

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the Context of Business English

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Abstract

This paper intends to offer some theoretical supports for teachers who handle for ESP. This will inspire students by their innovative teaching methods to develop Business English Communication (BEC) to enhance their carrier in the field of business.

This paper also intends to include Business English as an elective subject in non-professional courses for business context. It discusses how business English can be used in the class room including objective and the need of business English in order to communicate proficiently in globalised business world. It also focuses on how the theory of need analysis can be used in Business English Curriculum Design, systematic principle and developmental principle which will provide some references for the improvement of Business English Module Curriculums.

Keywords: Business English, ESP, need analysis, curriculum design (course design), SWOT analysis, enhancing and evaluating (the 4 skills-LSRW skills)

Introduction

The term Business English can cover a multitude of things. The concept of Business English is applicable for the both Under graduate and Post graduate students. When someone says they teach business English, or they are studying Business English it is quite possible that the speaker and the listener may have different understanding of the term. This might arise a question among the readers “How is Business English different from General English?” and with all W/H questions (such as What?, Why?, Who?, Where?, and How?) This paper includes several parts with an aim of offering some theoretical supports and inspirations for developing BE curricula. First it gives the literature review of ESP from the aspects of origins, key notions and characteristics. Second it gives the tips to teach BE, evaluating the 4 skills, SWOT analysis, difference between BE and GE. I hope that this paper would be able to provide some inputs for the improvement of BE module curriculum and to enhance learners interest by analysing and giving enough knowledge to their needs.

Literature Review

- The Origin of ESP

There three reasons common to the emergence of all ESP: such as demands of brave new world, a revolution in linguistics and focus on the learner (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) noted to two key historical periods breathed life into ESP. first, the end of the second world war brought with it and "...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 USA in post- war world, the role [of international language] fell to English" (P.6). second the oil crises of the early 1970's resulted in western money and knowledge flowing into the oil rich countries. The language of this knowledge become English

The general effect of all this development was to exert pressure on the language teaching profession to deliver the required goods. Whereas English had previously decided its own destiny, it now became subject to the wishes, needs and demands of people other than language teachers (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 7).

The second key reason cited as having a tremendous impact on the emergence of ESP was a revolution in linguistics. Whereas traditional linguists set out to describe the features of language, revolutionary pioneers in linguistics began to focus on the ways in which language is used in real communication. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) pointed out that one significant discovery was in the ways that spoken and written English vary. In other words, given the particular context in which English is used, the variant of English will change. This idea was taken one step farther. If language in different situations varies, then tailoring language instruction to meet the needs of learners in specific contexts is also possible. Hence, in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, there were many attempts to describe English for Science and Technology (EST). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) identified Ewer and Latorre, Swales, Selinker and Trimble as a few of the prominent descriptive EST pioneers.

The final reason Hutchinson and Waters (1987) cite as having influenced the emergence of ESP has less to do with linguistics and everything to do psychology. Rather than simply focusing on the method of language delivery, more attention was given to the ways in which learners acquire language and the differences in the ways language is acquired. Learners were seen to employ different learning strategies, use different skills, enter with different learning schemata, and be motivated by different needs and interests. Therefore, focusing on the learners' needs became equally paramount as the methods employed to disseminate linguistic knowledge. Designing specific courses to better meet these individual needs was a natural extension of this

thinking. To this day, the catchword in ESL circles is learner-centred or learning-centred.

Key Notions about ESP

In this discussion, 4 key notes will be discussed. They are as follows: a) the distinctions between the absolute and variable characteristics of ESP, b) types of ESP, c) Characteristics ESP courses and d) the meaning of the word “special” in ESP.

Absolute characteristics

ESP consists of English language teaching which includes:

- Design to meet specific needs of the learner
- Centred on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, etc. and analysis of discourse.
- In contrast with General English.

Variable characteristics

ESP may be, but it is not necessarily:

- Restricted as to the language skills to be learned (e.g. Reading only).
- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, different methodology from that of General English;
- ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students.

Characteristic of ESP Courses

The characteristics of ESP courses were identified by Carter (1983). He states that there are 3 features common to ESP courses:

- a) Authentic material
- b) Purpose-related orientation
- c) Self-direction

Need Analysis

As a branch of English language teaching (ELT), ESP has experienced the development of 5 stages, they are:

- Register analysis
- Rhetoric or discourse analysis
- Target situation analysis
- Skills and learning strategies and learning – centered stage (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, pp.9 – 14)

Principles of Business English Curriculum Design

Here we focus on 2 principles.

- Systematic principle
- Developmental principle

Five Tips for Teaching Business English

- Find out what students really want to achieve
- Get a clear idea about the contexts in which learners use English
- Be business – like but keep energy levels high.
- Choose your materials wisely.
- Be flexible and to anticipate problems.

The 4 Skills and the 4 Systems

Languages are made up of systems and skills. The 4 systems of language are **grammar, vocabulary, phonology and discourse.**

The Skills

The 4 skills are **reading, writing, listening and speaking.** While reading and listening are **receptive skills**, writing and speaking skills are **productive skills.**
e.g. The UCLES English **proficiency** exams explicitly test the four skills and also two systems, grammar and vocabulary.

In the Classroom

Although most modern methodologies and approaches focus on **communication** and make little reference to systems, many course books still structure based on the systems and skills mentioned above. **Discourse** itself is normally not identified separately but included when dealing with skills.

SWOT Analysis

S - strengths

W - Weakness

O - Opportunities

T - Threats

The teachers should analyse their students by the method of SWOT analysis. SWOT also helps the students to analyse themselves.

Difference Between Business English and General English

Trainer must:

- Be credible with excellent interpersonal skills

- Have excellence skills and knowledge.
- Be capable of adapting to immediate learner needs.
- Have general over view of what the learners line of work involves.
- Ensure that lessons learner – centred.
- Ensure lessons are of immediate real – life relevance to learners and company.
- Be aware of the best communicative practices.
- Include appropriate learner – training sessions to empower learners.

Students are generally:

- More demanding (so trainers need to manage expectations early on).
- More aware of their needs/requirements (making a needs analysis and invaluable part of the course)
- Quick to decide if something is useful or not.
- Free with feedback especially if they are unhappy.
- Able to make real – time use of skills they learn (trainer can use this to set homework tasks where real – time communication is essential, and students provide a written or oral report of what they did).

Conclusion

Thus, it is believed there are possible chances of using ESP in the context of BE for both the teachers and learners to acquire the knowledge of business communication at intermediate/ global level.

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