

## PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES OF TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPORTS STUDENTS

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**Abstract.** The study explores effective pedagogical approaches to teaching English to students of sports specializations in higher education. Unlike general language learners, sports students demonstrate specific cognitive, motivational, and behavioral characteristics that require adapted teaching strategies. The research combines theoretical analysis with empirical data obtained through questionnaires and classroom observation. The results indicate that task-based learning, gamification, and content integration significantly enhance students' engagement and communicative competence. The paper contributes to the development of ESP methodology in the context of sports education.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes (ESP), sports students, task-based learning, gamification, CLIL, sports pedagogy

**Introduction.** In the context of globalization, English has become the dominant language of international communication in sports. Athletes, coaches, and sports professionals are required to interact in multilingual environments, participate in international competitions, and access scientific knowledge in English. However, teaching English to sports students presents specific challenges. These learners differ from traditional students because of their training schedules, physical workload, and learning preferences. Based on classroom experience, it can be observed that traditional lecture-based approaches are often less effective for this group.

The aim of the study is to identify, substantiate, and systematize effective pedagogical approaches for teaching English to sports students in higher education institutions, taking into account the specific features of their professional training and learning environment. The study is aimed at enhancing the quality of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction in the field of sports education and improving students' communicative competence in professional contexts.

The objectives of the study include: (1) analyzing the psychological, cognitive, and motivational characteristics of sports students that influence their foreign language acquisition; (2) identifying and classifying the most effective ESP teaching methods applicable in sports education; (3) assessing the effectiveness of selected pedagogical approaches through empirical data obtained from the educational process; and (4) developing practical recommendations for optimizing English language teaching in sports-oriented academic programs.

The object of the study is the process of teaching English to students specializing in sports disciplines within higher education institutions. The subject of the study is the set of pedagogical approaches, methods, and techniques used in ESP instruction for sports students, as well as their impact on learning outcomes and professional language competence.

The research methodology is based on a comprehensive approach and includes the analysis of domestic and international scientific literature on the research topic, pedagogical observation of the educational process, a questionnaire survey of students aimed at identifying their educational needs and motivation levels, as well as elements of pedagogical experimentation designed to test and evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed approaches.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the adaptation and integration of modern ESP methodologies specifically for sports education. The study proposes a comprehensive instructional model based on the combination of task-based learning, content-based instruction, and elements of gamification, taking into account physical нагрузка, attention characteristics, motivation, and the psychophysiological features of student-athletes. Such an approach enables the creation of a

more engaging, practice-oriented, and professionally relevant learning environment, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of foreign language acquisition in sports higher education.

### *Theoretical Background*

Sports students represent a specific category of learners whose educational characteristics are shaped by their professional orientation, training routines, and psychological profile. A growing body of recent research indicates that students enrolled in physical education and sports-related programs tend to demonstrate a strong preference for kinesthetic and experiential learning styles, which are based on movement, physical engagement, and practical interaction with learning material [1], [2]. Kinesthetic learning is characterized by the active involvement of the body in the learning process, allowing students to better process and retain information through action-based experiences rather than passive reception [3]. Empirical studies confirm that incorporating movement-based and interactive activities significantly enhances engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes among physically active students [2], [4].

In the context of sports education, this preference is further reinforced by the nature of athletic training itself, which relies heavily on demonstration, repetition, and physical practice. Consequently, traditional lecture-based approaches often fail to fully engage sports students, whereas interactive, task-based, and practice-oriented instructional strategies yield higher levels of participation and comprehension. Recent studies in ESP and applied linguistics highlight that integrating technology-enhanced and interactive learning environments (e.g., mobile learning, simulations, and gamified tasks) can stimulate positive learning emotions and increase engagement among students, including those in specialized domains such as sports education [5], [6].

Another important characteristic of sports students is their performance-oriented mindset. Due to their continuous involvement in training and competition, they are accustomed to structured goal-setting, measurable progress, and immediate feedback. This aligns with contemporary educational theories emphasizing competence, autonomy, and relatedness as key drivers of motivation [7]. Research within the sport education model demonstrates that clearly defined objectives, performance indicators, and feedback mechanisms significantly enhance students' intrinsic motivation and learning effectiveness [7]. Therefore, language instruction for sports students becomes more effective when it mirrors the structure of sports training, incorporating elements such as goal-oriented tasks, incremental progression, and performance evaluation.

Teamwork and collaboration constitute another defining feature of sports students' learning behavior. As athletes frequently operate within team environments, they develop strong communication skills, cooperative strategies, and a readiness for group interaction. Studies show that collaborative learning approaches not only facilitate language acquisition but also foster social interaction, peer support, and increased motivation [7], [8]. In ESP contexts, particularly in sports education, group-based tasks, role-playing, and problem-solving activities simulate real-life communication scenarios, thereby enhancing both linguistic competence and professional readiness.

Furthermore, recent research emphasizes the importance of addressing the psychological and emotional dimensions of learning. Positive learning emotions, such as interest, enjoyment, and confidence, play a crucial role in student engagement and achievement. The integration of innovative pedagogical approaches, including gamification and digital tools, has been shown to positively influence students' emotional involvement and learning outcomes in ESP courses [5]. This is particularly relevant for sports students, whose motivation is often closely linked to competition, achievement, and active participation.

Overall, the theoretical framework suggests that effective teaching of English to sports students requires a multidimensional pedagogical approach that integrates kinesthetic learning, performance-based structuring, collaborative interaction, and motivational support. Such an approach not only aligns with the cognitive and psychological characteristics of sports students but also creates a dynamic and practice-oriented learning environment that enhances both language acquisition and professional competence.

### *Empirical Study*

The empirical study was conducted during the author’s teaching practice at the Kazakh National University of Sports (Astana). The participants included 30 students aged 18–22 enrolled in sports-related programs.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and classroom observations over four weeks. The questionnaire included 10 items focusing on students’ motivation, preferred learning styles, and perceived difficulties. The results revealed the following trends:

- 73% of students preferred interactive and movement-based learning;
- 68% showed higher motivation in competitive learning environments;
- 61% reported difficulties with academic reading tasks;
- 79% indicated that practical speaking tasks were the most useful.

The survey results are presented in Figure 1.

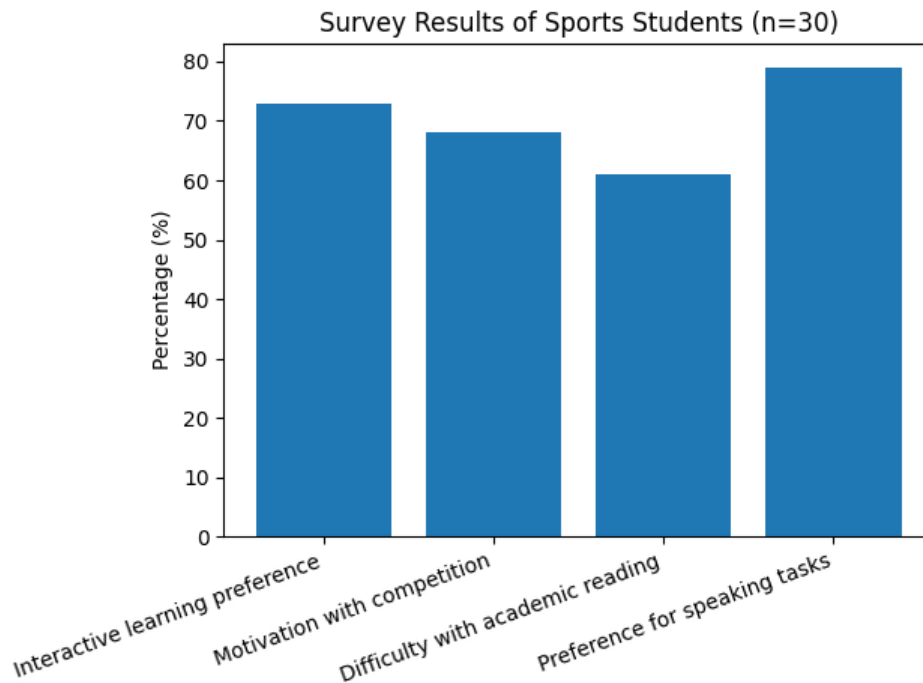


Figure 1. Survey results on learning preferences of sports students

*Source: compiled by the author*

During the implementation of task-based and gamified activities, an increase in classroom participation and confidence was observed. Students became more willing to communicate in English and demonstrated improved fluency. These results confirm that traditional methods should be supplemented with active and context-based approaches in sports education.

The pedagogical model applied in the study is illustrated in Figure 2.

## Model of ESP Teaching for Sports Students

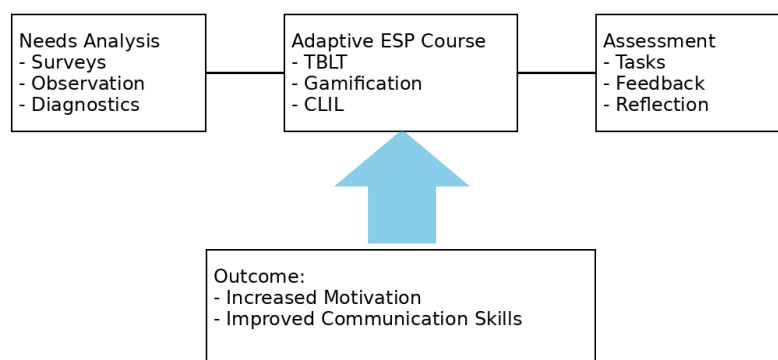


Figure 1. Model of ESP Teaching for Sports Students

Source: compiled by the author

### *Task-Based Learning*

Task-based learning was implemented through the use of real-life communicative situations relevant to sports contexts. In particular, students were engaged in activities such as mock interviews, describing training processes, and discussing sports strategies. These tasks are useful for learners to develop communicative competence while operating in professionally meaningful contexts [9].

In classroom practice, the implementation of task-based learning followed a three-stage structure: pre-task, task cycle, and post-task reflection.

At the pre-task stage, students were introduced to key vocabulary and communicative patterns related to the topic (e.g., training routines, competition preparation).

During the task cycle, students worked in pairs or small groups to complete practical assignments. For example, they simulated a press conference, where one group acted as athletes and another as journalists. Students were required to ask and answer questions in English under time constraints, which increased both engagement and authenticity of communication.

At the post-task stage, students reflected on their performance, discussed difficulties, and received feedback from the teacher. This stage contributed to the consolidation of language skills and increased students' awareness of their progress.

Based on classroom observations, it can be assumed that such structured task-based activities significantly improve students' confidence and willingness to communicate in English.

### *Gamification*

Gamification elements were integrated into the learning process to increase students' motivation and engagement. Considering the competitive nature of sports students, activities were designed to include elements such as scoring systems, time limits, and team-based competitions.

In classroom practice, students were divided into teams and participated in language competitions. For example, a «Vocabulary Challenge» was organized, where teams competed to correctly use sports-related terms in sentences within a limited time. Points were awarded for accuracy, speed, and creativity.

Another activity included «Grammar Tournament», where students completed grammar tasks in a competitive format similar to sports matches. This approach created a familiar and motivating environment for students.

Based on classroom observations, gamification contributed to increased participation, reduced anxiety, and higher levels of engagement in language learning activities.

### Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

CLIL was applied by integrating English language instruction with sports-related content. This approach allowed students to simultaneously develop language skills and professional knowledge [11].

In practice, students worked with authentic materials such as sports articles, training plans, and performance statistics. For example, during one lesson, students analyzed athletes' performance data and described results using comparative structures in English.

Another activity involved discussing training strategies and explaining exercise techniques in English. Students were required to use specific terminology related to their sport, which contributed to the development of professional vocabulary.

It can be assumed that CLIL-based activities increase the relevance of language learning and improve students' ability to use English in real professional contexts.

#### *Practical Examples of Activities*

##### Example 1: Press Conference Simulation

Students act as athletes and journalists, conducting interviews after a simulated competition. The task develops speaking and listening skills in a realistic context.

##### Example 2: Training Instructions Task

Students explain training exercises using English instructions. This activity focuses on the use of imperative forms and professional vocabulary.

##### Example 3: Sports Commentary

Students watch sports videos and provide live commentary. This task improves fluency, pronunciation, and spontaneous speech.

The main teaching approaches applied in the study are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Teaching approaches

<b>Method</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>TBLT</b>	Use of real-life communicative tasks (e.g., interviews, training scenarios)	Development of communicative competence
<b>Gamification</b>	Integration of competitive elements (points, teams, challenges)	Increased motivation and engagement
<b>CLIL</b>	Combination of language learning with sports-related content	Acquisition of professional vocabulary

Source: compiled by the author

#### *Assessment*

Assessment was based on communicative performance and practical tasks. Students were evaluated through role plays, presentations, and participation in discussions.

In classroom practice, one of the assessment formats included a "Final Simulation Task", where students were required to participate in a mock international sports event. They performed roles such as athletes, coaches, or journalists and communicated in English.

Formative assessment was used regularly to provide feedback. After each activity, students received comments on their performance, focusing on clarity, accuracy, and fluency.

Peer assessment was also implemented. Students evaluated each other's performance using simple criteria, which helped them develop critical thinking and self-reflection skills.

Such assessment methods allowed for a more accurate evaluation of students' communicative competence in realistic situations.

**Conclusion.** The findings of the present study confirm that teaching English to sports students in higher education requires the implementation of specialized pedagogical approaches that take into account the professional orientation, learning preferences, and psychophysiological characteristics of this category of learners. The empirical data obtained through observation,

surveys, and elements of pedagogical experimentation demonstrate that the integration of task-based learning, gamification, and content-based instruction significantly enhances both students' motivation and their communicative competence in professionally relevant contexts. In particular, the use of practice-oriented tasks, interactive formats, and sport-specific content contributes to higher levels of engagement, more active participation in the learning process, and improved retention of language material.

The results of the study highlight the importance of aligning foreign language instruction with the professional context of sports education. Such alignment allows for the creation of meaningful learning environments in which language acquisition is directly connected to students' future careers, thereby increasing both the effectiveness and applicability of learning outcomes. From a practical perspective, the findings can be utilized in the design and modernization of ESP curricula for sports students, including the development of specialized teaching materials, assessment tools, and instructional strategies that reflect the realities of sports communication and professional interaction.

The validity of the results is supported by a combination of empirical data and systematic classroom observations, which together provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the proposed pedagogical approaches. The consistency between observed student behavior and quantitative feedback further confirms the reliability of the conclusions drawn.

Future research may focus on expanding the scope of investigation by incorporating digital learning tools, adaptive and personalized learning systems, and innovative educational technologies that can further enhance the learning experience of sports students. In addition, longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of ESP instruction on professional communication skills, career development, and performance in sports-related fields would provide valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners in the field of sports education and applied linguistics.

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## СПОРТ БАҒЫТЫНДАҒЫ СТУДЕНТТЕРГЕ АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛІН ОҚЫТУДЫҢ ПЕДАГОГИКАЛЫҚ ЕРЕКШЕЛІКТЕРІ

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**Аңдатпа.** Зерттеу жоғары оқу орындарында спорт бағытындағы студенттерге ағылшын тілін оқытудың тиімді педагогикалық тәсілдерін қарастырады. Жалпы тіл үйренушілерден айырмашылығы, спорт студенттері ерекше когнитивтік, мотивациялық және мінез-құлықтық сипаттамаларға ие, бұл бейімделген оқыту стратегияларын қажет етеді. Зерттеу теориялық талдауды сауалнама және аудиториялық бақылау арқылы алынған эмпирикалық деректермен ұштастырады. Нәтижелер тапсырмаға негізделген оқыту, геймификация және мазмұнмен ықпалдастырылған оқыту студенттердің қызығушылығы мен коммуникативтік құзыреттілігін айтарлықтай арттыратынын көрсетеді. Мақала спорттық білім беру контекстінде арнайы мақсаттағы ағылшын тілін (ESP) оқыту әдістемесін дамытуға үлес қосады.

**Түйін сөздер:** арнайы мақсаттағы ағылшын тілі (ESP), спорт студенттері, тапсырмаға негізделген оқыту, геймификация, CLIL, спорт педагогикасы

## ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА СТУДЕНТАМ СПОРТИВНЫХ НАПРАВЛЕНИЙ

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**Аннотация.** В исследовании рассматриваются эффективные педагогические подходы к обучению английскому языку студентов спортивных направлений в системе высшего образования. В отличие от традиционных обучающихся, студенты спортивных специальностей обладают специфическими когнитивными, мотивационными и поведенческими характеристиками, что требует адаптированных стратегий обучения. В работе сочетаются теоретический анализ и эмпирические данные, полученные с помощью анкетирования и наблюдения в учебном процессе. Результаты показывают, что обучение на основе заданий, геймификация и интеграция содержания существенно повышают вовлеченность и коммуникативную компетентность студентов. Статья вносит вклад в развитие методики преподавания английского языка для специальных целей (ESP) в контексте спортивного образования.

**Ключевые слова:** английский язык для специальных целей (ESP), студенты спортивных направлений, обучение на основе заданий, геймификация, CLIL, педагогика спорта

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