

TEACHING TERMS EFFECTIVELY IN ESP

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Abstract: The presentation is aimed at discussing some aspects of effective teaching of specialized vocabulary in ESP lessons. Problems of selecting, presenting and practicing terms will be approached from both theoretical and practical points of view. Examples and conclusions will be based on teaching military terminology to professionals at tertiary level.

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at discussing some problems of teaching specialized military English terminology at N. Y. Vaptsarov Naval Academy in Varna, but the theoretical considerations and practical suggestions can be applied in any other field of teaching specialized vocabulary, since teaching specialized vocabulary/terminology is an integral, and probably the most important, part of ESP lessons where students study English through a field that is already known and relevant to them to a certain degree - depending on their educational level. Thus, students at a university level will, in an ideal situation, build on their General English knowledge and acquire specialized English terminology after they have already comprehended the specialized knowledge during their lectures and seminars in Bulgarian language. As for the postgraduate trainees who attend specialized English courses as part of their postgraduate education and qualification, they will have a profound knowledge of subject matters.

Most of the linguists and methodologists point out to the following important considerations when discussing ESP teaching in general:

- differences between General English and Specialized English;
- importance of needs analysis and ESP course design;
- approaches to effective learning and roles of the teacher;
- ESP materials (i.e. vocabulary) selection, presentation and practice.

In addition to commenting on the above points from the perspective of the teaching situation at the Naval Academy, we will also focus our attention on some effective techniques for teaching military terms and will present some sample exercises with them.

ESP VOCABULARY TEACHING: NEEDS ANALYSIS

Specialists underline that “specific” in ESP refers to the specific *purpose* for learning English (Fiorito, Anthony): “Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need” is the guiding principle of ESP”, state Hutchinson and Waters (Hutchinson, Waters, p. 8); “ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner” is the most important characteristic according to Dudley-Evans and St John (Dudley-Evans, St John, p. 4). Specific learning needs of the trainees at military educational institutions and the Naval Academy in particular are driven by the requirements stated by the MoD in the document, called “*Strategy for the Development of English Language Training System. Aims, Mission, Tasks and Main Components*” (Стратегия) where among the **aims** are: to provide conditions to servicemen for the acquisition of English knowledge and skills, necessary for the successful implementation of their professional tasks in a multinational environment, as well as to establish proper conditions for acquiring such knowledge and skills by cadets at military schools. The **mission** is to provide high quality and effective training in line with the needs of the Armed Forces to achieve interoperability with NATO members. The **tasks** are related to using standardized programs for English language training aimed at improving writing, reading, listening and speaking. According to this

Strategy, the ultimate goal of English training at military institutions is related to successful fulfillment of students' professional tasks in a multinational environment.

As seen from this document, all language skills are considered equally important, which raises some question: what English do trainees at the Naval Academy actually need – General or Specialized? What should be ratio between them? Shouldn't there be a stress on a particular skill they would most likely need in order to perform their duties more successfully? What should we prioritise in the syllabus?

Practice and feedback from students have proved that the answers to these questions depend on many factors, among which the most important are the position of the officer and his specialty. ESP postgraduates at the Naval Academy are adults most of whom (except participants in courses for beginners) already have some acquaintance with English and are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular job-related functions. Thus, officers who need English most are those who work at Naval HQ and General Staff, who communicate in English both in a written form and orally with NATO and non-NATO partners, as well as senior commanding officers, who regularly participate in international training exercises, activities, and meetings. Officer's specialty is also important, because, for example, Deck officers will have more exposure to English, while Ship Engineers will need less.

A more precise picture of actual needs of trainees who participate in English courses at the Department for Postgraduate Studies at the Naval Academy is possible thanks to questionnaires they fill in at the end of each course. Thus, 253 questionnaires have been collected in the period from 15.05.2006 to 18.12.2009. They provide feedback of the training experience in studying English by officers, NCOs and privates, as well as small number of civilians, who participated in 25 groups in six different courses: from Level One to Four, as well as in Refresher Courses Modules 1 and 2. The syllabus of the courses from the so called levels 1-4 is based mainly on the *American Language Course* Books 1-36¹ and Refresher courses are based mainly on General English Course books (*Headway*², *Cutting Edge*³) with specialized lessons from the *Campaign*⁴ Course book and *English for the Military* textbook (Georgieva 2005). Alongside with answering questions about the learning facilities and the self-access resource center, teachers' methods and punctuality, teacher-students interaction, and forms of control, there are two questions which are closely connected to evaluating trainees' needs:

1. According to you, is the course syllabus adequate to the course objectives?
 - a/ do you think there are unnecessary topics? If yes - which ones?
 - b/ do you think there are missing topics? If yes - which ones?
2. How do you personally assess the results you achieved during the course?

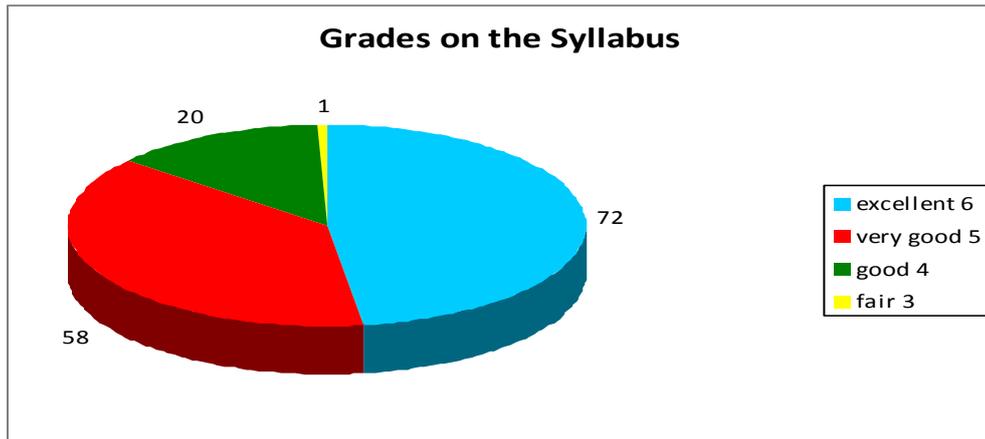
The **question about the syllabus** gets mostly positive answers, e.g. "The syllabus is adequate" and it is rated on a 6-grade scale as follows:

¹ American Language Course, Books 1-36, Defence Language Institute, English Language Center, Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas

² Soars J. and L., M. Sayer: New Headway, OUP

³ Cunningham S., P. Moor: New Cutting Edge, Person, Longman

⁴ Mellor-Clark S., Y. B. de Altamirano: Campaign, MacMillan



In addition, some of the trainees comment on the topics they think need a change or need to be included. Thus 18 of them state that the course should be directed towards better preparing for a successful passing of the STANAG 6001 test, e.g. “I consider it necessary to pay special attention to the STANAG 6001 test requirements”, “I suggest studying military terminology more intensively, e.g. military reports and formal papers and statements, that will help at the STANAG test.”

Another 18 state they consider the ALC course to be outdated: “The textbooks are pretty old”, “ALC books content is not enough”, “ALC has boring texts”, “ALC is not the best book”.

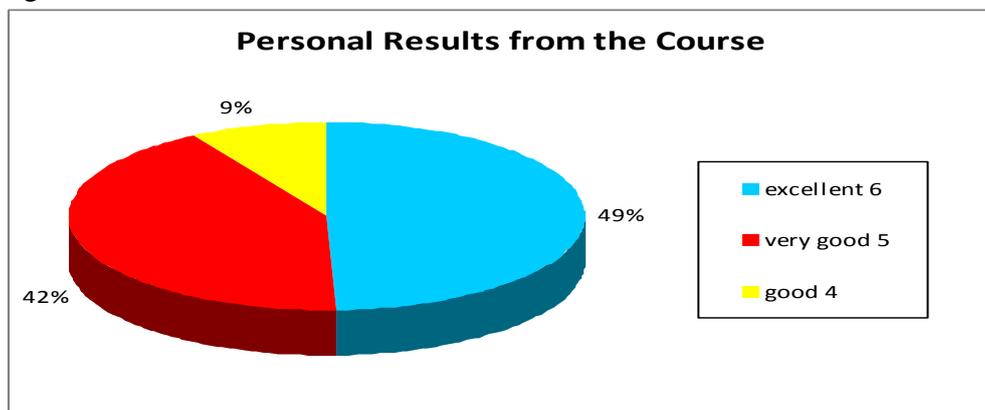
The next requirement is also e result of ALC content which lacks enough speaking tasks. That is why some students feel they need more speaking practice (14 trainees).

Despite the fact that ALC is designed for military members, it is still felt to be not enough “military”. Military topics appear in it randomly, in separate units which are not related to the previous or next ones. This is the reason for the students to insist on introducing more military terminology in the syllabus: “It is necessary to pay more attention to military topics”, “More attention should be paid to military abbreviations”, “There are military terms in the programme, but not enough naval terms” (11 students).

A smaller number of students need more listening (8) or grammar exercises (4).

From the statistic results, it can be seen that coping with the STANAG 6001 examination is the main target need for postgraduates since for the majority of them a certain result is a requirement for taking/keeping a job position. Their needs for speaking, listening and writing military English are urgent and justify their high demands on military writing and speaking.

The second question about the **personal results achieved during the course** was rated by 152 postgraduates as follows:



Another 77 students, who studied before February 2008 (85 %), answered positively, i.e. they achieved the results they had expected from the course, and 14 (15 %) were not completely satisfied by the course results, pointing to mainly personal reasons.

The results show that the practicality of ESP teaching was confirmed by 86% of the students.

On the basis of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that students have a definite target need for communication both professionally and in everyday situations and it is necessary to deliver ESP courses to postgraduates. Most postgraduates desire to improve their abilities in English listening, speaking and writing. The teaching materials of military ESP courses are practical and have raised students' ability in professional communication chiefly in the aspect of reading, but they still need a richer specialized military vocabulary.

APPROACHES TO EFFECTIVE ESP TEACHING AND ESP TEACHER'S ROLES

Specialized vocabulary, not grammar, should be put to the centre of the ESP classroom in order to help learners achieve their goal: to communicate fluently in a job-related real situation in a multinational surrounding.

Experts underline that ESP continues to evolve along several distinct paths, which are related to:

- an increasing focus on learners, not just on their immediate wants and needs, but also on future wants and needs as well;
- a move toward negotiated or process orientated syllabi with students actively involved in deciding on the course general goals, content, and pace;
- a continued focus on individual learning, learner centeredness, and learner autonomy;
- a move away from ESP course books towards a more eclectic approach to materials, with an emphasis on careful selection of materials to meet learners' wants and needs;
- a continued high-emphasis on target situation analysis and needs analysis and, following the course delivery, a more objective approach to evaluation and assessment of the course (Graves 2000).

Most specialists-methodologists view learner-centered learning as a major paradigm shift in ESP teaching (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evan & St. John, 1998). Unlike the teacher-centered model in which knowledge is transmitted from teacher to learner, the focus is shifted to the constructive role of the learner, who takes some responsibility for his own learning and can negotiate some aspects of the course design. Thus, the subject matter and course content have relevance for the learners and they feel motivated to become more involved in their learning and often seem to participate more actively in class.

The shift towards a learner-centered approach in ESP teaching raises the question about the shift in ESP teacher's roles. The description should start with highlighting the fact that "the great majority of ESP teachers have not been trained as such... Many of [the teachers] feel alienated by the subject matter they are expected to teach... The ESP teacher should not become a teacher of the subject matter, but rather an interested student of the subject matter." (Hutchinson, Waters, pp. 157, 163)

Dudley Evans (quoted by Antony 1997) describes the true **ESP teacher** as needing to perform **five different roles**. These are 1) Teacher, 2) Collaborator, 3) Course designer and materials provider, 4) Researcher and 5) Evaluator.

The first role as 'teacher' is synonymous with that of the 'General English' teacher. The performing of the other four roles is in close relation with collaboration with subject specialists. When team teaching is not possible, the ESP teacher must collaborate more

closely with the learners, who will generally be more familiar with the specialized content of materials than the teacher him or herself.

Both 'General English' teachers and ESP teachers often have to design courses and provide materials. One of the main controversies in the field of ESP is how specific those materials should be. Many ESP teachers need to develop class materials to meet the specific needs of their students. Here the ESP teachers' role as 'researcher' is especially important, with results leading directly to appropriate materials for the classroom. Authors of teaching materials and teachers should take into account the criteria of learnability and teachability of ESP learning materials.

The final role as 'evaluator' deals with assessing the outcomes of both the course and the students' results and is inseparable part of the learning process.

SELECTING SPECIALIZED VOCABULARY

Some specialists argue that the teaching of a specialized vocabulary is not the responsibility of a ESP teacher (Hutchinson T., A. Waters. 1987). However, others claim that "in certain specific contexts it may be the *duty* of the ESP teacher to check that learners have understood technical vocabulary appearing as carrier content for an exercise." (Dudley-Evans, St. John, p. 81). We agree with the latter statement though in our case the difficulty is with specialized military vocabulary. In addition, following the recommendation that "in ESP, English should be presented not as a subject to be learned in isolation from real use, nor as a mechanical skill or habit to be developed. On the contrary, English should be presented in authentic contexts to make the learners acquainted with the particular ways in which the language is used in functions that they will need to perform in their fields of specialty or jobs" (Fiorito). We need to be very careful with selecting and presenting the content paying special attention to the military terminology our students need. In most of the cases, the syllabus that is followed during a course contains enough general military topics and terms respectively. If the teacher decides to introduce supplementary military vocabulary, it should be based on students' particular professional needs, e.g. specialists from the Navy, Army, or Air Force will need different specialized vocabulary. In addition, it needs to be selected after a consultation with a subject specialist for clarifying the exact meaning of terms and their best translation in Bulgarian.

Another option for adding specialized vocabulary to classes is when students themselves bring texts that they need to understand. "The advantage here is that learners 'own' texts are involved and committed to them. These texts may be allotted classtime or self-study time according to whether they represent group or individual needs and interests." (Dudley-Evans, St. John, p. 99). A good example of such cases is when trainees from language courses from 3rd and 4th Level are asked to prepare presentations on professional military topics they choose. Very often students decide to present a topic which is highly professional and loaded with specialized terminology, e.g. *Proteo rescue and salvage ship construction and tasks, Diving operations, Checking a vehicle at a check point, Integrated defense resource management system* to name a few. These presentations are accompanied by discussions when the trainee-presenter not only develops his rhetoric skills, but also takes the leading role and explains to his colleagues a certain function, device, operation, etc. named with a specific term that appears in his presentation. The discussion stage is when students together enhance their knowledge of specialized terminology by clarifying the meaning and practicing the terms in a less formal way, yet in a classroom situation and under a teacher's guidance.

PRESENTING SPECIALIZED VOCABULARY

Having selected the new terminology to be introduced, the next step is presenting it in such a way so that to be understood and memorized easily by the students. The best way for doing this depends on the terms themselves. As Dudley-Evans, St. John (Dudley-Evans, St. John, p.81-82) point out, there are the following possible situations:

1) In some circumstances a **term is cognate** with the equivalent term in Bulgarian and does not cause difficulty (e.g. *torpedo, frigate, corvette, convoy, escalation, dispersal, sextant, radar, periscope, propeller*, etc.) In many cases there is a one-to-one relationship between the terms in English and the learners' L1, and so it will be enough to translate the term into the L1 after a brief explanation.

2) If the **term is not cognate** and is unfamiliar, then it may need to be introduced and explained before the exercise is tackled. The best teaching situation will be when the new term is presented with its definition according to standardized NATO definition, accepted in the *NATO Glossary of terms and definitions*⁵ thus familiarizing the students with the accepted concept of the term, e.g. "*decoy ship / Q-ship* a ship camouflaged as a non-combatant ship with its armament and other fighting equipment hidden and with special provisions for unmasking its weapons quickly."

3) In some situations learners start a new course that is completely new for them. One way is for the language teacher and the subject expert to prepare a **glossary of new terms** with straightforward explanations of the terms.

In all of the above cases, introduction of the new vocabulary should be inseparable from explaining the word meaning in the context of the real life in a simple and interesting way. As a general rule, vocabulary can be taught inductively (through some process of discovery) or deductively, e.g. by providing a picture: "this is a _____".

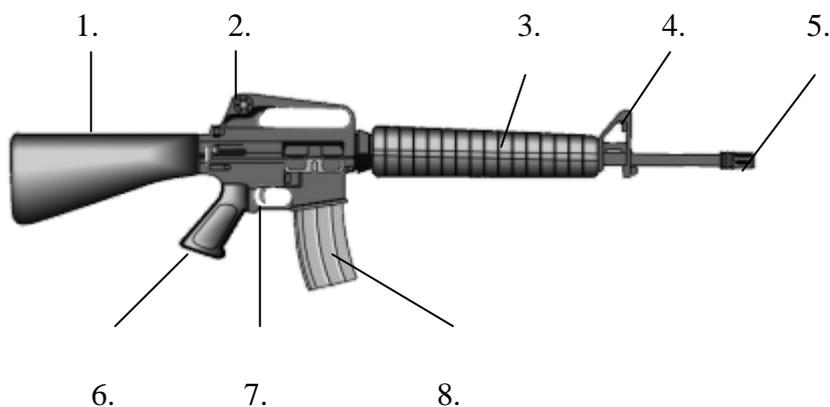
Verbal techniques of explanation can include, but are not limited to:

- presenting the new term with its **synonym** or **antonym**, e.g. *bottom mine - ground min, replenishment at sea - underway replenishment, attack - counterattack, friendly - hostile*.

- presenting the new term in a **scale**, e.g. if students know *friendly - hostile*, other steps could be to teach them *neutral, unknown, suspect*.

- **matching/labelling** – when students match new terms to pictures or to their definition, e.g. (Georgieva, 2005):

Match the description of the following parts of the rifle to the picture:



⁵ *NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions (English and French)*
<http://www.nato.int/docu/stanag/aap006/aap-6-2009.pdf>

- the open end of a gun where the bullets come out: muzzle
- the thick end of a weapon: butt
- the two parts of the aiming device
 - backsight/ rear sight
 - foresight/ front sight
- it can be held without the hands slipping: grip

This technique belongs to discovery techniques which activate the learner's previous knowledge of a language and initiate the work with the new vocabulary. Discovery techniques demand the autonomous students with higher knowledge of English.

In addition to the suggested by ESP specialists general methods of presenting the new vocabulary, I suggest some more types of useful ways for introducing specialized terminology.

1) The easiest way is by **visualizing** whenever possible the new term. With the military terminology this could be done in two ways:

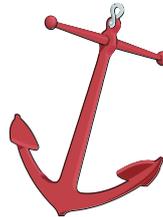
- by a picture, photograph, flashcards, drawing, or diagram, e.g.:



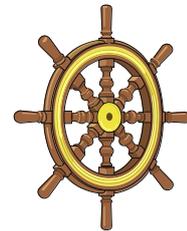
lifebuoy



lifejacket



anchor



helm

- by the **symbol** which replaces a given military term and is familiar to the trainees, since it is used in military maps, e.g.:



minelayer

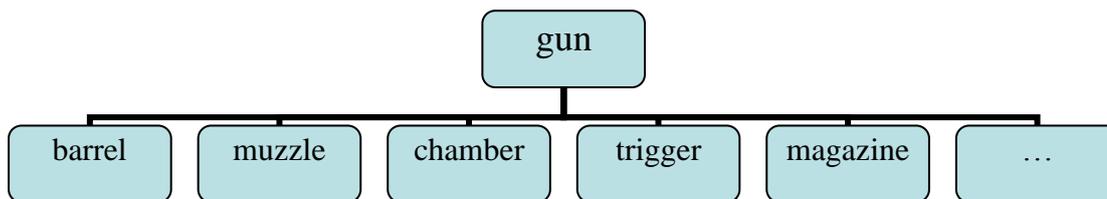


cruiser

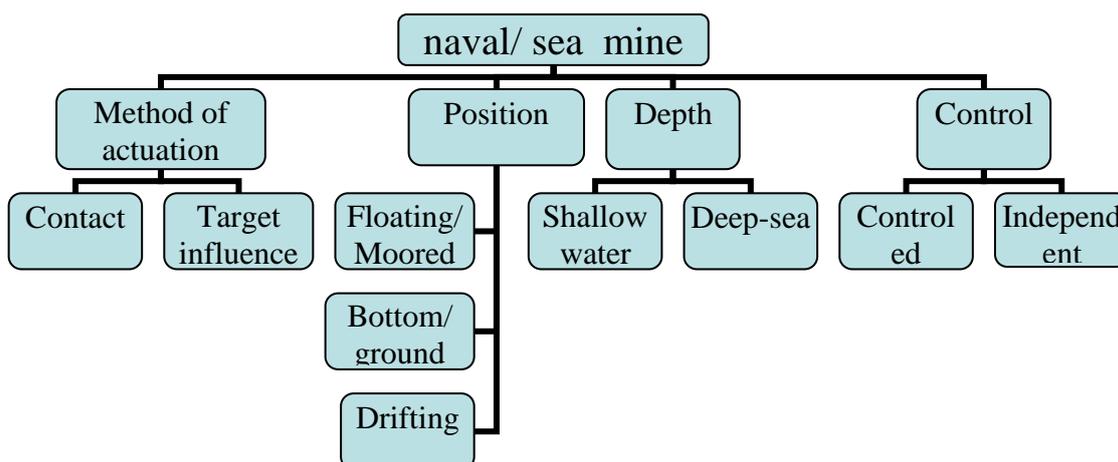


nuclear submarine

2) Another possible approach for introducing new terminology is by presenting terms in a **systematic way** (See Georgieva 2007 for details). This approach requires coordinated efforts of lots of specialists (both subject specialists and linguists) in order to collect, present and analyze the system relations between the main concepts, respectively terms, of English military terminology. Moreover, this approach requires language items to be classified not on the basis of their overt formal properties, as, for example, in an alphabetical order, but according to the properties of the concepts to which they refer. One of the possible ways of applying systematic approach is by representing 'whole-part' relationships between terms and indicating the connections between concepts consisting of more than one part and their constituent parts. Partitive relationships can be represented by trees, e.g.:



Classificatory systematicity deals with generic relationship which establishes hierarchical order and “identifies concepts as belonging to the same category in which there is a broader (generic) concept which is said to be superordinate to the narrower (specific) subordinate concept or concepts... Subordinate concepts contain all the characteristics of the superordinate concept as well as at least one differentiating characteristic. The generic relationship entails both a vertical and horizontal relationship, and can also have several layers which can be represented by a tree structure” (Sager 1990, p. 30). For example, when introducing the terms for different types of naval mines, it is convenient to indicate the criterion, by which a subordinate concept is distinguished from the superordinate concept, e.g.: according to the method of actuation naval mines are *contact* and *target-influence*; according to the position they are *floating/moored*, *bottom/ground* and *drifting*; according to the depth of mine-laying they are *shallow water* and *deep sea*, etc. This kind of subdivision of a concept made on the basis of a particular characteristic is called a *faceted classification*.



The choice of one of the above mentioned methods of presenting terms will depend on students’ level and interests, as well as on the context (terminologically loaded or of a general nature) in which terms to be studied and memorized appear. With beginner-level students it is advisable to use as many visuals as possible, so that to reduce explanations. On the contrary, with intermediate to advance students it will be beneficiary for them to receive a more complete picture of a set of terms presented as a system with hierarchical relations between them. In both cases a glossary of the new terms (with either translations or NATO definitions/explanations) should be included in the syllabus.

PRACTICING NEW TERMS

In order to ensure not only learning, but also remembering the new vocabulary and its transfer to the long-term memory and turning the passive/receptive knowledge of vocabulary into a productive usage, lots of various activities need to be incorporated in the studying process.

The main types of activities, proved to be practical and useful, are as follows (Sasson; **examples** are taken **from** *English for the Military* textbook):

1) **Matching** exercises:

- matching the word to its definition (p. 26, Ex. 7B; p. 32, Ex. 3 ; p. 54, Ex. 5B; p. 130, Ex. 4, etc.), e.g.:

p. 102, Ex. 3 B *Match the type of attack to its definition.*

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1. ambush | a. taking control of another country |
| 2. assault | b. a brief unimportant fight |
| 3. invasion | c. an attack on a place by keeping an army round it and stopping anyone from getting in or out |
| 4. raid | d. a surprise attack |
| 5. siege | e. a sudden secret attack by a small group |
| 6. skirmish | f. a strong attack |

- matching the term in English with its Bulgarian equivalent (e.g.: p. 10, Ex. 3 B, etc.), e.g.:

p. 23, Ex. 4 *Match the word combinations with **commander** in A with their Bulgarian equivalents in B*

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. assistant commander | a. непосредствен началник |
| 2. commander-in-chief | b. командващ флота |
| 3. deputy commander | c. строеви командир |
| 4. fleet commander | d. помощник командир |
| 5. immediate commander | e. главнокомандващ, |
| командващ | |
| 6. major commander | f. заместник командир |
| 7. tactical commander | g. старши командир |

- opposites/synonyms (e.g. p. 37, Ex. 1 D, p. 103, Ex. 6, etc.)

- term to the picture/symbol/diagram/abbreviation (p. 15, Ex. 4; p. 27 , Ex. 8; p. 31, Ex. 2; p. 45, Ex. 3, etc.)

- collocations (two terms that go together) (p. 117, Ex. 5; p. 156, Ex. 2, etc.) e.g.: p. 117, Ex. 5 *Match the compound words beginning with **ship-** to their definition.*

Ship	1. board	a. sailors who are sailing on the same ship
	2. load	b. tidy, clean and neat
	3. mates	c. the loss or destruction of a ship at sea
	4. owner	d. the goods and passengers a ship can carry
	5. shape	e. where ships are built or repaired
	6. wreck	f. happening on a ship
	7. yard	g. a person who owns the ship

2) **True/false** exercises (e.g. p. 36, Ex. 3 B; p. 152, Ex. 8, etc.)

3) **Categorization** of words (also called **sorting**, i.e. putting the lexical items into different categories), e.g:

p. 115, Ex. 2 *Distribute the following terms into the following categories: types of ships, armament, tasks, ship design characteristics)*

4) **Multiple choice** (p. 39, Ex. 6; p. 78, Ex. 3; p. 49, Ex. 1, etc.), e.g.: p. 103, Ex. 5 *Choose the correct word.*

1. to give oneself up to the enemy
a/ to suppress b/ to surrender c/ to step off
2. to set free from a tyrant or conqueror
a/ to liberate b/ to relieve c/ to surrender
3. to stop the siege
a/ to carry out b/ to expose c/ to relieve

4. to take control over land
a/ to land b/ to annex c/ invade
5. to capture quickly or very forcefully
a/ to invade b/ to occupy c/ to seize
6. to get by fighting
a/ to capture b/ to give in c/ to subvert

5) **Answering questions** (e.g.: p. 10, Ex. 3 C; p. 45, Ex. 4; p. 133, Ex. 5A, etc.)

6) **Completion tasks**, often called gap-filling exercises, used not only in practice but also in revision stages. They are:

- open gap-fills (p. 64, Ex. 4; p. 78, Ex. 4, etc.) e.g.:
p. 78, Ex. 3 *Read the text and fill in the missing words.*

One of the main aspects of military (1)_____ is the salute. It is a (2)_____ of respect and a sign of comradeship among service (3)_____.

The words of General John J. Pershing, commanding general of the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I indicates the (4) _____ of saluting. "Send me who can shoot and salute," he demanded.

No one can confirm exactly where the salute began, but for hundreds and perhaps thousands of years, the (5) _____ hand (or "weapon hand") has been raised as a greeting of friendship and knights raised their visors to friends for the purpose of identification. It became the (6) _____ to approach each other with raised (7) _____, palm to the front, showing that there was no concealed (8) _____.

- closed gap-fills (multiple choice activities), (p. 24, Ex. 6 B; p. 27, Ex. 9, etc.), e.g.:
p. 103, Ex. 7 *Fill in the blanks with the following words: **campaign, losses, victory, casualty, surrender, cease fire, triumph, defeat, conquest.***

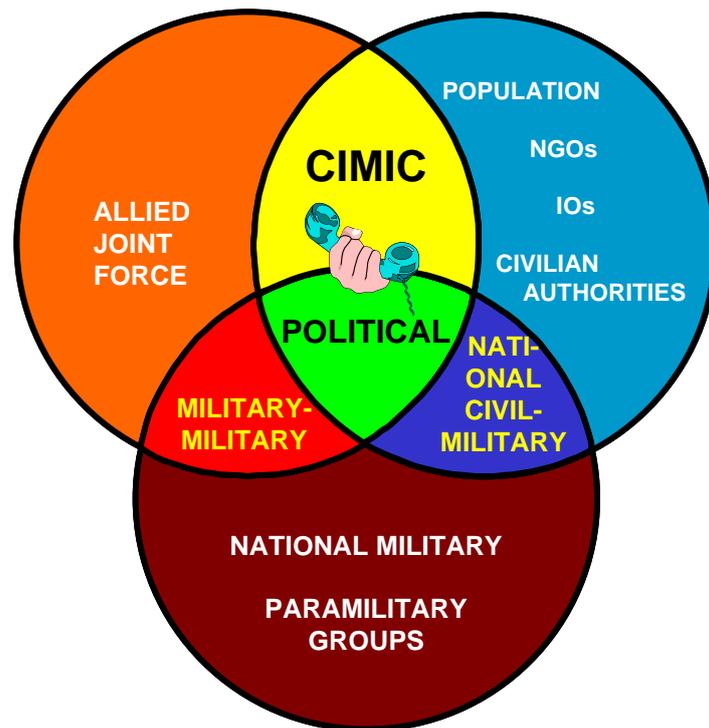
1. They suffered heavy _____ in the last battle.
2. If Napoleon's _____ at Austerlitz was the high-point of his military career, his _____ to take Moscow was a failure leading to the _____ at Waterloo, which was his end.
3. Her son is a _____ of the Vietnam war: he lost his both legs.
4. The German unconditional _____ was accepted by the Allied Powers.
5. The Norman _____ of Britain began in 1066.
6. The commanders agreed on a/n _____ for a period of five hours to allow the removal of the wounded.

- crosswords (p. 39, Ex. 7; p. 80, Ex. 9, etc.) e.g.:

7) **Creation tasks** - the students use the new terms in a sentence or a story, in writing, speaking or both forms. (p. 116, Ex. 4; p. 122, Ex. 11; p. 173, Ex. 5) e.g.:

p. 172, Ex. 4 *Look at the diagram below and use the information you have learned so far from this unit to comment on it.*

THE PLACE OF CIMIC IN THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



CONCLUSIONS

All of the above analyses prove that effective teaching of terms in ESP lessons is a sphere in English teaching which needs special attention since it develops students' abilities required for successful communication in occupational settings. Facilitation of this process goes hand in hand with the understanding of what ESP actually represents and what various roles ESP practitioners need to adopt in order to ensure success of the ESP teaching. Successful learning is possible only when terms "are not taught as a subject separated from the students' real world (or wishes); instead, it is integrated into a subject matter area important to the learners." (Fiorito)

Problems of selecting, presenting and practicing terms need to be dealt with the help of both subject specialists and students; the latter feel much more motivated when they become the active side in the process and can contribute to the lesson with their professional knowledge in their L1, thus improving their specialized English as well.

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