

THE ESSENCE OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

Fozila Ochilzoda

The lecturer of History and Philology Department
Asia International University
Bukhara, Uzbekistan

E-mail: fozilaochilzoda@gmail.com

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Abstract. *In today's era of rapidly advancing international scientific collaboration and business, specialized foreign language courses are gaining popularity. These courses follow the approach known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which involves tailoring language instruction to meet the specific linguistic and communicative needs of learners. This approach emphasizes adjusting the course content to align with the learners' professional aspirations, preferred learning styles, and future plans. Prior to designing the ESP course, it is essential to conduct a thorough needs analysis, including identifying the learners' anticipated professional contexts and analyzing the language used within these contexts.*

Key words: *international scientific collaboration and business, prospective employers, English for Specific Purposes.*

СУЩНОСТЬ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА ДЛЯ КОНКРЕТНЫХ ЦЕЛЕЙ

Аннотация. *В современную эпоху стремительно развивающегося международного научного сотрудничества и бизнеса все большую популярность набирают специализированные курсы иностранных языков. Эти курсы следуют подходу, известному как «Английский язык для специальных целей» (ESP), который предполагает адаптацию языкового обучения для удовлетворения конкретных языковых и коммуникативных потребностей учащихся. Этот подход делает упор на корректировку содержания курса в соответствии с профессиональными устремлениями учащихся, предпочтительными стилями обучения и планами на будущее. Прежде чем разрабатывать курс ESP, важно провести тщательный анализ потребностей, включая определение предполагаемого профессионального контекста учащихся и анализ языка, используемого в этих контекстах.*

Ключевые слова: *международное научное сотрудничество и бизнес, потенциальные работодатели, английский для специальных целей.*

Information regarding students' needs can be gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and discussions involving both students and their prospective employers. These data collection methods aim to enhance the effectiveness of the teaching process. This study aims to provide both theoretical and practical foundations for ESP methodology, distinguishing it from General English courses and discussing the methodological implications for language instructors. Equipping a student to perform proficiently in their current or prospective professional environment hinges on a meticulously planned and effectively executed course of English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Developing and implementing an ESP curriculum for university-level students poses a challenge for English language instructors, who must address various tasks related to course organization, including defining the course objectives, selecting appropriate content, and choosing suitable teaching methodologies and techniques to facilitate the acquisition of specialized

vocabulary and language structures necessary for specific contexts. This paper provides both theoretical and practical foundations for teaching a foreign language for specific purposes, discussing the unique objectives of ESP courses and the distinguishing features that set them apart from General English courses. Additionally, it offers methodological insights for language instructors derived from these findings.

What is ESP?

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 19) characterize ESP as "an approach to language learning centered on learner needs." They emphasize that all decisions regarding content and methodology in ESP are driven by the learner's rationale for acquiring a foreign language. Dudley Evans and St John (1998, p. 5) define ESP in terms of both absolute and variable characteristics. Absolute characteristics include:

1. ESP tailored to meet specific learner needs.
2. ESP aligns with the methodology and activities of the relevant discipline.
3. ESP focuses on language pertinent to disciplinary activities, encompassing grammar, vocabulary, register, study skills, discourse, and genre.

Variable characteristics encompass:

1. ESP may be discipline-specific.
2. ESP may employ distinct methodologies compared to General English, particularly in certain teaching contexts.
3. ESP typically targets adult learners at tertiary institutions or in professional settings, though it may also cater to secondary school students.
4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate to advanced language learners.
5. Most ESP courses assume a foundational understanding of the language system.

Stevens (1988) modified this definition, removing the contrast with General English and incorporating additional variable characteristics. Key features of the ESP approach, as emphasized by these scholars, include learner needs analysis, target situation analysis to identify features of the relevant discipline or occupation, and discourse analysis to examine language usage within disciplinary contexts. Employing these procedures aims to develop ESP courses that effectively prepare learners for communication in their professional endeavors or academic pursuits (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, pp. 2-4; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, pp. 6-8; Johns and Price-Machado, 2001, p. 44).

The difference between English for Specific Purposes and General English

The distinction between English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and General English, as noted by Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 53), is theoretically minimal but practically significant.

Historically, General English courses often lacked needs analysis, with teachers rarely assessing their students' purposes for learning English. However, contemporary teaching practices prioritize needs analysis, marking a notable influence of the ESP approach on General English instruction. Teachers now tailor syllabi based on learners' needs, whether through selecting appropriate textbooks or creating custom materials.

The primary disparity between ESP and General English lies in the learners and their motivations. ESP students are typically adults with some prior English proficiency and familiarity with relevant content areas that ESP teachers may not possess. These learners require English skills

for professional communication, specifically to perform job-related tasks. ESP emphasizes language usage within authentic professional contexts, contrasting with General English's focus on grammar and vocabulary unrelated to learners' core subjects.

According to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 4), ESP courses should reflect the methodologies of the respective disciplines or professions they serve. Consequently, designing an ESP course necessitates a thorough needs analysis, encompassing students' current or prospective occupations and target language usage. Johns and Price-Machado (2001, p. 49) suggest several methods for needs analysis, including questionnaires for students, academic teachers, and employers; interviews with stakeholders; job shadowing; and students' notes.

Furthermore, ESP course preparation should involve analyzing students' linguistic proficiency and communicative skills at the outset (present situation analysis) and ongoing assessment of their evolving learning needs (learning needs analysis). Adjustments to teaching materials, methods, and techniques may arise from this ongoing analysis to ensure effective language instruction tailored to students' requirements.

After conducting the aforementioned analyses, the instructor must make decisions regarding:

- the educational content, including texts and various linguistic components to be covered throughout the course;
- the syllabus structure;
- the teaching methodologies;
- the selection or creation of teaching materials;
- the emphasis on particular skills acquisition.

3. What is the role of the ESP teacher (practitioner)? In ESP instruction, the role of the teacher or ESP practitioner (Swales, 1988) is distinct, encompassing five crucial functions:

- teaching (pedagogy);
- designing the course and selecting or preparing teaching materials;
- collaborating with academic instructors and/or employers;
- conducting analyses of students' needs, target situations, and discourse;
- assessing students' progress and evaluating the course's effectiveness.

The range of tasks assigned to ESP teachers sets them apart from General English instructors, who typically follow a predetermined curriculum based on a chosen textbook. Dudley Evans and St John (1998) outline the ESP teacher's role as:

1. Teacher;
2. Collaborator;
3. Course designer and materials provider;
4. Researcher;
5. Evaluator.

While the first role aligns with that of a General English teacher, it's the necessity for fulfilling the other four roles that distinguishes ESP teaching. To effectively address learners' specific needs and align with the methodologies of their respective disciplines, ESP practitioners must familiarize themselves with the relevant subject matter and understand the professional

challenges associated with it. Collaboration with subject matter experts and course participants, who may possess deeper knowledge of specialized content, can be invaluable.

Although ESP teachers don't necessarily require expertise in the subject matter, they can leverage students' existing knowledge to create authentic communicative scenarios, such as seeking clarification on terminology and concepts.

One challenge ESP teachers encounter is assessing and determining the degree of specificity required in instructional materials. Considering all these factors is crucial when selecting and assessing teaching materials (Tomlinson, 1998). Fortunately, within the medical field, numerous textbooks are available that directly align with the discipline's topics and language.

However, teaching the nuances of written academic discourse specific to medicine requires ESP teachers to delve into this type of language and develop materials and activities accordingly. This task fulfills the ESP practitioner's role as a "researcher," ensuring that students receive suitable materials. The role of the ESP practitioner as an "evaluator" involves continuously assessing students' progress and the effectiveness of ESP courses.

What is the methodology of ESP? In ESP instruction, the choice of teaching methods and techniques hinges primarily on students' linguistic and communicative needs, the specificity of texts (discourse) utilized in current and target situations, students' learning methods and strategies, and the contextual elements of language teaching. Understanding and utilizing logical connectors like "moreover," "however," and "therefore," as well as structures indicating cause and effect, are crucial for producing cohesive texts and enhancing their comprehension. In spoken discourse, the usage of discourse markers such as "well," "oh," "right," and "I mean" plays a significant role (Dudley Evans and St John, 1998, p. 88).

The terms "hedging" or "vague" language refer to the cautious expression of opinions by writers or speakers, demonstrating a tentative commitment to their statements (Hyland, 2004, p. 109). Employing hedging softens the utterance, making it more polite and less susceptible to criticism from readers or interlocutors. This can be achieved through the use of modal verbs (may, might, can, could), certain adjectives (likely, probable), and select verbs (suggest, appear to, seem to, tend to). For instance, transforming a definite statement like "The ideal of building development is associated with the adherence to different policy ..." into a cautious utterance using "tend to" yields: "The ideal of building development tends to be associated with the adherence to different policy goals ..." (Jordan, 1997, p. 248).

Conclusion

This paper's examination of teaching methodologies for foreign language special purposes underscores their direct correlation with three key factors: learners' needs, target situations, and the language employed in these contexts. Analyzing these factors empowers ESP teachers to establish teaching objectives, select suitable syllabi, determine appropriate teaching content, and employ effective teaching methods and materials. ESP instruction should be anchored in a functional syllabus geared toward developing communicative competence relevant to the target profession. Collaborative teaching involving both subject specialists and language instructors appears to be the most effective approach. Specialists contribute subject-specific knowledge, materials, and guest lectures, while language teachers address linguistic challenges and train students in relevant communicative skills.

Teaching ESP poses a multifaceted challenge, demanding not only expertise in language teaching methodology but also familiarity with students' specialized disciplines. Furthermore, ESP instructors must demonstrate flexibility in decision-making and remain receptive to student feedback and opinions.

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