DESIGNING AUTHENTIC TASKS FOR BUSINESS ENGLISH ESP STUDENTS IN UZBEK UNIVERSITIES: A COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH

Karimbayeva Asal Shuxrat qizi

Trainee-teacher of the English Methodology Department
Uzbekistan State World Languages University

Abstract: *The modernization of higher education in Uzbekistan requires closer alignment between university instruction and labor market demands. Within this reform framework, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly Business English, plays a crucial role in preparing students for professional communication in national and international contexts. However, Business English instruction in many Uzbek universities remains predominantly textbook-centered and grammar-focused, limiting students' communicative and professional readiness. This article proposes a theoretically grounded and context-sensitive framework for designing authentic tasks in Business English courses. Drawing on ESP theory, task-based language teaching, communicative language teaching, and competency-based education, the paper outlines key principles for needs analysis, competency identification, scenario-based task design, integration of authentic materials, and performance-based assessment. The study argues that authentic task design enhances communicative competence, learner autonomy, and professional skills while supporting ongoing educational reforms in Uzbekistan.*

Keywords: *ESP, Business English, authentic tasks, task-based language teaching, competency-based education, higher education reform.*

Аннотация: *Модернизация системы высшего образования в Узбекистане требует более тесной взаимосвязи между университетским обучением и потребностями рынка труда. В рамках проводимых реформ английский язык для специальных целей (ESP), в частности деловой английский, играет ключевую роль в подготовке студентов к профессиональной коммуникации как на национальном, так и на международном уровнях. Однако преподавание делового английского во многих вузах Узбекистана по-прежнему носит преимущественно учебно-ориентированный и грамматико-центристский характер, что ограничивает развитие коммуникативной и профессиональной готовности студентов. В данной статье предлагается теоретически обоснованная и контекстуально адаптированная модель разработки аутентичных заданий для курсов делового английского языка. Опираясь на теорию ESP, методику обучения на основе заданий (Task-Based Language Teaching), коммуникативный подход и компетентностно-ориентированное образование, автор выделяет ключевые принципы проведения анализа*

потребностей, определения целевых компетенций, разработки сценарно-ориентированных заданий, интеграции аутентичных материалов и использования оценивания, основанного на результатах деятельности. В статье обосновывается, что внедрение аутентичных заданий способствует развитию коммуникативной компетенции, автономности обучающихся и профессиональных навыков, а также поддерживает проводимые образовательные реформы в Узбекистане.

Ключевые слова: *ESP, деловой английский язык, аутентичные задания, обучение на основе заданий, компетентностное образование, реформа высшего образования.*

Annotatsiya*: O'zbekiston oliy ta'lim tizimini modernizatsiya qilish universitet ta'limi bilan mehnat bozori talablari o'rtasidagi uyg'unlikni yanada mustahkamlashni talab etadi. Amalga oshirilayotgan islohotlar doirasida Maxsus maqsadlar uchun ingliz tili (ESP), xususan, Biznes ingliz tili, talabalarning milliy va xalqaro miqyosda professional muloqotga tayyorlanishida muhim o'rin tutadi. Biroq, O'zbekistonning ko'plab oliy ta'lim muassasalarida Biznes ingliz tilini o'qitish hali ham asosan darslikka tayanilgan va grammatik yo'nalishga asoslangan bo'lib, bu talabalarning kommunikativ hamda kasbiy tayyorgarligini to'liq rivojlantirishga to'sqinlik qilmoqda. Mazkur maqolada Biznes ingliz tili kurslari uchun autentik topshiriqlarni ishlab chiqishning nazariy jihatdan asoslangan va kontekstga moslashtirilgan modeli taklif etiladi. Maqolada ESP nazariyasi, vazifaga asoslangan til o'qitish (Task-Based Language Teaching), kommunikativ yondashuv hamda kompetensiyaga asoslangan ta'lim tamoyillariga tayanib, ehtiyojlar tahlili, maqsadli kompetensiyalarni aniqlash, ssenariy asosidagi topshiriqlarni ishlab chiqish, autentik materiallarni integratsiya qilish va natijaga yo'naltirilgan baholashning asosiy tamoyillari yoritib beriladi. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko'ra, autentik topshiriqlarni joriy etish talabalarning kommunikativ kompetensiyasini, o'quvchi mustaqilligini va kasbiy ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishga xizmat qiladi hamda O'zbekistonda amalga oshirilayotgan ta'lim islohotlarini qo'llab-quvvatlaydi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *ESP, Biznes ingliz tili, autentik topshiriqlar, vazifaga asoslangan til o'qitish, kompetensiyaga asoslangan ta'lim, oliy ta'lim islohoti.*

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has evolved as an approach to language teaching that prioritizes learners' professional and academic needs. Unlike general English instruction, ESP is defined not by specific teaching techniques but by its orientation toward purposeful language use. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) emphasize that ESP begins with the question: "Why does the learner need to learn English?" This principle is particularly relevant in Uzbekistan, where higher education reforms aim to strengthen graduate employability and international competitiveness.

The Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019) outlines the need to modernize curricula, implement competency-based education, and improve foreign language proficiency. The Law on Education (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020) further emphasizes practical orientation and alignment with global standards. These reforms create a favorable environment for rethinking Business English instruction in universities. However, despite policy-level transformations, classroom practices often remain traditional. Many Business English courses continue to rely heavily on textbook exercises, translation activities, and isolated grammar instruction. While such practices may improve linguistic accuracy, they do not adequately prepare students for authentic workplace communication. Robinson (1991) argues that ESP courses should replicate the communicative demands learners will face in real professional contexts. Therefore, incorporating authentic tasks becomes essential.

Authenticity in language teaching extends beyond the use of real materials. Breen (1985) suggests that authenticity also involves learner engagement in meaningful communicative processes. In Business English contexts, authentic tasks simulate real-life situations such as meetings, negotiations, presentations, and written correspondence. These tasks require students to use English as a tool for achieving practical goals rather than merely demonstrating knowledge of language forms.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) provides a strong methodological foundation for authentic task design. Ellis (2003) defines a task as an activity where meaning is primary, learners rely on their own linguistic resources, and a clear outcome is achieved. Willis (1996) proposes a task cycle consisting of pre-task preparation, task performance, and post-task reflection. Long (2015) further emphasizes that pedagogical tasks should derive from real-world target tasks identified through systematic needs analysis.

In the Uzbek context, needs analysis is particularly important. Business English students may pursue careers in banking, entrepreneurship, tourism, marketing, logistics, or international trade. Many will work in joint ventures with foreign companies or participate in international projects. Therefore, identifying realistic communicative situations is essential. Surveys, interviews with students, consultation with business faculty, and collaboration with industry partners can help identify these needs.

Once target situations are identified, the next step is defining competencies. Basturkmen (2010) stresses that ESP course design must integrate linguistic, pragmatic, and professional competencies. For Business English students in Uzbekistan, linguistic competence includes mastery of business terminology, functional grammar structures used in formal communication, and discourse patterns typical of meetings and presentations. Pragmatic competence involves understanding politeness conventions, persuasive language strategies, and intercultural sensitivity.

Professional competencies include teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving, and presentation skills.

Based on these principles, authentic task design can follow a structured model. The first stage involves analyzing target tasks, such as negotiating contracts, delivering project presentations, responding to client complaints, or drafting business proposals. The second stage consists of transforming these target tasks into pedagogical tasks suitable for classroom implementation. For example, students may simulate a negotiation between an Uzbek company and a foreign investor. In this scenario, each group prepares arguments, financial data, and persuasive strategies before engaging in structured negotiation.

Another example includes a startup pitch task. Students design a business idea relevant to Uzbekistan's economic sectors, such as tourism development, IT services, or agricultural export. They prepare a written business plan summary and deliver a formal presentation to the class acting as potential investors. This task integrates speaking, writing, reading, and critical thinking skills while reflecting realistic professional practice.

The integration of authentic or semi-authentic materials strengthens task relevance. Hyland (2006) emphasizes the importance of exposing learners to real disciplinary discourse to help them understand how language functions within professional communities. In Business English classes, materials may include company websites, marketing brochures, business reports, or news articles related to Uzbekistan's economic development. Teachers may adapt these materials to match students' proficiency levels while maintaining authenticity of purpose.

Assessment practices should also align with authentic task design. Traditional grammar-based testing does not adequately measure communicative competence. Performance-based assessment is more appropriate in ESP contexts. Rubrics may include criteria such as clarity of message, coherence, professional vocabulary usage, interaction management, persuasion strategies, and task completion. Self-assessment and peer feedback can further enhance learner autonomy and reflective practice.

While authentic task implementation offers numerous benefits, certain challenges must be acknowledged. Large class sizes may limit opportunities for individual feedback. Students with lower proficiency levels may struggle to participate actively in complex tasks. Teachers may require professional development to design and manage task-based instruction effectively. As Jalolov (2012) notes, successful adaptation of innovative methodologies requires consideration of local educational realities.

Despite these challenges, the systematic integration of authentic tasks aligns strongly with national educational reforms and international ESP scholarship. By grounding Business English instruction in real professional contexts, Uzbek universities can better prepare students for participation in global economic processes.

In conclusion, designing authentic tasks for Business English ESP students in Uzbek universities represents a pedagogically sound and reform-oriented approach. Drawing on ESP theory (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), task-based language teaching (Ellis, 2003; Willis, 1996; Long, 2015), and course design principles (Basturkmen, 2010), this framework supports the development of communicative competence and professional readiness. Authentic task integration bridges the gap between classroom learning and workplace communication, contributing to the overall quality and relevance of higher education in Uzbekistan.

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