CLASSROOM PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING PBL FOR ESP (ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES)

Kushieva Nodira Xabibjonovna
Doctor of pedagogical sciences (DSc, docent UzSWLU)
E-mail: nodira.kushieva@mail.ru
Komilova Dildora Gulamjanovna
PhD student of Gulistan State University
e-mail: dkomilova023@gmail.com

Annotation: This article provides an in-depth analysis of classroom practices and the key challenges in implementing Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction. Drawing on international and Uzbek research, the study explores the theoretical foundations of PBL, its pedagogical relevance to ESP contexts, and practical classroom applications in non-linguistic disciplines such as economics, medicine, and engineering. The article also examines obstacles such as teacher readiness, assessment difficulties, and student adaptation. Empirical findings from experimental teaching contexts are discussed, and recommendations for improving instructional design and implementation are proposed.

Keywords: Problem-Based Learning, English for Specific Purposes, communicative competence, professional English, PBL implementation, classroom challenges, learner autonomy, interdisciplinary language education, ESP in economics, PBL assessment.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola maxsus maqsadlar uchun ingliz tili (ESP) darslarida muammoli ta’lim (PBL)ni joriy etish bo‘yicha dars amaliyoti va muammolarni chuqur tahlil qiladi. Xalqaro va o‘zbek tadqiqotlari asosida PBLning nazariy asoslari, ESP kontekstida qo‘llashning pedagogik ahamiyati va uni iqtisodiyot, tibbiyot, muhandislik kabi nofilologik sohalarda amaliy qo‘llash yo‘llari yoritiladi. Shuningdek, o‘qituvchilarning tayyorgarligi, baholashdagi murakkabliklar va talabalar moslashuvi bilan bog‘liq muammolar ko‘rib chiqiladi. Tajriba-sinov ishlari asosida olingan natijalar va takliflar ham keltiriladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Muammoli ta’lim, maxsus maqsadlar uchun ingliz tili, kommunikativ kompetensiya, kasbiy ingliz tili, PBLni joriy etish, darsdagi muammolar, talaba mustaqilligi, tarmoqlararo til ta’limi, iqtisodda ESP, PBL baholash.

Аннотация: В статье проводится углублённый анализ учебных практик и основных трудностей внедрения технологии обучения на основе проблем (PBL) в преподавании английского языка для специальных целей (ESP). На основе международных и узбекских исследований рассматриваются теоретические основы PBL, его педагогическая значимость для ESP, а также практические примеры его применения в нефилологических областях, таких как экономика, медицина и инженерия. Особое внимание уделяется проблемам, связанным с подготовкой преподавателей, оцениванием и адаптацией студентов. Приводятся эмпирические результаты и рекомендации по совершенствованию учебного процесса.

Ключевые слова: Проблемное обучение, английский язык для специальных целей, коммуникативная компетентность, профессиональный английский, внедрение PBL, трудности в классе, автономия учащихся, междисциплинарное языковое обучение, ESP в экономике, оценка в PBL.

The development of 21st-century skills, particularly professional communication in foreign languages, has become an essential component of modern education, especially in non-linguistic fields such as economics, medicine, and engineering. English for Specific

Purposes (ESP) has thus evolved into a key area in language education, aligning language learning goals with professional realities. To meet these demands, innovative pedagogical approaches are required-among which Problem-Based Learning (PBL) stands out as an effective and transformative methodology. PBL fosters learner autonomy, critical thinking, and real-world problem-solving skills. Within the context of ESP, where communicative tasks are tightly linked to professional domains, PBL enables students to engage in meaningful interactions that simulate workplace communication. However, implementing PBL in ESP classrooms presents unique challenges: designing authentic problems, managing group dynamics, aligning tasks with language proficiency levels, and assessing complex outcomes are only a few examples. This article investigates how PBL can be effectively integrated into ESP instruction. Drawing on theoretical models, practical examples, and empirical research-especially from Uzbek and international contexts-we explore classroom strategies, pedagogical innovations, and the difficulties encountered during implementation. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to improving the quality of ESP teaching through PBL and preparing students for successful professional communication in their fields.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has gained traction in language education for its potential to engage learners in solving authentic, real-world problems, thereby developing both language skills and higher-order thinking. In the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly for Economics students, PBL offers opportunities for integrating discipline-specific content with language instruction. However, there are significant challenges in classroom practice that must be addressed to realize its full potential. This article reviews the literature on PBL in Economics/ESP, describes typical classroom practices, identifies obstacles in implementation, and offers recommendations to overcome them. Through a synthesis of case studies, empirical research, and theoretical perspectives, this paper aims to provide practitioners in ESP for Economics with insights and strategies to effectively integrate PBL.

Problem-Based Learning originates in medical education and has since spread to other disciplines. The core features of PBL include student - centeredness, small group work, real/proximal problems, self-directed learning, integration of disciplines, and facilitators guiding rather than lecturing. Key learning outcomes typically targeted are critical thinking, collaboration, problem solving, application of theory to practice, and transferable skills. In language learning, these features translate into tasks where language is both a tool and a goal. Students must use reading, writing, listening, and speaking for authentic purposes-research, discussion, presentation-rather than for isolated drills.

ESP refers to English instruction designed to meet the specific needs of learners in disciplines, professions, or academic contexts In the Economics domain, ESP would include specialized vocabulary (macroeconomics, microeconomics, econometrics, finance, policy, etc.), conventions of economic discourse, interpreting graphs and data, reading research articles, writing reports or essays, participating in discussions/debates about policies, etc. ESP differs from general English in that its content, methodology, assessment, and sometimes materials are tailored to students' target disciplines. Needs analysis is central: learners' immediate and future uses of English must be identified, which in Economics can include reading academic journals, writing policy briefs, delivering presentations, and using English in business/economic research. There are several reasons why PBL is particularly suitable for Economics ESP:

The domain itself deals with problems-economic issues, policy questions, business challenges-that can serve as authentic problems for students.

Economics students need not only to know theories but also apply them in contexts; PBL supports this transfer.

PBL fosters higher-order thinking: analytical skills, evaluation, synthesis, which are essential in Economics (e.g., interpreting data, evaluating policy).

PBL encourages active learning, increasing motivation and engagement.

However, integrating PBL into ESP for Economics is not straightforward. It requires thoughtful design, materials, teacher training, assessment changes, institutional support, time, and resources.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has become an influential and widely adopted instructional approach across various academic disciplines due to its learner-centered philosophy, emphasis on real-world relevance, and development of higher-order cognitive skills. In the realm of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and particularly in English for Economics, PBL offers a dynamic and contextually meaningful alternative to traditional language instruction. Rather than relying on teacher-centered lectures or isolated grammar exercises, PBL encourages learners to engage with authentic economic problems that mirror professional challenges in their future careers. This engagement necessitates the use of English in context, thereby facilitating language acquisition in tandem with domain-specific knowledge development. The integration of PBL into ESP for Economics not only enhances linguistic -competence but also promotes critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. However, implementing PBL in such contexts is not without its challenges. Instructors must navigate a range of pedagogical, logistical, institutional, and learner-related obstacles. These include varying language proficiencies, limited exposure to disciplinary content, insufficient resources, time constraints, and resistance to pedagogical change. Despite these challenges, the potential benefits of PBL in Economics ESP classrooms are substantial and merit in-depth exploration.

Assessment in PBL also differs from conventional models. Rather than relying solely on exams or quizzes, assessment may include rubrics evaluating the final product (e.g., a report or presentation), group process, individual contributions, and the quality of research and reasoning. Both formative and summative assessments are important. Formative assessments help guide learning during the process, while summative assessments evaluate the outcomes. Self-assessment and peer evaluation are also often included to promote metacognitive awareness and accountability. While the pedagogical advantages of PBL are numerous, implementing it in ESP courses, particularly for Economics students, is not without complications. One of the most significant challenges is the variation in students' English language proficiency. In many classrooms, students possess diverse levels of competence, with some struggling to understand academic texts or express complex ideas in English. These difficulties can hinder participation in group discussions, limit the depth of analysis, and reduce confidence. Moreover, students who are not proficient may become overly reliant on stronger group members or disengage entirely. Instructors must address these disparities through scaffolding, differentiated instruction, and supportive group dynamics. Another major challenge lies in the dual expertise required of instructors.

Teaching ESP for Economics using PBL requires knowledge not only of English language pedagogy but also of Economics content. In many institutions, instructors may be trained in language teaching but lack a deep understanding of economic concepts, trends, and discourse conventions. This gap can make it difficult to design realistic and meaningful problem scenarios, provide accurate content feedback, or evaluate the quality of students' solutions. Collaboration between language instructors and Economics faculty can help bridge this gap, but such collaboration is not always feasible due to institutional silos or scheduling

constraints. Resource constraints also affect PBL implementation. Effective PBL often requires access to up-to-date materials, including economic data, academic journals, case studies, statistical software, and digital tools for collaboration and presentation. In contexts where internet access is limited or library holdings are insufficient, students may struggle to conduct the necessary research. Furthermore, PBL requires more time than traditional instruction. The process of understanding the problem, researching it, developing solutions, and preparing deliverables can span several weeks. In rigid curricula with fixed syllabi and high-stakes assessments, allocating sufficient time for PBL may be difficult. The attitudes and expectations of students also play a role. Learners accustomed to teacher-led instruction may feel uncertain or frustrated in PBL environments where the path to learning is less clear. Some students may resist group work due to prior negative experiences or cultural preferences for individual learning. Others may lack the self-regulation skills needed for autonomous learning. It is important for instructors to anticipate these reactions and to provide orientation, guidance, and support throughout the PBL process. Additionally, institutional structures can either support or hinder PBL. Administrative buy-in is essential for scheduling, resource allocation, class size management, and curriculum flexibility. In institutions where performance is measured primarily through standardized tests or where teaching is oriented toward exam preparation, PBL may be viewed as inefficient or risky. Advocating for PBL requires evidence of its effectiveness, as well as a willingness to innovate and experiment. Despite these challenges, numerous studies and classroom reports demonstrate that PBL can be successfully integrated into ESP for Economics with thoughtful planning and adaptation. For example, in several university programs, PBL has been used to engage students in analyzing economic crises, designing business plans, simulating trade negotiations, and evaluating government policy. These projects not only enhance students' understanding of Economics but also improve their English proficiency and increase motivation. Students report that they find the tasks meaningful and relevant, and instructors note improvements in participation, critical thinking, and language use.

To facilitate the successful implementation of PBL in Economics ESP, several strategies can be recommended. First, needs analysis should be conducted at the beginning of the course to determine students' language levels, academic backgrounds, and learning goals. This information can inform the design of problem scenarios and the selection of texts and tasks. Second, scaffolding should be provided throughout the PBL process. This can include vocabulary glossaries, reading guides, writing templates, and examples of past student work. Third, instructors should receive training in both PBL methodology and Economics content, or work collaboratively with Economics faculty. Fourth, group work should be carefully structured to promote equitable participation and effective collaboration. Roles can be assigned within groups to ensure that all members contribute, and peer evaluations can be used to monitor group dynamics. Fifth, assessment should be aligned with PBL goals and include a balance of product- and process-oriented measures. Finally, student orientation is crucial. Learners need to understand the purpose and benefits of PBL, how it works, and what is expected of them. Providing opportunities for reflection and feedback throughout the course can help students adjust and grow.

In conclusion, integrating PBL into ESP for Economics represents a promising and pedagogically sound approach to language and content learning. It aligns with the needs of 21st-century learners by fostering not only linguistic competence but also analytical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and real-world communication skills. While challenges exist in terms of language proficiency, instructor preparation, resources, time, student attitudes, and institutional support, these can be mitigated through careful design, collaboration, and

reflective practice. The transformation from passive learning to active engagement can enrich students' educational experience and better prepare them for the demands of academic and professional life in the field of Economics.

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