Online Reading and Writing in English for Specific Purposes Classes

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Abstract. At tertiary level students face demanding tasks of reading an enormous amount of professional materials in English. Writing various assignments is another challenging part of higher education. Online activities are the priority for conducting assignments at university level.

University students usually start doing the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course before learning subject-matters of the future profession, i.e. in their first year. The cornerstone of the ESP is unfamiliar lexis and numerous concepts of subject-matter. In order to succeed, students need to develop proficiency in reading professional texts and writing skillfully on relevant subject issues.

The aim of this paper is to investigate, first, learners’ attitudes to reading professional materials and writing various assignments online and, second, learners’ self-assessment of proficiency in these skills.

Research employed brief written surveys designed in accordance with the standards in Social Sciences, which were administered to the students doing the ESP course, and the verbal data obtained during individual interviews intended to assess learners’ success and achievements throughout the academic year.

The respondents were the students specializing in psychology at Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania. All the participants were unanimous in the importance of writing and reading skills for the ESP tasks. 100% of respondents support reading professional materials, and 80% of respondents support exercising online writing. Self-assessment of reading proficiency demonstrate that 90% of students believe they possess very good or good skills of reading, and 70% of learners are sure of their good skills of writing. Respondents’ performance in these skills is less impressive.

The paper describes some recommendations that aim at perfecting students’ proficiency in “read-to-write” assignments. It is urgent to help learners to develop better rates of reading and learn to employ metacognitive strategies in writing.

Key words: online “read-to-write-tasks”, attitudes to reading/writing skills, self-assessment of reading/writing skills, English for Specific Purposes.