

English course in two vocational upper-secondary schools in Kosovo and Macedonia – A critical approach

PhD (C.) Osman Osmani

University of Pristina "Hasan Prishtina", Kosovo

PhD (C.) Albulena Lala-Zeqiri

Secondary teacher

Abstract

Vocational education today has become a great necessity. This is due to the fact that the labor market offers various professional opportunities. It is not enough just to know its significance theoretically. Unless accompanied by practical concretization, its passive awareness is just nonsense. Today, schools all over the world offer professional education. This is an undeniable fact. Macedonia and Kosovo offer the same education too. However, whether the latter are preparing students for the international market or not, remains a puzzle.

We conducted a comparative study in order to examine the syllabi of two vocational schools, "Arseni Jovkov" in Macedonia and "Jonuz Zejnullahu" in Kosovo, and find out which one better satisfies students needs and expectations. In addition, we interviewed three teachers from each school. It is to be noted that we adapted a critical approach throughout the study. Based on the findings, it is revealed that none of the schools offer ESP course for their students. However, while in Macedonia it is the Ministry itself through the Bureau of Education that designs the syllabus and is the determiner of the school textbooks; in Kosovo professors do have a kind of autonomy in designing their syllabi. Nevertheless, the latter although having an advantage in this regard, yet again choose General English course instead of ESP. In any case, the Ministries of both states should reflect upon ESP, and incorporate it in the school curriculum, considering the fact that professors are willing to adapt ESP course in their schools.

Keywords: ESP, GE, Macedonia, Kosovo, vocational education, students.

Introduction

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research is to examine, analyze, and contrast the English syllabi of two vocational upper-secondary schools of two states, Macedonia and Kosovo, and see whether English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is being applied in these two schools or not. The aim of researching the current web pages of the Ministry of Education of both countries accompanied us during the whole process of the study. Furthermore, in order to get to know the actual situation, we aimed to interview six teachers from two vocational schools: three Macedonian citizens and three Kosovan ones. The laws about vocational education, its aim, and students' expectations were available and downloadable for everyone. In addition, one of our objectives was to adapt a critical approach and try to come out with results which we considered to be very crucial for the Ministry of Education in general and English professors of the very same schools in particular.

Research Problem

A friend of ours, who currently works in a vocational school, once told us that students of vocational upper-secondary schools in Kosovo are being taught General English (GE) only. To be honest, at first we didn't believe him. One day, while surfing into internet, we came across the web page of Ministry of Education of Kosovo, and driven by curiosity, we visited it to prove our friend's statement. Oh yes! We were just surprised. The English syllabus for vocational schools was solely based on General English. It was the same syllabus both for gymnasiums and vocational schools. "It is not supposed to be like this," – we said to ourselves, - "we think that only vocational schools in Kosovo do not offer English for Specific Purposes course for their students. Macedonia, Albania, and Serbia do." And we wanted to undertake a contrastive analysis between pre-university education policies, including English syllabi of one of these countries with Kosovo. However, it was impossible for us to have access to any vocational schools in Albania and Serbia. Honestly, we didn't even try because we have no one there to help us. On the other hand, we decided to do this analysis between two schools in Kosovo and Macedonia, since we could have access in an economic and law vocational school in Skopje.

Research Hypothesis

The current research hypothesizes that, "English for Specific Purposes course in vocational schools is an immediate necessity and must be incorporated once and for all."

Research Questions

The following questions serve as a map in designing our research:

1. What English courses do vocational upper-secondary schools in the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Kosovo offer for their students?
2. Do the current syllabi in both states satisfy students' needs?
3. What are teachers' perceptions regarding ESP syllabus?
4. What are the consequences of non-offering ESP course for students of these vocational schools both in Macedonia and Kosovo?

Significance of the Research

The findings of the study highlight the current situation regarding English course in "Arseni Jovkov" and "Jonuz Zejnullahu" vocational schools, and consequently shed lights on similarities and differences prevailing in the syllabi of both aforementioned schools. Its findings reveal which school offers a better syllabus, and as a consequence serve as a guide to the pertinent future syllabi for English professors of the same schools. In addition, these findings further serve as a useful means contributing to a vital and necessary change for students' better.

Literature Review

The importance of English language for Macedonian and Kosovo students

English is being spoken worldwide. Day after day, it is spreading in every corner of the world. Balkans in general, and Kosovo and Macedonia in particular, have spread

their arms and embraced this spreading. It seems that these two countries have realized that a great means for being linked with other nations is by knowing English. Its importance is realized by everyone. To this importance both countries did not stay immune. They wanted to reflect and in fact both countries made a great step in offering students more opportunities to learn English. Now, first graders in Kosovo and Macedonia are obliged to attend English courses. If one wants to penetrate to the developed western countries and find a job, he has to know at least English. It is very crucial. Since by the law of nature you have to work in order to survive, it means that if you want to find a good job, English shouldn't be inseparable part of your life. However, you cannot be qualified as an expert in particular fields unless you know English terminology for that field.

English for Specific Purposes

It was in 1960s when English for Specific Purposes became an important and vital section of Applied Linguistics. With English rapid spread all over, the need for coping with different fields of English emerged. ESP usually refers to teaching specific skills of the language in order for the learner to master that particular field for his/her future job. Robinson (1980) states that not all students learn and study English just because they are interested in learning and mastering it; they rather learn it for study or they need it in their work. ESP students do not learn English solely to get a general knowledge on English or English culture itself, but to be equipped with the necessary knowledge for their professional field of study or their job. Therefore, we can conclude that ESP serves as a means of helping students to develop their skills in their particular field and use the same in their workplace.

Methodology

Participants

Six professors were part of our study. Three of them were of vocational school "Arseni Jokov", and three of the vocational school "Jonuz Zejnullahu". It is worth noting that the former school is a mixed school of both communities, Macedonians and Albanians. It consists of 18 classrooms, out of which six are composed of Albanian students and 12 of Macedonian ones. Both teachers of two nationalities offer the same syllabus. The only difference is that the very same syllabus is translated in Macedonian and Albanian.

Instruments

We conducted interviews as an instrument for gathering qualitative data for the current study. Only professors who teach 12th graders were part of our study.

Procedures

First of all, we examined the web pages of the Ministries of Education of Macedonia and Kosovo in order to find out what the laws for vocational education say and what syllabi they offer. The interviews in "Arseni Jokov" school took place on February 6, 2018. It took interviewees no more than 25 minutes each. On the other hand, the interviews with teachers of vocational school "Jonuz Zejnullahu" took place on February 8, 2018. They were asked the same questions, and the interviews were

conducted in English. They included open-ended questions followed by follow-up question

Findings and Analysis

English Syllabus of "Arseni Jovkov" school analysis

Shkolla e mesme: "Arseni Jovkov"
 Profesori: Besa Kadriu

Plani global vjetor

Plani global për mësimdhënie të gjuhës angleze për vitin e III-të, arsim i mesëm.

Libri: "HEADWAY Intermediate" Autori: Liz and John Soars
 Botues: Oxford University Press

Numri i orës	Kapitulli	Gramatikë	Vokabular	Modellet komunikative	Përp. i përmbajt. të	Udhëzimi i përmbajtjes	Vërtetimi i përmbajtjes	Koha e realizimit
1	Njësia 1	Konsolidimi i kohërave gramatikore - Simple - Continuous - Perfect	Format e përbëra emërore, foljore dhe të mbienarit Leksikon dhe vokablar në lidhje me udhëtime dhe shtëpi	Shkëmbimi i informatave në lidhje me udhëtime. Diskutim rreth aspekteve pozitive dhe negative të të jetuarit jashtë shtetit.	6	2	1	Shtator
2	Njësia 2	Përsëritja dhe përcaktimi i kohës Present Perfect, Simple dhe Continuous.	Kolokacione me foljet make dhe do Frazat dhe Idiomat	Pasthirmat Bisedë rreth efekteve negative të turizmit masovik.	6	2	1	Shtat./ Tetor
3	Njësia 3	Kohërat gramatikore narrative. - Past Simple - Past Continuous - Past	Leksikon lidhur me libra dhe filmat.	Të treguarit interes dhe habi. Tregim Diskutim rreth librit ose filmit të preferuar Të shprehurit me	6	2	1	Tetor

Due to the limited space that we were supposed to use in this scientific paper, we introduced only the first page of it, although the analysis is made about the whole syllabus.

If we examine the English syllabus of vocational school of economy and law "Arseni Jovkov" closely, we can see that it is solely based on General English, with the main focus in grammar. The content of the current syllabus is based on the book Headway Intermediate / Student's book by John and Liz Soars, published at Oxford University Press. Out of 12 chapters that this book contains, neither a single chapter nor a single session of it is devoted to economic or law terminology. Even the few words that we could find were overly basic; words that we constantly encounter in everyday life. For instance, when dealing with jobs, it mentions a few of them very briefly without giving any detailed explanation. Figure 1 represents a designed syllabus for a vocational school; however, does it really seem to be for vocational one? Obviously, it

is not designed for the school it serves to. It is solely based on the traditional approach, where the student is offered GE only.

According to the Article 4 - which is available on the official website of Ministry of Education of Macedonia - on the aims and duties of vocational education and training, it is stated that through professional education, the competences development, knowledge, and necessary skills for professional activities and self-employment within a society based on the principles of market and democracy are aimed to be achieved. Something is said theoretically, while practically the opposite prevails. We do not pretend to talk about other courses, as our study is not based on other courses but English. The actual syllabus obviously does not serve this purpose. We do not say either that GE is not important at all. We are saying that what the ministry provides for vocational schools does not serve the purpose mentioned in the above section. There is no doubt that the world market of economy and law require the recognition of the terminology of these profiles. How can a student become employed in the world market when everything s/he constantly learned and still learns at school was never related to what s/he ought to learn?

Furthermore, according to the law on textbooks for primary and secondary education, Article 5, Point 2, for adapting textbooks from foreign countries, it is said that only one school book is permitted, which the Ministry of Education and Science provides in accordance with the law. The fact that it is the Ministry of Education which determines the syllabus for the English course and the fact that it is the very same ministry which determines the type of book to be taught has made it impossible for the teachers of "Arseni Jovkov" vocational school to select the materials, although they claim that such a syllabus is not adequate for students of economics and law. Though the same profiles differ in almost all courses, when it comes to the English language one, there is no difference at all. This is confirmed by the English professors of this school which blame the ministry itself for this. According to them, if they were given enough space for compiling and modifying the syllabus themselves, they would do it far better, where ESP with economic and law terminology would dominate.

The analysis of syllabus provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo

The syllabus offered by MEST, Kosovo, which is available on the web page of the same ministry, does not specify which schools it is designed for. In Kosovo, pre-university secondary education includes gymnasiums and vocational schools. Although the differences are great between the two, the current syllabus does not reflect any single difference at all.

Unlike the Ministry of Education of Macedonia, which sets out the school textbooks to be offered for students, the Ministry of Education in Kosovo does not specify anywhere which books to be used, either for gymnasiums or vocational schools. Nor is it known on what basis this syllabus has been compiled. This gives space to the professors who by being unable to provide their students with a particular book choose the books they wish to lecture themselves. Although a kind of autonomy in designing their syllabi is given to them, yet again English professors of the vocational school "Jonuz Zejnullahu" in Kosovo somehow intentionally neglect ESP, because according to our interviewees there, it requires a great effort in finding and modifying

material from the internet or other sources. The fault is two-folded here. The biggest fault lies on the ministry itself, but Albanian teachers are not immune to this fault either.

GRADE TWELVE – TOPICAL CONTENT

1 Career paths

- Outstanding students
- Bringing up a better baby
- Helping youngsters succeed.

2. Journeys

- Backpackers on the road
- Un unforgettable journey
- The experience of lifetime

3. Life stories

- Brain power and unusual achievements
- Emotional intelligence
- Super athletes

4. Big events

- Festivals or celebrations in your country
- Getting together
- Organizing an international event

5. Environmental Issues

- Unnatural disasters
- Hell and high water
- Natural disasters

6. Organic food

- Organic farms
- Junk food
- Keeping fit and loosing weight

7. Media, money and power

- The beauty and the beast
- Planning an event
- Paparazzi

8. World citizenship

- Migrations
- Studying abroad
- Applying for a visa
- Home is where you make it

Figure 2 The syllabus provided by MEST, Kosovo

On the other hand, while English professors of “Andrei Jovkov” school in Macedonia were very zealous and enthusiastic for introducing ESP in vocational school syllabus, the same enthusiasm was not noticed to Kosovan professors of “Jonuz Zejnullahu” school. The formers claim that they are even willing to cooperate right away with other Macedonian professors who teach specific courses of economic and law terminology in Macedonian and Albanian and, parallel to their courses to incorporate relevant English terminology too. According to them, this is the key to the fastest absorption of the relevant terminology.

English Syllabus of “Jonuz Zejnullahu” school analysis

Plani vjetor : Gjuhët dhe komunikimi

Shkalla: VI Klasa: XII. Viti shkollor 2017-2018 Lënda: Gjuhë Angleze Mesimdhënësi: Jeton Rexhepi

FLIHA KURRIKULARE	Konceptet themelore te fushes kurrikulare (marrë nga BK)	Rezultatet e fushës së kurrikules (RNF) (marrë nga BK)	Temat mësimore që trajtohen gjatë një viti mësimor	Temat mësimore te shpërndara gjatë muajve					Rezultatet e Kompetencave (Rezultatet e të nxënit për shkollë)
				Shtator Tetor	Nëntor Dhjetor	Janar Shkurt	Mars Prill	Maj Qershor	
GJUHET DHE KOMUNIKIMI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Tekstet letrare dhe jolettrare; *Gjuhë figurative dhe jofigurative; *Pjesët skenike, teatri, dramatikimi, etj.; *Historia, teoria, kritika, romantizmi, realizmi, letërsia antike, letërsia moderne; *Sistemi i gjuhës (gramatikë, leksik, fonetike, sintaksë, drejtshkrim). 	ISHKATHËSITË E KOMUNIKIMIT Te Dëgjuarit dhe të folurit 1.1, 1.2 Të Lexuarit 2.1, Të shkruarit 3.1 II. KUPTIMI DHE ANALIZA E TEKSTEVE-1.1,1.2 III. ZHVILLIMI I KREATIVITETIT - 1 IV .Identiteti dhe Kultura VIII. Njohuritë- 1,3	Unit 1 It's a wonderful world Unit 2 Get Happy Unit 3 Telling tales Unit 4 Doing the right thing Unit 5 ON the move Unit 6 I just love it, Unit 7 The world of Work Unit 8 Just imagine Unit 9 Tell me about it!	Unit 1 It's a wonderful world Unit 2 Get happy	Unit 3 Telling Tales Unit 4 Doing the right thing	Unit 5 On the move Unit 6 I just love it	Unit 7 The world of work Unit 8 Just imagine	Unit 8 Just Imagine Conditionals	Kompetencat e komunikimit dhe të shprehurit – Komunikues Efektiv 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9 Kompetencat e të menduarit – Mendimtar Kreativ II,2,7 Kompetencat e të nxënit – Nxënës i suksesshëm III 1 ,3,4,6,9 Kompetencat për jetë për punë dhe për mjedis – Kontribues produktiv IV 1,8 Kompetenca Personale – Individ i Shëndoshë V - 1,5 Kompetenca qytetare –

Figure 3 The syllabus of vocational school “Jonuz Zejnullahu”

Obviously, the syllabus of the vocational school “Jonuz Zejnullahu” for the 12th grades does not coincide with the one the ministry provides. This is an indication that these teachers have a kind of autonomy in syllabus design. After being asked about the discrepancy of their syllabus with the one that the ministry provides, the interviewees of the aforementioned school asserted that they have to do what they have done because they have no idea which book the ministry bases the current syllabus. Therefore, this gives them the right to decide on the book they want to use. However, when asked about the reason for not designing a syllabus which would meet students’ requirements, .i.e. by incorporating ESP since they had a kind of autonomy, they said they are not qualified for designing ESP, because designing an adequate syllabus for ESP course is complicated since a lot of school profiles operate under the umbrella of vocational schools.

Surprisingly, even the syllabi of the teachers of the same school for 12th grades differ. Although the content is based on the same book, the specifications differ. Besides, the syllabus of vocational school “Jonuz Zejnullahu” for 12 grades is of a higher level compared to the one of the same grade in Macedonia. This is also another indication that Kosovo teachers so far have compiled and designed their syllabi based on their thoughts.

Discussion

Introduction

Under the conditions of society and labor market demands, these schools and the like are supposed to prepare accountants, bankers, lawyers, and so on with skills in the vocational field, mainly in offering them English for economy and law. In addition, they are supposed to prepare highly skilled persons with the skills needed to adapt to the demands of the world of economy and law. The foreign language course for specific purposes just like in European countries, in Macedonia and Kosovo needs to occupy an important place that will serve to satisfy students' needs. However, is it really taking place? Is it satisfying students' needs? The findings so far suggest that none of the states are even contributing to it.

Although under the Law on Professional Education and Training provided in the Official Newspaper of the Republic of Macedonia with no. 71/2006; 117/2008; 148/2009; 17/2011; 24/2013; 137/2013 and 41/2014), Article 2, Point 1 it is stated that vocational education and training is part of the education system that provides individual personal development through the acquisition of competencies, knowledge, and skills necessary for inclusion in the labor market or continuation of education, and Article 2, Point 2 the Institution for Vocational Education and Training is the institution whose main activity is the vocational education and training, it seems that with regard to English course, these articles are but statements; the English course is neglected totally. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology in Kosovo continuously states that they are aware of the importance of English, especially in the vocational schools. What nonsense! It is not a swallowed morsel anymore! Their uninterrupted statements that they have been engaged in trying to raise students' quality in this regard for 17 years now, reveals their hypocrisy. This cannot be achieved by blank statements. Commitment to materialize these declarations is indeed necessary. But do they have the courage to do so? Does this lead their agenda? Obviously not! "Lots of word, but little work" - paraphrases their condition. This is also evidenced by the English language syllabi of both vocational schools, where all professional profiles are offered only General English course. GE is undoubtedly a necessary means in the way to English-speaking countries, but is that all? In order to penetrate the international market, English acquisition must take place, i.e. English acquisition of the respective courses of the specified profile. One cannot be fully considered ready enough for the European trade market if s/he lacks English regarding his/her occupation.

While the Bureau of Education in Macedonia defines the books students must work with, non-defining school books by MEST in Kosovo has left an open door to teachers to do whatever they want. Although having a chance to utilize and incorporate ESP course in their school, this advantage has never been used properly by professors of "Jonuz Zejnullahu" school. Nevertheless, again it is better to exist a certain mechanism which should determine the level that these students have to attend as does the Bureau of Education in Macedonia. This implies, among other things that education there has been given more importance compared to Kosovo.

Regarding the importance of ESP course, the interviewees of both schools under

study are aware of the need of incorporating it into vocational schools. According to them, there is no need to verify the actual situation, since the same opinion is almost shared by every professor of other vocational schools too. However, they encourage the relevant ministries to take immediate steps and engage experts on designing syllabus with ESP incorporated.

Although professors of these schools have never offered even a single session with ESP, which is asserted by them, their perceptions on ESP, among other things, are that this course would stir students' enthusiasm. Furthermore, it would create a more favorable learning environment, and consequently progress in their field would not be lacking. In addition, it would only enrich their range of knowledge with the recognition of the relevant field of English terminology.

Conclusions

Although the student himself chooses a particular vocational field of education, and most likely s/he wishes to continue his/her university studies on the same field, or that through it s/he wants to make things easier for penetrating the international market, the school does not offer an ESP course that parallel to the acquisition of the relevant terminology, to acquire the English terminology of the same term as well.

If the ministries of both states indeed want to increase the quality in vocational schools, as they claim that these schools are their priority, with regard to their focus on other courses, they should not neglect English either. English course in general and ESP in particular must be given its deserved place. The syllabi must be modified and adapted to the needs of the students for the labor market, since obviously, the two schools under the study do not satisfy students' foresees required needs.

The current study provides many evidences and reasons which should prompt the Ministries of Education of Macedonia and Kosovo to take immediate and concrete steps in introducing ESP into vocational schools, which, parallel with the relevant Macedonian and Albanian terminology, would also offer English one. It is professors' perceptions and no one better knows the real situation than the professors who work in these schools. Therefore, it is time to reflect. Let the phrase, "Better ever than never" echo in the officials' ears.

Recommendations

- The Ministries of Education of both countries should offer ESP courses in vocational schools.
- Kosovo should establish a mechanism like the Bureau of Education in Macedonia which controls and have authority on designing syllabi.
- English teachers in Kosovo should use their autonomy and incorporate ESP into their course.
- Although English teachers in Macedonia cannot interfere in all their classes, they can and should use ESP terminology in their discussions with students and connect it with Macedonian or Albanian terminology.

Limitations of the Study

We gathered qualitative data only. The research was carried out only in the context of the vocational schools "Arseni Jovkov" in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, and "Jonuz

Zejnullahu" in Viti, Republic of Kosovo, Kosovo. Therefore, this study's sample was small and not representative of all vocational schools in both states. In addition, it involved only six English teachers from both schools under the study.

Suggestion for further research

In the future, if any researcher intends to conduct a similar study, he is strongly encouraged to include more subjects and carry the study over a longer period of time. Quantitative data would undoubtedly enrich the study. Therefore, in order to have more reliable results, future researchers are suggested to adapt a quantitative approach as well. Moreover, students of other profiles should be part of the study.

References

- Hutchison, T. & Waters, A. (1987), English for Specific Purposes: a learner-centered approach. England: Cambridge University Press.
- Robinson, P (1980) English for Specific Purposes. Oxford: Pergamon Press. ESP today.UK: Prentice Hall International ltd.
- <http://bro.gov.mk/?q=sq/nastavni-planovi>
- <http://www.mon.gov.mk/index.php/AL/2014-07-24-06-34-41/zakoni-al>
- <http://masht.rks-gov.net/arsimi-profesional>