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THE TEACHING OF ESP COURSES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA

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Abstract

A number of academic units at the University of Prishtina offer English for specific purposes in order to address the needs of students to communicate effectively in their chosen field of study. Recent developments and the changing landscape of teaching and learning English for Specific Purposes around the world lead to the decision to dedicate this Master thesis to the analysis of a complex of factors that affect or hinder the effectiveness of the process of teaching and learning ESP courses at the University of Prishtina. The data has been collected by conducting a survey in seven academic units of the University of Prishtina including both teaching staff and student population. Research findings have confirmed our research hypothesis displaying expected pattern of obstacles faced by the teaching staff and students in the process of teaching and learning ESP courses. Status of the course, large number of students in groups, lack of equipped laboratories and lack of staff present a hindrance in achieving the objectives of ESP courses at the University of Prishtina.

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that learning/teaching general English has a great difference from the process of learning/teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as it requires different vocabulary based on the study field that students are focused on. Hence, this work is dedicated to researching the process of teaching and learning English language within the University of Prishtina.

The University of Prishtina consists of seventeen academic units, all of a different study field. However, the research is conducted only in a number of the academic units, more precisely in seven of them, which need to teach their students focusing on particular field and specific register, since each study field requires a specific vocabulary that differs from that of everyday English. For instance the vocabulary of justice is completely

different from that of the philology or medicine, as is the vocabulary of engineering different from that of arts.

1.2. Research Methodology

1.2.1 Aims and objectives

The main aim of the research is to assess and evaluate the process of teaching and learning ESP courses at the University of Prishtina. The research will comprise the analysis of interrelated factors including the content of the courses, their objectives, learning outcomes and the literature

Used for this purpose, from the perspective of teaching staff and students.

The ultimate aim of this master thesis is to identify obstacles and problems that hinder the teaching and learning ESP courses and to provide recommendations for enhancement of the process leading to efficient learning.

After thorough analysis of the data collected for the research, we will be able to present a clear picture of the courses taught at the University of Prishtina, as well as the scale of efficiency of the teaching process.

2.1 English for Specific Purposes and General English

English for specific purposes (ESP) is a needs based concept to determine which language skills should be profitably developed for professional success of students. (Singh: 2005).

Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) or general English indicates the use of English in a non - English speaking region. Nowadays it is widely accepted that learning to speak English in general may be the best thing one can do to improve everyday life. How can one have access to information that other people can not get, how to travel without being accompanied by a translator, and the most important of all, how to leave the others miles behind us? The answer is; simply by learning general English. But it is even more important for the learners of English to be able to learn English for all sorts of transactions, as the learners of ESP already have the basics of the English language and are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular job related functions. (Singh: 2005).

When teaching ESP there are certain basic questions to be taken into account such as: who the learners are, what their view towards language learning is, what particular skill will they be needing in their account, on the

job situation, what their linguistic background or level of competence is, what their purpose and expectations are, and similar .

Rosenberg has analyzed the differences between English for specific purposes and general English. Here are some of them.

Business English	General English
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specialized vocabulary• Motivation related to job deviation from plan• Teach negotiation and presentation• Techniques• Students very goal-oriented• More serious atmosphere• Business correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Free time activityMore freedom inMore time for gamesLiteratureSongsMore relaxedGeneral writing skills

According to Rosenberg, when the two lists are analyzed it may be concluded that general English and English for Specific Purposes have in common the following:

Grammar and functions - grammar rules are the same everywhere; general vocabulary, and anxiety about capabilities, everyday English, small talk, travel vocabulary, survival English, and current events.

Although the vast majority of teachers are trained first as general English teachers, they feel that they need to teach these specialized fields in a totally different way. Communicative teaching has become an important part of our classrooms in general English courses, but activities which are lively and fun are not always transferred into the more 'serious' world of Business English.

On the other hand, many ideas which are taken directly from the business world and are successfully used to teach business students could be also transferred to the general English classroom, giving our learners a new perspective on the communication skills involved in becoming proficient in a language.

ESP is designed to meet the specific needs of the learners, ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the specialism it serves, therefore it is centered not only on the language (grammar, lexis, register), but also the skills, discourses and genres appropriate to those activities. Nowadays ESP practitioners are also becoming increasingly involved in intercultural communication and the development of intercultural competence (Gatehouse). Consequently the key questions are:

- What do students need to do with English?

- Which of the skills do they need to master and how well?
- Which genres do they need to master either for comprehension or production purposes?

Kiktauskiene (2006) states that teaching language for specific purposes is determined by different professional/occupational, social and other – needs of the learner. Therefore, English for specific purposes (ESP) includes specialized programmes which are designed to develop the communicative use of English in a specialized field of science, work or technology. To be able to speak on a professional subject is not enough to know general vocabulary.

3. ESP Courses at the University of Prishtina

3.1 Analysis of the syllabi

Analyzing the syllabi of the courses offered at the academic units included in the research, several discrepancies are observed:

Not all the academic units have the same workload nor the same number of ECTS credits as the number of ECTS credits depends on the number of classes held per week. Based on the regulation for academic development one ECTS credit requires 25 -30 course classes depending on the students' commitment. In the Faculty of Agriculture, for instance, English for specific purposes is an obligatory course, taught six classes per week in the first and second year of studies in both semesters, and has 3 ECTS credits. But in the Faculty of Economics, even though it is an obligatory course, it is taught only one semester and bears 6 ECTS credits. On the other hand, in the Faculty of Arts the English language course is an elective course, taught only one semester per year and has 7 ECTS credits and only two weekly classes. In the Faculty of Applied Sciences in Business the English course is an elective course in both first and second year of studies taught only one semester per year, five classes a week and has 6 ECTS credits. This shows that there is great diversity in the treatment of the same course and needs an immediate action in regulating the status and the importance of the English language courses at the University of Prishtina. (See syllabi in the appendix nr.1)

Based on the syllabi collected and analyzed, the aim of the English courses in each academic unit is to provide opportunities for students to gain knowledge and skills in order to understand, explain, and communicate in their study field, be able to translate from English into Albanian or Albanian into English, write reports and of course write business letters and have discussions in English. As it can be seen every academic unit uses the adequate literature necessary for the particular study field as well as

additional literature and exercises taken from different web pages in order to familiarize students as much as possible with professional vocabulary. In the faculty of Economic for instance, the literature used is **English for Business Studies** by Ian Mac Kenzie; Cambridge University Press, (2007), and **Exercises in Business Correspondence** by Ljerka Sedlan, Konig (2007). Judged by the course syllabi, by the end of these courses students of each academic unit will be able to deal with business, art, juridical and all other particular situations related to their study field and use specific vocabulary, write letters, compile essays on various professional subjects, carry on discussions and similar.

Teaching methodology in all researched academic units involves using the best possible methods such as: pre-teaching of the vocabulary, discussion of the meaning of the new words, listening focused tasks, grammar exercises, etc. all these conducted in small groups or individual discussions, seminars etc.

3.2. Comparative analysis

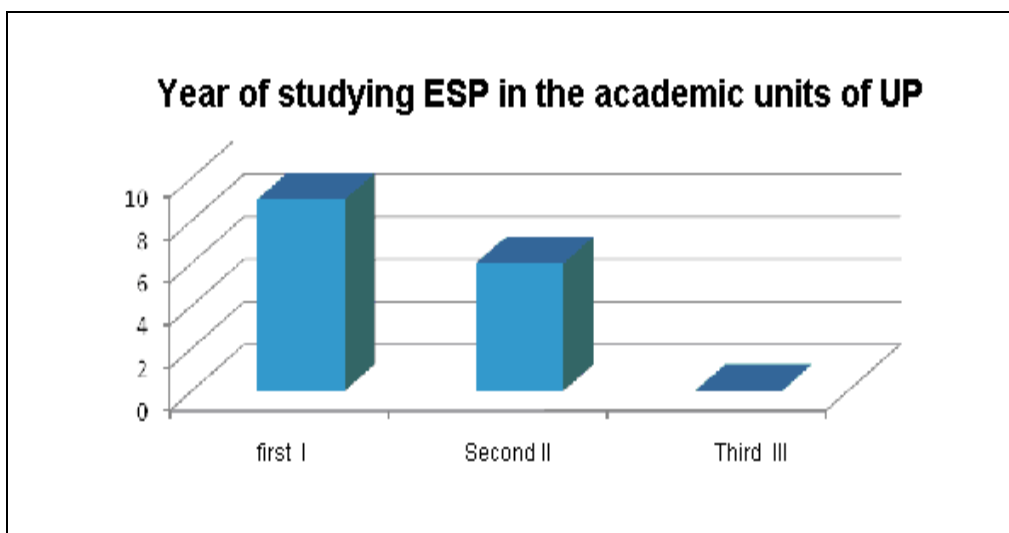


Chart 4. Year of studying English language

According to the results of the interview with professors of the University of Prishtina it is observed that in all academic units of the University of Prishtina, the English language course is taught in the first year of studies, in six other units, the English language course is taught in the first and in the second year. But in the third year students of these academic units of the University of Prishtina are not offered any courses of English language.

The question arises regarding the possibility of mastering ESP only with one or two years of study and only in one semester per year.

Another point is that English language, being an elective course, is considered unimportant by students; consequently is not chosen by them. But, knowing the importance of the English language, especially in the job market, it would be necessary for students to have English as an obligatory course in three years of study. This would enable students to apply in European and American universities as full time students or even as exchange students. Reforms in the University aim internationalization of the University of Prishtina and this sets the requirement for using literature in English, as well as accessing various sources on the Internet through English. This causes problems to students who are not proficient in English in their study field.

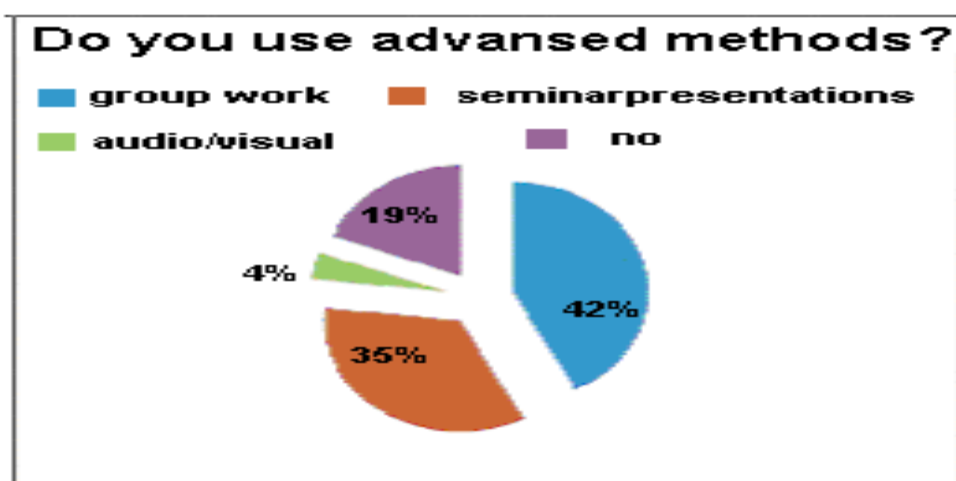
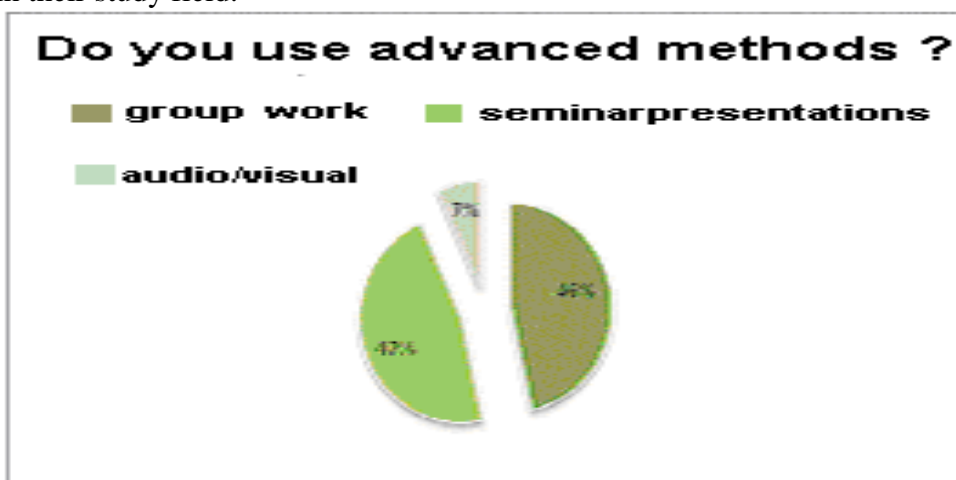


Chart 3. Responses provided by the teaching staff
Chart 4. Responses provided by students

The analysis prove that the only methods used in teaching are group work and seminary presentations. The lack of language laboratories makes the use of audio/visual method impossible.

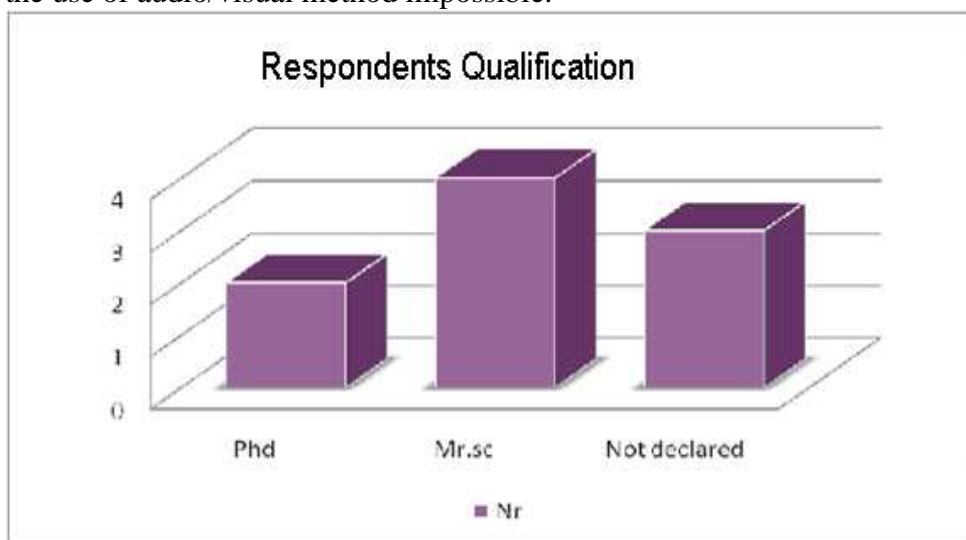


Chart 5. Respondent's qualification

As it can be observed, the scientific degree is not the issue that teachers of the University of Prishtina can proudly discuss and that is the reason why some of them did not declare their scientific degree. Out of nine professors who agreed to fill in the questionnaire, two of them are holders of a PhD degree, and that can be considered as a problem for the University of Prishtina not having enough qualified staff for delivering ESP courses. First of all this problem was caused by the retirement of a large number of staff from the old generations. On the other hand, young generations had no interest in furthering their education as our country was isolated. Due to political circumstances, no one was aware of the importance of the language, and secondly because of the enormous presence of international organizations after the war. All English teachers, regardless whether they were University of Prishtina teachers or teacher of secondary schools, were hired by those organizations being motivated by high salaries, having no interest at all to continue their master or doctoral studies. Even now most teachers of English are more interested to get employed in private universities having possibilities to work in two or more faculties and earn more money. Consequently, only those who are interested to get promoted

in the academic hierarchy may decide to work at the University of Prishtina since the current laws do not permit academic advancement in private universities.

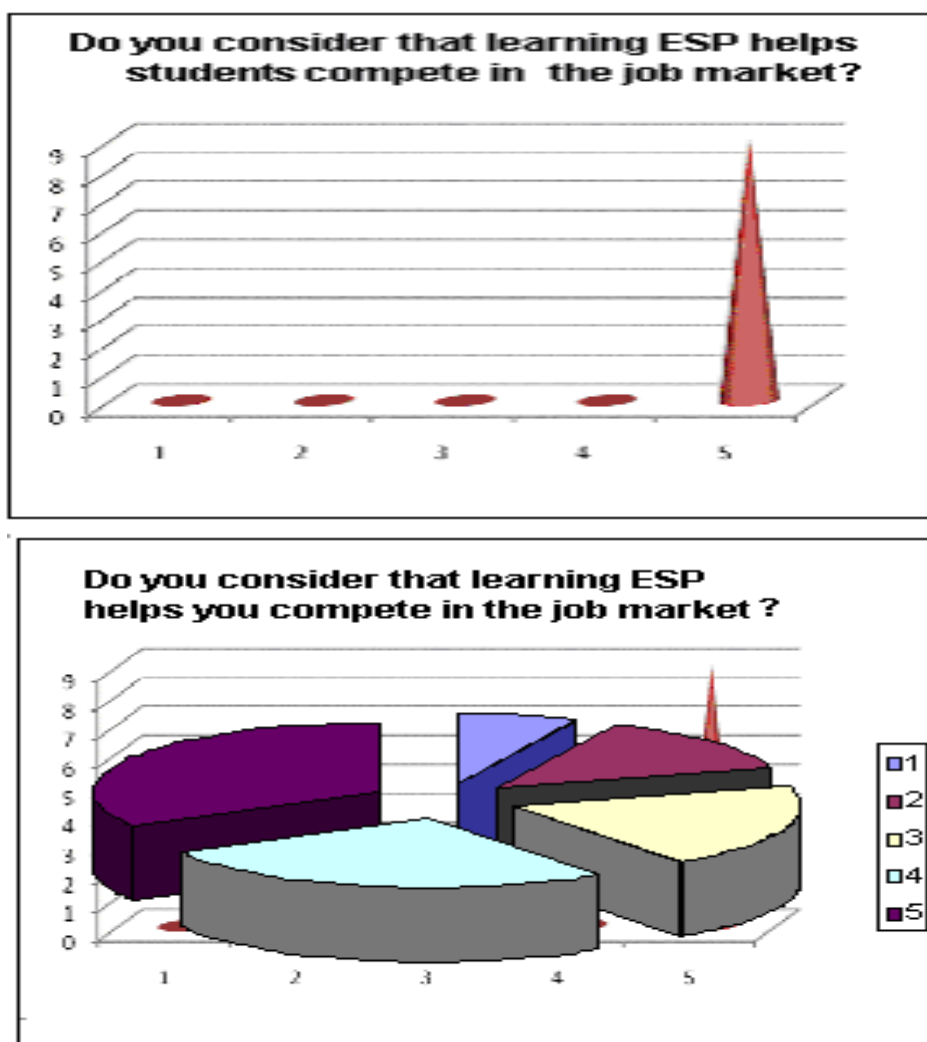


Chart 17. Responses provided by the teaching staff

Chart 18. Responses provided by students

All teaching staff and students consider that learning ESP helps students compete in the job market. Only small number responded negatively. This might be because of not being taught the right literature for their study field. Majority of students strongly insist on using ESP literature;

otherwise they will have to look for an alternative way of learning it by attending private ESP courses, which can hardly be found in Kosova, or other alternatives such as going abroad for some time.

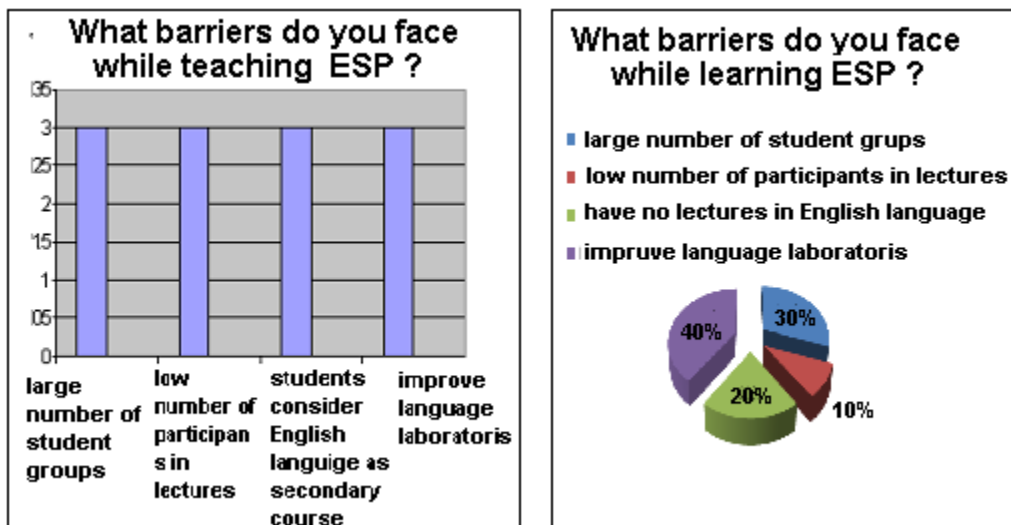


Chart 19. Responses provided by the teaching staff

Chart 20. Responses provided by students

Both professors and students emphasize that there are barriers that they face during the process of teaching/learning ESP in the academic units of the University of Prishtina.

- Professors and students both complain about a large number of student groups causing a lot of noise as well as a low number of students participating in the lectures considering English as a secondary, less important course.
- Professors and students both complain about not having equipped laboratories finding it difficult to hear what is being spoken in front of them.
- Some students also complain about having no English courses at all just being graded at the end of the semester.

4. Analysis and interpretation of data

The University of Prishtina with its seventeen academic units faces problems of different nature amongst which is the process of ESP teaching and learning. Based on the research conducted in only seven academic units of the University of Prishtina, there are some findings that present some problems that should be seriously taken into consideration and efforts are

required in order to find solutions. English language nowadays is not considered a luxury, but rather a necessity for every person regardless whether they are students or already employed, if they are young or old in age. No modern life can be run without English, especially English for Specific Purposes.

All the academic units of the University of Prishtina organize English language courses, but not all of them offer ESP courses. This is based on the finding that the literature in use does not fulfill students' needs for a professional communication. This irritates students, as they need to look for alternative courses outside the faculty, because without being able to use ESP students will neither be able to participate in the exchange student programs nor continue their master studies in European universities. They can neither enroll online studies nor compete in the job market.

Large number of students in teaching rooms with no microphones and headsets makes the process of teaching and learning difficult. It should be added that especially in the academic units with only one teaching staff, it is really hard to organize classes and divide students into groups as English is taught in the first and second year of studies.

The workload can also be considered as a problem in the ESP teaching/learning process, especially for applying modern teaching methods. Teaching staff, being overloaded, have no time for seminar presentations and as a result some of them are late with the intermediary tests or they do not organize tests at all. Implementation of online services in the University of Prishtina would undoubtedly be a great help for the students in getting informed from home about the exam dates and exam results, announcements about possible exam date changes, or for having online consultations with the teaching staff. These would facilitate students' contact with their professors/assistants.

Students also need to have a complaints box. Not all students dare to complain orally about the irregularities in the teaching process so, by having an opportunity to submit their complaints in written form students would feel much relaxed and would not hesitate to do it. This would be a great help to the teaching/learning process itself.

English language, not being a compulsory course, makes students consider that it is not important and consequently is not chosen by them. But, knowing the importance of the English language especially in the job market, it would be necessary for students to have the English course as an obligatory course in all three years of study. This would enable students to apply for studies in European and American universities as full-time students or as exchange students. Reforms at the University require a literature which can be found only in internet or in books written in English

language so it is difficult for a student who does not understand ESP to study that literature or use Internet sources.

Apart from having English courses as mandatory courses, it would be much better if these courses would be offered in the third year, too. The question arises: Can students learn ESP only in one or two years of study and only in one semester per year? All prestigious Universities of Europe organize ESP courses in every year of study and in every semester, too. English is not a course that can be learnt in a month or two. It is a course that needs a long time and continuous process.

It may be ascertained that the main problem of the University of Prishtina regarding the English courses organized within all seventeen academic units is the shortage of the teaching staff. There are several reasons for this. First of, all this problem was caused due to the retirement of a large number of staff from the old generations. Younger generations had no interest to study English or any other field as our country was occupied. Many were more interested to immigrate in Europe. After the war, those who came back were too old to get a place at the University even if they continued their studies. Second source of the shortage of staff is the presence of large number of international organizations after the war. Many English teachers from the University of Prishtina and pre-university education were hired by those organizations being motivated by high salaries, having no interest at all to continue their master or doctoral studies. Even now many teachers of English are more interested to get employed in private universities having possibilities to work in two or more faculties and earn more money. So, only those who are interested to get promoted in the academic hierarchy decide to get a job at the University of Prishtina due to the current regulations according to which private universities cannot provide such an opportunity.

5. Recommendations

Based on our research findings, it is clear that both teaching staff and students face different barriers and difficulties during the process of teaching and studying ESP. Based on all the answers given by both groups of research population it comes out that there is plenty to be done in order to improve the process of teaching/learning ESP courses at the University of Prishtina. My recommendations are as follows:

5.1. Establish language laboratories equipped with computers, head sets and microphones. Large number of students in lecture rooms causes plenty of noise making it rather difficult to follow the course of a lecture especially for those students sitting in the last rows. The use of

microphones and head sets as well as separate cabins for each student would make our teaching rooms relevant to the European faculties.

5.2. Employ more staff in order to have fewer groups for each professor/assistant. Most of the academic units face shortage of teaching staff. Consequently, one person has to work with a large number of student groups. In those academic units that have only one teaching staff, exercises are hardly held because professors are allowed to have only six classes overtime and the students do not prefer to have lectures and exercises with the same person.

5.3. Introduce English courses as obligatory courses. Students consider English courses as unimportant as it is not an obligatory course. Those students who decide to attend the English course when there is only a small number of participants during the lectures they get bored and leave the teaching room by finding it not attractive. This is the reason why in some academic units there is a low number of participants in lectures. Another reason why English should be introduced as obligatory course is that students feel that this course is less important and is easy to pass the exam. So, some students choose it not to learn something new or attend lectures, but by the logic of just considering it as already passed exam.

5.4. Offer English courses in the third year. The question that arises is: How can students learn ESP only with one or two years of study and only in one semester per year? Considering the importance of the English language as a world language, possibility to travel world wide and the open market, university management should come up with same curricula for all academic units. This means that the English language courses in all academic units should have the same status, the same number of ECTS credit points and the same weekly fund of classes. This would state the importance of English language at the University level.

5.5. All academic units be provided with the specific literature relevant to the study field. Students sometimes need to look for an alternative way of learning ESP, as they are not offered it at their faculty. A number of the teaching staff prefer to use “Headway“ series or other literature used in general English courses which is not relevant to students’ study field. Students then have to spend additional time consulting dictionaries when reading in English or searching on the Internet for extra information regarding the preparation for other exams in their study field and future profession.¹⁴⁶

Bibliography

¹⁴⁶ This paper work has been taken from the master thesis researched by the author who is the Lecturer at the Faculty of Applied Sciences on Business-Peje

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Permbledhje

Universiteti i Prishtinës përbëhet nga 17 njësi akademike që të gjitha të fushave të ndryshme të studimit. Mesimdhënia/mësimnxënja e Anglishtes së përgjithshme ka dallim të madh nga procesi i mësimdhënies/mësimnxënies së Anglishtes për qëllime specifike, pasi që ka të bëjë me një fjalor tërësisht të ndryshëm, bazuar në fushën e studimit të studentëve. Ky punim i është dedikuar hulumtimit të procesit të mësimin të Anglishtes për qëllime specifike në Universitetin e Prishtinës. Hulumtimi është bërë vetëm në një numër të njëjësive akademike, me saktësi në shtatë prej tyre, të cilat duhet të tregojnë studentëve të tyre një gjuhë me profesionale, sepse secila fushë e studimit kërkon një fjalor me specifik të cili dallohet nga ai i Anglishtes së përditshme, për shembull, fjalori i drejtësisë është komplet ndryshe nga ai i filologjisë. Bazuar në planprogramet e mbledhura dhe të analizuar, qëllimi i lëndës së gjuhës angleze në secilën njësi akademike është të ofrojë një mundësi studentëve, të marrin njohuri dhe të aftësohen në kuptimin, komunikimin, përkthimin, në të shkruarit e letrave të biznesit dhe raporteve si dhe të diskutojnë lirshëm në fushën e tyre të studimit.

Në fund të këtyre kurseve studentët e secilës njësi akademike duhet të jenë në gjendje të komunikojnë, shkruajnë dhe diskutojnë në gjuhën Angleze pasi që metodologjia e mësimdhënies së Anglishtes për qëllime specifike përfshinë përdorimin e metodave më të mira të mundshme siç janë: sqarimi i fjalorit, diskutimi i kuptimit të fjalëve të reja, ushtrimet gramatikore, ushtrimi i dëgjimit, punimet seminarike etj.

Metodologjia e përdorur në këtë hulumtim është siç vijon:

Me përdorimin e pyetësorëve është zhvilluar një pasqyrë ku janë përdorur 140 pyetësorë në përgjithësi, 20 për një njësi akademike, një për secilin student dhe një për secilin staf mësimor nga shtatë njësit akademike. Duke e përdorur metodën krahasuese është bërë vlerësimi i cilësisë dhe efektshmërisë në këto njësi akademike nga e cila është nxjerrë shkalla në të cilën mësohet Anglishtja specifike në Universitetin e Prishtinës.

Janë mbledhur dhe janë analizuar sylabusët nga të gjitha njësit akademike me qëllim të verifikimit se nëse objektivat dhe rezultatet e

pritshme të parapara në sylabuse përputhen më përgjigjet e dhëna nga studentët.

Të gjeturat e hulumtimit mund të përmbliken si:

- Jo të gjitha njësitet akademike ofrojnë kurse adekuate të gjuhës Angleze. Të gjitha njësitet ofrojnë lëndën e gjuhës Angleze por jo literaturë të mirëfilltë, që i plotëson nevojat e komunikimit profesional të studentëve. Kjo i iriton studentët pasi që ata duhet të kërkojnë kurse alternative jashtë fakultetit. Duke mos qenë të aftë të përdorin anglishten për qëllime specifike, studentët as nuk do të mund të participojnë në programet e shkëmbimit të studentëve as të vazhdojnë studimet master në universitetet europiane, e as të ndjekin studime nga distanca përmes internetit ose të konkurrojnë në tregun e punës.
- Numri i madh i studentëve në sallat e mësimi pa mikrofon dhe dëgjuese e vështirëson procesin e mësimdhënies/mësimnxënies. Duhet të theksohet se posaçërisht në ato njësi akademike me vetëm një mësimdhënës është shumë vështirë për ta, të organizojnë orët dhe të ndajnë studentët nëpër grupe (edhe pse ata ia dalin) pasi që anglishtja ligjërohet në vitin e parë dhe të dytë të studimeve. Kështu që ngarkesa e madhe në punë mund të konsiderohet si një barrierë në procesin e mësimi të Anglishtes specifike.
- Moshja e stafit mësimor është relativisht e pafavorshme. Kjo ndodh për shkak të ndryshimeve politike në vendin tone dhe prandaj se organizatave ndërkombëtare me ç'rast interesimi i mesimdhënësve për të vazhduar studimet e magjistratës apo doktoratës nuk ishte në rëndësi të pare. Ata ishin me shumë të stimuluar nga pagat e mëdha të ofruara nga ato organizata. Kjo madje shkaktonte edhe mosinteresimin e mesimdhënësve për të punuar në institucione arsimore. Sot të interesuar për të punuar në Universitetin e Prishtinës janë vetëm ata të cilët duan të ngrihen në nivelin akademik (gjeneratat më të reja).
- Një faktor i rëndësishëm në procesin e mësimdhënies së Anglishtes specifike, brenda njësive akademike të Universitetit të Prishtinës, përfshirë në hulumtim, është vendbanimi i stafit mësimor.

- Statusi i lëndës së gjuhës angleze si lëndë zgjedhore i bënë studentët që ta konsiderojnë atë si më pak të rëndësishme dhe nuk e ndiejnë të obligueshme për ta përcjellur atë lëndë¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁷ Ky punim është njerë nga hulumtimi I bërë gjatë punimit të temës së masterit nga ana e mesimdhënësës së gjuhës Angleze në Universitetin e Prishtinës M.sc. Shqipe Husaj

