

**Two Types of English:
General English and English for Specific Purposes (ESP)
What For?**

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Résumé

L'importance de l'apprentissage de l'Anglais se fait sentir dans des milieux à la fois éducatifs et professionnels très variés. Dans cet article nous tenterons, dans un premier temps, de souligner les points qui distinguent la disparité entre l'Anglais, dit 'Générale' et l'Anglais 'langue de Spécialité' sans pour autant négliger les aspects qui les relient aussi. En second lieu, l'étude reposera sur le rapport entre l'apprentissage de la langue étrangère et le progrès professionnel qui peut mener à la réussite ou à l'échec à caractère social.

1. Introduction:

Language knowledge today has proved to be a vital factor not only for better communication, but as a source of technological progress as well. The mastery of foreign languages enables rapid exchange of information and research of common global problems.

The development of language skills aims at active expansion of students' proficiency in English. English language classes at a higher school always make use of the texts of specific professional areas; it covers subjects varying from accounting or computer science to tourism and business management. In such classes, 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.

However, teaching/learning ESP includes much more than the teaching of English through specific material and content. Teaching ESP combines development of linguistic skills together with the acquisition of specific information. Even homework assignment should be associated both with the speciality and with the skill mentioned.

2. Two Types of English:

The division of the English language studies into two types requires careful scrutiny of the needs and interests of the learner. Generally speaking, university students whose learning fields are technical, do not think much of the way they are going to use their foreign language knowledge. They realize the quintessence of the subject as it is included in the general curriculum and is, in fact, an important component to graduate. While general language teaching covers the teaching of the fundamentals of grammar, of expression as well as of phonetics and provides a stronger or weaker basis for possible later language studies, ESP concentrates more on language in context than on language structures.

The term "specific" in ESP refers to the specific purpose for learning English. In other words, teaching language for specific purposes is determined by different – professional/occupational, social and other – needs of the learner. 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. Therefore, English for specific purposes (ESP) includes specialized programmes which are designed to develop the communicative use of English in a specialized field of science, work or technology. Knowing general vocabulary is not enough to be able to speak on a professional subject.

As a general rule, while in learning General English 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 Eng-

lish in order to become tourist guides. 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. 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. Thus, teaching/learning ESP is said to be speciality-oriented as it is submitted to specific (professional) needs of the student.

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.

Teaching a foreign language, as in the case of ESP, is a purposeful task framed well by both the English language of the subject he studies and the subject itself. In this sense, the language, beyond the communicative goal, becomes a means of teaching profession and appears to be significant in the context of the professional world.

To make the sum of the above theoretical aspects real first, in the class, then, in the professional world, a set of factors should be predetermined:

3. The responsibility of the teacher

He/she is the pillar of the game. A teacher that already has experience in teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL), can exploit his/her background in language teaching. Ann Johns states that while teaching English for Specific Purposes "all language teaching must be designed for the specific learning and language use purposes of identified groups of students" (Johns

1991: 67). The primary goal in teaching ESP is to provide the student with practical use of English revising the knowledge built earlier. The teacher's duty, therefore, is to recognize the ways in which the teaching skills can be adapted for the ESP 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.

4. Organizing Courses and Setting Goals

As an ESP teacher 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. Besides, 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.

5. Creating a Learning Environment

In order to proceed with day-to-day classroom work the teacher must understand the needs of the student and carefully examine them. There should be close cooperation between the language teacher and his students. 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. 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. Supervising the work of his/her group the teacher should give his/her students job satisfaction and organize his classes in such a way that it should be not only some new information but also a pleasant and amusing occupation, and it is not easily achieved.

6. *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. M. Bojarovi notices that sometimes happens that "a number of students tend to become complacent and play safe within a limited range of structure and vocabulary" (Bojarova 1998: 8). Such a situation is very unfavourable as it prevents the student from active learning of the language. The teacher must make the student feel that language learning is "a never-ending process" (Bojarova 1998: 8) and the teacher is to move the student out of the dead point by all possible means (giving some interesting or more complex material for studies, assigning special tasks, etc.).

7. *The Responsibility of the Student*

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. Considering language is "the means for communication among members of a culture communication culture" we realize that it "is the most visible and available expression of the culture" (Brown 1994: 169). However, the first thing the student is to do is to overcome the feeling of fear and shyness because of possible mistakes. Furthermore, the learning environment at university is much different from that in secondary school. Students, therefore, should adopt a more independent atti-

tude towards learning than constant reliance on the teachers' instructions.

8. *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. In our context, many students, at the faculty of Business and Management UDL Sidi-Bel-Abbès, fail to acquire English due to the absence of adequate materials which, if available, they may find interesting and relevant. The focus on the linguistic input or isolated language structures make students less motivated even to attend their classes. 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 speciality or jobs.

Conclusions:

- The basic assumption is that professional language development is to be rooted in the curriculum based both on the knowledge stored earlier at a secondary school and on the needs and interests of the student at university.
- The aim of teaching ESP is to develop both linguistic and professional skills and/or abilities as well as knowledge and competence.
- To achieve constructive results in teaching/ learning ESP the classroom practice is oriented towards developing language skills.
- Textbooks or texts selected should have special subject orientation. Task-based exercises should be constructed according to professional interests.
- The physical apparatus composed of teachers and decision makers, at various levels of the educational system, should collaborate their efforts to raise the quality of language studies and of higher education as well.

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