

The Teaching of Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes: the Way Forward

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Abstract

Mastery in foreign languages is considered, in today's world, not just an excellent tool to bridge gaps between people coming from different countries and to create strong sentimental and professional relationships, but above all an instrument that enables workers to considerably improve their career prospects. Multilingualism is today considered to be one of the key elements for a modern Europe, given that learning foreign languages permits citizens to enrich their lives, to grasp new ideas and to benefit from the European cultural diversity. In today's world, knowing how to use a language in specific circumstances and purposes gives people a very strong bargaining power, especially in the labour world. Whereas up to twenty or thirty years ago, speaking a foreign language was a very important prerequisite for just a few, like managers or diplomats, today it has become of fundamental importance in all professional circles. In fact, in today's European society, languages and intercultural play a fundamental role in getting to know different people and in obtaining professional and economic development. This means that there can be two main objectives for teaching/learning foreign languages: personal growth and professional growth. As declared by the European Commission in one of its documents on multilingualism, entitled, "Languages mean Business!", one of the main reasons why thousands of European companies lose out on concluding deals and contracts is their lack of linguistic and intercultural competencies[1]. And this is exactly why today we offer courses in foreign languages for specific purposes, be it for tourism, for call centres, for business, for commerce and so on, focusing on acquiring the necessary terminological, interdisciplinary and intercultural skills needed for specific jobs.