

Types of Teaching Materials for ESP in the Economic Environment

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Abstract

This paper explores the importance and diversity of teaching materials used in teaching specialist languages to economics students. We look at different types of educational resources, including textbooks, academic articles, case studies, financial reports, multimedia resources and legal documents, and how they contribute to the development of language and professional skills. We highlight the essential role of these materials in facilitating theoretical and applied learning, stimulating critical thinking and preparing students for the challenges of the global business environment. We also discuss the impact of digital and interactive resources in creating a dynamic and engaging learning environment. We conclude that the effective integration of didactic materials into the economics curriculum is crucial for ensuring a relevant and quality education, preparing students for professional success in various economic fields.

Key words: teaching materials, specific purposes, language

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1. Introduction

The omnipresent socio-educational changes on a global level require new approaches in the organization of the educational process, in continuous training, cultivation and optimization of the teaching-learning process of foreign languages - a reality that calls for the integration of information and communication technologies in this activity.

From this perspective, the application of foreign languages, as a result of globalization and the increase in the degree of specialized communication, is of major current importance in order to use and implement specific knowledge in one field of activity or another. The formation of communication skills in English for specific purposes involves not only the knowledge of the specialized language, but also facilitates understanding and intercultural cooperation on a global level. Along with the fluctuations of communication and intense collaboration at the international level, there is a tendency to develop the so-called "language of specialists" (language for specific purposes), which differs from everyday language (common language) and which includes terminology specific to the field of activity.

In the context of the achievements of the educational reforms, there is a tendency to propose new strategies for teaching and learning foreign languages as important criteria in the formation of professional skills for students. Thus, the process of teaching-learning the specialized vocabulary in English for students with communication needs in the field has become a priority in their professional training.

Studying a foreign language of international circulation (English) will indisputably contribute to the professional training of students, favoring, to a large extent, the definition of interests and reasons versus professional options. In the process of teaching-learning the specialized English language, the student is in the center of attention; the in-depth analysis of needs is insisted upon as one of the most important premises in the teaching-learning process of ESP. In our case, the teaching-learning of the English language for economics, has an additional requirement, implying a close cooperation with the specialized disciplines. This process is focused, in particular, on professional communication skills, conditioned by: the constant global development of intercultural communication; trends in the modernization of the university curriculum (teaching / optimization / evaluation of the foreign

language training process); adequate management of teaching-learning methodologies in higher education institutions, etc.

The use of authentic didactic materials in the act of teaching-learning English for economics as a motivational factor from a communicative perspective offers future specialists the opportunity to implement professional knowledge and comply with international requirements and rigors in a later professional plan.

2. Literature review

Practical approaches to the issue of the act of teaching and learning ESP, have been reflected in numerous studies, which have highlighted and argued various methods as relevant. Thus the researcher G. Gradinari (2006, p.29) mentions, describes and argues the application of the case study as an effective method of developing communication skills; A. Afanas 2019, p.1) approaches the reading of texts and their understanding in the context of the formation of communication skills; L. Schiopu (2017, p.57) renders the efficiency of teaching English through personalized learning, etc. The principles of teaching-learning English for specific purposes have been redefined and reworked according to the specific objectives, considered as one of the concerns of the methodologists: T. Hutchinson, A. Waters (1987, p.123), D. Crystal (2003, p.107), D. Nunan (2004, p.133), H. Basturkmen (2010, p.68,69), D. Douglas(2000, 109), J. M. Swales(1990, p.151), P.C. Robinson, (1980, p.144), T. Dudley-Evans and M.J. St. John (1998, p.110) , M. Peacock (1997, p.139), etc.

Materials are the resources used in education (learning and teaching) including commercial materials (global and local coursebooks/textbooks, teachers' books, tests, visual aids), reference materials (dictionaries) as well as DIY (teacher- prepared and learner-generated) materials (Mc Grath 2013, pp.2-5) According to Tomlinson, materials for language learning can serve numerous functions: they can inform learners about the target language, guide them in language practice, provide experiences of the language in real use, encourage active language use, and help learners make discoveries about the language they study. (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 143)

Materials development involves practical tasks such as creating, assessing, modifying and utilizing language materials to aid language learning and development. It is also an academic field that examines the principles and methods of designing, writing, implementing, evaluating and analyzing educational materials. Ideally, practitioners and researchers in materials development collaborate and share insights through conferences, publications and joint projects.

Several approaches, such as the Dogme movement by Thornbury and Meddings (2001), have tried to promote teaching languages without relying on materials. However, it is widely acknowledged that in most language classrooms all around the world, lessons continue to predominantly depend on materials. Richards (2001, p. 251) notes that instructional materials typically form the foundation for much of the language input that learners receive and the language practice that takes place in the classroom.

Regarding material development in ESP courses, Bocanegra- Valle (2010) highlights the significance of materials in ESP for exposing students to the actual language used in specific disciplines. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) succinctly describe these materials as a source of "real language".

Therefore, the development of teaching materials must be at the heart of courses aimed at the education, training and development of new and in-service teachers, and must be undertaken by applied linguists and teacher trainers who direct such courses and by the articles, chapters and books that are to be published for use in these courses.

In addition to its clear practical purpose of preparing teachers for the task of developing classroom materials, it can also be highly beneficial in helping teachers comprehend and apply language learning theories, thereby promoting both personal and professional development. (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 67).

3. Research methodology

A. Key Principles in Designing ESP Materials for Business

ESP teaching materials are more than just teaching tools; they are central to the learning process. In a business context, these materials must provide learners with the language and skills needed to perform specific tasks, such as negotiating contracts, giving presentations, or writing reports. Documents must also reflect actual business language use. This requires a careful balance between language teaching and the incorporation of authentic business content.

According to Pilbean, A.(1987, pp. 120-123), ESP materials should be needs-based, appropriate, valid, flexible, incorporate suitable methodology, of high quality, practical and economical to produce.

Therefore, when developing ESP materials for the business world, several key principles should guide the process:

- a. Needs analysis: Understanding the specific language needs of learners is the first step in developing effective materials. This involves analyzing the learners' business roles, current proficiency levels and the language requirements of their learning objectives. For example, a needs analysis might reveal that learners need to focus on business correspondence or intercultural communication skills.
- b. Authenticity: ESP materials should contain authentic business language and context. This helps learners become familiar with the types of language they will encounter in real business situations. Authentic materials might include actual business documents, meeting notes, or case studies about real companies.
- c. Relevance: The content of learning materials should be directly relevant to the learners' professional context. This relevance increases learner engagement and motivation. For example, materials for finance professionals should include terminology and scenarios related to financial trading, while materials for marketers should focus on language used in advertising and customer engagement.
- d. Integration of skills: ESP materials should integrate the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in a way that reflects their use in the business world. This approach ensures that learners develop a balanced range of skills. For example, a task might be to listen to a business presentation, take notes, discuss the content and write a summary.
- e. Task-Based Learning: ESP materials emphasize task-based learning, allowing learners to apply their language skills to practical, business-related tasks. This includes role-playing, simulations and problem-solving activities that reflect real-life business challenges. Such tasks help learners practice and hone their language skills in situations that mimic professional environments.

B. Challenges in Designing ESP Materials for Business

Developing effective ESP materials for the business world presents several challenges.

- a. Keep up with industry changes: The business world is dynamic, with frequent changes in practices, technology, and language usage. To remain relevant and effective, ESP materials must be regularly updated. This requires ongoing research and adaptation by educators and materials designers.
- b. Balance language and content: Finding the right balance between teaching language skills and providing industry-specific content can be difficult. Materials that are too language-focused may not adequately prepare learners for specialized roles, while materials with too much content may overwhelm learners who have not yet mastered the language.
- c. Cultural Sensitivity: Business practices and communication styles can vary widely from culture to culture. ESP materials need to reflect these differences and enable learners to manage them effectively. This includes understanding cultural nuances in business etiquette, negotiation styles, and communication preferences.

- d. Learner diversity: In each ESP class, learners come from different disciplines and have different levels of experience and language skills. Developing materials that accommodate this diversity while meeting their individual learning needs can be a challenge.

4. Findings. Types of ESP Teaching Materials for Economics Students

Taking into account the basic model proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), effective didactic materials in the acquisition of specialized language in the academic environment should contain four basic elements: input, content, language and task.

By complying with these basic requirements in the teaching of ESP for economics, these materials help to consolidate theoretical knowledge, develop practical skills and prepare students for the challenges of the real business world. Here is an overview of the main types of teaching materials used in teaching economics:

1. Textbooks and Specialty Books

- a. Textbooks

Textbooks are fundamental to any curriculum. They provide a clear and progressive structure of economic knowledge, covering topics such as macroeconomics, microeconomics, finance and accounting. Examples include "Principles of Economics" by N. Gregory Mankiw and "Corporate Finance" by Jonathan Berk and Peter DeMarzo.

- b. Specialty books

These books are written by experts in the field and provide in-depth insights into specific topics such as financial markets, risk management or econometrics. They are essential for advanced understanding of economics issues.

2. Academic Articles and Professional Publications

- a. Academic Journals

Articles from academic journals, such as "The American Economic Review" or "Journal of Financial Economics", provide access to recent research and developments in the economic field. These resources are valuable for deepening knowledge and developing critical reading skills.

- b. Business magazines

Professional publications such as "The Economist", "Harvard Business Review" and "Financial Times" provide up-to-date articles on global economic trends, case studies and market analysis. These are excellent resources for staying up to date with developments in the field.

3. Case studies

- a. Real Case Studies

Case studies allow students to analyze real economic problems encountered by companies or organizations. They help develop analytical and critical skills and provide opportunities to apply theory in practice. Students can analyze the causes and consequences of the 2008 financial crisis, identifying the key factors and discussing the measures taken to recover the economy. This case study develops analytical skills and understanding of global economic mechanisms.

- b. Simulated Case Studies

Case-based simulations give students the opportunity to make decisions in hypothetical scenarios, thereby developing their strategic thinking and decision-making skills. A business negotiation simulation between two companies allows them to practice negotiation and communication skills. This includes preparing negotiation strategies and using specific English terminology.

4. Financial Reports and Accounting Documents

The actual financial statements of companies, such as balance sheets, profit and loss accounts, and cash flows, are essential to a practical understanding of accounting and finance. Students can analyze these documents to learn about a company's financial performance and economic health. They may be involved in writing a financial report for a fictitious company, analyzing financial data and formulating recommendations to improve economic performance. This exercise develops writing and data interpretation skills.

5. Marketing and Advertising Materials

Marketing materials such as brochures, advertisements and marketing campaigns are useful for studying marketing strategies and business communication. Analyzing these materials helps students understand how companies promote their products and services.

6. Multimedia and Digital Resources

Technology plays an essential role in modernizing education and can significantly transform the teaching of English for economics students. The integration of digital resources and technological tools not only improves access to information, but also creates an interactive and attractive learning environment. There are various methods and advantages of using technology in this context.

a. Educational Videos

- Learning Management Systems (LMS)

LMS-type platforms such as Moodle, Blackboard or Canvas allow teachers to create structured online courses, distribute teaching materials, manage assignments and monitor student progress. These platforms also provide discussion forums where students can interact and collaborate.

- Webinars and Online Courses

Webinars and online courses, offered through platforms such as Coursera, edX, or Udemy, allow students to participate in interactive lessons, watch recorded lectures, and access additional resources. These courses can be adapted to include content specific to the economics field.

b. Mobile Applications and Digital Resources

- Foreign Language Learning Apps

Applications such as Duolingo, Babbel or Memrise offer interactive exercises for learning English, including specific economics vocabulary. These apps are affordable and allow for flexible learning anytime, anywhere.

- E-books and Audiobooks

E-books and audiobooks are valuable resources for economics students. These include specialist books, academic articles and business literature, available in digital formats that can be accessed on mobile devices.

c. Communication and Collaboration Tools

- Videoconferencing Platforms

Video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet facilitate online lessons, group meetings and individual discussions. These tools allow for screen sharing, use of interactive whiteboards, and recording of sessions for later review.

- Online Collaboration Tools

Google Workspace (Google Docs, Sheets, Slides) and Microsoft Office 365 (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) allow students to collaborate in real time on projects and documents. These tools facilitate teamwork and the development of business projects in English.

d. Multimedia and Interactive Resources

- Educational Videos

Platforms such as YouTube and TED-Ed offer educational videos on economic topics that can be integrated into lessons to illustrate economic concepts and theories in English. These visual resources help reinforce knowledge and capture students' attention.

- Simulations and Educational Games

Economic simulations and educational games, such as financial market simulators or business management games, give students the opportunity to apply economic knowledge in a virtual environment. These interactive activities develop practical skills and encourage active learning.

e. Digital Evaluation and Feedback

- Online Testing

Online testing platforms allow the creation and administration of tests and quizzes, providing instant feedback. These tests can assess both language skills and students' knowledge of economics.

- Automated Feedback

Automated feedback tools, such as text editors and language analysis applications (Grammarly, Turnitin), provide students with suggestions for improving their writing and avoiding common mistakes. These resources are useful for developing English writing skills.

7. Legal Documents and Contracts

Legal documents such as commercial contracts, confidentiality agreements and compliance documents are crucial to understanding the legal aspects of business. Students can study these documents to learn about the structure and terminology used in business transactions.

5. Conclusions

Teaching materials are essential in teaching specialist languages to economics students, contributing significantly to the development of skills necessary for professional success. These materials, which include textbooks, academic articles, case studies, financial reports, multimedia resources, and legal documents, provide a diverse range of perspectives and information that help students understand and apply economic concepts in a real-world context.

Textbooks and specialist books provide a solid theoretical foundation, covering essential topics and providing relevant examples. Academic articles and business journals keep students abreast of recent research and industry trends, developing their critical reading and analysis skills. Case studies and practical exercises facilitate the application of theory to real situations, stimulating critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Multimedia and digital resources such as educational videos and online platforms make learning more interactive and engaging by providing access to courses and lessons from experts around the world. Authentic documents such as financial reports and legal contracts provide practical insight into how economic concepts are applied in the business environment.

In conclusion, didactic materials are fundamental for a complete and contextualized education in the economic field. They not only facilitate the learning and understanding of specialized language, but also prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of an international career, providing them with the necessary skills to communicate and perform effectively in the global business environment.

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