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Developing Pragmatics-Focused English for Specific Purposes Online Courses

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The study explores the importance and specifics of enhancing ESP learners' pragmatic competence as well as the benefits availed by the online environment for creating and delivering efficient and up-to-date ESP courses that would meet the learners' needs. Building on prior contributions of scholars and practitioners in the field, the research examines relevant considerations for integrating pragmatic competence in ESP course development, proposing a functional syllabus as the potential organising principle of pragmatics-focused instructional course design. Accordingly, attempts have been made to create five ESP online courses: English for Insurance Professionals, English for the Pharmaceutical Industry, English for Financial Analysts, English for Brand Managers and English for Business Coaching. The courses aim at the development of learners' pragmatic competence focusing on spoken and written communication through performing four speech acts – apologies, suggestions, refusals and requests, employing the discovery-learning approach for creating and delivering motivational ESP course content online. In order to test the efficacy of the proposed course design, the study employs a web-based assessment of ESP learners' pragmatic competence through a pre-test and post-test. The study offers a model of integrating pragmatic competence in ESP course designs which makes use of the online environment as a source of field-specific and pragmatic language input as well as a space for both synchronous and asynchronous interaction during instructional delivery of ESP courses.

Key words: *online course development, ESP, instructional course design, pragmatic competence development, online learning, speech acts, the discovery-learning approach*

Biographical note(s) of the author(s)

The author is currently a 2nd-year Master's student of English Philology at the University of Latvia, whose academic interests include the studies and implementation of efficient language acquisition methodology, which involves developing up-to-date language learning courses that meet the needs of both ESP and general English learners. With her work as a researcher and a practitioner in the field of language acquisition, the author hopes to contribute to the aspects which have so far been insufficiently investigated, such as acquisitional pragmatics in LSP contexts.

Recommendation (for student section)

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