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## **ONLINE TOOLS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDY OF SPECIALISED VOCABULARY – SELECTED CHALLENGES**

### **ABSTRACT**

The acquisition of lexis is an important part of language learning. It is also a vital component of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) education, as knowledge of specialised vocabulary is considered integral to success in occupation-specific communicative activities. Expanding professional lexis is essential to help ESP learners understand the language and concepts of their academic or professional discipline and achieve specific communication goals. This paper aims to discuss selected challenges of using online tools (which were subjected to a qualitative analysis) to develop specialised lexis at the tertiary level. An outline of difficulties in professional vocabulary learning and a review of the main characteristics of teaching ESP are also included.

**Key words:** English for Specific Purposes (ESP), specialised lexis, online tools

### **ABSTRAKT**

## **NARZĘDZIA TECHNOLOGICZNE DO NAUKI SŁOWNICTWA SPECJALISTYCZNEGO – WYBRANE TRUDNOŚCI**

Rozwijanie podsystemu leksykalnego w języku obcym stanowi istotny element procesu specjalistycznego kształcenia językowego. Znajomość fachowego słownictwa jest niezbędna do

realizacji konkretnych zamierzeń komunikacyjnych, a niewłaściwy dobór środków leksykalnych może skutkować formułowaniem niezrozumiałych komunikatów. Prowadzi to często do nieporozumień i trudności w przekazywaniu informacji, a w wielu przypadkach wręcz uniemożliwia prowadzenie działalności zawodowej, naukowej czy dydaktycznej. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie trudności związanych z wykorzystywaniem wybranych narzędzi technologicznych do nauki słownictwa specjalistycznego (które zostały poddane analizie jakościowej) na poziomie szkoły wyższej. Przedstawiono aspekty jego przyswajania i stosowania, które sprawiają uczącym się największe trudności oraz omówiono specyfikę nauczania języka angielskiego do celów specjalistycznych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ESP – język angielski do celów specjalistycznych, słownictwo specjalistyczne, nowoczesne technologie

## 1. What makes ESP specific?

English for General Purposes (EGP) comprises general language instruction provided mainly at the primary and secondary school levels and is usually delivered for exam purposes. In contrast, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is commonly designed for adult learners either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. Significantly, General English (GE) is frequently perceived as a period of instruction that precedes ESP programmes, which normally build upon the linguistic competence acquired earlier in GE courses. The belief that specialist language acquisition must have its foundation in general English proficiency is supported by a number of ESP researchers<sup>1</sup>, who claim that GE is essential to achieve higher levels of professional and communicative competence. While EGP aims to develop learners' general language competence and capacity in the language<sup>2</sup>, ESP is designed to prepare them to master the language used in various professional and workplace settings to accomplish specific purposes. Consequently, English for Specific Purposes utilises specialised subject matter and specialist register relevant to a particular field or discipline.

Another significant feature of ESP is reflected in the language components that learners are exposed to. ESP instruction seeks to address the language and communicative tasks prescribed by learners' different professions. It is centred

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<sup>1</sup> K. Gatehouse, *Key issues in English for specific purposes (ESP) curriculum development*, "The Internet TESL Journal" 2001, 7(10); J. Oladejo, *Too little, too late: ESP in EFL communicative competence in the era of Globalization*, "The Proceedings of 2004 International Conference and Workshop on TEFL Applied Linguistics", Taipei 2004; Y. Chen, *From common core to specific*, "Asian ESP Journal" 2006, 1(3), pp. 1–27.

<sup>2</sup> H.G. Widdowson, *Learning Purpose and Language Use*, Oxford 1983.

on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre<sup>3</sup>. The complexity of ESP content is also emphasised by Orr<sup>4</sup>, who defines ESP learners as those who require special skills 'to carry out highly specialised tasks for which general English may not prove sufficient'. Orr further explains that ESP language is 'unfamiliar to the average speaker', as it is designed mainly for learners who have to carry out specific academic or workplace tasks. The tasks typically include dissertation writing for academic purposes, doctor-patient communication for medical purposes, or job interviews for business purposes. Orr concludes that ESP addresses 'higher level language needs', including 'composing successful grant proposals, managing complex pharmaceutical documentation, or negotiating business deals and constructing legal contracts'<sup>5</sup>.

Unlike EGP programmes, where the four skills are stressed equally, in ESP it is needs analysis that determines which language skills are most required and, consequently, reflected in syllabi<sup>6</sup>. ESP syllabus development is, therefore, guided by learner needs, which Johns and Dudley-Evans<sup>7</sup> define as the 'identifiable elements' of 'students' target English situations. ESP instruction is seen as designed to meet the specific needs of a specific group of learners, since it is 'an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning'<sup>8</sup>. Thus, conducting a needs analysis is imperative to determine the specific reasons for learning the language and to specify precisely what students need to achieve through the medium of English in an ESP course<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> L. Anthony, *Defining English for specific purposes and the role of the ESP practitioner*, "Center for Language Research 1997 Annual Review" 1997, pp. 1-5.

<sup>4</sup> T. Orr, *English language education for specific purposes*, "IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication" 2001, 44(3), pp. 207-211.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>6</sup> K. Gatehouse, *Key issues in English...*

<sup>7</sup> A. Johns, T. Dudley-Evans, *English for specific purposes: International in scope, specific in purpose*, "TESOL Quarterly" 1991, 25(2), pp. 297-314.

<sup>8</sup> T. Hutchinson, A. Waters, *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-Centred Approach*, Cambridge 1987.

<sup>9</sup> P.C. Robinson, *ESP today: A practitioner's guide*, New York 1991; J.D. Brown, *Second language studies: Curriculum development*, [in:] *Encyclopaedia of language and linguistics*, K. Brown (ed.), Oxford 2006, vol. 11, pp. 102-110; J. Richards, R. Schmidt, *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, London 2010; M. Huhta et al., *Needs analysis for language course design: A holistic approach to ESP*, Cambridge 2013.

## 2. Challenges in learning ESP vocabulary

ESP vocabulary comprises terms that are specific to a particular field of study or professional activity<sup>10</sup>. It is an integral component of ESP training and gives specialised language learners a solid foundation from which to develop communicative competence in order to be able to convey professional information and perform job-related tasks. However, the acquisition of specialised (or technical) vocabulary poses a significant challenge to many ESP learners. This is probably due to the fact that professional lexis is commonly considered more complex than general vocabulary, as it includes 'special purpose, specialized, technical, sub-technical, and semi-technical vocabulary' (ibid.). Thus, in addition to the vocabulary that is common to general English usage, it contains low-frequency words and specific jargon occurring in specific domains. Consequently, students normally require more time to learn how to use it correctly.

As ESP training combines specialist language and subject matter, a certain level of learners' understanding of their professional fields is assumed when planning courses. In reality, however, students' knowledge of their professional area is sometimes inadequate. This particularly refers to pre-service language training and is highly probable when the design of a language course is not in parallel with, or at least relatively equal to, the curriculum of content subjects. The situation is very common in Polish institutions of higher education, where specialised language course content in ESP classes delivered in the initial phase of degree programmes precedes the topics in content subjects. As ESP practitioners are not subject matter specialists, teaching the language of the target field is more effective when the course syllabus reflects, at least to some extent, the curriculum of content subjects. This can help to avoid situations in which an inadequate content-related knowledge base results in incorrect understanding of specialised terminology. Moreover, as indicated by Mohan and van Naerssen<sup>11</sup>, students' knowledge of a specific academic field expands while they simultaneously acquire words for the new concepts they learn.

A similar challenge in specialised lexis learning can arise when learners do not fully grasp technical terms in their first language (L1). Due to the fact that they are frequently characterised by highly specific lexical meanings and connotations, terms that belong to a particular jargon can also pose difficulty

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<sup>10</sup> A. Coxhead, *Vocabulary and ESP*, [in:] *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*, B. Paltridge, S. Starfield (eds.), Boston 2013, pp. 115–132.

<sup>11</sup> B. Mohan, M. van Naerssen, *Understanding cause-effect: Learning through language*, "Forum" 1997, 35 (4), pp. 22–29.

in students' L1. Consequently, deciding which equivalences in the target language (L2) express the same meaning or selecting the right word from a group of synonyms provided in dictionaries can become very challenging, if not impossible. Most specialised bilingual dictionaries do not include 'definitions or examples of contextual use, neither do they distinguish clearly between synonyms in the target language'<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, in order to help learners develop their knowledge of a specific jargon and expand their capacity to extract its meaning, continuous practice and exposure to that jargon, as well as awareness of the subject matter behind it, are all necessary. Moreover, encouraging learners to supplement bilingual dictionaries with monolingual ones and utilising on-line tools, e.g. dictionaries and terminological data banks, to find equivalences should be encouraged.

Finally, some terms do not have equivalences in L2, as 'new scientific terms spread to the international scientific community through a small number of vehicular languages, for example English, French and Japanese'<sup>13</sup>. However, this does not only refer to fast-growing specialised subject fields. All ESP teachers, therefore, ought to implement a needs-based approach to course design and determine specialised lexical content through consulting subject matter experts, using specialised dictionaries or scales, and corpus linguistics<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, ESP classes should be based on a corpus of authentic texts<sup>15</sup>, carefully selected according to the learners' level of linguistic proficiency and knowledge of their field of study. Finally, as providing ESP students with all of the versions of equivalence or all the terms they may need is impossible, it is essential to make them aware of different strategies that can be employed to choose the most suitable lexical items in a particular context<sup>16</sup>.

### 3. Essentials of ESP vocabulary teaching

Due to the fact that specialised vocabulary is frequently regarded as the most central element of ESP training, the development of professional terminology is one of the key objectives of a course. In order to help course participants

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<sup>12</sup> M. Rogers, *Beyond the dictionary: the translator, the l2 learner and the computer*, [in:] *Words, words, words. The translator and the language learner*, G. Anderman, M. Rogers (eds.), Clevedon 1996, pp. 69–95.

<sup>13</sup> J. Sager, *Terminology: Applications*, [in:] *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, M. Baker (ed.), London 2001, pp. 251–255.

<sup>14</sup> A. Coxhead, *Vocabulary and ESP...*

<sup>15</sup> C. Kennedy, R. Bolitho, *English for Specific Purposes*, London 1991.

<sup>16</sup> V. Mishchenko, *Terminology Translation in Teaching Legal English*, "English for Specific Purposes World" 2010, 29 (9), pp. 1–8.

learn how to use it correctly, certain aspects of technical vocabulary knowledge ought to be emphasised in the syllabus and particular attention paid to them during the course. Not only should learners be aware of how to use words in context, but also be familiar with how specialised terms are formed and the key patterns they include. Therefore, the following aspects should be generally emphasised in the teaching of specialised lexis:

- specialist terms and their everyday equivalences;
- words which students may be familiar with in general English, but which are used with a different meaning in specialised English;
- prefixes and suffixes used in specialised terminology;
- abbreviations and acronyms;
- collocations and fixed phrases;
- synonyms and antonyms;
- differences and similarities between the native and the foreign language, e.g. false friends, cognates;
- grammar of vocabulary, i.e. awareness of the rules that enable learners to produce different forms of the word or different words in the family;
- pronunciation, i.e. the ability to effectively recognise and reproduce items in speech.

Throughout the course learners should be encouraged to utilise vocabulary employing the four skills and to interact with authentic materials and activities based on everyday practice of the target profession. Regardless of activity type, emphasis should be placed on understanding the context in which vocabulary is used, and ample opportunity for repeated exposure should be provided. Teachers need to develop vocabulary building techniques by selecting appropriate class activities to consolidate new lexis in the classroom, so that new vocabulary is recycled throughout the course.

Finally, emphasis should be placed on helping ESP course participants to become independent learners by increasing their awareness of various vocabulary learning strategies. Students should also be guided to develop their own vocabulary learning techniques and encouraged to implement them in their independent study time.

#### **4. Individual vocabulary learning with the help of online tools**

Since ESP students will need to use various language skills in their future professions, vocabulary development should not be the sole objective of ESP courses. However, as language learners find it significantly easier to perform listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks if they have an extensive knowledge

of vocabulary<sup>17</sup>, it seems reasonable to devote a considerable amount of time and effort to its development in tertiary language education. Moreover, apart from the efforts undertaken in the classroom, individual vocabulary learning ought to be emphasised as a useful strategy for enhancing foreign language proficiency. Significantly, lexis is believed to be best acquired through focused, conscious study, which is not always possible in the language classroom.

ESP courses in Poland are primarily delivered in the form of tertiary language programmes designed for pre-service young adults. It is generally accepted that, similar to the majority of students, they learn best when:

- they are not overstimulated, nor experiencing stress or anxiety;
- new pieces of information are presented through a variety of sensory modes and experiences<sup>18</sup>.

This, unquestionably, substantiates the argument that digital tools can be used to create effective learning environments for them. When learning vocabulary independently with the aid of online tools, students can create an atmosphere that is conducive to their specific needs. This means that they can study when it is most convenient for them, in a relaxing and stress-free environment. Additionally, they can proceed in a self-paced manner and the vocabulary content can be accessed an unlimited number of times. This particular functionality of digital tools is especially useful for shy individuals who do not always feel confident enough to ask their teachers to devote more time to a particularly complex lexical area. Moreover, online vocabulary tools normally use interactive content, i.e. content that ‘requires and encourages users to actively engage with it rather than passively consume it’<sup>19</sup>. Significantly, high levels of interactivity have the potential to enhance understanding and help learners conceptualize more complex ideas. Consequently, they find it easier to remember specialised lexis and to apply it more effectively in their future professional activities. Finally, when working with online tools for developing vocabulary, students may both gain and develop new technical skills. It can therefore be concluded that apart from facilitating language development, online tools help reduce the stress and anxiety that sometimes accompany language learning and can affect students’ willingness to use and further develop their English<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> P. Nation, *New Ways in teaching vocabulary*, Alexandria 1994.

<sup>18</sup> J.C. Richards, *Key issues in language teaching*, Cambridge 2015.

<sup>19</sup> R. Pokorniyk, *12 Types of Interactive Content to Drive Better Engagement*. Single Grain, [online], <https://www.singlegrain.com/blog-posts/content-marketing/7-types-of-interactive-content-why-and-how-to-use-them/>, [retrieved: 13.12.2021].

<sup>20</sup> L. Woodrow, *Anxiety and speaking English as a second language*, “RELC Journal” 2006, 63 (4), pp. 323–331.

Online tools for individual vocabulary study are understood in this article as those that come with pre-designed vocabulary content (usually from one broad thematic area, e.g. medical English), which the teacher does not have to create. Moreover, they do not allow the trainer to track learners' progress. In contrast, a tool such as the immensely popular *Quizlet* enables the teacher to design vocabulary activities related to any topic, while other *Quizlet* functionalities make it easier to monitor how students are completing their assignments. It should be stressed that while *Quizlet* offers 350 million study sets, searching for one that would be most appropriate for a given ESP group might prove abundantly time-consuming.

## 5. Online tools for learning Medical and Business English vocabulary

Generally, an ideal online tool designed for independent study of specialised vocabulary ought to enable students to learn:

- the meaning of a vocabulary item;
- its form, i.e. what part of speech it is;
- its pronunciation, spelling, and phonemic transcription;
- whether it follows an unpredictable grammatical pattern;
- the connotations the item might have and the contexts in which it is used, e.g. its level of formality, whether it is used mainly in speech or mainly in writing, whether it is old-fashioned or up-to-date;
- the item's collocations.

Additionally, it should present the meaning of a word or phrase in a number of ways, e.g. through the use of visual material, translations, definitions, contexts, etc. Finally, it ought to be interactive, i.e. enable its users to interact with the website content itself, as interactivity is likely to increase users' engagement.

While selecting tools for developing specialised vocabulary that could be further recommended to students, the authors of the article, being fully aware of the advantages of bilingual teaching resources, made a conscious decision to focus only on tools that do not use translations to illustrate the meaning of Medical and Business English vocabulary items. The use of definitions rather than translations is likely to entail a more pro-active mental effort when it comes to vocabulary learning and, consequently, might give students a truer meaning of a word. Moreover, the use of definitions increases students' exposure to English. Finally, not every term has a direct, unambiguous translation in the learners' native language. The analysed tools are also free to use, as the authors believe that students should not have to pay for access to tools used to develop their linguistic proficiency.

The primary aim of the analysis was to verify to what extent the selected tools meet the requirements of an ideal online tool for independent study of specialised vocabulary. Due to limited space, the authors decided to discuss only two tools: one for developing medical terms and the other for developing business vocabulary. These were selected so as to reflect the most common challenges related to the use of online tools for individual vocabulary study.

### **a. Medical English – Surgery 101**

**<http://surgery101.org/>**

*Surgery 101* is an educational research project developed by the University of Alberta, Canada. Its main aim is to create supplementary learning materials for medical degree programmes in the form of podcasts. Thus, *Surgery 101* comprises 21 main sections devoted to major topics pertinent to contemporary surgery. Each section contains a number of different podcasts and covers a single topic, which enables students to enhance their knowledge related to a common surgical problem. All 21 sections are narrated by different speakers and contain educational objectives listed beneath each episode. The objectives promote independent learning by informing students what they will be able to do as a result of listening to a particular episode.

It is evident that *Surgery 101* is not a tool that was designed for language learners who wish to expand their knowledge of specialised vocabulary. However, there are a number of reasons why ESP students should be encouraged to use it. First of all, extensive free online tools for independent vocabulary learning in the field of English for Medical Purposes (EMP) seem scarce. Hence, a resource that is mainly useful for expanding professional knowledge might be helpful in learning specialised lexis. While *Surgery 101* is mostly beneficial for developing listening comprehension skills, it does simultaneously require students to have at least a passive knowledge of medical vocabulary and allows them the opportunity to recall and use the words they have acquired in other parts of the course in a realistic context. As students interact with subject-matter content, they should also feel encouraged to research medical vocabulary items they find challenging. The following advantages of using *Surgery 101* to develop medical vocabulary ought to be emphasised:

- The podcasts reflect the current state of medical knowledge. Therefore, the vocabulary students learn while listening to them is actually used by contemporary medical professionals.
- The podcasts are narrated by a number of different speakers, meaning that students are exposed to a variety of accents and local dialects. Such diversity might be characteristic of an environment where medical professionals

from different linguistic backgrounds cooperate. Accordingly, the podcasts prepare students for listening to real-life communicative exchanges in their future professions.

Nevertheless, a number of limitations can occur in using *Surgery 101* as a vocabulary learning aid. As previously indicated, the podcasts were produced for medical students rather than foreign language learners. This means that the audio recordings feature connected speech, or spoken language in a continuous sequence, which is characterised by sound deletion or sound clipping. Therefore, students who want to improve their medical vocabulary might find it difficult to identify individual words from the material. The task might become particularly challenging due to the fact that subtitles or transcripts are not provided. Moreover, in order to fully exploit the vocabulary potential of the recorded material, students need to have vast content knowledge, which is generally beyond the capabilities of learners who develop their specialised language skills at the beginning of their medical education. As EMP courses normally begin in the initial year of medical programmes, students' content knowledge is not yet very broad. As observed by Fiorito<sup>21</sup>, 'Knowledge of the subject area enables the students to identify a real context for the vocabulary and structures of the ESP classroom. In such way, the learners can take advantage of what they already know about the subject matter to learn English'.

Due to the lack of transcripts or subtitles, learners will not be able to practise the spelling of medical terms. *Surgery 101* does not provide glossaries, and not every student is able to guess the meaning of technical lexis from context, especially when their content knowledge is still not very comprehensive. Moreover, learners will not receive any information on the connotations of the vocabulary items, the grammar patterns they follow, or their collocations. In fact, learning new words with the aid of *Surgery 101* would require a lot of determination from students, as they would have to listen to the podcasts, note down the words they are not familiar with, work with a dictionary to find the meaning, and probably design certain activities with the help of an interactive tool<sup>22</sup>, such as *Quizlet*, in order to transfer the new words into their long-term memory.

It needs to be emphasised, however, that individual, autonomous vocabulary learning might be a demanding endeavour. It involves willingness on the part of the learner and taking responsibility for their own language progress. Moreover, if students spend too much time searching for such tools

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<sup>21</sup> L. Fiorito, *Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP)*. UsingEnglish.com 2021, [online], <https://www.usingenglish.com/teachers/articles/teaching-english-for-specific-purposes-esp.html>, [retrieved: 14.12.2021].

<sup>22</sup> *Surgery 101* does not possess any type of interactive content.

instead of working with them, they will not see the benefits of individual vocabulary study and might become discouraged from working independently of the teacher. Therefore, providing them with resources that might at least partially support the development of specialised lexis might be more effective than expecting them to tackle the task on their own.

**b. Business English – BusinessEnglishSite.com**  
**<https://www.businessenglishsite.com/>**

According to its creators, *BusinessEnglishSite.com* is an online platform for individuals who want to expand their knowledge of modern Business English. It is stressed that the content on the website was developed by professionals with corporate experience, which guarantees that those who wish to broaden their knowledge of business lexis will work with ‘the best, most accurate business vocabulary, phrases, expressions, and jargon’<sup>23</sup>.

The website is divided into four broad sections, i.e. Vocabulary training, Grammar quizzes, Listening comprehension, and Reading comprehension. The Vocabulary component consists of six subsections, each containing a number of exercises intended for intermediate or advanced students. Rather surprisingly, one of the subsections is devoted to medical English for doctors and nurses.

There are two types of vocabulary exercises to be found on the website, either visual or multiple choice. In the former, students are given 10 pictures which they label using expressions listed underneath the instructions. Following this, students can click on the button at the bottom of the page to check their score, show solutions, or clear answers. In the multiple choice exercises, learners are presented with ten questions, each followed by a set of three alternative answers of which only one is correct. Students click on the answer they consider to be correct and then use the function ‘Check Answers’ to obtain immediate feedback.

Undoubtedly, the greatest advantage of *BusinessEnglishSite.com* is the selection of activities that enable students to learn and revise a considerable number of lexical items related to the world of business. It is a highly extensive vocabulary learning resource for presenting, practising and testing specialised lexis in a self-study mode. The two types of vocabulary activities are interactive and allow students to immediately view their scores, thus creating a live interactive learning experience. Moreover, the visual input enhancement can play a role in improving both vocabulary learning and retention.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.businessenglishsite.com/>, [retrieved: 15.14.2021].

However, all of the multiple choice and visual exercises follow exactly the same pattern and can be discouraging. Despite the variety of business expressions and the interactivity of the tasks, the boredom and weariness that working with the website entails can demotivate many students. Secondly, even though the website offers visual activities, their number is quite insignificant when compared to that of multiple choice exercises. Significantly, some of the pictures that are used display outdated or obsolete office equipment. This raises the question, since the images do not reflect the reality of modern offices, of whether other vocabulary items are really used in contemporary business environments. It seems that a lot of effort was invested in developing the content, but not much attention was paid to updating it. Furthermore, the activities are designed around definitions and synonyms of supposedly contemporary British jargon, but the pronunciation of the lexis is not practised in any way.

*BusinessEnglishSite.com* offers its users an 'English glossary of terms', which is advertised as: 'a great collection of common terms and expressions that will help you become more fluent in modern Business English' (ibid.). However, the glossary is a paid resource and it is not clear whether the items it contains can be found in the activities on the website or whether they are a random collection of words loosely related to the world of business.

## 6. Conclusions

ESP lexis is frequently considered more complex than general vocabulary. Hence, more time is needed to learn how to use it correctly. Unfortunately, during most tertiary ESP courses teachers do not have a sufficient amount of time at their disposal to explain all the intricacies of specialised terms. For this reason, students need to be encouraged to expand their knowledge of professional terminology outside the language classroom.

As the majority of young adults learning ESP at tertiary level are digital natives, they possess exceptional familiarity with modern information technologies and they consider them to be an integral part of their lives. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, their learning is built around different forms of multimodal input and, according to Richards<sup>24</sup>, heavily driven by visual images. Richards further argues that digital natives know how to explore the Internet to find the things that they need. However, as highlighted in the previous sections, online tools for individual study of specialised vocabulary are frequently

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<sup>24</sup> J.C. Richards, *Key issues in language teaching*, Cambridge 2015.

difficult to find. The task might be even more daunting for those who have only begun to expand their professional lexis and have little awareness of what ESP involves and which thematic areas might be most important for their future careers. Nevertheless, different tools might emphasise different aspects of specialised lexis. If ESP students are to be encouraged to use online tools for individual vocabulary study, they need to have such tools recommended to them by their teachers, so as not to spend time searching for rather than working with them.

Unfortunately, apart from being difficult to find, online tools for individual study of specialised lexis do not allow for truly autonomous vocabulary development due to the following reasons:

- they hardly ever possess functionalities that would allow students to practise pronunciation;
- they hardly ever present such information about a given item as its grammatical pattern, connotations, formality or informality, or collocations;
- they are hardly ever truly interactive so as to sustain the motivation of digital natives, who are accustomed to working with multi-modal texts.

Despite their flaws, such tools can be a good introduction to learner autonomy, especially when students are asked in class to discuss the challenges they faced practising professional vocabulary with the help of a given tool. Not only does it create additional speaking practice, but it also raises students' awareness of the complexity of specialised vocabulary and helps them discover new approaches and even new tools for learning it.

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