



TESTING OF ESP STUDENT'S VOCABULARY

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Abstract

The respondents were three streams of day-time students who study ESP at the Faculty of Social Policy. There were 96 participants altogether. The subjects were predominantly females and at intermediate level. The first sample refers to the year 2005 (34 students), the second one – to 2004 (26 students), and the third one – to 2006 (36 students). The size of respondent classes in each stream varied from 10 to 18 students in a class. Students were aged between 19 and 25 years old. The amount of time spent in L2 environment was 4 hours a week for 3 semesters, which amounted to 192 hours of instruction. Research employed a questionnaire on students' assessment of usefulness of various activities in ESP classes and written learners' reflections on their performance in various activities. Some excerpts from students' reflections are reproduced in this paper below. The main content areas of a designed and previously piloted questionnaire cover the key activities in ESP classes and contain 6 items. The questionnaire was piloted at various stages of its development on a sample of learners who were similar to the target sample, i.e. students of the same faculty. The questionnaire was administered to three streams of respondents (9 students' groups altogether) of the Faculty of Social Policy. Two streams submitted anonymous replies and one signed ones. It was of interest to find out if anonymity had any influence on a level of significance that was computed for each activity. After the administration of the questionnaire, item analysis was conducted. Fortunately there were no left out questions which simplified the analysis. According to Read, J., this can serve as an indication that there was nothing wrong with the design of the questionnaire.

Introduction

The length of time to complete a questionnaire did not exceed 15 minutes. Questionnaire return rate was very good – all sheets were returned.

Learners' responses to a questionnaire on utility of various activities used in the ESP classroom. throughout the academic year are presented in Charts 1 to 6. All charts display percentage of learners versus their expressed attitude to usefulness of each activity item in the survey. In the presented charts, for the sake of clarity, positive responses 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were added up, and negative responses 'strongly





disagree' and 'disagree' were added up, too. This procedure does not distort the data. On the contrary, it allows to draw clear visual charts. Double bars in each chart refer to different streams. The first bars display the data obtained for the first stream of the investigated sample (34 learners), signed questionnaires, and the second bars – the data for the second stream (26 learners), anonymous replies. For each question students were expected to rate the statements according to the scale by circling or writing the appropriate number: 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – not sure, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree. In the questions below only numbers are written in brackets. Writing definitions of ESP vocabulary terms is beneficial for my linguistic development. 70% of students feel that vocabulary definitions are useful to learning. This result is close to obtained for the second stream (73%). There were very few negative responses (6% and 8%, respectively). About quarter of respondents are not sure about usefulness of this learning area (24% and 19%, respectively).

Usefulness of Power Point Presentations

Power Point Presentations seem to be the most difficult tasks for majority of students. Slightly fewer than half of respondents (47%) feel presentations are useful (against 38%). About quarter are either unsure or do not support the idea of making presentations. The reason will be evident from students' reflections on various activities that are described below.

Formal testing of ESP vocabulary is beneficial to learning

Surprisingly, the majority of learners are positive about formal testing – 79% in the first stream and 77% in the second stream support it. About the fifth of respondents are not sure (21% and 15%, respectively). In the second stream, 8% disagree, but there are no opponents in the first sample. Respondents claim that formal testing mobilizes and stimulates learning and consolidation, while experienced teachers consider testing as an evil burden.

The results that are shown in the process were processed statistically in order to determine how significant the obtained data are. Internal consistency reliability was met by satisfying two conditions: multi-item scales were used, and items measured the same target area. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated by computing Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Usually Cronbach Alpha coefficient is ranged between zero and +1. For well-developed scales containing a few items it ought to approach 0.80. In our study, it was 0.83, which ensures internal consistency reliability. Formal experiments are analyzed using inferential statistics in order to be able to make inferences on research data. For this purpose, we computed the Means and Standard.





As I above mentioned, learners' reflections on the usefulness of various activities in English classes offer significant insights into learning outcomes. Anonymity of responses does not play a significant role: for one stream anonymous replies on usefulness are less favorable, and for another stream – more favorable than for signed responses. Given the disparity of usefulness scores, it is apparent that only statistical processing provides further clarification. Another noteworthy finding is that learners' reflections on vocabulary assessment and usefulness of class activities are greatly affected by their performance in a particular activity.

At first, it might seem that students already know how to express themselves using their facial expressions and body language, and that it is therefore not necessary to teach this. However, it may be useful to help students to build vocabulary in the following areas:

- facial expression
- other body language
- emotions
- attitudes

The activities here enable students to become more precise in their written and spoken descriptions of people, as well as aiding their comprehension of descriptive texts (when students are reading or listening). This will apply directly to the dramatic scripts that they read and write for this module.

Learning Activity 1

Acting Game for vocabulary 45 minutes

Photocopy, cut up and distribute sets of the “Word Cards” on different emotions and attitudes for your class.

The aim of this activity is to revise vocabulary, so it may be necessary for students to clarify meaning before starting to play.

The activity can be carried out in various ways. For example:

- 1) Students can be divided into groups of three. One student acts out the words, and the other two compete to name each emotion or attitude first.
- 2) In pairs or small groups, students compete against a timer to see how many emotions or attitudes they can act out in a given time period.
- 3) A class display could be made using students' photographs or video clips in which they demonstrate emotions or attitudes by using facial expressions and body language.





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