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**NADEŽDA STOJKOVIĆ,**
*PhD, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Electronic Engineering,
University of Niš, Serbia*

**SLAĐANA ŽIVKOVIĆ,**
*PhD, Lecturer at the School of Higher Technical Professional Education, Niš, Serbia*

**NATAŠA BAKIĆ-MIRIĆ,**
*PhD, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Niš, Serbia;
Suleyman Demirel University, Kazakhstan*

# ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

The article is devoted to teaching formats of academic presentations to ESP students which is a necessity for them if they are to perform well both in the professional and academic setting. The paper starts with theoretical elaborations on the rationale and the methodology of teaching written and spoken formats of academic presentations. Further on, there is an explanation why these segments of an ESP syllabus are universal, applicable and needed in most diverse ESP higher education settings.

*Key words: formats of spoken and written academic presentations, English for Specific Purposes, English for Vocational Purposes, syllabus design.*

## 1. The rationale for teaching written and spoken communications in ESP

In English for Specific Purposes there has been given substantial emphasis onto the relevance of the needs analysis as being the primary anchor of all ESP courses [3; 7; 9]. One of the most renowned theoreticians of ESP, Richards, defined the needs analysis as « . . . a mechanism for collecting a wider range of input into the content, design and implementation of a language program through involving such people as learners, teachers, administration and employees in the planning process» [8, p. 5]. Without clearly set goals it is virtually impossible to design an ESP course which in itself is a tailor made course [5; 6]. In the process of needs analysis there are two possible approaches, one is Target-Situation Analysis (TSA) and the other is Present-Situation Analysis (PSA), as defined and elaborated on in Chambers; Jordan and Songhori [1; 4; 11]. Much as the names suggest, in the TSA the aim is to pinpoint the linguistic requirements of the targeted future professional context needed for students' successful immersion into the competitiveness of such a surrounding. As a balance to it, there is established the Present-Situation Analysis which on the outset of the course is to determine the readiness and the possibilities of students to actually work on the needs as required for the target situation [10]. It is in this process that ESP practitioners are able to really find the weaknesses that may and do obstruct the successful realization of the ESP course, and that, therefore, need to be worked upon. Needless to say, this analysis also shows the strengths of students' prior knowledge.

The authors regularly perform both types of analysis at their institutions respectively. It is through these activities that it was found that students have very little and very inadequate prior knowledge of formats of either written or spoken communications. For the authors the similarities of the findings were a bit of a surprise as the institutions largely differ in profiles. However, in informal consultations with colleague from faculties of yet other profiles, we have come to the same answer. These comparisons are to be substantiated by further research.

The findings of the PSA as carried out on the Faculty of Electronic Engineering, University of Niš, Serbia, and the Department of English Language and Linguistics, University of Benghazi, Libya, were that students need a thorough, in-depth instruction and practice in both written and spoken communications formats. One of the reasons for almost complete lack of such skills in our students can be found in the fact that neither Serbian nor Libyan educational systems foster or even implement trainings in such areas. Moreover, those formats are typical for the Western school of thought to which neither country truly belongs.

## 2. The content of the communications format segment of an ESP course

The actual work on communications format comprises two parts: written and spoken [12]. Through the work on written formats students are made aware that many of the principles employed in writing are of equal relevance to speaking formats. Hereby, we shall present the content of the formats segment, however, our ESP courses do have the segments that deal with registers, appropriate lexis, stylistics, all related to those formats. The hedging we make here is that the purpose of this paper is to present mere content, with only some methodological aspects involved.

### 2.1. Written formats

The work on scientific presentations structures should begin with the lecture on *titles*. That is the first instance when students become aware of what is meant by precision in science, and why it is crucial to bear in mind the expectations of the audience, that is to control the flow of their understanding. The title contains the topic and a clearly defined angle from which it is being presented. It needs to be emphasized that this is the case when dealing with highly scientific or professional topics, not those written for general public. The next step in the analysis of structures is a *paragraph*, the smallest, nucleus logical piece of every presentation. On the example of a paragraph students should comprehend the 'ruling' model of scientific argumentation. The three, most common parts of a paragraph are: topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a closing one. Depending on the type of paragraph, the topic sentence can be a definition, an expression of the author's personal viewpoint, etc. Supporting sentences explain, describe or develop the thesis and provide examples that illustrate it properly. Concluding sentence sums up the idea of the entire paragraph. In all more complex structures of presentation this nucleus of the logic of scientific argumentation is only further developed and/or multiplied. According to the content, paragraphs can be classified as follows: definition, classification, description, comparison and contrast, sequence, choice, explanation, and evaluation paragraphs. This, however, is not the only possible classification. The classes may differ according to various criteria employed.

Once the principles of structuring a paragraph are mastered, as well as its various kinds, it is easy to move on to teaching the principles of structuring an *essay*, since it follows the already presented logic of organization. For the beginning, it is recommended that students write within the frame of a five paragraph essay. Seemingly a limitation, this only helps students acquire higher precision when numerous pieces of information are to be presented in a limited space. The most frequent types of essays in scientific/professional literature are: process analysis, exploratory, argumentative, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, classification, definition, and narrative essays. Yet, these types are not clearly delineated but mutually intertwined.

Such a kind of work should be the preparation for writing professional documents such as reports, journal articles, theses. But before that, students should be taught the special relevance of *proper documentation of sources, referencing and quoting,* that being a very important stance in our teaching process.

In today's fast and competitive world, *correspondence* often plays the crucial role in promoting work, establishing contacts, enhancing profession. The work in this field begins with the structure of a common letter. The upgrade is the work on the vocation specific situations. Some of the basic types of correspondence are: initiating cooperation, initiating visits abroad, requesting/inviting a guest professional from abroad, recommending technical training, requesting information, application letters, letters of recommendation, resumé/CV, cover letters, memorandums.

### 2.2. Spoken formats

*Spoken presentations* mean public speaking. Spoken presentations practiced at our classes are simulations of future job specific situations like delivery of a scientific finding in front of

an audience that may be academic, business, of governmental; presentations for a general audience; speaking to students, high school pupils, etc.

The fact insisted on is that spoken presentations are much more than a simple delivery of one's scientific of professional knowledge. The preconditions of an effective, but most importantly good spoken presentations are many. Sole mastery of the required knowledge is insufficient in this case. The success largely depends on judging all the specifics of the situation and responding to those properly, and the impression one gives as a person. Spoken presentation should never be a monologue, but an active dialogue in which verbal communication is not the only constituent. The facts that need students' close attention are:

– To identify the audience as precisely as possible. It is not always an easy task, but it is absolutely necessary. Different audiences require and are prepared for different amounts and depths of information. The success of a presentation depends on knowing those in advance.

– The presentation can have one of these aims: to inform, persuade, teach, and is variously shaped accordingly.

– Students should gain the mastery of organizing and selecting their arguments or pieces of information so as to respect the time allotted. Also, for the sake of their assertiveness they should familiarize themselves with the physical space for their presentation and visualize their movements within.

– When designing a visual, students should consider its effect on the audience. Visual aids function as «cue cards» clarifying the message and allowing the audience to remember the main points.

– The introduction must draw the audience's attention, identify the topic, and create expectations in the audience that the presenter will satisfy in the course of the presentation.

– The audience needs to be presented with the aim, content, and structure of presentation in the introduction part.

The other crucial part of the spoken presentations is ***expert argumentation***. Situations in which professionals finds themselves needing to argue in favor or against a certain concept vary from the most informal, a chat after a conference session, for example, to the most formal, like presenting a research paper and having a formal discussion with the audience afterwards. Whatever the occasion, to prove your expertise education and culture, you need to tailor your speech, the flow of your argumentation according to the logic rules inherent in the very nature of science. The formality/informality of the actual words and phrases you employ will vastly depend on the situation. When having a discussion of a pro and contra type, in order to present and defend your viewpoint you will need to *build a case*. This means your delivery should have the following segments: introduction, credentials, clarifying the background of the problem, stating the personal professional stance, presenting arguments that support one's stance and the conclusion.

### 3. Concluding Remarks

English language instruction today is often one of the crucial aspects of preparing students for their vocation in a highly competitive international professional environment. Teaching principles of written and spoken communications at faculty level is an especially relevant curriculum segment and is done with the ultimate purpose of better communicating professional knowledge to other professionals and to non specialists. Every professional is involved in some aspects of communication which usually involve gathering, analyzing, and distributing scientific and/or technical information efficiently and accurately for specific audiences.

The fundamental purpose of professional discourse is not mere presentation of information and thought, but rather its actual communication. The content that the author wants to convey is inseparable from the form they employ. Depending on the exact profile of the target science/occupation, specific vocabulary, style, and organizational structure of presentation need to be taught.

Spoken communication for academic and professional purposes occupies a significant part of language teaching classes. The aim of such classes is practical and concrete. It is designed to meet the job-specific needs of students [2], and allows them to present the acquired academic knowledge in both academic and professional environment.

Teaching students to design effective presentations implies developing their insightful and well-trained thinking strategies that can produce clarity in communication without oversimplifying

scientific or vocational issues. The results are substantive, not merely cosmetic: improving the quality of presentation actually improves the quality of thought and vice versa.

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Статтю присвячено проблемам навчання академічних презентацій англійською мовою як необхідного елемента підготовки студентів до практичного використання мови, що викладається для спеціальних цілей, у професійній та академічній діяльності майбутнього фахівця. Розробляється методика навчання усного та письмового формату таких презентацій.

*Ключові слова: усний та письмовий формат академічних презентацій, англійська мова для спеціальних та професійних цілей, розробка навчальних програм.*

Статья посвящена проблемам обучения академическим презентациям на английском языке как необходимому элементу подготовки студентов к практическому использованию языка, преподаваемого для специальных целей, в профессиональной и академической деятельности будущих специалистов. Разрабатывается методика обучения устному и письменному формату таких презентаций.

*Ключевые слова: устный и письменный формат академических презентаций, английский язык для специальных и профессиональных целей, разработка учебных программ.*

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