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TEACHING SPECIAL EDUCATION TERMINOLOGY

Abstract. The paper presents a way of grouping special education terminology from the point of view of university lecturers in Lithuania. Having acknowledged the complexity of presenting English for specific purposes (ESP) and as a foreign language (EFL) as well, the authors propose a way of grouping special education terms with the purpose to facilitate and stimulate students to better mastering of the terminology that subsequently might help to comprehend modern English sources on special education.

The presented way of terminology grouping is the result of a long-term work experience in teaching EFL. It enables over 90% of first-year students to sufficiently master this complex and numerous terminology in the course of two semesters (128 academic hours).

The authors also share some ideas to improve further classification and standardization of current special education terms and urge educationalists, researchers and practitioners to collaborate actively in the field.

Key words: special education, special educators, terminology, grouping/classification, teaching, mastering.

Introduction. Special educators have already been trained in Lithuania for 44 years. The names of the first qualifications acquired were *Special Education and the Lithuanian Language*, *Speech Therapy and the Lithuanian Language*, and *Defectology*. The latter term, especially popular in the Soviet period, currently is universally considered to be obsolete and offensive because it originates from *defect*.

The need to group (classify) current special education terminology has been determined by at least three factors: 1) increasing attention paid to the problem, 2) numerous and constantly increasing number of the terms (including influence of terminology of other related fields), and 3) the seeking to assist the teachers in terminology presentation and students in its mastering. There are few investigators who try to treat the problems of special education terminology from several points of view, i.e. classification (grouping), standardization, adequacy (appropriateness), teaching, etc. (Adams and Whittaker, 1994; Gudonis, 1998; Petruševičius and Hurst, 1997; Leitch, 1998; Petruševičius, 1996; 2000; 2002). The complexity of the problem becomes even greater and more urgent at those higher educational institutions where students have to study terminology in at least two languages: native and foreign.

Training special educators and grouping of the terminology

Currently seven Basic Principles of Special Education are observed in Lithuania: 1) humanism, 2) democracy, 3) nationalism, 4) renovation, 5) normalization, 6) decentralization, and 7) integration. The following eight forms in the Model of the Special Education System in Lithuania have been distinguished: 1) full integration in mainstream educational institutions, 2) education following modified mainstream curriculum, 3) mainstream education following individual/adapted programs, 4) part-time education in mainstream and part-time in special classes, 5) education in special groups or classes, 6) education in special pre-school institutions, 7) education in special residential/boarding schools, 8) education in pensions, sanatoriums (health stations), at home, etc. The greatest contribution in realization of the Basic Principles and the Model is made by the special and social educators who have graduated from Šiauliai University, Lithuania. Every year over 200 students are enrolled at the Special Education Faculty of the University. Students can acquire the following qualifications: special educator and speech and language therapist, special educator and kinetotherapist/physiotherapist and social pedagogue (educator). At present the Faculty trains over 1000 students seeking a Bachelor's degree, 46 post-graduate students seeking a Master's degree in Social Sciences in three fields: Special Education, Speech and Language Therapy, and Social Education, and 12 post-graduate students seeking a Doctor's degree in Social Sciences /Educology (ECTS Information Package for International Students). All the students seeking a Master's degree have to study at least one foreign language out of the four: English, German, French, and Russian. The number of those studying English is predominating.

Consequently, a foreign language lecturer is expected not only to further develop students' practical (everyday) foreign language skills, but also to present, explain and often to define numerous modern special education terms and concepts used in contemporary sources by scholars, researchers, representatives of educational authorities, etc. In addition to academic books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc. and in order to keep up with the latest developments in special education the university foreign language teacher should use materials from current periodicals such as *International Journal of Special Education*, *Journal of Spe-*

cial Education, *British Journal of Special Education*, *Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *Educational Psychology*, *Disability and Society*, *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, *Remedial and Special Education*, etc. One of the indispensable means to comprehend difficult modern texts on special education is mastering the specific terminology in use. Grouping of special education terms according to appropriate criteria may be of substantial help for the teacher in presenting and the student in mastering them. The classifications of impairments by A. Bagdonas (1995) and those published in the State News (Valstybės žinios, 2002) prompt us a way for possible grouping of the names of different impairments, i. e. those of intelligence, cognition, emotions, behavior and social development, speech, language and communication, hearing, vision, movement and posture, long-term somatic and neurological origin, comorbidity/multiple impairments and others. One more group of terms usually attributed to special education are the terms and concepts characterizing the peculiarities of education of gifted, talented children. Obviously, this classification cannot cover all

the basic terminology encountered in studying a foreign language for specific purposes. Names of impairments may be considered only one of special terminology groups from the huge amount of the necessary terms and concepts.

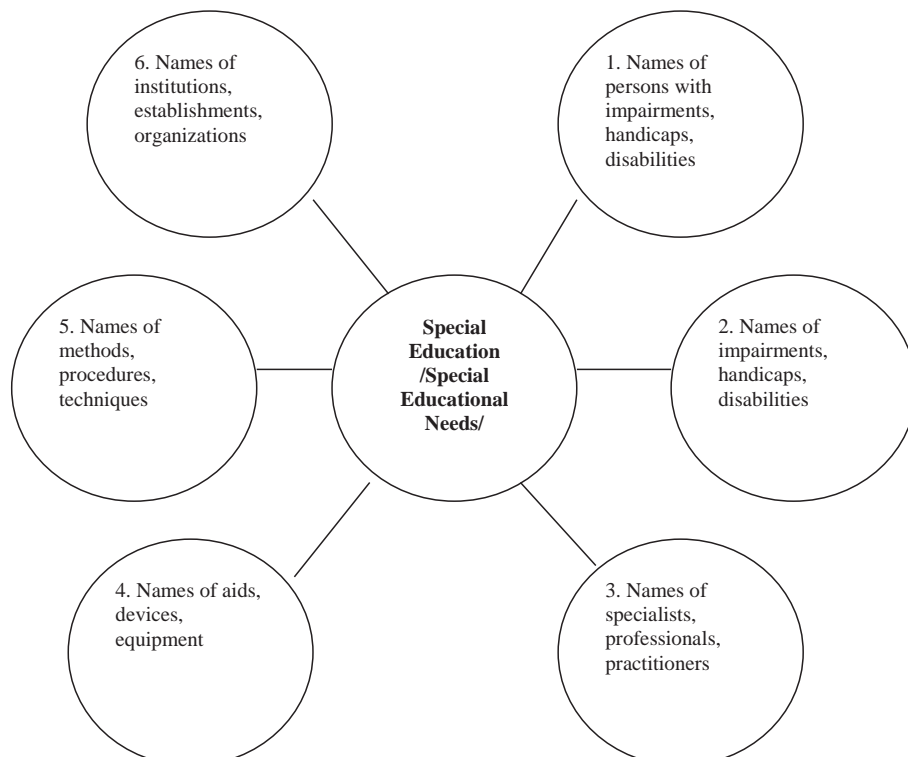
The object of the research: methods of teaching special education terminology.

The aim of the research: to create a handy scheme of grouping special education terminology in order to facilitate its presentation and mastering.

The following methods have been used: analysis of modern authentic British and American texts and glossaries on special educational needs; selection of the most necessary and frequent terminology; experimental groupings of the terms/concepts according to the teaching subjects/disciplines, alphabetical order, etc. and subsequent applying them in teaching and testing.

The results of the research: the approbated in practical teaching Scheme of Grouping Special Education Terminology enabling over 90% of students to master the material and expand their knowledge in special education in general and terminology in particular.

Scheme of Grouping Special Education Terminology



To illustrate a possible contents to be filled in and technique of use of the Scheme we shall take typhology - a branch of special education investigating the developmental peculiarities, education, rehabilitation and integration problems of the visually impaired (Gudonis, 1998).

1. The names of persons with impairments, handicaps and disabilities, e.g.:
the adventitiously/congenitally blind,
daltonist,
the short-sighted,
sight-impaired person(s),
the visually handicapped, etc.
2. The names of impairments (diseases), handicaps and disabilities, e.g.:
cataract,
daltonism,
diplopia,
myopia,
tunnel vision, etc.
3. The names of specialists, professionals, practitioners, e.g.:
daily living skills specialist,
mobility instructor/officer,
oculist,
ophthalmologist,
optometrist, etc.
4. The names of aids, devices, equipment, e.g.:
amblyoscope,
bifocal glasses/spectacles,
folding cane,
grooved tablet,
pathsounder, etc.
5. The names of methods, procedures, techniques, e.g.:
haptics,
ophthalmometry,
retinoscopy,
screening,
tactual discrimination,
6. The names of institutions, establishments, organizations, e.g.:
American Foundation for the Blind (AFB),
day/residential schools for the visually impaired,
eye infirmary,
Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB),
sight-saving class, etc.

Related fields of knowledge.

A modern special educator, in addition to his/her particular field of expertise, should also possess some knowledge in other related to special education fields (disciplines). In Lithuania the future special educators

and social pedagogues are expected to have mastered (got acquainted with) the basics of IT, speech and language therapy, education of the sensory impaired (typhology and surdology), physiotherapy /kinetotherapy, education of the intellectually impaired, educational (general and special) psychology, special didactics of different subjects (languages, mathematics, art, geography, history, nature science, etc.), medicine and law.

Therefore, a forward-looking foreign language lecturer working at a university should be aware of the major disciplines (teaching subjects) presented for his/her students and select appropriate informative materials on the above listed subjects to be analyzed and discussed. The Scheme of Grouping Special Education Terminology can be easily adapted and help in finding, accumulating and sorting out special terms and concepts and stimulate students to expand their vocabulary for specific purposes.

Testing

Testing is also an effective means in teaching and learning special education terminology. There are a lot of different approaches to test students' level (degree) of mastering the vocabulary of a foreign language for specific purposes. We propose the following ways of testing approved at our practical workshops:

- oral or written translation tests,
- intensive 'cross examinations' (group work),
- individual or team competitions (e.g. to find out who knows the greatest number of terms within a fixed period of time),
- writing definitions (in native and foreign languages),
- individual students' reports/presentations on particular terminology used in a source under analysis,
- contests of glossaries compiled by the students, etc.

Difficulties

While teaching EFL the teachers inevitably encounter a serious problem of presenting and interpreting/defining a lot of English so-called 'general concepts' and other difficult words that can not be attributed to any of the above outlined fields of knowledge, but which are mostly unfamiliar for the Lithuanian students because they are not included in mainstream secondary school curriculum (e.g. *ameliorate, correlation, delirium, distractor, exposure, sample, validity, vigilance, etc.*). These 'general' concepts may be singled out in separate banks of new/active words to be learned by students on their own (individually). An additional difficulty in teaching EFL is, of course, introducing correct pronunciation and spelling.

Perspective

Grouping (defining and interpreting) special education terminology from the didactic point of view may be considered as an initial step into its further classification and standardization. Compilation of reference (normative) dictionaries/glossaries both monolingual and multilingual, no doubt, would help the learner to better understand miscellaneous and frequently rather complicated concepts and would present a student with an opportunity to compare the ways and contexts how particular (specific) terms are used and interpreted by different authors in different languages (countries) and to find out similarities and variations.

Contacts and collaboration among researchers and practitioners including both representatives of special education and linguists of different countries should be encouraged in every way possible. The urgent issues of classification and standardization of special education terminology should be analyzed and discussed at national and international conferences, symposiums and seminars. Only united attempts will lead to better understanding of special education (special educational needs) terminology, its diversity and it will assist the teachers/lecturers in presenting and the learners in mastering the disciplines they study.

Conclusions

- Grouping/classification as well as standardization of special educational needs terminology has become an urgent problem from the didactic and common understanding points of view.
- The problem becomes even more urgent for those who have to study the terminology in two (native and foreign) or more languages.
- The approbation of the presented Scheme of Grouping Special Education Terminology has demonstrated its adaptability, use and effectiveness in both

introducing and mastering the material.

- Any attempt to classify and standardize SEN terminology should be encouraged and supported.

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Reziumė

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SPECIALIOJO UGDYMO TERMINIJOS DĖSTYMAS

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama viena iš aktualiausių specialiuųjų pedagogų rengimo problemų – specialiojo ugdymo terminijos užsienio (anglų) kalba dėstymas ir mokymasis. Pateikiama praktikoje apčiuota specialiojo ugdymo terminų grupavimo schema, padedanti studentams suprantamai išdėstyti terminiją ir ją suvokti. Naudojant šią metodiką praktiniame darbe pasiekti geri ter-

minų suvokimo rezultatai: per 90 proc. Šiaulių universiteto Specialiosios pedagogikos fakulteto pirmakursių per du semestrus pakankamai gerai suprato reikiamus specialybės terminus. Raginama dėti daugiau pastangų klasifikuojant ir norminant specialiojo ugdymo bei jam artimų disciplinų terminus ir sąvokas.

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