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English for Specific Purposes

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Introduction

As our current world has entered the era of international communication and advanced technology, there are more and more chances for engineers and technical professionals to convey technical information in English for various purposes. Therefore, besides learning general English as an international language, engineering students of colleges and technical institutes need to be equipped with adequate writing ability so that they can communicate technical information clearly on at least a basic level. A good English writing proficiency can be a contributing factor to their professional recognition and career prospect. The term "specific" in ESP refers to the specific purpose for learning English. ESP assesses needs and integrates motivation, subject matter and content for the teaching of relevant skills.

Significance of ESP

When we talk of need-analysis, one more thing that comes to the mind is ESP (English for Specific Purposes) which also has its base in need-analysis. English language, when learnt for a specific purpose, is more important as a medium of receiving and reproducing the knowledge of the other domains of curriculum under study, than a separate subject to study. So, its role in curriculum is important and at the same time, a crucial one. Unlike those who learn a language with a view to study the linguistic features and literary values, the others – i.e. Students learning English for a specific purpose – are many, and increasing rapidly in numbers. To them language is primarily and basically, a tool to use for the sake of communication. They need to learn it in order to exploit and express something altogether different from linguistic features of language.

The role of English for Specific Purposes

The "ESP" The use of English language for academic / professional purposes professionals in engineering colleges is not only to impart linguistic skills in engineering students but also many soft skills. As the range of employment for engineers and technologists expand in the twenty-first century, there is a need to teach multiple skills to engineering students. As engineering students are required to communicate effectively in different situations, think creatively and critically, demonstrate good interpersonal and team skills, and have a set of soft skills demanded by recruiters, the Engineering English course should be modified based on the needs of students and expectations of recruiters. Such changes in the syllabus will set higher demands on the ESP practitioner. They will be expected to play a more professional role. They can no longer be mere teachers of Technical

English; they will be expected to play the role of soft skills trainers and communication skills consultants.

The non-technical or soft skills desired in them are: communication skills, problem-solving skills, negotiation skills, critical thinking skills, interpersonal skills, team work skills, etc. These skills can be very well called 'survival skills'. As defined in Career Opportunities News, October 2002, Volume 20, Number 2, Ferguson Publishing Company, "a soft skill refers to the cluster of personality traits, social graces, and facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark each of us to varying degrees. Persons who rank high in this cluster, with good soft skills, are generally the people that most employers want to hire. Soft skills complement hard skills, which are the technical requirements of a job.

As a teacher in English, for the students of technical education, namely Engineering discipline we observe that the students who learn English for a specific purpose are almost poor at receiving and reproducing their domain subject knowledge through English; though the same process can be done in a brilliant way if they use their vernacular language. Sometimes their use of English language is so poor that they are not able to fulfill even the basic purpose of communication. This leads to a complete failure as a professional. This research work aims at identifying and rectifying the errors in the use of English language by the students of Engineering discipline for whom English is a tool / medium. Here, the writing has been focused, because they are the students for whom English is a second language. So, their first output of learning a language would be in the form of written answers. And if they err here, the error would be fossilized and transferred to their speech, too. In order to solve the problem from the grass root level, an extensive remedial programme to correct errors has been implemented.

Hypothesis on "English for Specific Purposes"

The main function of a language is to communicate ideas. When the language of the world reflect the socio-politico-economic and religious interactions in the form of literature, new words are coined, existing meanings of the words are changed. Every new situations and context demand new strategies to use the language. Languages of the world in general, English in particular, have been maintaining a steady growth in word building depending upon the demands of the social situations. After the industrial revolution, the rapid developments taking place in the fields of science and technology created and added hundreds of new technical words to the English vocabulary. These new words are mainly scientific and technical in nature. These words cannot be used and understood by all writers and all people. This vocabulary is meant for special purpose. This kind of English is called English for Specific Purpose.

The advent of computers and the achievements of the scientists and technologists have been steadily enriching the English vocabulary and an exclusive format has been emerged for the scientific and technical writings. This style of writing can be called as 'Technical English'. The term technical English refers to the English which is used for specific purposes. Technical is something that involves a specific field and therefore it is exclusive for people who are familiar with it. In short , the technical language or language for specific purpose is created by specific persons like Specialists/Scientists/Technologists

for specific audience(scientific and technical community)conveying specific messages for specific purpose. This can be explained in the following way:

Specific persons (Scientists and Technologists)

Specific information (Technical / Special Subjects)

Specific purpose (Experiment, Analysis, Procedure, Result, Evaluation)

Specific Audience (Researchers, Experts, Technical students of Science and Technology)

The language of the scientists and technologists is very much different from the language of the general public. It is remarkably distinct from the literary language. A student of professional courses encounters a conflict situation when he faces the professional technical texts for the first time. He has been studying the general language up to his intermediate level. The competence he achieves in the general English helps him to learn the new style or format of the technical English. The general English and especially the literary language is immensely rich in exhibiting imagination and creativity of the writers. It gives scope for many interpretations and different shades of meanings are possible. It is emotive in tone and thrills the reader. The intensity of the human feelings is heightened by the emotive words. The lines of Shelly, for instance "I fall upon the thorns of life I bleed' may stir the feelings of the reader. So the evocation of the feelings may vary from reader to reader. Hence the impact of the literary language may not be uniform. The literary style use ornamental language, figures of speech, metaphors or similes and alliteration. The literary language deals with the feeling emotion, opinion and persuasion.

The language of science and technology differs entirely from the literary language in that it says only one thing and it means only what it says. There is no ambiguity or hidden meaning in the technical text. And more importantly it means the same to one and all. Its meaning does not vary from reader to reader. Either a reader understands it or does not understand it. There is no question of different interpretation. "Water boils at 100xC" is understood by everyone. And there is no dispute over this statement. Hence science and technology states only facts, verifiable or tested ones. The technical English, on the other hand emphasizes impartial presentations, dispassionate explanation and factual recording of scientific investigations and findings. Technical writing consists of simple straight forward sentences consisting of technical words. Technical writings have three purposes.1) to record 2) to inform 3) to educate.

The contemporary science and technology field has roughly three hundred special words fields. Each field creates a unique vocabulary of its own depending upon the necessity of the situation. This specific vocabulary is used in the following contexts of science of science and technology.

1. To describe a process
2. To instruct procedures (step by step instructions0
3. To state principles/theories

4. To record facts.

The vocabulary of Technical English is standardized and hence it is international. It is non-emotive and new word formation is very frequent. The text of the specific/technical English consists a large number of symbols. The ESP is meant for 1) Reporting, 2) Describing 3) Directing 4) Explaining and arguing of technical subjects. The text forms are 1. Articles, 2. Dissertations, 3.Laboratory Reports and Text books.

The text forms have the following types of text materials:

1. Exposition: discussion, arguments, result, conclusion
2. Procedure: analysis, experiment, measurement, observation, test.
3. Statistics: sample, probability, distribution, significance.
4. Classification: class, type, group, species, item, unit.
5. Relational words: similar, distinct, average, relative, normal.

The ESP is addressed to 1.Research scholars, 2. Students, 3. The General Public. The texts are explained with the help of diagrams, graphs, outlines, formulae, charts and tables. The format of the text presentation is as follows:

1. Introduction(purpose is presented)
2. Review(previous work)
3. Methods part(procedures)
4. Result Section
5. Discussion(finings are evaluated)

The ever-changing social life gives room for coining new words in the languages of the world. In the fields of science and technology, new findings and discoveries, inventions and devices demand appropriate terminologies. In this process, the language takes a specific shape for the specific purpose.

The ESP student has the following study/Learning materials:

1. Reading scientific texts.
2. Reading and making notes on textbooks
3. Taking notes on lectures.
4. Carrying out and writing up experiment.
5. Writing Technical Reports.
6. Answering examination questions
7. Taking part in seminars.

Conclusion

The ESP student is particularly well disposed to focus on meaning in the subject-matter field. The ESP focal point is that English is not taught as a subject separated from the students' real world (or wishes); instead, it is integrated into a subject matter area important to

the learner. . ESP combines subject matter and English language teaching. Such a combination is highly motivating because students are able to apply what they learn in their English classes to their main field of study, whether it be accounting, business management, economics, computer science or tourism. In ESP, English should be presented not as a subject to be learned in isolation from real use, nor as a mechanical skill but habit to be developed .People learn languages when they have opportunities to understand and work with language in a context that they comprehend and find interesting. Since language is more of a medium and less of content for them, they need to pay special attention to the basic structures of language which can provide them with a format in which they may put the content they have. So, for them the most appropriate and accurate language structures are as important as specific terminology at their field in order to communicate effectively. In this view, ESP is a powerful means for such opportunities.

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