# AUTHENTIC ASSESMENT IN CONTEXT OF ESP

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*Abstract: It is necessary to improve the quality of teaching English globally. Application of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) to teaching process in any country in the world has been used as a very suitable tool to meet these task. Main goal of this paper is to emphasize authentic assessment within ESP as a really up-dated tool to evaluate the course. First and foremost, the paper emphasizes four general steps of authentic assessment. Afterwards, these four steps have been implemented to real-life example in Slovak background.*

*Keywords: quality of teaching, ESP (English for Specific Purposes), authentic assessment, English for sportsmen, learner centered training.*

**What is ESP?** English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a subdivision of a wider field, Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), which is defined as: „...the area of inquiry and practice in the development of language programs for people who need a language to meet a predictable range of communicative needs." (Swales,1993 p.300).

ESP is English instruction based on actual and immediate needs of learners who have to successfully perform real-life tasks unrelated to merely passing an English class exam.

ESP is considered to be needs based and task oriented. As it comes to teaching, it is demanding and quite time consuming. It is also different for every group of students. It is learner centered foreign language training, based on needs, involving all stakeholders and characterized by co-operation with workplace. Authenticity is very typical for ESP/LSP in terms of materials and tasks (specificity and relevance). The following picture shows the basic principles of ESP.
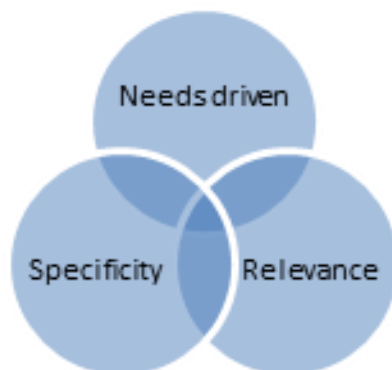


*Fig. 1. Core principles of ESP*
*Source: Own processing*

Regarding learners, they can be divided according to their need for English communication skills. The first group is represented by language learners, who are in the process of developing expertise in their fields, need English communication skills as tools in their training (e.g. communication skills as tools in training).The second group consists of learners, who are already experts in their fields, need English communication skills as tools in their work (e.g. communication skills as tools at work).

Regarding ESP professionals, they often have multiple roles in public, academic and private sector locally, regionally and globally as well. They roles are as follows:

- teaching or training (onsite and online)
- teacher or trainer development (onsite and online)
- curriculum design
- materials development
- program administration
- policy analysis and development
- public speaking
- research
- consulting

Regarding the areas of ESP application, there are as follows:

- identification of target market „customers", program design material development, delivery of training, program evaluation, professional development
- language planning and language policy (LPLP)
- EOP and multinational corporations (MNCs)

ESP is not only teaching list of specific vocabulary and use of language intuition. Needs analysis should include observations of the language in context and materials should be authentic and suitable. As ESP is very interesting topic and offers space for extensive discussion, we will have to focus only on one area, which is authentic assessment of the training.

**Authentic assessment of the course.** Purpose of authentic assessment is not meant to suggest that you have to choose between traditional methods of evaluation as tests and use some more authentic. It is to emphasize the advantages of authentic assessments, which have become popular in recent years among English teachers.

Authentic Assessment Toolbox created by Jan Mueller proposes 4 steps of authentic assessment, which are as follows:

1. Standards - standards, goals and objectives are all descriptions of what students should know and be able to do

2. Authentic task  - *an assignment given to students designed to assess their ability to apply standard-driven knowledge and skills to real-world challenges*

*3.* Criteria - indicators of good performance on a task

*4.* Rubric - *a scoring scale used to assess student performance along a task-specific set of criteria*

Following picture shows the positioning of standards in the process of authentic assessment.



*Fig. 2. Graphic display of standards*
*Source: http://jfmueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/*

Following scheme shows the fundamental difference between traditional and authentic assessment in terms of their defining attributes.

Table 1. Characteristic of authentic task

| Traditional | Authentic |
|---|---|
| Selecting a Response | Performing a Task |
| Contrived | Real-life |
| Recall/Recognition | Construction/Application |
| Teacher-structured | Student-structured |
| Indirect Evidence | Direct Evidence |

*Source: own processing*

**Criteria.** Following example  demonstrates the importance of setting good criteria due to improve the quality of ESP course.

Example: The student will conduct banking transactions.  The authentic task created by the teacher was to make  deposits, withdrawals or cash checks at a bank.   Regarding identification of criteria for this task, the teacher came up with seven crucial characteristics of completing this task, which are as follows:

- selects needed form (deposit, withdrawal)
- fills in form with necessary information
- endorses check
- locates open teller
- states type of transaction
- counts money to be deposited to teller
- puts money received in wallet

If the students meet the above mentioned criteria, they will perform well on the task, so they will meet the standard.

Basic task of research rubric is to measure if the students performance during the course meets the criteria of the task. The following rubric (scoring scale) is an example of research rubrics:

**Real-life example in Slovakia.** This authentic assessment has been created within an international online course English for Specific Purposes, managed by American English Institute. The course focusing on English for sportsmen was proposed at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication in Slovakia. Regarding our target learners of ESP, we have chosen the group of aerobics instructors (10-15 max ) in Bratislava. Level of English is pre-intermediate and intermediate.

Main goal of this course is to create and teach an aerobic lesson in English.

Table 2. Research rubric

| Criteria | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Sources | x1 | 1-4 | 5-9 | 10-12 |
| Historical Accuracy | x3 | Lots of historical inaccuracies | Few inaccuracies | No apparent inaccuracies |
| Organization | x1 | Can not tell from which source information came | Can tell with difficulty where information came from | Can easily tell which sources info was drawn from |
| Bibliography | x1 | Bibiliography contains very little information | Bibliography contains most relevant information | All relevant information is included |

*Source: http://jfmueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/*

Partial goals of the course are as follows:
- master vocabulary and phrases connected with aerobics
- master language of meetings
- present themselves at international gatherings (e.g. workshops)
- write e-mails
- make phone calls
- give feedbacks
- write reports

Regarding summative assessment, it must be logically connected with the final goal, as well as partial goals.

Task is to create a video of well performed aerobics lesson in English. This video will be used as a base for later communication practice.

Regarding authentic assessment, I will follow 4 steps discussed in Toolbox:

1.Standards
- students will create audio visual material
- this audio visual material (video) will be used as a base for communication
- students will mutually watch the videos produced by them
- students will actively listen to each other and provide feedback to each other
- students will be critical and objective

2. Authentic task
- motivation - students will watch the video dealing with an aerobics instructor, teaching a good aerobics lesson in English
- students will work in pairs
- final output - students are supposed to create similar video (while using vocabulary and phrases they mastered during the course)
- students will watch the videos, comment on it, giving a feedback to each other
- teacher will observe the students while watching the videos and commenting on it

3.Criteria

Criteria will consider both, the quality of video and communication itself.

Video:
- students will exercise in chosen premises
- students will use the aerobics vocabulary mastered
- students will use aerobics phrases mastered
- movements and phrases/vocabulary should match

- teacher will observe their work

Communication:

- students will give logical and objective feedback
- students will communicate fluently and accurately
- teacher will observe the communication

5. Rubric

This rubric will be used to evaluate the tasks.

Table 3.

| VIDEO | Poor | Good | Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Matching of body language and English used | There are a lot of discrepancies between English instruction and body language. The instruction rarely matches body language. | It take some time to follow the instruction or instruction differs a bit from the body language. | English and body language match a lot, the movements are immediately and correctly followed by instructions in English. |
| Aerobics phrases being used | Improper phrases are being used in context. | Improper phrases are being used sometimes. Sometimes the good ones. | Appropriate phrases are being used in correct context. Phrases are accurate and used in suitable context. |
| Aerobics vocabulary being used | Not suitable vocabulary is used, mistakes occur pernamenly. Less than required words are used. | There are sometimes mistakes in meaning of words and pronunciation. | Suitable vocabulary is used, required number of words is used in correct context. |

*Source: own processing*

Table 4.

| Communication skills | Poor | Good | Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fluency of English | Communication is poor, not fluent enough. | Communication is fluent, students understand the content, but they are not fluent enough. | Communication is fluent. Students speak English completely fluently, without hesitation. They are confident enough. |
| Accuracy of English | Communication is poor, mistakes occur frequently. | Students still make some mistakes bud understand quite well. | Almost no mistakes occur while speaking |
| Content and creativity | Very poor in terms of idea and creativity. | Quite good idea and creative processing, but nothing special. | Very good idea and creative processing. |

*Source: own processing*

In conclusion, it is necessary to emphasize authenticity of ESP assessment and its use in teaching real-life English. As it comes to authentic assessment in terms of course quality improvement, it is needy to follow and implement the above mentioned four steps - standards, authentic task, criteria and rubric. The purpose of this article was not to degrade traditional methods of assessment. It was to emphasize the authentic assessment as a suitable tool to improve the quality of teaching English language.

## REFERENCES

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