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Case Study Method Regarding Challenges of LSP – on the Example of the Following Study Fields: Economics, Logistics, Management, Administration and National Security

Introduction

The presented paper concentrates on challenges and difficulties for both teachers and students in terms of language for specific purposes (LSP). Being an LSP lecturer at Jan Amos Komeński University of Applied Sciences in Leszno, the author of the following text describes her observations as well as obstacles regarding LSP at the example of four fields of BA studies: economics, logistics, administration and national security as well as one MA study field – management. The author has been working as LSP teacher for several years. For this reason, she presents the most common problems that tend to occur in terms of the above-mentioned process. Teaching a foreign business language is an extremely demanding task if we assume that it is going to be taught at a very satisfying level which will enable students to communicate without any trouble.

When we take a closer look at the process of foreign language teaching, we notice a huge difference between the so-called general language and language for specific purposes. The first one seems to be much less complicated since it concentrates on a variety of common subjects such as daily routine, hobby, family, friends, sport, work, school, holiday, at the doctor's, food and drinks, etc. The vocabulary of the above-mentioned aspects is usually well-known to students in their mother tongue. Therefore, their learning is strictly focused on memorizing words and phrases of occurrences that are commonly clear and do not need any further explanation. It is worth emphasizing that studying a business language means a totally different task. It requires a lot of understanding of certain processes that are closely associated with some business areas. Consequently, language for specific purposes stand in need for some background knowledge – without this very significant detail the whole learning process could be defined as pointless because it would lack one of the most essential matters – understanding. It would mean mindless mesmerizing of exotic and fully unclear vocabulary. Unquestionably, it is not the point of any LSP teaching. To make

LSP teaching and learning successful, it demands teachers' and students' maximum engagement (Mann/ Kiaer/ Cakir 2022: 85). Literally, many lecturers constantly struggle with the thought how to make their Business English classes more attractive, interesting and comprehensible. On the other hand, it also requires from students a lot of involvement as well as cooperation. It is needless to say that there can occur a plenty of reasons which make it impossible for them to fully focus on LSP learning (and sometimes on learning in general).

The author of the following article aims to conduct analysis in terms of finding an answer to a very significant question: What aspects make LSP teaching and learning challenging? As already mentioned, this paper is going to present author's several years of experience on this field. Furthermore, she will focus on case studies as one of the possible solutions that can enable students a much easier apprehension of the unknown areas of LSP. Additionally, the last part of this paper is going to be strictly connected with presenting an example of a case study created by the author.

LSP as a great challenge for students

It seems to be extremely challenging to find a student who is totally unaware of the importance of LSP learning nowadays. There is a great possibility to cooperate with different international companies that have been present in Poland for many years. From this perspective it should be clear for future employees that getting a university degree is not enough when it comes to finding an attractive position. A very significant aspect with regard to professional life concerns fluent communication in a foreign language within the scope of a certain business area. The insufficient level of language skills as well as lack of knowledge of a foreign culture may lead to plenty of unneeded misunderstandings (Martin/Chaney: 2012: ix, Moore 1998: 1, Sabath 1993: 7). Furthermore, the above-mentioned lacking skills may also lead to a negotiation disaster which is never the goal of any business meetings. Therefore, it would be quite hard to imagine that students of economics, logistics, management, administration or national security are not able to use any foreign language at work. Going back to Jan Amos Komeński University of Applied Science students, they usually learn two foreign languages – English and German.

There are a few aspects that make LSP teaching quite challenging as well as very complicated. First of all, when we take a closer look at the Polish Primary and Secondary School program, there will not be found a lot of business foreign language due to the fact that the majority of hours are dedicated to general foreign language. Pupils learn how to correctly communicate in various situations connected with everyday life. They are able to talk about their holiday or hobby, but it becomes much more troublesome to conduct business negotiations. Sometimes it is even impossible. On the other hand, some of these pupils have a clear vision of their future professional life. They aim to study e.g. economics, logistics, national security

or administration due to a beautiful future vision that has been created in their minds. At a certain point in time, they become first year university students, and the previously wonderful vision becomes an arduous journey in terms of LSP learning. Suddenly, they find themselves in a classroom with a plenty of unknown people, and the lecturer is trying to explain some specific issues connected with their future work. It is considered as a big challenge to comprehend some occurrences as well as to talk about them in English or German. At this moment it is very significant to understand that one needs to learn regularly from day one. The author of this paper gives her students a piece of advice to focus on a foreign business language at least 15 or 20 minutes a day. There is a great importance when it comes to a constant reviewing of the new vocabulary (Dul/ Hak 2008: 3). On the contrary, the author clearly discourages her students from concentrating on LSP only a day before another lecture takes place. There is simply too much of a new content plus its English or German translation. Due to this fact it is not possible to memorize it completely within just one afternoon or evening.

With great pleasure it can be stated that most of the Jan Amos Komeński University of Applied Sciences students tend to get fully involved in LSP learning. They do realize the fact that it is the only way regarding further development of their skills within the scope of two areas: foreign language as well as necessary background knowledge. As their lecturer, this paper's author attempts to encourage as well as motivate them – sometimes by using some famous quotations like the following the one: “All change is hard at first, messy in the middle and gorgeous at the end” (Sharma 2018: 33). However, there are students who really aim to work regularly, but at the same time they have no clue how to organize it. This group usually claims to have huge issues with time management or work organization (Swanborn 2010: 13). In this case the problem usually does not concern only LSP, but other subjects as well. Such students require much more time to adjust themselves to a new reality. Finally, they usually manage to do it. It is clear that being a first-year student is an uneasy task – so many complicated lectures occur one after another. But once again, it is very significant to spend regular time on learning – every day. Unfortunately, among the above-mentioned students' groups there can also be noticed a small percentage of young people who are simply unwilling to work. It is worth emphasizing that the author of this paper perceives two reasons connected with this issue. Firstly, the chosen study field occurs to completely differ from the previous vision created by students. It often leads to a huge disappointment as well as disinclination. Secondly, a further investigation of the occurrence allows to state the following fact – some young people show a tendency of being lazy and therefore reluctant in terms of LSP learning. For a lecturer it might be difficult to observe it, but on the other hand, every human being has his or her free will that needs to be respected. To sum up, LSP learning might be perceived as very challenging for many students. The further section of this article is going to relate to LSP teaching as a demanding issue for plenty of teachers. The final part of this paper is about to offer a solution for both students' as well as teachers' doubts and problems that are deeply interrelated to them.

LSP as a huge challenge to lecturers

Worth mentioning is the fact that not only students suffer from lacking background knowledge in terms of LSP. The described phenomenon turns out to be a very challenging task for foreign language teachers as well. First and foremost, it must be stated that in the Polish academic education system it is practically impossible to find a study field focusing only on LSP for future teachers. Of course, there are various possibilities to study English Philology or Applied Linguistics in Poland. It is widely believed that after graduating from such study field one is an expert within the scope of a certain foreign language. For this reason, such a graduate is taken into consideration by a potential employer (company owner/ CEO/ HR director) as a person that speaks a foreign language fluently as well as has a wide range of knowledge regarding all possible business areas. A very similar situation can be observed when the above-named graduate decides to focus in his/ her professional life on LSP teaching.

At this point it must be explained how an average study field of English Philology or Applied Linguistics looks like. It is assumed that English Philology should not be considered as a way of learning a language. Consequently, a potential candidate's level of English language is supposed to be advanced. Each philology is strictly connected with acquiring knowledge regarding British and/ or American culture, its literature, history, etc. Of course, there are also hours dedicated to descriptive grammar and practical English – exercising such skills as speaking, listening, writing (practical English usually ends up after the second term). On the contrary, Applied Linguistics focuses much more on the so-called practical approach to a foreign language learning. It does not concentrate on British or American culture as much as philology does. Instead of it, linguistics attracts potential candidates with many more hours of practical language as well as offers two options for further professional development – didactics or translation studies. Both English Philology and Applied Linguistics can be undoubtedly described as very attractive study fields. Regrettably, their study program does not include a great number of LSP. Taking into consideration the aforementioned study programs, one can create an impression that they are fulfilled with a huge number of different aspects to learn. As far as I am concerned, preparing students for further professional life as LSP teachers would require a study program dedicated only to this area. Literally, it seems to be a very good idea.

Keeping in view the described situation, the most popular way leading to become an excellent LSP teacher requires a lot of self-study of various aspects connected with explaining background knowledge from different areas. Another option is to take part in an additional language course that focuses only on LSP. Unfortunately, in many cases the main core of such classes concerns only business or technical English. Finding a language course for e.g. future soldiers, nurses, policemen, etc. might be considered as a big challenge.

Bearing in mind the previously mentioned issues in terms of LSP learning, LSP teaching appears to be very demanding as well. A lecturer might perceive a plenty of other challenges including different type of personalities, speaking blockade or students' low self-esteem.

Let us take a closer look at different personality phenomenon. Considering the author's professional experience, almost each students' group can be divided into three parts: self-confident young people, less confident ones and completely introvert ones. Because of the fact that the self-confident students' aim is to be noticed and appreciated by teachers, they tend to speak a lot. The less confident ones are rather reluctant to take part in a conversation – they rarely express their opinion without being asked to do it by their lecturer. On the other hand, the introvert group would usually dream of keeping quiet all the time. Reticent students prefer to stay somewhere in the background – barely noticed and somehow hidden among other people. The author of this paper realizes that among the introvert students exist some personalities with a speaking blockade. It does not mean that they lack knowledge – many times it is quite the opposite. Sadly, it is an act of speaking that scares them the most. When asked a question, they instantaneously keep quiet and avoid eye contact. Finally, some students can be identified as ones with low self-esteem. Is it a challenge to find them in the crowd? Rather not. An experienced lecturer realizes they belong to his/her group at the very beginning. In contradiction to previously mentioned obstacles regarding LSP, students with low self-esteem do not perceive LSP as their main problem. At this point it needs to be stressed that foreign language skills are here not a big issue – the most complicated problem seems to be students themselves. They possess various mental barriers that do not only enable them to open up for LSP but also keep them closed for life itself. They show a great tendency for depression, lack of power, energy, joy or enthusiasm. The constant negative attitude is a factor that makes every kind of learning a huge challenge. Even if encouraged to show a more positive attitude, such people usually prefer to stay surrounded by their negative projections (Wapnick 2014: 9). Even their body language indicates the depressive state they are in (Renard 2004: 86).

Aiming to summarise the brief analysis of different challenges in terms of LSP learning as well as LSP teaching, the author of the article suggests case studies as one of the most successful means regarding reducing the above-mentioned obstacles. Therefore, the next chapter is going to include a case study definition explanation. As already mentioned, an example of a case study regarding LSP will be presented.

Case study regarding LSP learning and LSP teaching

Deepak Chopra (2007: 39) points out that “Everyone has heard the expression *What you sow is what you reap*. If we want to create happiness in our lives, we must learn to sow the seeds of happiness”. The famous quotation does not only concentrate on happiness – it could easily describe every other aspect of our lives. If a person aims to achieve something, he or she puts all his/her energy into it. Wherever we put out attention, that certain aspect of our life grows. For this reason, the author of this article does not stop to motivate and encourage her students in terms of LSP learning. However, considering the previously described challenges, it occurs that LSP

learning and teaching might be perceived as a journey fulfilled with a large number of unpleasant stopovers.

As previously mentioned, the paper's author has had several years of experience when it comes to LSP teaching. It needs to be honestly admitted that at the beginning of this journey she was a bit lost – not knowing exactly how to combine foreign language development with concentrating on some useful background knowledge from many different business areas. A lack of various books on this subject was not an issue – she had access to many of them. At one moment in time she realized that her students had already gathered an impressive knowledge within the scope of many various background aspects and understood them well. Still, from her perspective there was too little time left for conversations. Was the point of analyzing different business matters without having an opportunity to talk them over? Even if occasionally, there was some more time for conversations in a foreign language, it were usually all the time the same students that participated in a conversation (the so called self-confident ones). The less confident or the introvert students would usually keep quiet anyway. For this reason, the paper's author tried many different methods that could be helpful at finding a common ground between acquiring background knowledge, getting to know new vocabulary and speaking. It was a demanding task and there were times when the author felt helpless. At some point in time, she decided to try a case study method that turn out to be a very successful step forward.

Case studies concentrate on foreign business language learning regarding an investigation of a specific business or social issue (Baron/McNeal 2019: 183). In terms of LSP, a case study usually concerns finding proper solutions to variety of disputes or issues within the wide range of different economic aspects (Andrews 2021: 15). A case study description usually describes one problem to be solved by students involved in it (Farquhar 2012:6). They need to conduct a detailed analysis of the matter to be able to find an appropriate solution. Worth mentioning is the fact that they usually work in pairs and each person is given a different role to play. The roles description contains two opposing ideas. Therefore, before playing their part, students must prepare themselves by finding some useful arguments for their side (Tsui 2003: 2). At this point they can use the previously memorized vocabulary as well as the background knowledge. After collecting a few strong arguments, they are ready to start a discussion aiming to negotiate some conditions with each other (Lutzker 2022: 287). While dealing with such study fields as economics, logistics, management, administration and national security, the author of this article needs to adjust different case studies to the groups, e.g. a supply chain case study for logistics students, reporting a crime or an assault for national security students, etc. Taking into consideration case studies dedicated to specific study fields, the existence of the so-called general ones has to be mentioned as well. This group includes such case studies as e.g. job interview, business travel, business lunch, asking for a higher salary, etc. It is relevant to note that the background knowledge given before case study should include international relations analysis that enables students to understand a variety of intercultural differences among nations

(G. Hofstede/G.J. Hofstede/Minkov 2010: 4). Similarly, a knowledge of business etiquette in various countries may as well be important while conducting negotiations regarding an international business area (Bolten 2007: 22, Gibson-Odgers 2008: 147).

A significant aspect is worth noting at this point. As already mentioned, while concentrating on case studies, the author's students work in pairs. It needs to be emphasized that all pairs conduct discussions at the same time. Such a situation creates a great noise in the classroom. Surprisingly, this aspect seems to be very convenient for the students – they enjoy feeling anonymous because only their conversation partner is listening to them and negotiating with them. Step by step, an improvement of their speaking skills can be observed. Even the shyness of the introvert students somehow evaporates. Perceiving such an evolution means a great joy for a lecturer.

Here comes an example of a case study:

- 1) The subject of case study: business negotiations
- 2) The field of studies: economics
- 3) A task for student A:

You have been working as a sales representative for an international company for five years. In your opinion you have a great result and therefore deserve a higher salary and some additional perks such as a new company car and ... (be creative and think of three more perks). You meet with your supervisor to negotiate some better conditions. Do not forget to mention that during the four years of working in the company there was only one pay rise.

- 4) A task for student B:

You are student's A supervisor. You think that student A is a good employee, but not necessarily as good as he/she claims. You are eager to give him/her some higher salary, but not as high as he/she wishes to have. Additionally, you do not think that this employee deserves any great perks.

The above-presented example was created by the author of this article. A lecturer has two options: to create a new case study or to use the ready ones. There are plenty of publications that can be understood as an inspiration to creating one's own case studies. The following books can also be used by students while acquiring essential background knowledge on a specific area:

- 1) Magdalena Filak and Filip Radej "Angielski w tłumaczeniach. Business – praktyczny kurs mówienia językiem biznesu" (English in translations. Business – a practical course in speaking the business language);
- 2) Katarzyna Remlein "Niemiecki w tłumaczeniach. Sytuacje" (German in Translations. Situations);
- 3) Justyna Plizga "Niemiecki w tłumaczeniach. Business – praktyczny kurs mówienia językiem biznesu" (German in Translations. Business – a practical course of speaking a business language).

At this point it is significant to note a teacher's role regarding case studies. When the students concentrate on playing their roles, a lecturer comes from one pair to another. It is a great way to listen to many different discussions as well as help if help is needed (Lutzker 2022: 286). Sometimes students ask for some additional words or phrases that were not included in the previously given vocabulary list. Listening to case studies in pairs enables the lecturer to follow and appreciate speaking skills development. It is also relevant to point out that in this situation the teacher is considered to be in the background. He or she plays the role of a helpful and kind advisor.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to present the most common challenges in terms of LSP learning and LSP teaching regarding the following fields of studies: economics, logistics, management, administration and national security. The author of the article concentrated on three aspects that – according to her experience – occur most often in terms of dealing with LSP as a student as well as a lecturer. The author realizes the fact of existence of other obstacles that are not described in this article. It must be stressed that the point of this paper was to share her observations as well as subjective perspective and – basing on it – give other teachers and students some piece of advice. After focusing on the variety of difficulties connected with LSP learning and teaching, a solution in form of case studies was offered. It is supposed to be perceived as a common ground regarding these three matters: specific background knowledge, vocabulary development and improving conversation skills. According to author's observations, the case study method can be described as a very successful one. Furthermore, such kind of LSP classes is highly recommended to other teachers. The case study method enables to observe a quite fast development of students' skills. It can be considered as a so-called win-win situation: students unfoldment brings joy and appreciation to a teacher. Additionally, while concentrating on case studies, students not only speak a foreign language and focus on some background knowledge but also use their creativity that one day might become necessary while conducting negotiations in a real professional life. Moreover, students learn to make some significant decisions regarding a chosen aspects of a particular study field. Furthermore, a case study method prepares students for a future work in terms of reacting to a strong disagreement from the other party.

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Abstract

Since language for specific purposes addresses immediate and very specific needs of learners, it can be classified as a very challenging aspect of foreign language learning and teaching. It is understood as much more difficult for students as the so-called general language that is strictly connected with communication in terms of a huge variety of everyday life's situations. When it comes to LSP, some more advanced knowledge is required. Without that background knowledge it could become very difficult or even impossible to move forward regarding a certain foreign language learning. The author of the following article is a LSP teacher that conducts lectures for such fields of study as economics, logistics, management, administration and national security. She describes her LSP teaching experience as well as recommends a case study method as a way of dealing with different challenges regarding LSP. The paper also presents some examples of case studies created by the author.

Keywords

case study, LSP teaching, administration, economics, logistics, management, national security