The Underlying Methodology in Designing a Constructivist Textbook of English for Tertiary Students Majoring in Tourism: The Results of the Textbook Elaboration Project

Oleg Tarnopolsky*

Golovposhtamt, Abonentska Skrynka 856, Dnipro, 49000, Ukraine

Department of Applied Linguistics and Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages,
Alfred Nobel University, Dnipro, Ukraine

Corresponding Email: otarnopolsky@mail.ru

Abstract. This paper analyzes a project devoted to elaborating a new textbook of English for students majoring in "Tourism." The textbook is designed on the basis of the constructivist approach, i.e. such an organization of the teaching/learning process that ensures students' involuntary language acquisition through participation in target language communication which is implemented when performing learning tasks modeling the professional activities of the future university graduates. Those tasks are completed in the form of experiential learning activities that provide for modeling the students' future professional activities and professional target language communication, giving them opportunities of acquiring the language involuntarily through practical experience of participating in such communication. Examples of experiential learning activities are given – those that are used in every unit of the textbook as organized in the separate parts (called "*Steps*") of every such unit.

1. Introduction

Nowadays in Ukraine more and more tertiary schools are beginning to train students majoring in "Tourism". The reason for this is that for the economic growth of the country the development of tourism, especially of international tourism, is absolutely indispensable because the tourism industry is one of the most profitable and cost-effective branches of the national economy. However, a very important prerequisite for training real professionals in international tourism is ensuring in their university studies the achievement of a high level of command of at least one foreign language – in particular, of English as the language of international, or rather global [1], communication.

In this context , high-quality foreign (English) language training requires, first of all, a high-quality textbook of English that has been developed specifically for university target language studies directed particularly at teaching English for professional purposes (not General English) and, even more specifically, at teaching it only to those students who are majoring in "Tourism." It means not that a standard ESP (English for Specific Purposes) textbook is required but rather an ETP (English for Tourist Purposes) one. This textbook must be designed on the basis of cutting-edge approaches to ESP, or English for Professional Communication, teaching developed both in Ukraine and in the other countries. Finally, it should be a Ukrainian and not a foreign (even the best) textbook of English for Tourism, so that it can take into account all the peculiarities of professional activities of future Ukrainian managers of tourism, the peculiarities of their training and mentality, and the peculiarities of teaching and learning at Ukrainian institutions of higher education.

There is no such textbook in Ukraine yet, and its elaboration requires solving a number of scientific, methodological, and practical problems. It is for solving them and developing such a textbook that a relevant project has been launched at Alfred Nobel University, Dnipro, Ukraine. This project is now approaching its completion, and its final result is going to be the textbook (now

almost fully developed) of English called *"Tourist Matters."* The goal of this article is the description and analysis of that textbook and the methods (methodology) of teaching and learning underlying it. Such description and analysis are, in fact, a kind of summary of our project results.

2. Constructivism and Experiential Learning as the Underlying Theoretical and Practical Foundation of the Developed Textbook

The underlying concepts for the development of this textbook have been the constructivist approach as the theoretical basis and experiential learning as the method of practical implementation of that approach. Both this approach and this kind of learning can be considered as being at the cutting edge of present day achievements in teaching foreign languages for professional purposes.

Constructivism, broadly used in today's higher education pedagogy, has only relatively recently been included into the stock of foreign language teaching approaches [2; 3], in particular those which are used for teaching foreign languages (first of all English) for professional communication [4]. In such teaching, the constructivist approach can be defined as the specific designing of professionally oriented university courses in the target language in such a way as to give students opportunities of acquiring communicative skills in that language involuntarily through learning activities that model professional activities of a future graduate and which are implemented in the target language [4].

The principal way of modeling and implementing such activities in a constructivist course of English for professional purposes has already been elaborated. It involves using the so called *experiential learning* with *experiential learning activities* proper to it [4; 5; 6]. Experiential learning activities provide for students' acquisition of the information to be learned through the experience of using it in genuine or modeled practical professional activities (in our case, in modeled professional communication in English), and it is this that actually implements the constructivist approach in teaching practice.

One of the most typical kinds of experiential learning activities is *simulation* [7], especially the so called *continuous simulation* [4; 8; 9]. In the latter case, the entire learning process is united by one single plot (in our project for developing a language course for future specialists in tourism, the plot may be focused on establishing the students' own – imaginary – travel agency in which they "work" , enacting simulations [7] and role play [10] that reflect the "agency's everyday activities"). In such a simulation both the development of target language professional communication skills and the acquisition of language material required for such communication mostly happen involuntarily through professional communication in the target language which is generated in the process of participating in the activity. Besides simulations (role plays, continuous simulation – see above), there are many other kinds of experiential language learning activities that will be further discussed in this article.

3. The Basics of Textbook Design and Structure

The general ideas cited above and concerning the organization of students' experiential learning activities make it clear that implementing such activities for involuntary development of target language professional communication skills requires quite a high level of command of General English by learners. Otherwise, without special exercises for developing pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar skills, it would be well-nigh impossible to implement target language professional communication in, for instance, the above-mentioned simulations due to students' deficiencies in the command of basic language material and the skills for using it.

This is why our textbook designed following the constructivist approach and based on experiential learning activities may be used only after the students have reached at least the intermediate level (the level of "independent user" or B1+/B2 according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* [11]) in their command of General English. In the conditions of teaching English to Ukrainian university students majoring in "Tourism" it means

starting to use the textbook only in the second year of the learners' university language course when in classes of English closely focused professional specialization in language training actually begins.

The textbook "*Tourist Matters*" is designed for 144 hours of work in class (72 class periods of two hours with two class periods per week) and the same number of hours of out-of-class work. It consists of 12 thematic *Units* (five or six classes for every *Unit*) combined in four *Modules*, with three *Units* per *Module*. Every *Module* is followed by one "*Progress Check*" class. The topics of the textbook units reflect all the important aspects of a tourism manager's professional activities (e.g., choosing and booking hotels for tourists, working out tourist itineraries and solving all the associated problems of logistics, participating in tourism fairs and exhibitions, working and solving problems with tour operators, etc.).

Every textbook unit is subdivided into five parts (and then, five two-hour class periods are allocated to working on this unit in class – one two-hour class period for every part) or six parts (with six two-hour class periods allocated for such a unit). The parts are called *Steps*, and everything that follows in this article is devoted to discussing the kinds of experiential learning activities included into each of the *Steps*.

4. Experiential Learning Activities in the *Steps* of the Textbook *Units*

4.1. *Step 1* of the textbook *Unit*

The first of such *Steps* bears the name of "*Introductory definitions*" and is designed for making a communicative introduction to the topic of the textbook unit by way of activating the students' background knowledge and providing them with basic notions and definitions on that topic. The work begins with brainstorming and/or discussions [12] in small groups on those basic notions, and after such brainstorming/discussions, every small group prepares and delivers for the benefit of all the other students in the class a short presentation [13] concerning the conclusions made. For instance:

> *Professionals in the field of tourism are most broadly divided into tour operators and travel agents. How would you formulate what each of them does? Try to define the jobs of a tour operator and travel agent in the most concise, comprehensive, and scientific manner and speak about their functions. Discuss and define the similarities and differences between these two basic professions in tourism. Discuss your definitions in the … groups of three or four students (*10 minutes*). Then, every group is supposed to give their definitions for the benefit of the whole class (every student in the small group should say something concerning those definitions). Discuss all the definitions given by different groups and choose the best ones that satisfy everybody (*15 minutes*).*
> (Unit 1, topic: "*Tour Operators and Travel Agencies*")

Presentations are followed by the students' working with a text in which all the basic definitions concerning the topic are given. After the students finish reading the text, they discuss the differences between the information and definitions in it and those that the learners themselves have previously formulated in their discussions and presentations.

Work in the class period devoted to "*Introductory definitions*" is, as a rule, completed with one further brainstorming/discussion for specifying some narrower notions within the topic and such a discussion may again be followed by short small group presentations, for instance:

> *The picture above shows a family on a tour. In your opinion, what types of tourists exist? Discuss this in groups of three or four students (you have* ten minutes *for discussion). After the group discussion, one student from each of the groups will be requested to make a short presentation of the conclusions made (not more than* three minutes *for every presentation; not more than* 15 minutes *for all the presentations with questions to presenters).*
> (Unit 2, topic: "*Models of Holidaymaking and Types of Tourists*")

The home task to be done by students after the in-class work on the first *Step* includes:

1) reading an additional text expanding on the information obtained and processed in class; 2) writing a summarizing essay on all the professional information obtained.

4.2. *Step 2* **of the textbook** *Unit*

This *Step* is called "*Information processing*" and is devoted to further expanding and processing the professional information on the topic.

The in-class work usually begins with discussing in pairs and peer-reviewing of the essays written at home, which are then submitted to the teacher for checking and grading. This is followed by reading a text on some specific issue of the general topic and, after reading, a small group discussion of that issue is organized with presentation of the conclusions of every small group to all the other students in class, for instance:

> *You certainly know that the best way of ensuring accommodation for the time of your holiday is to book it in advance. You can do it either yourself or through a travel agent. Read the text below (*15 minutes*) and then discuss in small groups of three or four students what you consider to be the best and safest way of booking accommodation. Why? Present your conclusions to the other students in class in a* 3-4-minute *presentation (every member of the small group is expected to speak in that presentation). You have* five minutes *for small-group discussions and up to* twenty minutes *for presentations from all the small groups.*
>
> (Unit 5, topic: "*Tourist Accommodation*")

The next task for students in this class is listening to the text on the topic (for instance, a dialogue between a tourist and a travel agent or a hotel manager in which the tourist wants to book hotel accommodation for the holiday period), the listening being followed by a discussion of the information heard and a role play or a simulation in pairs in a similar communicative situation. For example:

> *Role play. Following the sample of the dialogue just heard, in pairs book hotel rooms by telephone. First, one of you is a hotel manager and the other a person booking a hotel room for himself/herself or for somebody else. Then, exchange roles. After that, exchange roles again, so that each student in the pair plays the roles of a hotel manager and a person booking hotel accommodation at least twice. In every dialogue of yours change the situation, hotel, its facilities, price, duration of the guest's (guests') stay, the kind of room booked, food service options, etc*. You have time until the end of the class.
>
> (Unit 5, topic: "*Tourist Accommodation*")

The home task for this *Step* is focused on compulsory independent work to be done by the students on the Internet, either for researching and processing some specific information or for completing some other creative learning assignment. For instance, according to the topic of *Unit 5* discussed above, it may be an assignment to book online (in English) a hotel room somewhere. The students are requested to prepare presentations for the next class on the basis of their Internet research.

4.3. *Step 3* **of the textbook** *Unit*

Listening to and discussing such individual presentations of every student occupies the greater part of the in-class work connected with the third *Step* in each of the textbook *Units*. That is why this *Step* is called "*Presentations and their discussion*." After finishing with all the presentations, the remaining part of the class may be devoted to every student writing a summary or abstract of one of the presentations heard (not his or her own but one delivered by some other student) or to a case study, such as below:

Case study. Study attentively the text of an announcement of an international event below (you have 3 minutes for reading).

DORTMUND **30.11.2016 — 01.12.2016**	**EHE - European Hotel Exhibition 2016.** Exhibition and Congress. EHE is a global hotel trade event focusing on three main areas: hotel designing, constructing & remodeling, hotel styling & decoration, hotel operation. EHE CONGRESS hosts international speakers and offers a programme covering all current and future trends.

(borrowed from http://www.world-tourism-exhibitions.com/ as of 3 November 2016)

*After finishing studying the announcement, work in small groups of three to four students. Discuss (*five minutes*) whether this exhibition can be interesting only for those who are engaged in the hotel business or for those who are engaged in the tourism business, too. Why or why not? Present your ideas to the other students in a short 3-minute talk.* You have 25 minutes for doing the task.
(Unit 3, topic: "*Fairs and Exhibitions in Hospitality and Tourism*")

The home task to this *Step* is devoted to working with texts from textbooks or found by the students themselves on the Internet that serve as additional (together with everything processed by the students when working on the *Unit*) sources for writing a report on some practical aspect of the tourism business, for example:

Use the text about water-based transportation in tourism and some additional Internet search for writing a 150-180-word report to the director of your travel agency suggesting that your agency starts promoting sea and river cruises as one of the principal directions of your activities.
(Unit 4, topic: "*Logistics, Supply Chain Management and Transportation in Tourism*")

4.4. *Step 4* of the textbook *Unit*

If a *Unit* consists of six *Steps* instead of five, which is characteristic of more than half of the units in the textbook (this depends on the volume of professional information in a *Unit*, its significance, and difficulty), the fourth *Step* called "*Development*" is devoted to reading and listening to additional materials on the topic; to discussing them, to studying and analyzing practical cases; to role playing and simulating practical professional situations; and to writing summaries, abstracts, short reports, etc. The home task for students is focused on collecting Internet materials (in English) for continuous simulation (see below) in the next class.

4.5. *Step 5* (*4*) of the textbook *Unit*

The fifth *Step* (the fourth one if the textbook unit has only five *Steps* and there is no "*Development*" *Step*) which is called "*Continuous simulation and project work*" is the central and leading one in every *Unit* , which ties together all the types of learning activities employed in this textbook. All the in-class work here is connected with *continuous simulation*. In this article it has already been explained what continuous simulation is; it has also been indicated that it unites the learning process in one single plot where (in our case) the students establish their own (imaginary) travel agency and "work" in it. It is in the fifth (fourth) *Step* of every textbook unit that the students develop this plot, which requires a highly creative approach to performing such learning assignments as shown below:

1. Continuous simulation. *Work in three or four small groups of four or five students in each of the groups – the same small groups in which you were doing continuous simulation tasks when working on all the preceding Units. Now you are going to discuss*

what hotels (and why) your agency is going to recommend to its tourists in every tourist destination that the agency specializes in. Listen (in turn, one after the other) to the report of every member of the group who was researching hotels at this or that particular destination and choose two hotels out of five that he or she suggests. One of them should be for tourists who are planning luxury tours for themselves, the other – for tourists with a limited budget. Give reasons for your choices and in this way compile a list of hotels to be recommended for every tourist destination that you specialize in. Prepare a presentation on your decisions. You have 30 minutes for the small group discussion.

2. Now every small group is expected to give a five-minute presentation to the rest of the class to outline everything concerning the hotels that you are going to recommend to the tourists who have chosen those tourist destinations which your agency specializes in. Every member of the small group should deliver a part of your joint presentation and be ready to answer questions from the other small groups. You have 25 minutes for the task.

3. Case study in continuous simulation. *In the same small groups, brainstorm and role play the following case. A family with three children has turned to your travel agency. They want a two-week holiday in July with maximum comfort but on a limited budget. It is not too important for them which of your destinations they choose as long as it is a beach holiday and the hotel is cheap enough for the five of them. First, brainstorm what you can offer to those people. Then, role play a conversation between one or two representatives of your agency and three members of the family in question (the husband, the wife and the elder son or daughter). Try to stimulate the family to accept one of your offers and leave satisfied.* You have 15 minutes for the task.

4. Role playing in continuous simulation. *In pairs:*

   a) Act out a telephone conversation between a hotel (motel, aparthotel) manager and a representative of your travel agency booking a room for your customer.

   b) Act out a telephone conversation between a representative of your travel agency and a customer who wants to book a bed-and-breakfast.

   You have time until the end of the class.

<p align="center">(Unit 5, topic: "Tourist Accommodation")</p>

Project work [14; 15] organized on the basis of continuous simulation results is done out of class as a home task after the class period devoted to *Step 5* (*4*). Just as with the continuous simulations, the project tasks constitute one of the most important and leading kinds of experiential learning activities in all the cycle of work on any one unit of the textbook because of their high creative potential, integration of all forms of communication (speaking, reading, listening, and writing), and their summarizing character from the point of view of all the acquired communication skills and professional knowledge.

Project work is conducted through all stages of the language course in the second year of the students' English studies, and it involves the development by the students of the prospectus of that imaginary travel agency that they "have founded." Following completion of each textbook unit, the learners develop a relevant prospectus chapter involving creative interpretation of the same topic. The learning task for students is usually formulated as shown below:

Project work. *At home, you will need to work in the same small groups that you were working in during the class time. Develop (in writing) the seventh part of your travel agency's prospectus. This part will need to be not less than 250-300 words. State what thermal and mineral water spas and international centres of medical tourism your travel agency specializes in and recommends to your tourists, what kinds of travel insurance you recommend that your clients get and which you will provide for them through insurance companies-your partners. Give information about those partners and why you have chosen them.*

After writing this part, print it on the computer and illustrate it as well as you can. Print out several copies to use in the next class and get ready to present this completed part of the project to your class-mates and listen to their critiques and criticisms.
(Unit 7, topic: "*Medical Care and Insurance in Tourism*")

4.6. *Step 6* (*5*) of the textbook *Unit*

This last *Step* in each *Unit* bears the name "*Discussing projects, concluding and checking.*" The first half of the class on the *Step* ("*Discussing projects*") is devoted to discussing the students' homework on developing their learning project. The assignment that the students usually complete in this case may be formulated like the one below:

Project work. *Each of the small groups has written at home the seventh part of their agency's prospectus. Now every small group is expected to present this part of the prospectus to the other small groups. First, give them the printed out version of that part and very briefly (*5 minutes*) outline what you have written there. Then, for the next* five minutes *the students from the other small groups are supposed to give the presenters their critiques and criticisms, telling them what was good and what was bad in the part of the project that they have completed. They are supposed to give recommendations as to how to improve that part. The presenters should take notes on the recommendations and use these to improve their part of the prospectus before the next class, where they will be asked to hand in their work to the teacher for checking and grading. Thus, the project presentation of one small group is expected* to last 10 minutes. *After that, the members of the second small group will present their project for ten minutes in the same manner, etc.* Depending on the number of small groups, the entire time for this task is from 30 to 40 minutes.
(Unit 7, topic: "*Medical Care and Insurance in Tourism*")

The second half of the class period on the last *Step* ("*Concluding and checking*") involves students in brief tasks devoted to speaking, listening, reading, and writing. They may be such tasks as role plays and simulations, listening to a conversation between a travel agent and a customer followed by the students summarizing that conversation in writing, reading a professional text and writing its summary or doing a test-type comprehension task, etc. All those tasks recapitulate the communicative and content material of the topic and check the development of the students' skills of professional communication in English.

The "*Progress Check*" classes between the separate modules in the textbook are similar in design to the "*Concluding and checking*" part of the last class period on every textbook unit. The difference is in the volume of such tasks (in "*Progress Check*" classes that volume is greater) and in their embracing the material of not only one topic/unit but of the three topics/units included in one module.

5. Conclusion

Everything said above demonstrates that in the developed textbook all kinds of learning activities that are considered as experiential in nature are very broadly used – those kinds that, to a greater or lesser degree, model the professional activities of future graduates and make their learning process a constructivist one. Such learning activities, which in their entirety make up the methodology underlying the textbook, are as follows:
1. Role plays and simulations with their supreme embodiment in continuous simulations.
2. The learning project conducted through the academic year on the basis of continuous simulation results.
3. Brainstorming, case studies, and discussions on professional issues.
4. Students' presentations on professional issues.
5. Reading and listening to professional information sources in English for finding information necessary for doing some creative learning tasks in speaking and writing. The

greater part of those sources is found by students themselves on the Internet (in English). Learners also use the Internet for doing some creative learning assignments (see one possible example of this in the abovementioned description of work on *Step 2* of the textbook *Unit*). This makes computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and the Internet an inalienable part of the work on the textbook, fully integrating online activities into the language learning process [16-18]. As a result, such a process becomes *blended* [19; 20] with the work on the Internet organically intertwined with traditional classroom learning activities.

6. Writing professional summaries, abstracts, essays, short professional articles and chapters of the simulated travel agency's prospectus, reports on project work and continuous simulation, etc.

Language, grammar or vocabulary exercises are not used at all in the textbook since the main principle of the developed approach is students' subconscious acquisition of language material in the process of professional communication in English.

Our further work in the direction discussed in the article will involve an experimental study of the advantages and disadvantages of the developed textbook in the practical course of English for professional communication taught to students majoring in "Tourism."

References

[1] D. Graddol, English Next. Why global English may mean the end of English as a foreign language, British Council, 2006.

[2] M. Williams, R.L. Burden, Psychology for language teachers: a social constructivist approach, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007.

[3] S. Ioannou-Georgiou, Constructing meaning with virtual reality, TESOL Journal. 11(3) (2002) 21-26.

[4] O. Tarnopolsky, Constructivist blended learning approach to teaching English for specific purposes, Versita, London, 2012.

[5] Y. Cerdà, S. Williams, Doing the product: an experiential task-based approach to inspire learners, in: T. Pattison (Ed.), IATEFL 2012. Brighton Conference Selections, IATEFL, Whitstable, Kent, 2012, pp. 99-101.

[6] D. Kolb, Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1984.

[7] K. Jones, Simulations in language teaching, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982.

[8] O. Tarnopolsky, Business English teaching: Imaginative continuous simulations and critical analysis tasks, Business Issues. 2 (2000) 12-14.

[9] O. Tarnopolsky, S. Kozhushko, Acquiring Business English in a quasi-natural business environment: A method of teaching Business English to students of Business and Economics, Working Papers in Educational Linguistics, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. 18(2) (2003) 55-88.

[10] M. van Ments, The effective use of role play: A handbook for teachers and trainers, Kogan Page, London, 1999.

[11] Council of Europe, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment, Strasbourg, 2001.

[12] P. Ur, Discussions that work. Task-centred fluency practice, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.

[13] O. Tarnopolsky, Y. Avsiukevych, Successful presentations. A coursebook on successful presentations in English for tertiary students of economics, Lenvit, Kyiv, 2007.

[14] D.L. Fried-Booth, Project Work, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996.

[15] O. Tarnopolsky, S. Kozhushko, Business projects. Coursebook. Student's Book and Workbook, Second revised edition, Nova Knyha Publishers, Vinnytsya, 2007.

[16] J.L. Egbert, Conducting research on CALL, in: J.L. Egbert, G.M. Petrie (Eds.), CALL Research Perspective*s*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ, 2005, pp. 3-8.

[17] M. Warschauer, H. Shetzer, C. Meloni, Internet for English teaching, TESOL, Alexandria, VA, 2000.

[18] M. Warschauer, A developmental perspective on technology in language education, TESOL Quarterly. 36(3) (2002) 458-474.

[19] B. Barrett, P. Sharma, The Internet and Business English, Summertown Publishing, Oxford, 2003.

[20] P. Sharma, B. Barrett, Blended learning: Using technology in and beyond the language classroom, Macmillan, Oxford, 2007.