

Task-Based Terminology Instruction for Enhancing Professional Communicative Competence in ESP Classrooms

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Abstract: This article examines task-based terminology instruction as a methodological mechanism for enhancing professional communicative competence in English for Specific Purposes classrooms. Drawing on TBLT, ESP, lexical learning and genre perspectives, it proposes a four-phase model consisting of pre-task orientation, a communicative task cycle, post-task language analysis and reflective transfer. The model aligns target professional situations, high-value terminology, communicative outcomes and performance-based assessment. Particular attention is given to terminological accuracy, discourse construction, interactional effectiveness and professional task achievement.

Keywords: Task-based language teaching, terminology instruction, ESP, professional communicative competence, professional discourse, performance assessment.

Introduction: The growing professionalization of English-language education requires university courses to produce learners who can use disciplinary language under realistic communicative conditions. In Uzbekistan, this direction corresponds to the national policy of strengthening practical foreign-language competence. The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-5117 of 19 May 2021 establishes measures aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of foreign-language learning and expanding opportunities for the practical use of languages [1]. In higher education, the implementation of this policy requires methodologies that connect English with the students' future occupational and academic practices. One of the most productive points of integration is specialized terminology, because professional communication is largely organized around concepts, processes, objects, indicators and decisions that are linguistically realized through discipline-specific lexical units.

At the same time, terminology presents a methodological paradox. It is highly visible in ESP syllabi,

textbooks and assessment, but students may retain lists of terms without being able to activate them in professional interaction. The problem is not insufficient exposure alone; it is the lack of a structured route from recognition to purposeful use. A student may successfully match a term with a definition and still fail to explain it to a partner, distinguish it from a related concept, apply it to a case or employ it in a reasoned recommendation. Thus, professional communicative competence requires a shift from term-centered exercises to task-centered communication in which terminology functions as a necessary resource. The present article develops this position through a task-based methodological model designed to integrate lexical acquisition, discourse construction, interaction and reflective assessment.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) provides a strong theoretical basis for such integration. Ellis defines tasks as meaning-focused activities in which learners use their linguistic resources to achieve an outcome, while Long emphasizes target tasks and real-world relevance as central to task-based syllabus design [2; 3]. Willis

proposes a practical task cycle that includes pre-task preparation, task performance and subsequent language focus [4]. These principles correspond closely to ESP because both approaches begin with what learners need to do with language rather than with an abstract sequence of grammatical items. In terminology instruction, a task-based orientation changes the status of the term: it becomes an instrument for solving a problem, exchanging information, making a decision, explaining a process or producing a professional text.

The learning-centered tradition of ESP supports the same shift. Hutchinson and Waters argue that the defining feature of ESP is not a special type of English but an approach organized around the learner's reasons for learning [5]. Dudley-Evans and St John refine this view by linking ESP course design to needs analysis, target situations and disciplinary communication [6]. These principles imply that terminology should be selected according to communicative relevance. A term deserves instructional priority not only because it is frequent in a textbook, but because students need it to perform recurrent professional functions. In this sense, a terminology syllabus should be organized around combinations of concept and action: identify an indicator, describe a process, compare options, classify an object, interpret a result, identify a risk, explain a cause, propose a solution, justify a recommendation.

Vocabulary research clarifies why repeated task use is necessary. Nation explains that lexical knowledge includes form, meaning and use and develops incrementally through multiple encounters and retrieval opportunities [7]. Specialized terminology requires an especially rich representation because learners must connect linguistic form with domain-specific conceptual content and discourse behavior. Therefore, a single explanatory encounter is insufficient. The term should reappear in receptive and productive tasks, in oral and written modes, and in more than one communicative function. Repetition becomes pedagogically meaningful when the context changes. For example, a term first encountered in a definition may later be used to interpret data, discuss a case, answer a client's question and formulate a written recommendation. This variation creates retrieval, elaboration and transfer.

The proposed model is organized around four methodological layers: target situation, terminology

set, communicative task and assessment evidence. The target situation identifies a realistic professional context. The terminology set contains a limited number of high-value lexical units required to operate within that context. The communicative task specifies what learners must achieve through interaction or text production. Assessment evidence determines what observable performance will demonstrate competence. These layers prevent a common weakness in ESP practice: selecting interesting professional vocabulary without defining how the learner will use it. When all four layers are aligned, terminology is embedded into an instructional architecture that links needs, process and outcome.

The first phase of the model is pre-task orientation. Its purpose is to activate professional background knowledge, reduce conceptual ambiguity and create a minimal linguistic scaffold without pre-empting the communicative work. The teacher may present a diagram, chart, short professional text, photograph, data table or problem statement. Students predict key concepts, identify familiar terms and infer unfamiliar items from context. A concise terminology bank can then provide definitions, pronunciation support and two or three typical collocations. The amount of support should be carefully controlled. If every sentence needed for the task is supplied in advance, students merely reproduce the teacher's language; if support is absent, low-proficiency learners may be unable to participate. The optimal scaffold supplies essential lexical and functional resources while leaving space for choice, negotiation and reformulation.

The second phase is the communicative task cycle. Students complete an activity with a defined professional outcome. Information-gap tasks are useful when partners possess complementary data and must question each other to construct a complete picture. Decision-making tasks require learners to compare options according to criteria and reach a justified choice. Problem-solving tasks ask them to identify causes and propose solutions. Role-based simulations create differences in perspective: one learner may represent a specialist, another a client, manager, supplier, farmer, analyst or inspector. Mini-project tasks culminate in a tangible product such as a recommendation sheet, short report, process map or presentation. In every case, the selected terminology

should be functionally necessary for successful completion.

The third phase is post-task language analysis. Rather than treating correction as a list of isolated mistakes, the teacher analyzes how language influenced the quality of professional communication. Students compare effective and ineffective formulations, examine term-collocation patterns, repair ambiguity and improve discourse organization. A brief corpus-informed component can strengthen this stage. Mockienė, Rackevičienė and Ušinskienė demonstrate that terminology study based on corpus analysis can develop learners' investigative and analytical abilities [8]. Even a small teacher-prepared corpus can reveal which verbs, modifiers and grammatical frames regularly accompany a term. Learners then revise the expressions they used during the task. This creates a direct bridge between communicative experience and language awareness.

The fourth phase is reflective transfer. Students receive a new situation requiring related but not identical communicative behavior. For example, after discussing the causes of a production problem, they may have to write a short advisory message to a different audience. After comparing two methods orally, they may interpret a new set of data and defend a revised choice. This phase responds to Basturkmen's call for closer attention to learning trajectories and transfer in specialized registers [9]. It also prevents task success from being interpreted as stable competence. The ability to perform once with familiar support is not the same as the ability to mobilize professional language flexibly across contexts.

Assessment within the model is analytic and performance-based. Four criteria are proposed. The terminological-conceptual criterion evaluates the accuracy, appropriateness and range of specialized terms. The professional-discursive criterion evaluates coherence, logical sequencing and the use of communicative functions such as defining, comparing, explaining and justifying. The interactional-pragmatic criterion evaluates turn-taking, clarification, responsiveness and adaptation to interlocutor. The task-result criterion evaluates whether the professional problem has been addressed and whether the final product is usable. Equal attention to these criteria prevents vocabulary testing from becoming detached

from communicative purpose. It also allows the teacher to diagnose whether a weak performance results from insufficient conceptual knowledge, limited linguistic resources, discourse problems or interactional difficulty.

A practical lesson design may illustrate the logic. Suppose the target situation concerns evaluating two alternative professional procedures. The teacher selects eight core terms, four comparison expressions and two justification frames. During pre-task orientation students read a short description and classify the terms. In the task cycle, pairs receive different data and ask questions to complete a comparison table. They then agree on one option and justify their decision to another pair. During post-task analysis, the class examines inaccurate collocations and improves three representative statements. In the transfer phase, students receive a new case with altered conditions and record a two-minute recommendation. The final evidence therefore includes term use, interaction, reasoning and a professional outcome.

The methodological value of this design is that it promotes a controlled increase in communicative complexity. Initial tasks can be convergent and highly scaffolded: students identify, match, classify and exchange factual information. Later tasks can become divergent and less predictable: learners interpret ambiguous data, defend competing positions and negotiate a shared decision. Terminology also develops from receptive familiarity to productive flexibility. This progression is particularly important for first-year non-philological students, whose general English level may vary considerably. A task-based framework allows the teacher to retain a common professional objective while differentiating support. Learners with lower proficiency can use structured terminology cards and functional prompts; stronger learners can be challenged to reformulate, qualify and extend arguments.

The author's position is that task-based terminology instruction should be understood as a pedagogical sequence rather than a collection of entertaining activities. Each task needs a transparent relationship with a target professional function and an assessment criterion. The methodological sequence can be expressed as needs analysis → functional term selection → contextual input → scaffolded task → discourse-focused feedback → transfer task → reflective

assessment. If one element is missing, the system weakens. Needs analysis without transfer produces relevant but fragile learning; tasks without lexical focus may improve fluency without terminological precision; correction without task repetition may not produce durable change. Integration is therefore the defining condition of the model.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, task-based terminology instruction offers a coherent route for developing professional communicative competence in ESP classrooms. It addresses a major pedagogical gap between knowing specialized vocabulary and using it effectively. The proposed four-phase model – pre-task orientation, communicative task cycle, post-task language analysis and reflective transfer – combines the strengths of TBLT, ESP, lexical development and genre-aware pedagogy. Its assessment system links terminological accuracy with discourse, interaction and professional task achievement. Such a methodology is consistent with the practical orientation of foreign-language education promoted in Uzbekistan [1] and with research on specialized registers, genre, disciplinary communication and transfer [9; 10; 11; 12]. Further empirical work can test the model with different disciplines and proficiency levels, but its central pedagogical principle is clear: terminology becomes professionally valuable when students repeatedly use it to accomplish meaningful communicative work.

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