

THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING ESP AT VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

BY USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

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Abstract

The article deals with the process of teaching illustrating the procedure of conducting experiment with a target group. It explains how to use authentic materials in ESP classrooms at vocational colleges revealing the detailed descriptions of the experimental part of the study. The stages of how the process of teaching was organized spanning the aim of the experiment, its participants, the selection of teaching materials and conducting speaking activities on the basis of listening sources are described. Moreover, the article sheds light on the procedure of applying those materials into practical lessons with the target groups, namely Experimental and Control groups, and produces the outcome reached at the end of the practical teaching.

Key words: experimental group, control group, ESP, authentic materials, CEFR, target language and language proficiency

Autentik manbalardan foydalangan holda kasb-hunar kollejlarda sohaga yo'naltirilgan ingliz tili (ESP)ni o'qitish amaliyoti

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Abstrakt

Maqolada ingliz tilini o'rganayotgan guruh bilan eksperiment o'tkazish tartibini ko'rsatadigan jarayon aks ettirilgan bo'lib, kasb-hunar kollejlardagi sohaga yo'naltirilgan ingliz tili (ESP) ni o'rganayotgan guruhlar autentik materiallardan

qanday foydalanish kerakligi tushuntiriladi va tadqiqotning batafsil tavsiflari yoritiladi. Ya'ni, tajriba maqsadi, uning ishtirokchilari, o'quv materiallarini tanlash va tinglab tushinish ko'nikmasini rivojlantiruvchi manbalar asosida nutq ko'nikmasini o'stirish bo'yicha o'qitishning tashkil etish bosqichlari tushuntiriladi. Bundan tashqari, maqolada ushbu materiallarni tajriba guruhlariga, ya'ni Tajriba va Nazorat guruhlariga bilan amaliy mashg'ulotlarda qo'llash tartibi va amaliy mashg'ulot yakunida erishilgan natijalar aks etadi.

Kalit so'zlar: tajriba guruhi, nazorat guruhi, sohaga yo'naltirilgan ingliz tili (ESP), autentik materiallar, tillar bo'yicha umumiy Yevropa ma'lumot tizimi (CEFR), o'rganilayotgan xorijiy til va til bilish darajasi

Практика преподавания ESP в профессиональных колледжах с использованием аутентичных материалов

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Абстракт

В статье рассмотрен процесс обучения, иллюстрирующий процедуру проведения эксперимента с выбранной группой. В нем объясняется, как использовать аутентичные материалы на уроках ESP в профессиональных колледжах, а также подробно описываются экспериментальная часть исследования. Описаны этапы организации процесса обучения, включая цель эксперимента, его участников, подбор учебных материалов и проведение речевой деятельности на основе аудирующих источников. Кроме того, в статье объясняется процедура применения этих материалов на практических занятиях с выбранными группами, а именно экспериментальной и контрольной группами, и определяются результаты, достигаемые в конце практического обучения.

Ключевые слова: экспериментальная группа, контрольная группа, английский для специальных целей, аутентичные материалы, общеевропейские компетенции владения иностранным языком (CEFR), изучаемый язык и уровень владения языком.

Introduction

Authentic materials are not made deliberately to teach language learners in a classroom; conversely, they are created to accomplish some communicative aims (Martinez, 2002). The role of authentic materials is deemed to be significant as of increasing students' motivation for learning and making learners exposed to the real language according to most experts' opinions. Meanwhile, authentic reading and listening materials (such as announcements, instructions, timetables, newsflashes, weather reports, etc.) can be incorporated into a variety of multi-skill communicative activities such as games, simulations, projects, and drama activities to develop students' language proficiency.

The role of authentic materials in teaching languages, particularly the English language, is undeniable as they elevate students language skills into a higher one. However, to determine to what extent authentic materials can influence learners' language proficiency, we decided to conduct an experiment with a group of students at vocational college.

Main part

The participants of the conducted research were the second year students of the Vocational Technological College named after Mirzo Ulug'bek (Tashkent, Uzbekistan). English is not the major of the students of this Vocational

Technological College as most attention is paid to teaching physics, chemistry and biology. The students of this college learn English merely for the reason that they should be able to handle conversations within the scope of their major professional fields including oil and grain products, culinary and computer technology. Moreover, they are supposed to become aware of technical English to operate in these spheres successfully. Alongside with the data about students' major, other factors spanning their age, gender and language background are also considered as important points of the experiment.

The students vary at age (ranging at the ages of 16-17). As they are college students, the students' level of English proficiency is B1 in accordance with Common European Framework of Reference; and there are mostly representatives of Uzbek culture.

The experiment was conducted with two groups of these college students (overall 24 participants). The groups didn't have any distinctions concerning the number of students as both experimental (EG) and control (CG) groups consisted of 12 students equally.

Generally, the experiment that aims at evaluating the influence of authentic materials on college students includes two main phases pre-experimental and post-experimental tests. Based on the State Educational Standards of Uzbekistan, college students are required to have B1 level in accordance with Common European Framework of Reference. Therefore, pre-experimental listening and speaking tests were conducted to gather data on the students' language skills before the practical teaching.

The results of the listening test indicated that students' listening skills were relatively lower than they were supposed to be. In fact, the students were supposed to fulfill the tasks with the result of 80 % completion. However, it turned out to be 60% completion according to the results of the test. Moreover, a speaking test on the basis of the content of the listening task was conducted to reveal the students' level of language proficiency in

communicative competence. To follow this procedure, we worked out the criteria for Speaking Evaluation concerning the requirements stated in the documents of State Educational Standards. The topics were chosen in accordance with course syllabus and students' professional orientation.

It should be mentioned that some daily conversations including giving instructions, describing professional fields, giving suggestions and other issues were taken into consideration while organizing speaking test. After all the data relevant to the research was collected, we precisely analyzed them to reach a final conclusion about the participants' level.

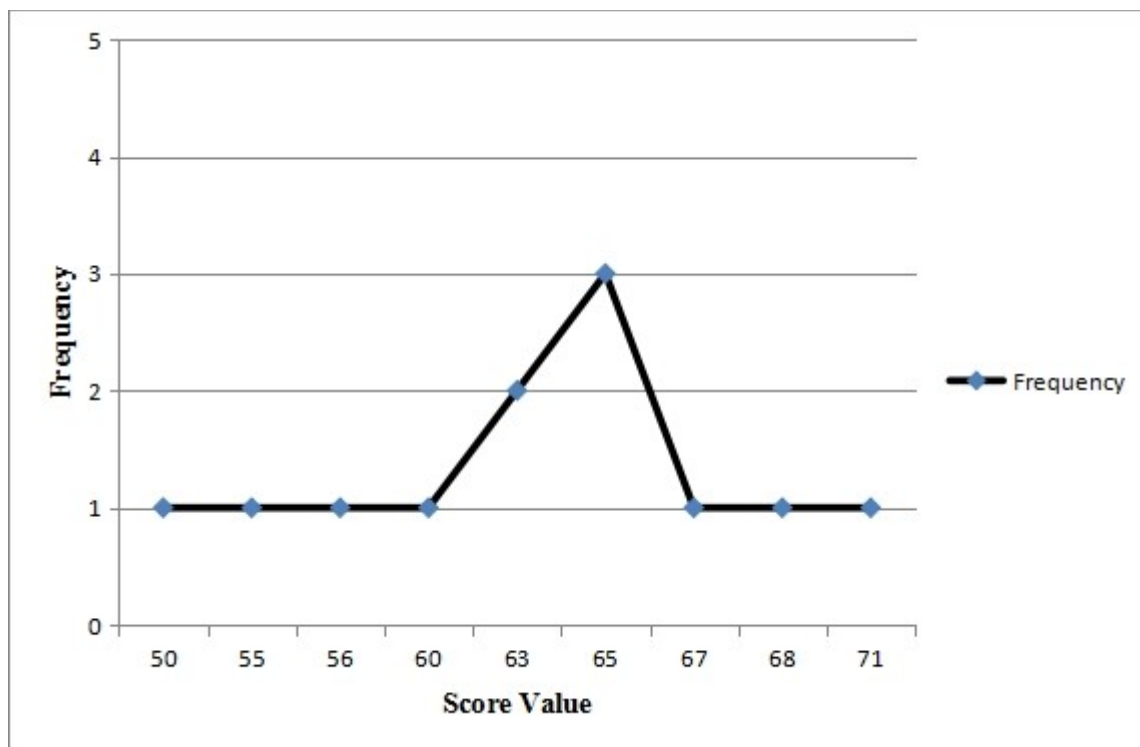
The pre-test results, which helped to determine the participants' listening and speaking skills, will be presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Pre-experiment Test Results of the level of language performance in listening and speaking

The number of students	Listening skills (%)	Speaking skills (%)
24	60 %	65 %

During the pre-experimental teaching we constructed the chart of Frequency Distribution to summarize data of pre-test and clearly see how many participants performed in the same way and what their range of performance was.

Figure 1. Experimental Group's Pre-Experiment Speaking Test Results
(Frequency Distribution)



Let's examine Experimental Group's Pre-Experiment Speaking Test Results Frequency Distribution (Figure 1). As it can be seen from the chart, the students' scores on speaking task ranged between 52 and 69 with several of them having identical figures in some cases. The fact of great variety of scores shows heterogeneity of subjects and helps teachers to come up with reliable results and see how the hypothesis of the study applies to the learners of different initial levels. The main trend of the figure below shows that the majority of identical results occurred in the middle of the range of scores, which suggests that the selection of subjects was adequate and some of them were merely of the average initial level of language performance.

Having identified the level of students' language proficiency in listening and speaking skills we divided the participants into experimental (EG) and control groups (CG). While dividing them into two groups, we carefully considered to provide both groups with identical level, to be more precise, the most successful

8 students who had better results than the others were separated into two groups equally (4 of them in the CG and the rest four in EG). After having several sessions with EG and while CG continued to study with the use of adapted materials, we took the post-test from both groups to compare their results with those of the pre-test.

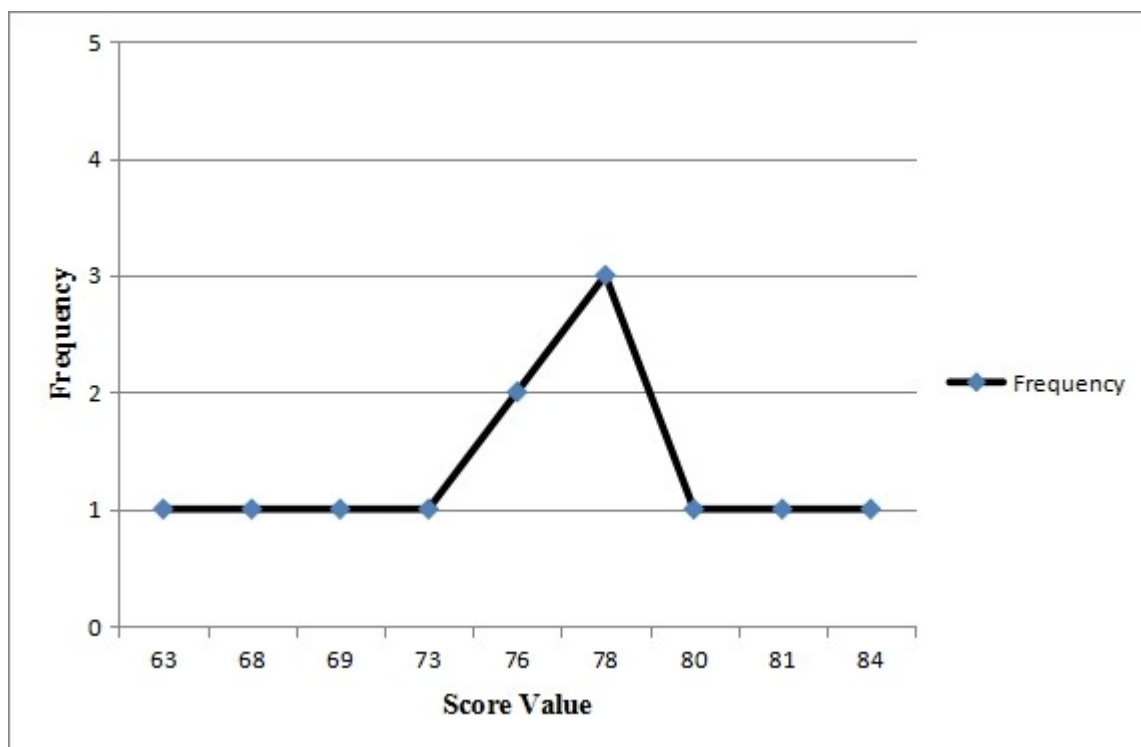
Post-experiment test results of both groups are provided in Table 2.

Table 2.

Groups and number of students	Listening skills (%)	Speaking skills (%)
EG - 12	70%	78 %
CG - 12	63 %	67%

The experimental group's test results on speaking will be presented with frequency distribution.

Figure 2. Experimental Group's Post-Experiment Speaking Test Results (Frequency Distribution)



It is obvious from the chart that the scores of students in accomplishing speaking tasks range between 65 and 83 with several of them having identical figures at some points. In comparison to the chart presenting pre-experimental speaking test results of the participants, the statistics shows that students' overall performance in fulfilling speaking tasks generally progressed by 13% after the experimental teaching process. The main trend of this figure also indicates that the majority of identical results are produced in the middle of the range of scores. In fact, the chart serves as an evidence for that vocational college students who were involved in the experimental teaching made strides in improving their language proficiency, to be more precise, speaking skills after having a number of practical English lessons based on authentic listening materials.

As it has been mentioned, an apparent growth of EG students' language proficiency can be detected from the presented table. Indeed, this suggests the development of speaking skills as well as listening of the majority of EG students in comparison to the results of the pre-experiment test.

The next table enables us to become aware of the results of both tests simultaneously and draw vital conclusions about the success of the experimental teaching which is closely connected with the effectiveness of authentic sources in a teaching process.

Table 3. Results of Pre and Post-Experiment Tests of Experimental and Control Groups of the Level of Language Performance (listening and speaking)

Experimental teaching (ET)	Groups and number of students	Listening skills (%)	Speaking skills (%)
Pre – ET	EG - 12	60 %	65%
Post – ET	EG - 12	70%	78 %
Pre – ET	CG - 12	60 %	65%
Post – ET	CG - 12	63 %	67%

It can easily be detected from Table 3 that in comparison to the results of the experimental group, the figures of the control group do not show any significant difference with the pre-experiment test results.

The CG did not experience authentic listening materials in the period of the primary research, which can be concluded that authentic listening materials influence the development of learners' communicative competence. With listening tasks based on authentic materials, we can notice steady improvement

of EG's speaking skills in English as shown after the post-test results. In fact, the authentic listening materials and speaking tasks made contribution to developing students' communicative competence. The progress of the EG in comparison to the control one's was noticed in listening skills' development: all of the 12 examinees in the experimental group progressed in the listening section of the post-experiment test. Moreover, the figures representing the compared scores differ from one another, making us infer that the progress was obvious.

Subsequent to the experimental teaching, a survey among EL teachers (5) and students (15) was conducted, in which the participants were inquired to present their opinions in terms of effectiveness of authentic materials for the target ESP lessons and evaluate those materials in terms of effectiveness. The teachers and students were asked to rank the given below statements on the following five-point scale: 1 – completely disagree; 2 – disagree; 3 – partially agree; 4 – agree; and 5 – strongly agree (see Appendix). The scale has been converted to present the overall result including 1- Very poor, 2- Poor; 3- Average, 4 - Very good, and 5- Excellent. Teachers and students responded anonymously so they could feel completely free to be honest.

Table 4. Evaluated aspect

Evaluated Aspects	Percentage of teachers and students who ranked the aspect as <i>Very good</i> and <i>Excellent</i> .
Opportunities provided by the materials to listen to authentic English (only the teachers' evaluation)	100

Opportunities motivated the students' activity during the lesson.	88
Opportunities provided by authentic listening materials to enlarge vocabulary.	84
Overall perception of the effect of the materials in the English classrooms.	86
Positive effects of authentic tasks on developing communicative competence	93

While conducting this survey we asked both teachers and students to evaluate the course materials objectively so that reliable data would be reached through this process. The results of the survey have been generalized and presented in the percentages of “Very good” and “Excellent” responses. Having fulfilled this task the participants provided their opinions about the efficiency of the listening materials presented during English classes. Moreover, during the interviews conducted in this research, the students expressed their opinions asserting that the listening materials gave them a lot of chance to become aware of some important vocabulary related to their study and major fields; different types of speaking activities arranged during the classes appealed to them and motivated them to learn English better.

Conclusion

The analysis of the data gained through the experimental teaching provided positive results, to be more precise, students' language proficiency (their speaking skills) improved with the help of authentic sources. To state it precisely, authentic listening materials provided the learners with substantial

opportunity to enhance communicative competence by motivating them to study. More importantly, the statistics proved that students' overall performance in fulfilling speaking tasks has generally progressed by over 10% within a short period.

Overall, the students of the experimental group improved their language performance starting to produce utterances that were followed by cohesion and encompassed some essential vocabulary pertaining to their major professional fields. The result of the experimental teaching proved that bringing authentic materials into ESP lessons at vocational colleges is highly effective to improve learners' language proficiency.

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