

Language Issues in ESP

1* Grammar in ESP.

There are many misconceptions about the role of grammar in ESP teaching. Indeed, it is often said that ESP teaching isn't concerned with grammar while much of the skills oriented work in EAP does not concentrate on grammar itself. It is incorrect to consider grammar teaching as outside of the remit: grammar is taught as being a part of whole texts; it is within readings, discussions and lectures rather than separate from them. Therefore, Grammar is not a separate entity which students need to memorize knowledge of but rather needs to be viewed within the context of language use.

The specific grammar points mentioned in Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) are:

- Voice;
- Tense aspect;
- Articles;
- Nominalization;
- Logical connectors (Discourse markers).

Verb and tense:

Which tenses should be taught?

- 1) Present simple:

- Scientific and technical texts in English frequently use the present tense, since in most cases they state facts.

2) Present perfect:

- Use the present perfect for actions in the past with a connection to the present and when the time of the past actions is not important. Use the present perfect for recently completed actions and actions beginning in the past and continuing in the present.

3) Past simple:

- Use the simple past for actions in the past that have no connection to the present and when the time of the past action is important or shown.

*** Teachers should teach different tenses. They should be presented with due explanation about when and why students should use a particular tense instead of another.**

Voice:

-The passive voice appears in scientific texts rather frequently. This is appropriate for an impersonal use of the language, where the acting person is of no importance and therefore does not have to be mentioned. The passive is also used to describe a process or experiment.

- The active form is used only to describe the procedural choices.

Modals:

-Modals like: may, might, could, would.... are also important. They are used in order to show a degree of certainty.

Articles:

-Teachers should teach when their students should use a, an, or the'.

Word Formation:

the Suffix -able/-ible

Adjectives ending in **-able/-ible** are often used in scientific texts, as they can replace

longer verbal phrases, for example:

The specimen exhibits elongation **that can be appreciated**.

The specimen exhibits **appreciable** elongation.

Nominalization:

-It is the use of verbal nouns usually ending in suffixes such as: ation, ition, ity, ment, ness....

Logical connectors:

-Logical connectors, such as moreover, however, therefore..... have always had a high profile in EAP teaching. They are generally seen as a key device to the understanding of the logical relationships in texts and therefore relevant to the teaching of reading and writing in EAP.

Pre-modifying participle:

-Swales"1974" discusses the function of the pre-modifying participle "*given*" such as: *a given element, a given reaction*.....

He points out that expressions of this kind are very common in scientific writing and consequently they should be taught by ESP teachers.

The first step in dealing with grammar in an ESP approach is to try to have the students analyze a text and see if they can identify the patterns which are inherent within that text. Ultimately, we are looking for patterns of usage. The next step of course is trying not just to identify, but understand these patterns of usage. This means the students, with the teacher's help, need to try to figure out how and why certain grammatical structures are used in certain places within a text. Once this is done, we expect the students to be able to produce their own texts using the appropriate grammatical structures for that genre or content area.