

ESP: Past, Present, Future

Nassera SENHADJI

University Abderrahmane Mira - Bejaia, Algeria

nasseraetsenhadji@gmail.com

Received: 11/05/2018,

Accepted: 30/12/2020,

Published: 31/12/2020

Abstract: *The present article outlines the development of ESP from the post second world war period to the present and foresees its development in the future. This field is extremely important today because of most research publication in diverse fields and scientific research carried out in English. This paper is divided into three parts as the title indicates 'The Past, the Present and the Future of ESP and shows what marks each period.*

Introduction

The fact most research publication and scientific research is done in English today accounts for English being in a key position, and so is ESP in English departments worldwide. What is ESP? The 'S' standing for specialized discourse in professional and academic spheres. We all know that ESP is the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language where the goal of the learners is to use English in a particular domain. A key feature of an ESP course is that the context and aims of the course are oriented to the specific needs of the learners. ESP courses, then, focus on the language skills, and genres appropriate to the specific activities the learners need to carry in English.

But the scope and aim of ESP is much larger than this since ESP also deals with pedagogy having four main interests: Needs Analysis, Curriculum development, Genre and ESP, Assessment in ESP.

The Past (1960-1990)

After World War 2, English became important to master because of the spread of technological commerce.

After the 1960's and the 1970's marked by Noam Chomsky's transformational Grammar, researchers became interested in 'communication in real situations' spearheaded by the sociolinguist Dell Hymes in the UK and by David Crystal, John Sinclair, and Malcom Coulthard.

The first goal in ESP was for catering for the need of learners of English as a foreign language.

Three of the leaders of the field were John and Dudley-Evans (1991) and St John 1998. Other well-known researchers included Peter Strevens, Robinson, Caffey, Hutchinson and Waters, Belcher.

Their goal was to identify the characteristics of the language of specific domains. It was also the start of corpus studies. What ensued is a series of subfields of ESP starting with

EST: English for Science and technology

Vocational English as a second language.

ESP was then defined according to its **absolute characteristics**:

- ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners.
- ESP makes use of the 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.

It was also defined in terms of its **Variable characteristics**:

- **Strevens'** (1988) affirms that ESP may be, but is not necessarily:
- *restricted as to the language skills to be learned (e.g. reading only);*
- *not taught according to any pre-ordained methodology*
- **Dudley-Evans & St John(1998):**
- *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 system, but it can be used with beginners.
Other sub-fields of ESP include:
- English for Specific and academic purposes(ESAP)
- English for Professional and Academic purposes(EPAP)
- English as a Lingua Franca in Academic settings(ELFA)
- English for occupational purposes(EOP)
- English for Business communication(EBC)
- English for socio-cultural purposes(ESCP)
- English for General Business Purposes(EGPB)
- English for Medical Purposes(EMP)
- English for Legal Purposes(ELP)
- English for Academic Legal Purposes(EALP)
- English for research Publication Purposes(ERPP)

Considering the vast number of specialties one may think that researchers are going to take a narrow –angled view of the characteristics and specificities of a given sub-field; it is not the

case: researchers tend to take a ‘wide-angled approach to identify the broad features that cut across the different branches of specialized knowledge . However ,the main approach is to focus on what learners need.



The Present

In this digital age there are two recent additions:

- Electronic Business English (e-BE)
- Electronic Medical English(e-ME)ESPES

Besides, corpus studies have still a key role in E.S.P research and there has been a growth of English for Academic Purposes by John Swales and Ken Hyland. Language centers in England nolonger offer foreign language courses to native speakers of English but provide English courses in EAP for non-native speakers, of whom 23% are postgraduates from China.

Nowadays, another area that has grown is Content and Language Integrated Learning known as EMILE (Enseignement d'une Matière par l'Intégration d'une Langue Etrangère) in the French speaking world. CLIL has existed for the last 20 years and is mainly adopted in Europe and Asia. CLIL conveys the content of a non-language subject such as science or history in a foreign language whereas ESP courses are taught by teachers of English who have graduated in language studies and have in most cases, only subsequently acquired a content-based knowledge of, for example, Medicine, Finance or Law.

CLIL and ESP

Differences

Learning and objective outcomes

In CLIL, Content-learning objectives are more important than language learning objectives whereas ESP is language-led and language-learning objectives are of primary importance.

Moreover, institutions overseas tend to teach medicine, agriculture, business, some management all in English and tend to favour CLIL over ESP

The Future

In the future, ESP will include the phenomenon of multimodality, namely, the various forms of internet communication including digital media elements (texts, graphics, sound, animation and video that the new generation is acquainted with. New research will be based on an analysis of this new multimodal technology, being more and more a part of a classroom lesson. Researchers take this aspect into consideration in the 21st century ESP environment. Present day research still overemphasizes questions of language forms in monomodal specialized texts, but this may change with the advance of free resources available in the internet, influencing the learning process. An ESP text may no longer be print-based, but a digital media element which will open new areas of research on the development of a multimodal communicative competence. Besides, as Brian Paltridge and Sue Starfield as cited in *The Handbook of ESP*, 2011, p. 24 have highlighted

One major problem needs to be researched more is how to implement the new technologies that are constantly being introduced.

Moreover, the evolution of the knowledge economy has put great importance on the ability to use these new forms of technology.

Besides, EAP will carry on developing as will the potential of Content and Language Integrated Learning providing new axes of research since EAP contexts are varied as Hyland has stated in the Handbook of ESP (2011:22):

So much remains to be discovered to equip students with the communicative skills to participate in particular academic cultures.

Another axis of research is ELF standing for English as a Lingua Franca:

In ELF, speakers did not need to adhere to native speakers' norms; they used ELF to achieve effective communication with speakers of other linguistic backgrounds even though the language they used was ungrammatical. What mattered to them is the intelligibility of their message. Criticism of ELF said that it consisted of learner errors rather than authentic variation so, it was not worth studying, and others said that it was a reified variety of English: other researchers compared ELF to World Englishes pointing out language features by region and group versus EFL aiming at conveying the message even if the form was wrong.

Finally, **The critical approach** will be deepened: in the past, it questioned if the whole principles of ESP were to teach our students *skills, the language, the behaviors or knowledge to fit into target situations to act appropriately*. Advocates of the critical approach were against the idea that teaching should encourage the communicative norms of the target environment and lead students to

accept these norms uncritically. Hyland and Hamp-Lyons(2002)reported, as a central issue for EAP, the question of whether *it was the EAP teacher's job to replicate and reproduce existing forms of discourse (and thus power relations or to develop an understanding of them so that they can be challenged?* (as cited on p. 9).

Students generally accepted what they were taught (established communicative practices (Allison, 1998, p. 44).
And

ESP may endorse and be responsible for the maintenance of norms and practises not all of which are necessarily desirable (as cited in Helen Basturkmen, in Ideas and Options in ESP, 2006, p141).

In the future, English will still remain the main language of publication, of the transmission and exchange of scientific knowledge and more particularly as the principal language of research in the field of ESP as evidenced by Ana Bocanegra Valle, editor-in-chief of Iberica, publishing in the Journal ESP today. She conducted a research and showed that 76 respondents out of 133 scholars from European countries wrote in English, saying that English added to the prestige and visibility to a research article: it reached a wider audience and the writer could be acknowledged in the world of academia.

English as a global language, first medium of research publication, is again a main topic for researchers today, and in the future for, as Gibson Fergusson has stated: *The rise of English for Specific Purposes »(ESP) as a major branch of*

*language teaching in the last half century has been firmly rooted in two key developments: **the spread of English** as a global language, specifically its emergence as **the dominant international language of academic publication**; and second, **recognition of language variation, by use as well as user**, as a fundamental property of language use. Without the first- there would....be... **no ESP**-at least on the scale we witness it today (as cited, p9).*

Conclusion:

As Brian Paltridge and Sue Starfield (2013, p.98) put it, English is at the forefront of research publication, and for modern man to be competitive in this globalized world, human beings need to access the language of knowledge mainly English, so ESP will remain a key field of research and study in the future!

Besides, we must reconsider the integration of ESP within English departments in Algeria placing ESP not as a simple course inside a specialty, but as a specialty in its own right to enable Algerian researchers to come closer to the Silicon valley!

REFERENCES

- Bocanegra-Valle, A.** (2013). *[The perceived value of English for academic publishing among ESP multilingual scholars in Europe.](#)* *ESP Today. Journal of English for Specific Purposes at Tertiary Level*, 1 (1), 5-25.
- Dudley-Evans, T., and St John, M.** (1998). *Developments in ESP: A multi-disciplinary approach.* Cambridge: CUP.
- Helen Basturkmen.**(2006). *Ideas and Options in English for Specific Purposes.* London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Gibson Ferguson.**(2007). *The Global Spread of English, Scientific Communication and ESP: Questions of Equity, Access and Domain Loss.* Article in *Iberica* 13 (7- 38) April 2007 Source:OA.
- Hamp-Lyons Liz.** English for Academic Purposes. *Handbook of Research on Second Language Learning and Teaching, Chapter: 6, Publisher: Routledge/Taylor & Francis, Editors: E.Hinkel, pp.89-105.*
- Paltridge Brian, Sue Starfield (eds.).** (2013). *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes.* Boston: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Shaeda Isani,** in *Brian Paltridge, Sue Starfield (eds.).* 2013. *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes.* Asp [Online], 64 |, Online since 01 November 2013, connection on 30 September 2016. UR :<http://asp.revues.org/3806>.
- Stevens, P.** (1988) *ESP after twenty years: A re-appraisal.* In M. Tickoo (Ed.), *ESP: State of the Art* (pp. 1-13). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Centre.