

Advancing English language teaching through an integrative approach

Faridakhon Makhammadjanovna Turgunova

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-4750-3864>

tfm_83@yahoo.com

Andijan State Pedagogical Institute

Abstract: This article explores the challenges of integrating language learning into the educational processes of non-linguistic higher educational institutions. Drawing on the experiences of leading foreign specialists, it examines the specific features of implementing integrated learning and highlights its potential benefits. Key factors that influence the effectiveness of this integrative approach are identified. The article discusses the main stages of the cognitive process in language learning, ranging from initial exposure to skill development and practical application.

Keywords: integrative approach, language acquisition, communication, journalism

INTRODUCTION

The integration of English language instruction with domain-specific content has become increasingly critical in non-linguistic higher education institutions, particularly in light of global demands for industry-ready graduates. This study examines the implementation of an integrative approach to teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) within professional programs, most notably in journalism, at universities in Uzbekistan. Drawing on comparative international practices and empirical data collected from ESP instructors across various disciplines, the research identifies pedagogical gaps, such as inadequate methodological resources, insufficient field-specific materials, and limited teacher preparedness. The study underscores the pedagogical value of using authentic texts to enhance students' communicative competence and professional engagement. Findings indicate that integrative instruction, supported by cognitive learning frameworks, fosters deeper understanding, skill acquisition, and learner motivation. The article concludes by advocating for curriculum innovations that embed interdisciplinary ESP practices, thus promoting both linguistic proficiency and domain-specific expertise aligned with global academic and labor market standards.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first integrated English language teaching programs in Germany appeared in the 90s of the last century due to the dominance of the English language in international communication. Currently, integrated education in English is implemented in many educational institutions in Germany. Leading universities in this country, such as Georg-August-Universität Göttingen and Universität Freiburg, which have a great international reputation, offer programs taught in English, allowing foreign students to study undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

The results of researchers in this direction confirm that it is an important and meaningful addition to existing traditional foreign language teaching programs (Gebauer et al., 2023; Lasagabaster, 2008; Küppers & Trautmann, 2013; Gierlinger & Wagner, 2016). Such programs are aimed at introducing teaching of certain subjects in English into the educational process. For example, in Denmark, the relative number of universities offering programs in English is almost 70%, and in Turkey, this figure reaches 94%. In Switzerland, almost all universities offer programs in English, and therefore, it is the place with the highest degree of penetration of English-language education. A

comparative analysis shows that integrated learning is currently quite popular in European universities.

Currently, there are many research works devoted to studying the specifics of implementing integrated learning in the education systems of different foreign countries (Dallinger et al., 2018; Grevtseva et al., 2017; Leshchenko et al., 2018; Van Kampen et al., 2020; Goris et al., 2019). However, although each country's education system has its own characteristics of implementing integrated education, many leading scientists claim that in any educational system, it is the most promising integrated methodology. In universities in the world's leading countries, more effective English language teaching programs are gradually appearing for undergraduate and graduate students, which are aimed at increasing personal competence in a foreign language and a specialized subject. Such programs have proven to be very effective and are successfully used in the educational process.

The observed tendency to combine various subjects into one whole is being considered by scientists from numerous countries around the world. There are a large number of research works examining integrated content and language of instruction for future professional workforces in various specialties (Merino & Lasagabaster, 2017; McDougald, 2016; He & Lin, 2020). However, these studies focus on some elements of teaching English, such as composing an oral speech, introducing dialogue, presenting a prepared presentation, and others. This does not provide a full opportunity to use English to gain new knowledge in professional activities and communicate freely in English outside the integrated learning environment.

Research and practice in the field of English language teaching in Uzbekistan, especially in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), are underdeveloped. The fact that the number of articles published in this field in the Scopus database is zero indicates the need for further study of these issues. There is a very small number of scientific studies on the teaching of subject-oriented English in Uzbekistan. This, in turn, hinders the development of English teaching methodologies in the education system. Nowadays, it is necessary to combine theoretical knowledge with practical skills in the educational process. Learning English for specific purposes helps to form the necessary skills for students and professionals.

METHOD

The research uses a systematic approach to studying the concept of integrated learning, as well as its significance in the development of foreign language speech activity. The concepts of an integrated approach in higher education are considered. The key components of an integrative approach to teaching a foreign language in non-philological areas, in particular in the specialty of journalism, are analyzed. Also, the factors of the integrative approach for effective and successful application in the educational process are considered. To substantiate the need for an integrated approach in the educational process for the development of foreign language speech activity, a scientific approach is used. The work examines the integration of knowledge about language and communication from both different subject areas and the area of one subject. The empirical approach is focused on studying the experience of foreign researchers designing and implementing various models and methods of integrated foreign language teaching. In particular, an integrative approach to teaching English in the educational process of higher educational institutions is considered, based on materials from English-language periodicals.

In addition, the study conducted a detailed analysis of the practice of teaching English in higher education institutions based on a specially designed questionnaire. The questionnaire examined the main problems teachers face in the process of integrating English into professional education, in particular, the lack of textbooks and teaching materials, methodological support that does not meet modern requirements, insufficient formation of students' language skills, as well as the fact that

teachers themselves feel the need to master professional English in depth. The results of the study will serve to develop scientifically based recommendations for improving professional English education.

A survey was conducted with professional-oriented English (ESP) language teaching instructors. Surveys are effective tools for gathering direct insights and opinions from a specific target group. The survey was conducted mainly to identify deficiencies observed by professors in teaching English. The reasons we chose this method over others and how it helped to achieve the expected results are as follows:

- **Direct Access to Expert Opinions:** The survey allowed us to collect firsthand information from ESP instructors who have practical experience and a deep understanding of the challenges in teaching English in professional contexts. Other methods, like literature review or experimental studies, might not provide these personalized, context-specific insights.

- **Efficiency and Reach:** Surveys can be distributed to a relatively large number of instructors within a reasonable time frame, making it possible to gather diverse perspectives. Interviews or focus groups, while rich in detail, can be more time-consuming and less scalable.

- **Structured Data Collection:** The survey format enables systematic data collection through predefined questions, making it easier to analyze and identify common deficiencies reported by instructors. This structured approach helps in drawing clear conclusions relevant to the research objectives.

- **Focus on Observed Deficiencies:** Since the research aimed to identify specific deficiencies observed by professors, the survey method provided a direct way to ask targeted questions about the issues, ensuring that the data collected was directly relevant.

- **Empirical Evidence:** The survey provided concrete, empirical evidence based on the real experiences and observations of professionals. This strengthened the validity and credibility of your findings.

Using a carefully designed survey, this study gathered comprehensive and reliable data from a diverse sample of ESP teachers and instructors across various professional fields. The data revealed specific areas in need of improvement, such as insufficient focus on industry-specific vocabulary and limited opportunities for real-world language application.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the first stage of the study, a survey of 25 questions was prepared and analyzed by scientists and senior teachers of 10 people at the Scientific Council of the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan. In addition, based on the advice and recommendations of the sociologist, 15 questions of a positive nature were distinguished. After that, the questionnaire was prepared in the form of a Google Form, distributed among teachers, and used to collect their opinions.

A total of 70 respondents who were teaching English in technical and engineering, medicine, law, economics, journalism, and other fields took part in the survey.

According to the survey results, more than 44% of teachers have more than 10 years of experience (Table 1). All teachers have taught mostly General English during their experiences, and have said that they have been teaching ESP for only a few years. It has been found that more than 70% of teachers prefer interactive and hands-on Styles in the teaching process, which increases student interest. More than 50% of teachers favor the use of open source and resources on the internet, but 30% of them have difficulty using technology. The level of students' mastery of English-language materials related to the field was highlighted by teachers at 53%.

When teaching ESP, the level of students should be a middle or higher level, not an elementary level. Because the ESP teaches a special lexicon and terminology of the field, students must know basic general English. Anthony (1997) states that the language level and field needs must complement each other in ESP teaching. In addition, students must have basic knowledge of the field they are studying. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that students need a combination of language level and field knowledge to teach ESP. They believe that the purpose of language learning in ESP teaching should be clear and specific. For example, students studying journalism need to have basic knowledge of journalism so that they can effectively use ESP classes. Dudley-Evans and St. Louis. John (1998) states that for ESP teaching, it is important for students to identify the specific needs of the field being taught and build a curriculum based on this. They highlight the integration of language level and field knowledge.

65% of teachers have defined students' English proficiency as B1-B2, and 53% consider students' level of mastery of field-specific English language material to be moderate. 68% of teachers find it important to communicate by mixing English and their native language in explaining a new topic to students, but some believe that the native language should be used in the process. Scholars' opinions on the issue of mixing mother tongue and English in explaining a new topic to students in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) education are mixed, but most support purposeful and limited use of mother tongue. Dudley-Evans and St. Louis. John (1998) argues that the use of native language in particularly complex or technical subjects can help improve the student's understanding and communicate new information more accurately. In their opinion, complete free usage of the native language can make the student's mastering process difficult. Harmer (2007) supports the limited and purposeful use of the native language as it allows students to better understand the new material, but says that the focus should always be on English. Cook (2001), on the other hand, argues that the use of the native language is a natural part of the language learning process and recommends effective integration, rather than an absolute ban on it. Turnbull and Arnett (2002) cite studies that have shown that using the native language with balance increases the effectiveness of language learning, rather than limiting it entirely in the educational process. The results of the study we conducted showed that, taking into account the level of knowledge and professional training of students in English, the balanced use of native language and English in the organization of classes ESP (English for Specific Purposes) serves to effectively master the new information on a particular topic. The new topic is first explained in English, then, if necessary, it is clarified in the native language, and practical exercises are conducted in basic English. This approach helps students develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter and the skill of the correct application of professional terminology.

Table 1.

General information about the respondents of the questionnaire survey

Performance	Result
Teachers with more than 10 years of experience	more than 44%
Mostly General English teaching professors	all teachers
Those who have recently started training ESP	all teachers
Teachers who prefer interactive and practical styles in teaching ESP	more than 70%
Teachers who use open resources on the internet	more than 50%
Teachers with difficulty in using technology	30%
Student appropriation of materials related to the field	53% (average).
Student English language level (those that define B1-B2)	65% teachers

Those who find it important to explain the new topic in English and native language	68% of teachers
Those who believe that only native language should be used	13% teachers

The results of the survey show that when organizing the course process, there is a lack of additional materials for teachers to assist effective learning process, such as, special seminar trainings, modern and interactive textbooks, special dictionaries and terminological manuals related to the field, real practical examples and “case studies”, video and audio materials. In addition, there are difficulties in motivating the students.

Through their experiences and innovative techniques, teachers seek to increase students’ interest, strengthen their knowledge, and maintain a high level of mastery. The results of the survey showed that there was a significant increase in educational success among teachers through the use of interactive methods and modern technologies.

As the biggest problem in area-oriented teaching of English, 25.5% of respondents reported the complexity of special terminology, 18.2% showed a lack of teaching materials, 56.4% showed a low language level of students, 38.2% did not have enough resources for practical classes, 50.9% showed a lack of special training in teaching methodology, 9.1% showed other issues (Fig.1).

Of the effective methods used to explain specific terms and technical texts in the course process, 61.8% of teachers recognized visual materials (pictures, videos, diagrams) from open sources on the internet, 56.4% recognized practical activities and cases (case study, project, presentation), 27.3% recognized a translation-based method, 47.3% recognized students working on real-world projects, 9.1% used other techniques and strategies.

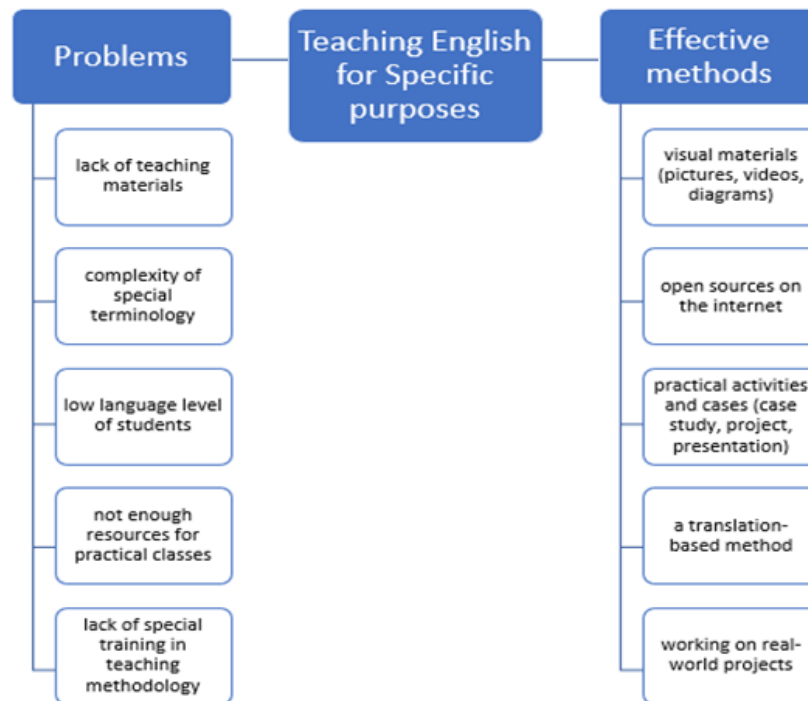


Figure 1. Shortcomings in teaching English for specific purposes, according to respondents’ opinions, and effective methods to improve teaching efficiency.

When asked about students’ mastery of field-specific English-language materials, 14.5% of teachers responded that they were excellent, 52.7% average, 30.9% satisfactory, and 1.8% of respondents responded that they were low.

As for the special difficulties students faced in learning special terms, 38.2% of professors recognized term recall, 41.8% did not have sufficient knowledge in the field, 47.3% had difficulty

understanding English texts, 52.7% found it difficult to use special terms in oral speech, and 9.1% recognized other issues.

When asked by what methods you encourage readers to read and understand industry-specific texts, 34.5% stated that mentors give interesting articles on the industry, 52.7% teach through field-specific hands-on tasks, 61.8% work with authentic video and audio materials, and 69.1% set out group discussions.

When asked which language they use the most with students during class, 67.3% of teachers reported using English and their mother tongue, 23.6% said they mainly use English, and 9.1% said they use more mother tongue.

When the most used resources in field-specific English teaching were studied, 56.4% of respondents replied that they were special textbooks, 69.1% of open sources on the internet (articles, periodicals, podcasts, interviews), 32.7% of academic journals and scientific articles, 45.5% of audio and video textbooks, 7.3% of other sources.

When studying what types of additional materials are lacking in the course process, 61.1% of educators recognized modern and interactive textbooks, 46.3% of specialized dictionaries and terminology books related to the field, 51.9% of real practical examples and case studies, 25.9% of video and audio materials, 5.6% of other resources.

When teachers were asked to indicate the most productive methods and approaches in teaching ESP, they mentioned an integrative approach, practical approach, case study, all of the most effective approaches, group work, interactive approach, professional oriented tasks, oral and written tasks, question-answer approach, communicative and other approaches and methods. Of these, the most repeated was the integrative approach, with almost 28% being recognized by the professors (Fig.2).



Figure 2. The most productive methods and approaches in teaching ESP (English for Specific Purposes) according to professors' opinions.

When professors were asked about the possibility of sharing experiences with other teachers, 49.1% would be at times, but not enough, 27.3% said yes, there were regular seminars and trainings, 23.6% said no, there was little such opportunity.

When asked about the effective methods mentors use to advance students’ field-specific English-language oral speech, 61.8% said role-playing games and presentations, 41.8% said Field discussions and debates, 60% said real-life situation-based discussions, 56.4% heard podcasts and interviews, and 10.9% said they used other techniques like this.

The bar chart below illustrates the prioritization of support mechanisms needed in field-oriented English teaching, based on the analysis of various factors mentioned by educators.

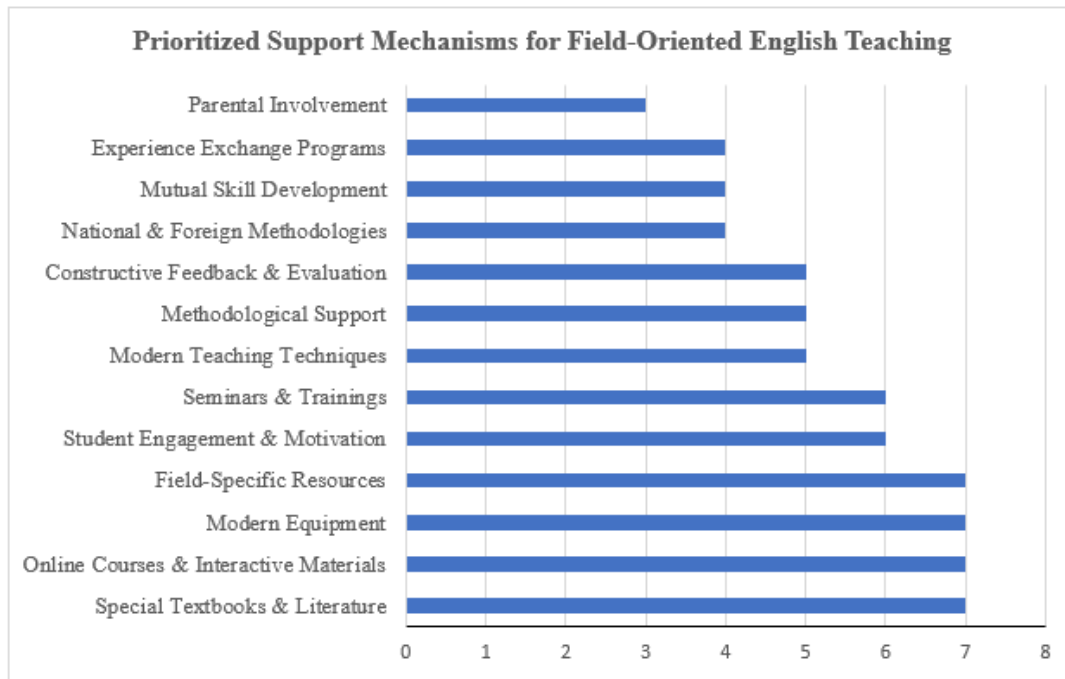


Figure 3. Prioritized Support Mechanisms for Professional-Oriented English Teaching.

When learning how professors need support mechanisms in field-oriented English teaching (Fig.3), they need special textbooks, seminars, a lack of modern equipment, a need for all kinds of mechanisms in teaching English, the inability to introduce new methodological manuals, experience exchange trips to foreign countries, mutual skill development, level preparation of literature, provision of special textbooks and Educational Support, seminar trainings, terminology and field-specific hands-on experiences and conversation in English, organizing competitions and encouraging students in English-language groups, lack of audio richness equipment, interactive whiteboard, HDMI cable and other equipment, lack of Siha-oriented English-language materials and resources, little involvement of parents with their child, literature on the field in English, constructive feedback, peer evaluation, student focused learning, modern techniques, teachers are also told that there is a need to create conditions for deeper English learning, provide online courses, and interactive materials (for example, video lessons or simulations), support mechanisms in teaching a foreign language focused on the field, improve the methodology of teaching English, relying on national and advanced foreign experiences.

The results of the survey helped to determine the achievements and shortcomings of teachers in teaching professional-oriented English. Factors such as teacher experience, educational styles, and the use of technology are important in organizing the educational process. In the future, it was proposed that the shortcomings could be eliminated by providing additional workshop trainings and resources to teachers.

CONCLUSION

Through a carefully structured survey, this study collected comprehensive, reliable, and diverse data from ESP learners and instructors, uncovering specific areas needing improvement - particularly

the limited emphasis on industry-specific vocabulary and real-world language application. These findings formed the basis for evidence-based conclusions and targeted recommendations aimed at enhancing English instruction in professional contexts. By contributing to the broader discourse on ESP teaching and aligning with learners' practical needs, the study addresses existing gaps in the field. Thus, an integrative approach to teaching English within the modern higher education system, especially one that incorporates authentic materials from English-language periodicals, is increasingly relevant and effective. Integrated training sessions based on these information allow students to synthesize and apply their professional language skills in a unified, practical context, thereby reinforcing the overall effectiveness of the educational process.

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