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TEXT ACQUISITION IN THE ESP STUDIES AT TERTIARY LEVEL

Abstract
This paper deals with using specialized professional texts and the ways of developing students' textual competence in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) studies at tertiary level. Reading and writing are viewed interactively because writing can test understanding of the text. An attempt to present summary as a way of ascertaining whether the learner has understood the material he/she has been reading is made. Summarizing is highlighted as a thinking tool for the process of understanding, and communicating ideas. The author of the paper proposes criteria for evaluating the students' level of understanding the text. Data on use of summary markers, linking words and phrases for maintaining flow and establishing cohesion in the students' papers are discussed. Use of the summary writers own words when paraphrasing the main ideas of the original text is also examined. The analysis of the results shows that students have different skills of summarizing a text. To conclude, summary can serve as a tool for developing students' ability to reflect on the acquaired knowledge from the text, if citeria for writing effective summaries are taken into consideration.

Key words: textual competence, coherence, cohesion, discourse markers

Introduction

Textual competnce plays a significant role in the ESP teaching/learning. It represents an ability "to master the linguistic code, as well as an ability to use textual, contextual and pragmatic knowledge to construct and interpret contextually appropriate texts" (Bhatia, 2005).

Understanding of specialized texts is considered as one of the criteria for evaluating language use in a professional environment - professional language competence (Lūka, 2008). According to Lūka's (2008) classification understanding of a professional text for high level English proficiency students means the ability to understand long, complex and professional fields related texts in detail; to distinguish the different language styles, to understand the nuances of the specialized text, express or implied views, to explain them; when reading across long and complex professional fields related texts to guickly get the necessary information.

Learners' ability to work with specialized texts and to effectively reflect on the material they have been reading depends on both background knowledge in the subject and the language proficiency level. In order to understand a text in a subject area they need to understand the subject first (Davies, 2007). Even if actual information is entirely new, those who have background knowledge in the area and fairly good English will already be familiar with the terms or at least will acquire them very quickly.

Reading and writing can be viewed interactively (Bjork, Raisanen, 1997). Writing can test, clarify, and extend understanding (Kramiņa, 2000) of the reading material, It enables the learners to clarify and deepen their understanding of new concept and to find ways to relate it to other ideas within a discipline (Kramiņa, 2000). Seen from a broader perspective,

writing is not only a learning, a language development tool but also a tool for thinking in the process of, for instance, verbalising, discovering, understanding, and communicating ideas and emotions (Bjork,1997).

Learning new ideas at tertiary level consists of three stages during which the new concepts are comprehended, thought through and used in written and oral communication (Kramiņa, 2000). Language is manifested through speaking, listening as well as writing and reading skills which the users of the relevant language should possess and continuously develop. Moreover, these language skills are mutually interconnected and function in integrity.

In an age of information the ability to summarize is becoming increasingly essential in both personal and professional lives (Bjork, Raisanen, 1997). As readers and listeners people often need to know the main points without being overloaded by too much detail. Summarizing is also an excellent way of ascertaining whether one has understood and can remember the material he/she has been reading (Kramiņa, 2000).

In practice, students often recreate the text, for example, write a summary on a specialized professional text in the way that does not reveal to what extent they have understood the information. Their summaries consist of directly copied sentences from the original and they do not refer to the source material. Very often they also do not sound fluent because they do not include linking words and phrases that can help a writer maintain flow and establish clear relationship between ideas.

Theoretical Background

Due to the fact that ESP teaching/learning takes place in the context of other disciplines (Dudley-Evans, St. John, 1998) analysis of key texts on the disciplines and exploiting texts in English that present additional relevant material serve as a means for the ESP practitioner to help the students to understand how written and spoken texts are used within a particular discipline.

The approaches to using authentic or adapted texts in the ESP studies are contradictory. On the one hand, there is a view (Davies, 2007) that if the matching of the subject matter to the needs and interests of the learner has been done well, then there will be an advantage in providing a text as an exercise in the English class. Moreover, appropriate selection of core course and supplementary materials, including texts for reading, is considered (Donna, 2000) as a crucial part of effective Business English course planning. Therefore, if selected carefully, published materials, specifically created for the purpose of language teaching can help to give a course structure and direction precisely, because of their

predictability. The reasons for having very specific texts in the ESP class rest on the factors that they are relevant to the learner's special interests and can help the learner to be competent in the target situation (Hutchinson, Waters, 1991). Thus, information conveyed has high credibility and is more up-to-date than most Business English training materials (Ellis, Johnson, 1996). Texts which are taken from the real world provide information about real-life situations or events (Ellis, Johnson, 1996). It is suggested not to select texts as texts, but as elements in a learning process.

However, it is also argued (Ellis, Johnson, 1996) that there is no need for focusing on highly specific materials in the ESP classroom too much. It is said that authentic materials are, in reality, not very reliable as sources of teaching material and can be used only occasionally on a course - to supplement Business English material by adding interest and variety. It is explained, that sub-technical and texnical vocabulary as well as a higher proportion of particular grammatical or structural forms for certain subject areas are the only ways in which the subject has influence on the language content.

In linguistics the word text is "any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole" (Halliday, Hasan, 1976). Moreover, it is realized by sentences and there are certain linguistic features which contribute to its total unity.

One of the features characteristic of texts is cohesion. It "consists of certain linguistic devices, including pronouns and conjunctions, which enable the writer or speaker to make relationships between entities and events explicit" (Nunan, 1993). It is expressed partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary (Halliday, Hasan, 1976). The means whereby elements that are structurally unrelated to one another are linked together and make a text different from a rondom collection of unrelated sentences are called markers, or discourse markers. Discourse markers tell us about textual competence of those who use them (Schiffrin, 2003). They are proposed as a set of expressions that function in textual domains comprised of members of word classes as varied as conjunctions, interjections, adverbs, and lexicalized phrases. Any segment of a text can be characterized in terms of the number and kinds of ties it displays ((Halliday, Hasan, 1976). They make it possible to analyse a text in terms of its cohesive properties. Text analysis studies the formal linguistic devices that distinguish a text from random sentences (Nunan, 1993).

Summarizing can help the learners develop "textual ability to organize forms and convey meanings within units of language longer than a single sentence (Schiffrin, 2003). The basic principle behind a good summary is selectivity (Bjork, Raisanen, 1997). To summarize is to identify what is important and to set aside that which is less important; to distinguish from the main points on the one hand, and their supporting details on the other.

The purpose of writing summaries is to compress the information in the way that enables the reader to decide if the information is worth reading (Ilyinska, 2004). It should contain enough information to be understandable without having to read the original text. A good summary should not copy the article (Swales, Feak, 2009) except for the technical words (Boardman, 2009). It should be presented in the summary writer's own words (Leonhard, 2002, Bjork, Raisanen, 1997) and grammar (Boardman, 2009). Reference to the source of the article should always be included.

Summary writer's understanding of what he or she has read should be demonstrated by specific language use common to summary writing genre. They are, for example, phrases which can - express addition, adversativity, cause and effect, clarification, contrast, illustration, intensification (Swales, Feak, 2009). Linking words and phrases - help the writer to achieve coherence, establish clear, logical relationship between the ideas. Summary or attitude markers at the beginning of sentences remind the readers about the original of the ideas (Bjork, Raisanen, 1997).

Kramiņa (2000) proposes the check list according to which a summary can be evaluated: does the summary give me enough information to make sense without reading the original? Does the summary give me too much information so that I can't distinguish the important from the unimportant points? Does the summary read smoothly? Are the sentences well constructed, is there linkage from one sentence to another? Are relationships between ideas indicated clearly? Is this signalled clearly by use of such words as 'because', 'as', 'so'?

The author of the paper has found useful the idea (Ilyinska, 2004) that a summary can be effective if criteria for writing effective summaries are taken into consideration.

Methods and results

In Decenber 2010 at the School of Business Administration Turiba a research
activity was carried out whose aim was to study the students' skill to formulate a specialized text in their own words, to maintain flow and establish clear relationship between ideas.

At the School of Business Administration Turiba student self- studies include reading professional teksts. The purpose is to develop ability to learn independently through reading for job or occupation. Home reading includes such activity as making a summary on the original text. Students should be able to express the content of the reading material in a compressed form, as well as present it in their own words and grammar.

The focus group consisted of 12 second year students of the Faculty of Business Administration (BA). All the students belonged to intermediate language group level, and all of them were students of the group in which the author had been teaching English. Thus the

gained results could be used in practice to improve the students' textual ability. The focus of investigation was upon use of useful phrases and words for writing summaries in the students' papers. The results gained were systematized in Microsoft Excel.
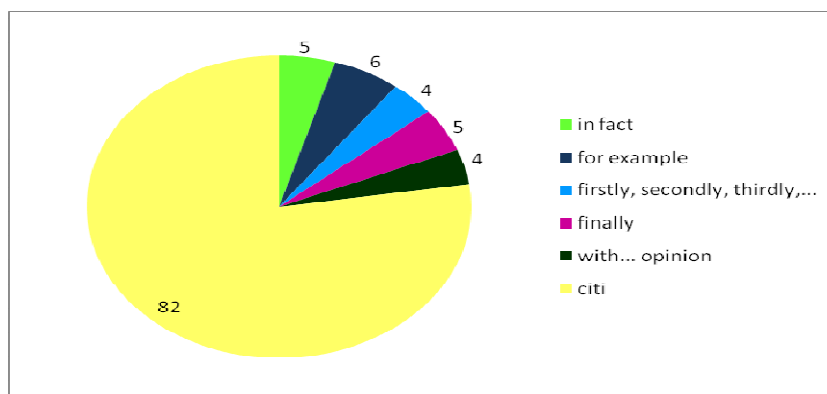

Table 1 shows high frequency words/phrases used in the
students' papers. They are 'for example' (6) and 'in fact', finally (5).
Other words/phrases have been mentioned three or less times.

The analysis of the results obtained by analysing the students' summaries shows different frequency of words/phrases used in the students' papers. High frequency words/phrases are 'for example' (50%), 'in fact' (42%), 'finally' (42%). Other words and phrases are used less frequently. The results of the research reveal the fact that students have more knowledge of some simple words/phrases than complicated ones. Students still need to strengthen vocabulary for summary writing because the number of included linking words and phrases is different: student 1 (3 words), student 2 (14), student 3 (4), student 4 (18), student 5 (12), student 6 (4), student 7 (0), student 8 (5), student 9 (1), student 10 (3), student 11 (4), student 12 (2).

Conclusions

To sum up, on the basis of the research results gained from the theoretical studies and obtained during the analysis of the students' papers, learning materials for developing their skills to write effective summaries have been developed. The author of the paper considers that to carry out more specific research summaries should be evaluated according to all their characteristic features. Summary can serve as a tool for evaluating students'

understanding of the text, if citeria for writing effective summaries are taken into consideration.

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