher (in co-operation with the subject specialist) should provide material which is relevant and not intellectually insulting.

In general, the aim of the course is to use English to examine and solve problems in engineering, as it stated by the course Programme in the set of competencies. However, Engineering and Technology as an academic subject, starts to be taught only at a post-elementary level. Once again, the English which students have at their disposal initially is out of balance with the relatively complicated ideas which they want and need to express. The linguistic skills demanded by the theoretical characteristics of the major discipline entail the early introduction of certain relatively complex language forms. In engineering cause-and-effect relationships abound, especially in discussion of assumptions, predictions, and outcomes forecasting. Consequently, the conditional is a particularly frequent form. The frequency of the conditionals in texts on engineering suggests that it should be introduced earlier into the English course for engineering students than it would be in a general English course.

Comparatives and superlatives are also very frequently used, for example, in the language of predictions, e.g.: 'Under high temperatures, average number of defects is greater than average output'.

Connectives such as *although, whenever, therefore, however, consequently, as soon as*, are needed for the expression of advanced ideas in any subject. The teacher should bear all the above in mind when selecting and grading material for the lesson.

Apart from their language problems, students may have difficulty in interpreting visual data which are commonly used in English textbooks on Engineering subjects. These materials include statistical tables, diagrams, and graphs. Consequently, the teacher may be called upon to explain not only language phenomena, but the use of these data in relation to the language. What might seem to be a time-consuming process can be turned to an advantage. Visual materials can be used as teaching aids. Not only do the students need practice in 'reading' them, but there are other advantages: (a) The graphs, etc., have an obvious relevance to the language being learnt and to the theoretical characteristics of the main subject; (b) they have obvious relevance to the teaching situation: e.g. video frames showing some mechanical process can be used to illustrate a real situation and elicit meaningful, yet controlled responses; (c) diagrams make an essential summary of product features and are used by engineers to explain theory in a simpler form than language. Verbal reasoning has the advantage of appealing to common sense at every stage, and if the theory is simple, of being the easiest way of making deductions. It has the disadvantage of being long-winded; even in slightly complex theories it becomes cumbersome, and, as theories get more complex, it breaks down completely, in many cases, it is virtually impossible by using verbal methods to say whether or not a given conclusion is implied by the assumption of a theory. Geometrical analysis has the advantage of appeal to the eye. Most people find it easier to comprehend a relation between two things when a "picture" of it is drawn.

Conversely, these diagrammatic summaries can be expanded into language at a level of complexity commensurate with the degree of attainment of L2 ability. They can be used by the teacher as shorthand cues not only to practice structures and sentence connectives, but also to facilitate the introduction of a wide range of specialised lexis in realistic situations. They serve as a real stimulus to communication in themselves and, what is more, can be used to teach the specific language of description, prediction, explanation, and so on.

It is suggested that different graphs should be used to teach different linguistic features, in order not to confuse. For example, a graph which compares the velocity of different gears (and used to teach comparatives) may be of no use when teaching a lot and a little, since the difference in quantities is insufficient to make the point clearly. (Also, of course, a piece of visual material as abstract as a graph tends to have less impact the more often it is used.) Moreover, since the teacher has the job of familiarising the students with these materials used in an English-language context, graphs of varying complexity could be introduced. A lesson introducing conditionals can make use of a relatively simple graph, but a much more complicated graph might be used in conjunction with a later, or revision lesson. This suggests that teachers should be prepared to grade these visual materials as carefully as the language they teach.

Posters can be either specially drawn or chosen from stock, in particular, those which include relevant material. On the other hand, the language-teachers' maps will lose their realistic impact if they contain illustrative material not normally found on stock maps.

These aids can be used beyond their limitations: e.g. to try to teach tenses and other linguistic forms.

We have suggested the use of visual materials in the way outlined above as we have found that it provides a teaching strategy which helps us to overcome the major ESP problem of reconciling linguistic, situational, and communicative demands on grading and presentation. We hope that we have not only succeeded in reiterating the need to beware of, and integrate, the above factors in an ESP course, but that we have shown to some extent how it might be done. Although the discussion has necessarily been limited to the teaching of English to engineering specialists, the teacher of English for some other special purpose may discover that an analysis of the material used (visual or otherwise) in the study of the main discipline may help to arrive at a similar solution.