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## **THE ESSENCE OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES**

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## Abstract: -

The present paper is an attempt to understand the essence of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) by studying various language specialists' efforts to define it, tracing its evolution and presenting its distinctive characteristics. Being a branch of English Language Teaching (ELT), its focus is narrower than that of EGP (English for General Purposes) and in contrast to EGP, ESP is determined by specific learning needs of the language learner. Although, there have been contradictions as to what ESP is, Hutchinson and Waters improved absolute and variable characteristics helped significantly in resolving arguments about what is ESP. Thus, ESP refers to the teaching and learning of English where the aim of the learners is to use English in a particular academic, professional or occupational domain, focusing on learners' special needs.

**Key-words:** - ESP, EGP, special needs, absolute characteristics, variable characteristics

## I Introduction

The most important difference lies in the learners and their purposes for learning English. ESP students are usually adults who 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. An ESP program is therefore built on an assessment of purposes and needs and the functions for which English is required.

ESP concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures. It covers subjects varying from accounting or computer science to tourism and business management. The ESP focal point is that English is 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.

However, ESL and ESP diverge not only in the nature of the learner, but also in the aim of instruction. In fact, as a general rule, while in ESL all four language skills; listening, reading, speaking, and writing, are stressed equally, in ESP it is a needs analysis that determines which language skills are most needed by the students, and the syllabus is designed accordingly. An ESP program, might, for example, emphasize the development of reading skills in students who are preparing for graduate work in business administration; or it might promote the development of spoken skills in students who are studying English in order to become tourist guides.



As a matter of fact, ESP combines subject matter and English language teaching. Such a combination is highly motivating because students are able to apply what they learn in their English classes to their main field of study, whether it be accounting, business management, economics, computer science or tourism. Being able to use the vocabulary and structures that they learn in a meaningful context reinforces what is taught and increases their motivation.

The students' abilities in their subject-matter fields, in turn, improve their ability to acquire English. Subject-matter knowledge gives them the context they need to understand the English of the classroom. In the ESP class, students are shown how the subject-matter content is expressed in English. The teacher can make the most of the students' knowledge of the subject matter, thus helping them learn English faster.

The term "specific" in ESP refers to the specific purpose for learning English. Students approach the study of English through a field that is already known and relevant to them. This means that they are able to use what they learn in the ESP classroom right away in their work and studies. The ESP approach enhances the relevance of what the students are learning and enables them to use the English they know to learn even more English, since their interest in their field will motivate them to interact with speakers and texts.

ESP assesses needs and integrates motivation, subject matter and content for the teaching of relevant skills.

### The responsibility of the teacher

A teacher that already has experience in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), can exploit her background in language teaching. She should recognize the ways in which her teaching skills can be adapted for the teaching of English for Specific Purposes. Moreover, she will need to look for content specialists for help in designing appropriate lessons in the subject matter field she is teaching.

As an ESP teacher, you must play many roles. You may be asked to organize courses, to set learning objectives, to establish a positive learning environment in the classroom, and to evaluate student s progress.

### Organizing Courses

You have to set learning goals and then transform them into an instructional program with the timing of activities. One of your main tasks will be selecting, designing and organizing course materials, supporting the students in their efforts, and providing them with feedback on their progress.



## Setting Goals and Objectives

You arrange the conditions for learning in the classroom and set long-term goals and short-term objectives for students' achievement. Your knowledge of students' potential is central in designing a syllabus with realistic goals that takes into account the students' concern in the learning situation.

### What is ESP?

English for Specific Purposes or ESP refers to the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language where the aim of the learners is to use English in a particular academic, professional or occupational domain. It is English focusing on learners' special needs. Hutchinson and Waters in their attempt to define ESP, focus not so much on what ESP is, but rather on what ESP is not, as according to them, ESP is a variety of the many possible kinds of language teaching. They explain that ESP should not be seen as a matter of teaching 'specialized varieties' of English, nor as a matter of science words and grammar for Scientists, Hotel words and grammar for hotel staff and so on. It is neither different in kind from any other form of language teaching in that it should be based in the first instance on principles of effective and efficient learning. It is rather an approach to language learning, based on learner's needs and directed by specific and apparent reasons for learning.

Dudley-Evans supports Hutchinson and Waters's view in this regard and agrees that 'ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning'. He even describes ESP as an 'attitude of mind'

## II Creating a Learning Environment

Your skills for communication and mediation create the classroom atmosphere. Students acquire language when they have opportunities to use the language in interaction with other speakers. Being their teacher, you may be the only English-speaking person available to students, and although your time with any of them is limited, you can structure effective communication skills in the classroom. In order to do so, in your interactions with students try to listen carefully to what they are saying and give your understanding or misunderstanding back at them through your replies. Good language learners are also great risk-takers, since they must make many errors in order to succeed: however, in ESP classes, they are handicapped because they are unable to use their native language competence to present themselves as well-informed



adults. That is why the teacher should create an atmosphere in the language classroom which supports the students. Learners must be self-confident in order to communicate, and you have the responsibility to help build the learner's confidence.

## **A. Evaluating Students**

The teacher is a resource that helps students identify their language learning problems and find solutions to them, find out the skills they need to focus on, and take responsibility for making choices which determine what and how to learn. You will serve as a source of information to the students about how they are progressing in their language learning.

## **B. The responsibility of the student**

What is the role of the learner and what is the task he/she faces? The learners come to the ESP class with a specific interest for learning, subject matter knowledge, and well-built adult learning strategies. They are in charge of developing English language skills to reflect their native-language knowledge and skills.

## **C. Interest for Learning**

People learn languages when they have opportunities to understand and work with language in a context that they comprehend and find interesting. In this view, ESP is a powerful means for such opportunities. Students will acquire English as they work with materials which they find interesting and relevant and which they can use in their professional work or further studies. The more learners pay attention to the meaning of the language they hear or read, the more they are successful; the more they have to focus on the linguistic input or isolated language structures, the less they are motivated to attend their classes.

The ESP student is particularly well disposed to focus on meaning in the subject-matter field. 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.



## D. Subject-Content Knowledge

Learners in the ESP classes are generally aware of the purposes for which they will need to use English. Having already oriented their education toward a specific field, they see their English training as complementing this orientation. 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.

## E. Learning Strategies

Adults must work harder than children in order to learn a new language, but the learning skills they bring to the task permit them to learn faster and more efficiently. The skills they have already developed in using their native languages will make learning English easier. Although you will be working with students whose English will probably be quite limited, the language learning abilities of the adult in the ESP classroom are potentially immense. Educated adults are continually learning new language behaviour in their native languages, since language learning continues naturally throughout our lives. They are constantly expanding vocabulary, becoming more fluent in their fields, and adjusting their linguistic behaviour to new situations or new roles. ESP students can exploit these innate competencies in learning English.

## III Suggestion

Not only is there an interdisciplinary research base at the heart of ESP, but this results in a clear theoretical stance that distils down to three main commitments: to linguistic analysis, to the principle of contextual relevance, and to the classroom replication of community-specific communicative events. It is clear that the same concerns which initially encouraged the pioneers to turn to specialised English language teaching remain central to the field. An interest in research-informed language instruction based on an understanding of specialised discourses and the demands these make on users. But nothing remains static, and ESP continually requires us to step into new domains and face new challenges. Among these are finding ways to adequately marry textual and experiential methods which allow us to better understand new domains of practice and explore unfamiliar communicative worlds. In particular, the affordances of the internet, online teaching, digital genres and automated feedback on learning will require our attention, as will the growing



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demand for ESP by professional, technical, migrant and blue-collar occupations. This will almost certainly require adding to our existing toolkit of theories, methods and approaches, but there is no reason to suppose it will mean abandoning those that have proven so useful in helping us thus far in building plausible theories, detailed descriptions, relevant curricula and useful pedagogic tasks.



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