

General English (GE) and English for specific purposes (ESP) in theory and practice.

In order to design and develop an ESP course, we must determine what it is comprised of and what makes it different from other courses. Having previously defined English for specific purposes, with the help of the Strevens's and Dudley-Evans & St John's definitions, in opposition to general English we ought to examine this relationship more thoroughly. What is the actual difference between ESP and GE then? Hutchinson and Waters (1987:53) answer this quite simply: "in theory nothing, in practice a great deal".

Orr (1998) in differentiating between EGP and ESP states that:

" English for general purposes (EGP) is essentially the English language education in junior and senior high schools where needs can not readily be specified. Students are introduced to the sounds and symbols of English, as well as to the lexical/grammatical/rhetorical elements that compose spoken and written discourse ...University instruction that introduces students to common features of academic discourse in the sciences or humanities, frequently called English for Academic Purposes (EAP), is equally ESP."

According to Orr —*English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is research and instruction that builds on EGP and is designed to prepare students or working adults for the English used in specific disciplines, vocations, or professions to accomplish specific purposes.*

It is obvious that ESP context must be preceded by a sizeable background of general English. As it has been argued, ESP is associated with mature learners, because it has a strong relationship with specialization in different fields of concern. Aside from the ‘rough separation’ at definition level, there exists overlapping connection and proportion between them. To clarify their relations, Widdowson (1983) accounts for distinctive features of ESP and EGP; among them these are the most important:

EGP	ESP
<p>*The focus is on education.</p> <p>* As the future needs of the student’s are impossible to predict, course content is more difficult to select</p>	<p>*The focus is on training.</p> <p>*As the English is intended to be used in specific vocational contexts, selection of appropriate content is easier (but not ‘easy’ in itself).</p>

Much of the discussion presented up to now was brief and needed theoretical arguments regarding ESP and EGP. It is better to alter the perspective so as to get rid of theoretical assumptions and concepts. The investigators prefer to expand on the role of GE (EGP) and its trace in a typical ESP classroom, so that one can have a better understanding of the actualization of their connection in a real context.

ESP and EGP (GE) in practice.

Some important points about ESP classes and their comparison with EGP ones:

1. Learners and purposes of learning ; ESP learners are usually adults who already have some familiarity with English language and they are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular –job-

related functions. In EGP classes, age of learners varies from children to adults and learning English language is the subject of classes.

2. Based on the purpose of learning, aims of instruction are identified; in an EGP class, as a general rule, *four skills are stressed equally*. But in ESP, it is *needs analysis* that determines which language skills are most needed by the students, and the syllabus is designed accordingly. For example, in order to train a tourist guide, the ESP class should promote the development of spoken skills. Another example, one who intends to work in a business administration should be trained in development of reading skills.

3. In a typical EGP class, there is concentration on *teaching grammar and language structures* (mostly in isolation). But in ESP, the focus is on *context*, to ESP, English is not taught as a subject separated from the student's real world/wishes.

Language in context —————> **ESP** Language in isolation —————> **EGP**

4. Combination of subject-matter (which learners are familiar with) with English language creates a meaningful context which is highly motivating. This meaningful context increases motivation that is a positive indication of a successful learning.

5. Regarding the term *'specific'* in ESP, it should be noted that not only does it mean English for specific purposes, i.e. English language at service of specific purposes, but also implies specific purposes for learning English. In other words, the study of English through a field that is already known and relevant to it. Therefore, learners are able to use what they learn in ESP classes right away in their work and studies. This means that ESP enables them to use the English they know to learn even more English.

The following are some opinions on the relation of EGP and ESP: First, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) maintain that what distinguishes ESP from general English (GE) is an awareness of the need. Second, Robinson (1991) suggests that in an ESP class, language is a *'service'* rather than a *'subject'* in its own sake. Finally, Anthony (1997) notes that it is not clear where ESP courses end and general English (GE) courses begin.

In sum, ESP assesses and analyzes needs and integrates motivation, subjectmatter and content with the help of relevant language skills. For all of ESP curriculum design, it can be concluded that general English (GE) language content, grammatical functions and acquisition skills are important and dominant in curriculum development and course design . The problem concerning contrasting leading to emphatic separation of these two fields of study is sometimes because of ill-defined descriptions or ill described definitions.

