

ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

‘A paper on the special area of English of the non-specialist ESP English instructor’

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Abstract: This paper attempts to define ‘English for specific purposes’ (known as ESP for short) area language teaching, as well as its historical background, its typical features, a general distinction between GE (General English) and ESP, the significance of the ESP teacher will be drawn. In the last part, the definition of needs analysis and its significance will be mentioned.

It is obvious that teaching English for General Purposes and teaching English for Specific Purposes have a lot in common since both of them carry necessary considerations in linguistic improvements, teaching methodologies and techniques. However, what really differentiates ESP teachers from their colleagues teaching General English is the need to consider the requirements of other areas of professions and the motivation to adapt these requirements into the language classroom.

This paper also focuses upon the types of ESP, the importance of needs analysis and its two main types namely known as Target Situation Analysis (TSA) and Present Situation Analysis (PSA). Moreover, this paper focuses the significance of the ESP teacher and the important roles an ESP teacher plays.

Key words: ESP (English for Specific Purposes), GE (General English), EGP (English for General Purposes), EAP (English for Academic Purposes), needs analysis (NA).

Özet: Bu araştırma, özel amaçlı İngilizce (ESP) terimini tanımlamaya çalışmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu çalışmada, özel amaçlı İngilizce öğretiminin tarihi alt yapısı, tipik özellikleri, genel İngilizce ile özel amaçlı İngilizce öğretimi arasındaki genel farklar ortaya konulmaktadır. Ayrıca, özel amaçlı İngilizce veren öğretmenlerin öneminden bahsedilecektir. Son olarak ise ihtiyaç analizi'nin ne olduğundan ve öneminden bahsedilecektir.

Son derece açıktır ki, özel amaçlı İngilizce öğretimi ile genel İngilizce öğretimi arasında dilsel gelişimler, öğretim metodları ve teknikleri bakımından pek çok ortak nokta bulunmasına rağmen, özel amaçlı İngilizce öğreten öğretmeni, genel İngilizce öğreten meslektaşından ayıran unsur, belli bir mesleğe yönelik olan dilsel ihtiyaçların ve bunların saiklerinin (sebeplerinin) sınıfa uyarlanmasıdır.

Ayrıca, bu çalışma, özel amaçlı İngilizce'nin türlerini, ihtiyaç analizinin önemini ve hedef durum analizi ile mevcut durum analizinin ne olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bunlara ek olarak, bu çalışmada, özel amaçlı İngilizce veren öğretmenlerin öneminden ve üslendikleri rollerden de bahsedilecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Özel amaçlı İngilizce, genel İngilizce, Akademik amaçlı İngilizce, özel amaçlar, ihtiyaç analizi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that the theory of ESP moves away from the classical trends in ELT, it has generally come along with needs analysis and training learners to establish effective communicative ground in the tasks related to their branch of study or work settings. Thus, the teaching of ESP has been a separate activity within ELT. The main distinguishing property its own methodological base as well as its own research from different disciplines including applied linguistics. Generally speaking, the learners' needs-related knowledge and the need for teaching that specific knowledge are what form the nature of ESP.

2. THE DEFINITION OF ESP

If we assume that the term ESP is commenced to be used in the 1960s, the definitions of ESP in the literature are relatively late in time. However, the ESP community has yet got no definite definition of what ESP means. For instance, some scholar's debate that ESP should be considered as a part of EAP (English for Academic Purposes). Also, some describe ESP as simply being the teaching of English for any purpose that could be specified; yet Dudley-Evans and St. Jones (1998) describe it as the teaching of English used only in academic studies, or the teaching of English for vocational or Professional purposes.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) attempts to define ESP, that is, rather than a product, ESP is an approach-meaning that it involves no particular type of language-teaching material or methodology. According to those researchers, the core question of ESP should be: "why does this learner need to learn a foreign language?" The main element of learning English is the 'purpose' why the learner is learning the language. They state "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reasons for learning." (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:19) In reference to Hutchinson and Water's definition, Antony (1997) suggests that their definition has validity but has some weak points. He notes that since various non-specialist ESP teachers utilise an ESP approach in their syllabi are

based upon learner needs analysis and their own specialist personal knowledge of English for real communication, it is never clear where ESP courses finish and General English courses start. Robinson (1991) suggests a definition that ESP rises upon two important criteria, which are:

- ESP is normally ‘goal-directed’
- A needs analysis, which specifies what students have to do exactly (through the medium of English), should be applied to develop ESP courses.

Perren (1974) points out that although the terms ‘special language’ and ‘specialised aim’ refer to totally different notions, they are mixed to each other. Similarly, Mackay and Mountford (1978), who suggest that ESP refers to the teaching of English for a utilitarian purpose (the purpose refers to the needs of learners in academic, scientific or occupational studies), make an explanation of the notions as; the notion of ‘special language’ is a limited list of words and expressions picked from the entire language since that limited list covers every requirement within a context, task or profession. However, the term ‘specialised aim’ is used to refer to the reason for which a learner learns a language (not the nature of the language learners learn). As a result, the word ‘special’ in ESP refers to the ‘purpose’, not the particular jargon learners learn.

According to El-Minyawi (1984) ESP courses are merely built on the need to convey the ideas (of subjects) which students need to be able to read confidently and speak about them fluently afterwards.

Having being aware of all those hot debates about being unable to describe clearly what ESP really means, the main speaker at the Japan Conference on ESP, Dudley-Evans (1997) suggests “variable” characteristics of ESP, which are explained in more details under the following title ‘the typical features of ESP’.

3. ESP vs. GE

Hutchinson (1987) answers the question ‘what is the difference between the ESP and General English’ as: “in theory nothing, in practise a great deal (Hutchinson, 1987:53) which is very true because, in the 80’s, teachers would rarely apply a needs analysis to discover what was really needed or necessary to be able to actually accomplish the objective. Nevertheless, nowadays, teachers are more conscious of the significance of needs analysis. Besides that, teachers can now select materials which closely fit the aim of the learner. Maybe this shows the impact that the ESP approach has had upon English teaching in general. The basic distinctions between ESP and GE can be drawn as follows:

- *Learners*
ESP – specially designed for (working) adults
GE – specially designed for high school students
- *Aims*
ESP – the objective is to meet the needs of particular learners

GE – to improve overall English competence involving a range of skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc.)

- *Concerns: sphere of interest*

ESP – to design suitable courses for different types of groups of learners in accordance with their needs

GE – designing courses targeting vocabulary work, spelling, grammar, pronunciation, language function, etc.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THE EMERGENCE OF ESP

It is certain that a lot can be written regarding the origins of ESP. However, according to Hutchinson & Waters (1987) it can be summarised under the three main reasons which are common to the commencement of all ESP: the necessities of the new world, a great revolution in linguistics, and the learners' needs.

- ***The Necessities***

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) underlines that there are two key historical periods in the point of origin in ESP, that is, the end of the second World War, when it brought about "... age of enormous and unprecedented expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale for various reasons, most notably the economic power of the United States in the post-war world, the role [of an international language] fell to English" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987:6). Secondly, the Oil Crisis in the early 1970s led to Western money and knowledge penetrating into the oil-rich countries. Not surprisingly, the language of this knowledge became English and those effects resulted in the development in the language teaching profession.

- ***Revolution in Linguistics***

The other powerful event that helped the emergence of ESP was the revolution in linguistics. Since some revolutionary leaders in linguistics started to concentrate on how language is used in a natural communication setting, (unlike the traditional linguistics, who tend to describe the properties of language), more attention has been given to how a learner can acquire a language. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) report that as spoken and written English vary, then according to the specific context in which English is used, variant of English will also alter. Taking this idea one step further, it can be noted that, if language under different circumstances varies, then adapting language instruction in order to fulfil the requirements of learners in a particular context is also possible.

- ***The Learner's Needs***

Hutchinson & Waters (1987) emphasise that ESP has less to do with linguistics and everything to do with psychology. They underline that learners seem to be applying

various skills, various learning strategies, different learning schemata. Also, they seem to be motivated by different needs and interests. Hence, the learners' needs and the methods (to convey linguistic knowledge) have become equally important.

5. THE SIGNIFICANT FEATURES of ESP

Dudley-Evans (1997) attempts to state the properties of ESP under the two terms known as 'absolute' characteristics and 'variable' characteristics

a) *Absolute Characteristics*

Absolute characteristics can be described as language teaching designed to fulfil the particular needs of the learner, and can be summarised as:

- ESP is fed by the grounding methodology and the activity it suggests
- These activities cover grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre

b) *Variable Characteristics*

The variable characteristics suggested by Dudley-Evans (1997) are summarized below:

- ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students
- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines
- ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners
- A different methodology may be used in ESP other than of GE (General English)
- Most ESP courses are designed in accordance with the assumption that some basic knowledge of the language systems is acquired.

6. TYPES of ESP

Despite the fact that ESP is traditionally divided into two main branches as English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), Carter (1983) suggests three types of ESP, which are, English as a Restricted Language, English for Academic and Occupational Purposes (EAOP), and English with Specific Topics (EST) . Under the following titles, the types will be examined in detail:

6.1. English as a Restricted Language

According to Carver (1983) language, which is used to communicate effectively in an original setting of a very specific environment, such as the language used by air-traffic controllers or by waiters. These are examples of English as a Restricted Language. The following statement by Mackay and Mountford (1978) underlines the difference between language and restricted language:

“the language of international air-traffic control could be regarded as 'special', in the sense that the repertoire required by the controller is strictly limited and can be accurately determined situationally, as might be the linguistic needs of a dining-room waiter or air-hostess. However, such restricted repertoires are not languages, just as a tourist phrase book is not grammar. Knowing a restricted 'language' would not allow the speaker to communicate effectively in novel situation, or in contexts outside the vocational environment.” (Mackay and Mountford, 1978: 4-5)

6.2.English for Academic and Occupational Purposes

Carter (1983) points out that English for Academic and Occupational Purposes serves professional and vocational purposes, such as, English for medical technician, engineers or business executives etc. However, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) have drawn a ‘Tree of ELT’, which demonstrates the subdivisions of ESP. In this tree, ESP is divided into three branches: English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics (EBE), and English for Social Studies (ESS). Each area mentioned above is again divided into branches as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes since Hutchinson and Waters (1987) underline that there is no certain distinction between EAP and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes). The reasons why we cannot have a sharp distinction between them are that (i) people can work and study at the same time, (ii) the language which is taught in a learning environment (for academic purposes) can be used by the learner in an occupational settings if/when s/he has a job or if/when s/he returns to a job. This might be the reason why EAP and EOP are classified under the same kind of ESP. (Mackay and Mountford, 1978)

6.3.English with Specific Topics

According to Carter (1983), EST, the last kind of ESP, is different from other types of ESP regarding that focus changes from purpose to topic, meaning that the focus is on the compromise with the learners’ probable future English needs, for example science students needing English for postgraduate reading studies, taking places in conferences or when they are employed in foreign institutions. Yet, it has been asserted that this kind of ESP should not be regarded as a separate class of ESP but an inherent part of ESP lessons or programs with stress on situational language. The interpretation of results from needs analysis of authentic language (utilised in target workplace environments) is what determines this situational language.

7.DEFINING ‘NEEDS ANALYSIS’

Needs analysis (needs assessment) has an essential role in designing and carrying out any language course, does not really matter whether it is a course for ESP or for a general English course, and its significance has intensively been acknowledged by a number of scholars and researchers.

One of them is Brown (1995) who attempts to define the term as the activities that are involved for gathering information that will act as the foundation for developing a curriculum which will meet the learning needs of a particular group of learners. According to Johns (1991) the very first step of a course design is what we call needs analysis which provides validity and relevancy for the other subsequent course design activities.

Witkin and Alschuld (1995) identify needs analysis as a bunch of systematic procedures applied for the aim of identifying the priorities that will help in making decisions about the programs or organisational improvement and implementing resources.

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1992), needs analysis is the base of 'necessities' and 'wants', which are a classification between what students have to know and what the students feel they have to know. Here, the focus is on the 'lacks' that stand as a gap between the existing proficiency of a student and the needed proficiency in the target situation. Hutchinson and Waters (1992) summarise the terms as follows:

Necessities: necessities are the type of need determined by the demands of the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation'

Lacks: lacks refer to the learners existing language proficiency in order to help determination of the starting point of the teaching and learning process.

Wants: wants relate to what the learner would like to gain from the language course. (p.55)

Moreover, for Soriano (1995) needs analysis helps in collecting and analysing data for determination of what learners 'want' and 'need' to learn; yet, an evaluation helps in measuring the effectiveness of a program to meet the needs of the students.

The definitions above mostly have the concept of 'necessities', 'lacks', 'wants' and 'gaps' in them. Nevertheless, all these terms do not just have the same interpretations for everyone. Thus, the ESP branch linguists have not yet negotiated on a definite definition of 'needs'. West (1994) argues that the term 'needs' is ambiguous. Richards (2001) underlines that different values and interests are reflected in the definition and defining the term 'needs' depends on the perception of the one who is making the judgement since teachers, learners, parents, administrators may not have the same views to what needs are.

8. THE NEED FOR NEEDS ANALYSIS

One of the frequently addressed issues in the ESP literature is learning needs, and according to Mackay and Mountford (1978) all language teaching needs to be designed in accordance with the 'specific learning and language use purposes of identified groups of students' so it is a pre-requisite to conduct a systematic analysis to be able to figure out the specific learning needs and communication needs of students before making the content of a language program relevant to the learners' needs.

Similarly, according to Johns (1991) and Robinson (1991), considering the diversity and complexity of ESP objectives, it is essential to do an extensive needs analysis prior to planning and applying an EAP curriculum and material. They emphasise that we can then begin teaching ESP courses since we are aware of what students' needs are for the language.

For Johns (1991), the first step for ESP curriculum design is to detect the specific needs of the students for which will form the decisions to make an ESP program as ESP is driven by the specific learning needs of students. Designing a course in accordance with the administrators' beliefs and interests, or teachers' interests would be an incorrect approach to the course design.

According to M.M. Al Mumaidi, the initial phase starts with a very important question (a) 'will the students use English at University or in their jobs after the graduation?' If the answer is negative, then there is no reason to add an English language program into the curriculum. If the answer is positive, then ESP should be an option for the curriculum. Moreover, the following basic questions should be asked to be able to make a survey what will be required. (b) Under what situations will students use English? (c) For what purposes? (c) What are the language skills that will be needed (reading, writing, speaking, listening)? (d) What are the other important properties of the language needed (lexicon, grammar, written texts, spoken scripts etc.)? What extra linguistic knowledge of academia, particular disciplines, and vocations is needed for a successful English usage? (Retrieved <http://faculty.ksu.edu.sa/alhumaidi/Publications/English%20for%20Specific%20Purposes%20Review%20of%20Literature.pdf>)

Needs analysis was established in the middle of the 1970s when course designers came to see learners' purposes of learning the language. Munby's model (1978), as an early instrument, examined the needs by investigating the target situation for learners were being prepared. This model became the basis of the models; however, it has been criticised for the follow reasons: (a) its' over-fullness in design, and (b) what it fails in considering social-political considerations, logistical considerations, administrative considerations, psycho-pedagogic, and methodological considerations).

9. APPROACHES TO NEEDS ANALYSIS

Needs analysis, as it is known today, has undergone through a number of stages after the work of 'Munby's *Communicative Syllabus Design*' in 1978, in which he set the structure of needs analysis within situations and functions. 'Communication needs processor', which is the skeleton of Munby's approach to needs analysis, was first introduced in his book. Chambers (1980) introduced the term *Target Situation Analysis* taking the Munby's work as a guideline. Since then, some other terms like *Present Situation Analysis* have been introduced. The following titles examine the terms *Target Situation Analysis* and *Present Situation Analysis* in a more detailed way.

9.1. Target Situation Analysis (TSA)

It is known that the Target Situation Analysis emerged in 1978 when Munby suggested a model of Communication Needs Process, in which a detailed bunch of procedures for indentifying 'target situation needs' were suggested. Analysing (language) communication in the target language settings to be able to provide a communicative needs profile for a specific group of students is what the approach focuses on. The aim of a Communication Needs Profile (CNP) is to introduce a valid specification of the skills and linguistic forms of which are required by a group of students particularly needed in the target situation, and it is made up of nine components (dialect, target level, participant, interaction, communicative event, purposive domain, setting, instrumentality, and communicative key). Each part attempts to identify learners' real world communicative needs. The findings are employed as an input to fix the target students for their target use of language (Jordan, 1997). Another research on the same framework was conducted by Tarone and Yule (1989); yet they added extra four parts to Munby's model, that is, the global level (situations, participants, communicative purpose, and target activities), the rhetorical level (organisational structure of the communicative activities), the grammatical-rhetorical level (linguistic forms needed to make out the forms in the rhetorical level) and the grammatical level (the frequency of grammatical and lexical construction in the target situation). Moreover, Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence (discourse competence) added more levels to the model. The aim of more levels was to identify how needs analysis incorporates linguistic form (register analysis) and functional form (discourse analysis). Both forms are the basis in both target situation and present situations that supply basis for syllabus design (West, 1994). In the field of ESP needs analysis, the Target Situation Analysis approach has been very influential, and it has been the first approach towards the idea of communicative competence.

9.2. Present Situation Analysis (PSA)

The second biggest model used in needs analysis is the Present Situation Analysis, which was proposed by Richterich and Chancerel (1980). In this model, the information gathered to reveal the needs is collected through a wide range of sources, like the students, the teaching establishment, the place of work, and so on. Since the sources of data collection are multiple, the PSA approach provides guidelines and

techniques on what type of information should be considered. This model is applied to investigate various information, such as levels of ability, surrounding society, and cultural elements. The PSA is further developed by the Council of Europe to reveal and to define the needs of European adult learners. Yet, there are some disadvantages of the approach, that is, it calls for a group of specialists to be conducted, and the excessive use of generalisations to include a profile from the other countries. The established placement tests can be conducted to gain information about students' present abilities in the target language. Also, the background information of a learner like her level of education, or years of learning English can provide information about her present abilities in the target language. In brief, the following comparison between TSA and PSA can be drawn:

- PSA could be positioned as a complement to Target Situation Analysis.
- If TSA tries to establish what the learners are expected to be like at the end of the language course, Present Situation Analysis attempts to identify what they are like at the beginning of it.
- The PSA can be carried out by means of established placement tests; however, the background information, level of education etc. can provide enough info about their present abilities which can thus be predicted to some extent. (Robinson, 1991; Jordan, 1997)

10.THE SIGNIFICANCE of the ESP TEACHER

Robinson (1991) points out that the ESP teacher has many extra roles compared to the EGP teachers, and emphasizes that the ESP teacher, additionally to teaching, s/he designs, sets up and administers the (ESP) course. Also, the ESP teacher is responsible for evaluating and testing the students and the course throughout the course.

Since the teaching of English for specific purposes involves much more than just teaching, most scholars believe that the term 'practitioner' should be used rather than 'teacher'. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) the term 'ESP practitioner' seems to be more detailed and complete and they attempt to state the following significant roles that an ESP practitioner plays:

- Teacher
- Course designer and materials provider
- Collaborator
- Researcher
- Evaluator

10.1. The ESP Practitioner as a Teacher

The most significant objective of an ESP practitioner is to aid students learning for sure. Yet, the teacher is not the chief knower of the material, since in the matter of very specific courses; the students themselves may become very frequent knower about the content. To produce communication in the classroom, the teacher can use the students' knowledge of the content. The teacher becomes a 'consultant' when the knowledge of communication must meet the practices. However, this is required to be 'negotiated' on in what way this can best be explored to meet the students learning objectives since the teaching is very specific on content; for instance how to write a business e-mail. The role of the teacher in the classroom is more like a partner. Also, the role of the ESP teacher, in some situations, is to provide face-to-face advice to students. The main role of the teacher is to be able to develop real, authentic communication based upon students' ability and knowledge as well as they should be willing to listen to learners and they should be willing to listen to learners and be interested in Professional activities, be flexible and they should also be able to take some risks in their teaching.

10.2. The ESP Practitioner as Course Designer and Material Provider

Because of the shortage of specialist materials for ESP courses, the ESP teachers' role becomes not only planning and rendering materials for the courses, but also assessing their usefulness. The materials may be published or self-produced. Nevertheless, there is a risk in self-produced materials as the advantages of published materials may be disregarded even though they may be eligible for a specific situation.

10.3. The ESP practitioner as researcher

The ESP practitioner as researcher to be able to meet the students needs, and since there is a great deal of interest in investigating the genres, the language and the skills concerning (business) communication, ESP teachers should also become a researcher. Research is also essential for designing a course, writing teaching materials, discovering the ESP students' specific interests and for conducting a needs analysis.

10.4. The ESP practitioner as a collaborator

Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) also consider the ESP teacher as a collaborator that is, cooperating with subject specialist. This can be a simple cooperation, in which the ESP teacher obtains information about the subject syllabus, or the tasks that the students need to effectuate in their professional settings.

10.5. The ESP practitioner as an evaluator

Not only in General English classes, but also in ESP case, the ESP practitioner should be involved in different types of evaluation in which one of the most regular one is testing to be able to evaluate the students' progress and the teaching

effectiveness. But, this is not the only work. In the ESP classes, the course itself and the teaching materials should also be evaluated since ESP courses are often adapted. Unlike General English courses, which are well-studied and developed by methodology specialists, ESP is more unique and is not that much possible to originate one ESP course that could be adapted to all ESP students; thus, the evaluation of such a course is vital.

11.ESP TODAY

Since today English is the number one language of communication in the whole world, even among non-native speakers of the language, there has been a great impact on the type of ESP syllabus provided. It is without a doubt that EFL/ESL teachers have to teach the ESP courses are now more conscious about the latest developments in theory and methodology in the branch of ESP, which are: corpus analysis, genre analysis, and functional linguistics. Currently, ESP teachers carry the responsibility of designing the courses, creating effective learning settings in the class, discovering the needs of their students as well as evaluating not only their students' performances as in tests, but also their development and the course book(s) or the self-produced materials which are particularly designed for that particular course. Today, thanks to the modern information and ICT (Communication Technologies), we are now able to shift our 'traditional' classes into a more 'approachable' and 'modern' environment with these facilities. ESP teachers can now obtain more recent and modern materials utilising the current multi-media tools, like the Web. In the future, it is estimated that distance learning can be a very convenient mode in instructing the ESP adult learners.

12.CONCLUSION

Putting into nutshell, ESP is not a different variety of English, but it is a contextual and needs- based situation, in which some specific purposes of language functions are gained. In the sense of linguistic terminology, ESP means what learners need in target situation, or what s/he wants about this function of language use and/or what his/her needs are in accordance with his/her views. At this point, an ESP practitioner should conduct a needs analysis to find out the students' pre-requisites before designing the course. The role that ESP teachers play is obviously more complex than the GE (General English) teacher. Also, ESP teachers have more responsibilities since they are more than just a teacher as they are considered to be 'practitioners', who besides to teaching, prepare and provide relevant materials, actively take part in developing and designing a syllabus, do researches specifically for discovering the needs of his/her students (needs analysis), evaluate the tests, the students, and the course materials.

It can be stated that ESP teachers are not specialists in the field, yet in teaching English. It must be borne in mind that an ESP teacher's subject is English for a particular profession, not the profession in English.

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