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ESP teachers' perception of textbooks: evaluation and possibilities for innovation²

Extended summary

This paper examines university teachers' perspectives on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks, focusing on their perceptions based on structured interviews and evaluation scales. The research goal was to get an insight into ESP teachers' attitudes towards the advantages and disadvantages of the textbooks used in teaching ESP at university level, and explore the potential for innovations in terms of teaching materials and, consequently, teaching process. Conducted at the University of Kragujevac, the research involved five ESP instructors teaching ESP courses across various academic fields, including technical, medical, natural, and social sciences. The research instruments included a semi-structured interview and an evaluation scale, while the results were processed using content analysis (for the interview) and SPSS programme for analysing the responses within the evaluation scale. The results indicate that textbooks have significant advantages, including a wide range of professional terminology and alignment with professional discourse, which makes them relevant for students' future careers. However, many disadvantages were pointed out, including an insufficient representation of conversation and writing skills, the lack of contextualised examples which are specific for local industries, and a minimal integration

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of digital resources. The need for the modernisation of the textbooks by combining printed material and digital tools is one of the key conclusions of the research. The teachers pointed out the potential for using QR codes connecting the materials with interactive content, as well as for updating the teaching process by using digital tools and modern forms of evaluation (quizzes, video games, etc.). Such innovations would improve considerably motivation and student engagement, while providing a greater learning autonomy. The qualitative analysis of the interview showed that teachers believe that textbooks are useful, but that they have to be adapted to meet the specific needs of the students and to fit the local context. The quantitative results of the evaluation scale indicated a positive perception of lexical and thematic content in the textbooks, but also the shortcomings in terms of an insufficient task diversity and the lack of interactive aspects. The discrepancy between objective evaluations and subjective experience points to the need for cooperation among teachers, researchers, and textbook publishers.

In conclusion, it is important to include teachers in the process of ESP textbook development and evaluation. Future textbooks should be aligned with contemporary pedagogical methods, integrate digital resources, and include diverse activities that encourage conversation and practical language usage. The research serves as a starting point for further development of innovative and tailored teaching materials which would cater for students' needs and facilitate their preparation for professional challenges.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), textbook evaluation, needs analysis, English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

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