

THE INTERNET AND ESP

The introduction to the column

The purpose of this new column is to describe some pedagogical applications of the Internet to teach ESP at university level. In order to help ESP practitioners integrate the Internet into their classes and find the most appropriate activity for their purposes, this column will describe some Internet activities which are already being used by ESP teachers or which could be used in the ESP classroom. The column will, therefore, analyse learning environments available on the Internet that are appropriate for ESP.

The main objective of ESP courses is to help students learn the language and communicative skills that they will need in the future target situation (e.g. industry or business settings). This can be achieved with a content-based curriculum, where students learn the language by focusing on the subject matter with the help of authentic materials. Internet can be used to provide authentic content-based materials and activities which fit the students' needs. As Kimball (1998) points out, "Internet-generated materials can be flexibly arrayed to engage students with topics and cognitive tasks relevant to students' professional futures".

In this column I will describe activities belonging to the following four groups:

1. Information collection and analysis
2. Interpersonal exchanges
3. Problem solving activities
4. Collaborative writing, peer editing and publishing

The activities that will be described in this column foster constructivist learning. Rather than being based on the transmission of knowledge from teacher to learner, they provide learners with the motivation, resources and guidance to help them construct knowledge.

When using the models described here to create their own activities on the Web the ESP teacher needs to take into account the criteria that both ESP activities and Internet activities should meet. ESP teaching should use the methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves and focus on the language, skills, discourse types and genres suitable for these activities (Dudley-Evans and St. Johns, 1998). The tasks set for the students should be meaningful to them, i.e. related to their special purpose, and should involve the use of authentic language.

REFERENCES

- Dudley-Evans, T. and St. Johns, M.J. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kimball, J. (1998). "Task-based medical English: elements for Internet-assisted language learning." *Call Journal*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 411-418, <http://www.fauxpress.com/kimball/res/task.htm>