
English for Business Purposes: An ESP Approach

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Abstract

English has been widely used and spread as the globalization of business environment. This paper highlights the needs and uses of English language in business along with the discussion of ESP Approach used for Business Purposes. Business English (English for Business Purposes) is a new branch of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) which is a type of ELT (English Language Teaching). Needs are split into three specific types: present situation needs involving language institutions; learning situation needs concerning learners, and finally target situation needs comprising companies (Dudley-Evans and St. Johns, 1998).

Keywords: Business English, ESP Approach, ELT, Needs Analysis

Introduction

In the present scenario English is globally considered an inevitable link language especially in the areas of business, commerce and marketing. English has been recognized as the library language and medium of instruction in higher education and its various disciplines. English is recognized as undoubtedly the most important language to learn for the increasingly mobile international community, and English has become the official language of the business and scientific world (Schütz, 2005).

English is the real global language and is important in education, relations and business. I am the Chairman of one of the largest Italian Bank Foundations and we are dealing with more than 100 countries. Our work language is English.

-Professor Francesco Profumo, Politecnico di Torino, Italy.

The aim of the present paper is to focus on English for Business Purposes helping the students of business find out and review their needs and uses of English language in business or workplace.

It also discusses ESP Approach which is used for Business Purposes specifically related to the area of business and management.

English is used for business purposes and the language particularly related to international trade, and so it is considered a part of English for Specific purposes; English has been widely used and spread as the globalization of business environment. Furthermore, international and multinational business companies are expected to increase. Now-a-days, many international native to non-native or non-native to non-native communications are undertaken in the business settings. Business people have to learn how to perform English language skills they already master in their native language such as presentations, negotiations, meetings, small talk, correspondence, report writing, and so on.

The term, Business English is wide; according to the Oxford Business English Dictionary, it covers the areas, such as, accounting, commerce, e-commerce, economics, finance, HR, insurance, IT, law, manufacturing, marketing, production, property, the stock exchange, (international) trade, transport. Business English is associated with the skills which most people need to perform well are writing e-mails and reports, making presentations, doing negotiations, using the telephone, attending and participating actively in meetings or telephone conferences, receiving visitors, etc.

English for Specific Purposes

The study of languages for specific purposes has had a long and interesting history going back, some would say, as far as the Roman and Greek Empires.

(Dudley-Evans & St John, 1997)

According to Hutchinson & Waters (1987), ESP is a phenomenon resulting from human activities' development – “ESP was not a planned and coherent movement, but rather a phenomenon that grew out of a number of converging trends.” The development of ESP is considered as a logical result of a number of converging movements such as:

- The expansion of demand for English after the world war-II to suit specific needs of a profession

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- Development in the field of linguistics (the use of language in real communication)
 - Educational psychology (learner's need and interest have an influence on their motivation and effectiveness of their learning)

Dudley-Evans (1997) defined ESP (English for Specific Purposes) with the following Characteristics:

Absolute Characteristics

- ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners.
- ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves.
- ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre.

Variable Characteristics

- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines.
- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English.
- ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level.
- ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students.
- Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems.

ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions; content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning (Hutchinson and Waters 1987). It aims to meet the learners' specific needs and to develop linguistic competences of learners. Learning aims can be defined in terms of these specific purposes to which the language will put, whether it will be reading scientific papers or communication with technicians in an oil rig (Mackay, 1978).

In the present scenario, English is an indispensable language for communication and career, and to get endorsed and perform effectively in the world of Business. So, it is considered a new linguistic branch within the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), which is further divided into two sub branches, English for

professional purpose and English for vocational purpose. Then it is termed as Business English from the 'English for professional purpose. Business English is presently one of the areas of growth in ESP (Ellis & Johnson, 1994). Dudley-Evans & St John (1996) says "Business English as an umbrella term used similarly to the term English for Specific Purposes to embrace both general courses in the appropriate lexis and grammar for business communication.

English for Business Purposes

Business English (English for Business Purposes) is a new branch of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) which is a type of ELT (English Language Teaching) emerging as a response to a growing awareness of certain types of learners with specialized needs which are not fulfilled in General English courses. The teaching of Business English, directly related to learners' and employers' professional needs, started to be accompanied and guided by abundant theoretical literature. As a consequence, Palmer (1964) mentions the selective concentration on particular language skills and abilities as an important characteristic of ESP; Strevens (1977, 1980) offers a comprehensive definition of ESP; Robinson (1980) writes a thorough review of theoretical positions and what ESP meant at that time; Coffey (1985) updates Strevens's work and puts ESP in the context of communicative language teaching.

In fact, all ELT approaches to Business English are utilitarian, practical and goal-oriented. Business English and ESP in general should not be perceived as 'specialized varieties of English' or as a special form of language different in kind from other forms (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). It is to consider that in ELT Business English is neither a language, nor a particular kind of language, but it is rather a methodology of designing and running a special-purpose language course. Business English is merely a method of teaching a specific language corpus and a particular kind of communication in a specific context (Sobkowiak, 2008). Business English is not a product, but a process.

English for Specific Purposes is an approach to language teaching. Learners' needs play a vital role in the process of establishing the way classes and content are put into practice. Then they are divided into target situation, present situation, and learning situation needs.

Needs Analysis

According to Johns (1991), Needs analysis is the first step in course design and it provides validity and relevancy for all subsequent course design activities. Richards et al. (1992) say that Needs analysis is the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners requires a language.

Needs analysis is more fundamental in EBP as learners have different language proficiency and skills. It depends on the situation and context. According to Pilbeam (1979), Needs analysis should be based on:

- *Target Situation Analysis*: to establish a target profile of language skills that set down the actual activities that the participants have to carry out
- *Present Situation Analysis*: to establish a profile of personal ability in which the participant's proficiency in these activities is evaluated

Holden (1993) gives three stage-analysis to the needs analysis:

- To tabulate information through which target language needs are identified
- To conduct an interview (or questionnaire) to establish learners perceptions of communication within their corporate culture
- To administer a questionnaire to establish preferred learning styles

In ESP courses teachers and schools have to meet learners' reasons and needs for learning more effectively. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), needs analysis is basically an attempt to understand and gather as much information as possible about learners, their working environment, expectations about the course, as well as their learning preferences. Needs analysis, further, establishes the 'how' and 'what' should be taught in an ESP course.

The learners' essential needs in Business English for listening and speaking skills are telephoning, socializing, giving presentations, taking part in meetings, negotiating and so on, and for the needs in reading and writing are corresponding and report writing.

Language Skills/Needs Required for Business Professionals

According to Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998), *needs* are split into three specific types: *present situation needs* involving language institutions; *learning situation needs* concerning learners, and finally *target situation needs* comprising companies.

Some research studies explored the learners' Language Skills/Needs Required in Business English. *Needs Analysis And English For Business Purposes* (Strapasson, G. (2015) is an investigation which is conducted to improve what has already been offered by language institutions in terms of Business English classes as well as to shed some light on a relatively unexplored field in foreign language teaching and learning.

The study finds out the needs of business professionals: *emails, presentations, conference calls, phone calls, meetings, writing, business travels, negotiations, reading/comprehension of technical manuals, conduction of meetings and communication with suppliers, communication with foreign headquarters and subsidiaries, listening (comprehension of different accents), communication (conversation) and pronunciation.*

Currently emails play a vital role in business correspondence and transactions. Business professionals should acquire the skill of making presentation which is one of the essential skills and learning how to overcome fear of public speaking and give a winning and informative presentation. Conference calls that are a staple at any workplace or business can connect employees with their clients because they are scattered all across different locations. Conference calls are conducted to solve essential business issues, to discuss various marketing strategies and to make presentations and receive feedback.

Telephoning is a very important skill in business or marketing. In the business context most of the languages used on telephone are reasonably restricted, except English. In any business setup,

well-planned meetings are a vital communication tool. Meetings can make business professionals together to share information, develop strategies, work toward corporate goals and celebrate success that depends on the active participation of invited participants.

Business travels are essential for professionals for visiting customers or suppliers, attending meetings at other company locations, promoting products or sales, strengthening employees' loyalty to the business and identifying trends and new markets. Negotiations are common in business. Professionals should be skillful as they have to negotiate a salary or a promotion, to secure a sale, or to form a new partnership. Negotiating is frequently considered an 'art'.

Business professionals or employees have to develop the reading skill to comprehend technical material as a foundation skill needed by all employees. Therefore, they are able to understand and interpret various documents including diagrams, directories, correspondence, manuals, records, charts, graphs, tables, and specifications.

Good conversation skills are indispensable for successful business. Formality and restraint differentiate business communications from ordinary personal conversations. Keeping one's manners is a simple but effective way of communicating professionalism and respect with business contacts. For a good business conversation, listening should be given more importance to one's business partners than just talking about oneself.

Listening is an active skill that shows how people are participating in conversation or some communication event. It makes the people think about the ideas being proposed, analyze the facts, ask questions and seek clarification from the speaker or presenter. Listening comprehension encompasses several processes involving in understanding and making sense of spoken language. It includes recognizing speech sounds/pronunciation (comprehension of different accents), understanding the meaning of individual words and understanding the syntax of sentences. Written communication is an important skill in business transactions such as writing reports, memos, and business letters. So, it is indispensable for Business professionals to develop effective written communication skills.

Conclusion

English is the real global language and is important in education, relations and business. English has been widely used and spread as the globalization of business environment and it is considered a part of English for Specific purposes. Needs analysis is more fundamental in EBP as learners have different language proficiency and skills depending on the situation and context.

Therefore, The learners' essential needs in Business English for listening and speaking skills are telephoning, socializing, giving presentations, taking part in meetings, negotiating and so on, and for the needs in reading and writing are corresponding and report writing.

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