TEACHING ESP & BUSINESS ENGLISH

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Abstract: Business English is one of the forms of the language used for a Specific Purpose, such as Maritime English, Aviation English, Technical English, or Scientific English. In the case of Business English, it is largely used in international trade by many whose primary spoken or written language is not English. In a globally connected world, Business English is becoming increasingly important as more and more companies need their staff to be multi-lingual. The ultimate goal of any Business English Course is to allow its users to effectively communicate with others in a business environment, whether that communication is in correspondence, face to face meetings, or other methods. Therefore a Business English Language Course may include topics such as business English reading, letters and resumes, business phrases, or terms in sale, advertising, and marketing.
Keywords: *ESP, Business English, types of communication, teaching techniques, specific vocabulary, student's needs, authentic materials.*

INTRODUCTION

Business English must be seen in the larger context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as it shares the important characteristics of needs analysis, syllabus design, course design, and materials selection and development which are common to all fields of work in ESP. As with other varieties of ESP, Business English involves a specific language corpus and emphasis on specific types of communication in a specific context. However, it was pointed out that Business English is different from other varieties of ESP due to its mix of specific content and general content (Ellis & Johnson, 1994).

According to Dudley-Evans (1977) ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learner and 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. It is also underlined the fact that ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English.

From the definition, we see that ESP can, but it is not necessarily concerned with a specific discipline, nor does it have to be aimed at a certain age group or ability range. ESP should be seen simple as an approach to teaching, or what Dudley-Evans describes as an "*attitude of mind*". This is a similar conclusion to that made by Hutchinson et al. (1987) who stated, "*ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning*".

BUSINESS ENGLISH AS PART OF ESP

However, Business English, as a variety of ESP, shares a number of characteristics with General English, still differing in point of content: it is a mixture of specific content and general content; therefore Business English is English for communication in a specific context.

As William Bradridge puts it, "*teaching Business English means saying goodbye to crowded classrooms of unmotivated noisy teens and hello to negotiating your own time schedule and better pay with very motivated and highly intelligent professionals.*"

Hence the challenges that teachers of Business English face in their activity are as follows: What should the main focus be on? Specialized vocabulary? Improving communication skills in a business related context? More specifically, what do non-native students in economics and business need to know about Business English in order to face the future challenges in their careers? How should a Business English course be designed in order to fulfill the expectations and necessities of the future businessmen? What teaching and learning techniques are most appropriate to the content of such a course?

As a teacher at the Naval Academy, I teach students at the Port management specialization, and in the second year of study I find it necessary to introduce them to some business vocabulary, texts, even grammar exercises which comprise business terms. Why a business course? Because I have to keep in mind that one day some, or all of my students are going to work for multinational companies, therefore they need to know this form of ESP. Our students need to focus on vocabulary and phrases which are used in the business world, be familiar with the professional writing such as business letters, memos, e-mails, invitations and reports, and in the same time be good at preparing and delivering presentations within the business family.

Course design

There have been many developments over the past decades in terms of the way teachers and course designers look at Business English. In the 1960s and 1970s the specialist vocabulary was seen as the distinguishing component between General English and Business English. Textbooks at that time were intended to offer target specialist vocabulary in a context of a written text or dialogue which dealt with a specific topic (for example, banking). Exercises mainly comprised comprehension questions about the text and vocabulary drills. Such textbooks did not take into account the learner's previous knowledge nor did they consider how the learner might use language in real life.

Later on, in the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s course books began to put a greater emphasis on communication skills, on speaking, writing, listening and reading within a business context. Business English teaching became thus more focused on functional areas – language for recommending, expressing opinions, giving advice, showing agreement etc. These developments have continued so far as there appeared a growing need for enhancing such skills as presentation techniques, negotiating or meeting skills. The practical use of language prevailed over the theoretical knowledge about the language.

In what concerns teaching Business English speaking skills, students should be taught how to handle a job interview, which is an important part of an employment file, what tips they should have in mind when they apply for a particular job.

When designing a course in Business English, specialists such as Mark Ellis and Christine Johnson (1994) suggest a few specific steps to consider, in contrast to General English courses, such as:
- Needs analysis: what do students need to know in order to face the requirements of their future job environment?
- Assessment of level: using written tests, we can see what level of language students have at the beginning of the course.
- Syllabus: set courses, like the ones taught in colleges, should have fixed objectives and syllabus.
- Course objectives: should be defined in relation to the needs analysis findings; in the case of pre-experience learners they can be worded in terms of their course of

study or in terms of required language improvement (command of structures, functions etc.)
- Time: in the case of college language training, time is limited so the course should be structured according to the duration (number of weeks, semesters etc.).
- Learner expectations: in the case of Business English, learners are likely to be more goal-orientated and to expect success.
- Evaluation of progress: written or oral examination, dependent on particular circumstances.

ESP teacher

It is also rightfully noticed that "*it is a misconception that in the field of ESP the teacher has to be an expert in the subject matter.*" (Ellis 17) The teacher does not have to teach negotiation strategies, management theory etc. He underlines the fact that the teacher should be seen as an expert in presenting and explaining the language and in taking care of the learners' language problems. The Business English teacher has to prepare students to communicate in a foreign language, i.e. English about business issues students specialize in.

Nowadays the portrait of the traditional teachers is shifting rapidly towards self-directed learning or student-oriented learning, and these can be done due to the new technologies. Therefore teachers should be familiar with the modern technology and the new methodological approaches. "*The teachers need to learn new skills of Business English for effective teaching in order to use them and enhance the .communication skills of the learners*" (Chen 16-33).

It is up to each and every teacher to use and implement in the same time the new technologies in his/her own class of Business English, and his/her attitude towards technology will influence both their approach to teaching Business English and the students' feedback.

Tip S for teaching business english

Many teachers of English as a foreign language feel intimidated by the prospect of teaching business English. Here are some tips to get your business English teaching off to a good start:

1. *Find out what your students want to achieve*

You'll be teaching busy adults who are used to working towards objectives. You should therefore discuss with them at the beginning of the course what they would like to achieve. This usually means breaking things down into skills: telephoning more effectively, writing more coherent emails, chairing meetings, etc. Teachers should help set these objectives by analysing the needs of the learners early on. This 'needs analysis' can then be shared with the learners and referred to as a way of keeping them engaged and motivated throughout the course.

2. *Get a clear idea about the contexts in which learners use English*

A very important part of the needs analysis process should be a discussion about the context in which the course participants need to perform: Why are they learning English? Who do they communicate with in their work and under what conditions? Someone who is learning English just to brush up fluency skills will have different needs and expectations to someone who is learning English to supervise a team working in another country. We should also remember that business is conducted on a global level and there is a strong possibility that your students will be communicating with other non-native speakers. It's a good idea to research cross-cultural communication and find out how people from different backgrounds do business.

3. *Be businesslike but keep energy levels high*

To make the right impression, it's important to teach in a business-like way. This affects what you say, and how you behave, but also what you wear. If you're going to work in-company, then punctuality, professionalism and competence are crucial. Student talking time (STT) is likely to be much higher in a business English classroom, so ensure there are plenty of opportunities for collaborative task work and speaking practice. Where possible, leave reading and writing for self-study or homework.

4. *Choose your materials wisely*

As in the general English classroom, learners will expect you to bring materials to class. There are lots of books and online resources available, but it's important to choose materials that create 'authentic' situations in the classroom. Probably the most important resource is the learners themselves. They can provide you with real materials from their working lives – the things they need to read and understand, or perhaps even create and present. These could be leaflets, emails, PowerPoint presentations or reports. Don't forget: concentrate on goals and needs. Find out why these resources are important and what your learners want to take away from the lesson. Then come to an agreement with them about how to meet these needs.

Authentic material

Authentic materials are especially important for ESP trainees, since they reproduce an immersion environment and provide a realistic context for tasks that relate to learner's needs. Realia and authentic materials increase learners' motivation but are difficult to adapt to the learners' level of language, especially at the beginning level. It is also important to note that preparing such materials can be very time-consuming. Nowadays, authentic materials must be constantly updated, as they are more and more frequently on demand in ESP classes; with the advance of technology, the sources of authentic materials are practically limitless.

All areas of human activity result in products which can somehow be involved in the learning of a foreign language. Various authors have grouped and listed them. Examples of materials appropriate for teaching Business English include TV and radio commercials, interviews, the news, reality or other shows, films, documentaries, video clips, presentations, lectures, etc. This diversity and accessibility allows learners to find and bring their own materials they feel most relevant to their needs. Reading/Printed materials newspapers and magazines, specialized literature, newspaper ads, reports, photos, menus, brand logos, various reports, brochures, company documents and correspondence, transcripts of meetings, financial reports, agreements invoices, press releases etc. Realia, all kinds of real world and cultural objects fall into this group. They are generally used to illustrate some points made during the task based activities and thus make them more memorable.

The Internet is a wonderful resource for teachers of Business English. The Internet can enrich your lessons, provide you with authentic and up-to-date materials, and help you prepare for lessons as well as provide a fantastic opportunity for both your own research and that of your students. No matter how much experience or confidence you have in incorporating the Internet into your business English classes, you can take advantage of the benefits the Internet offers you at any level.

CONCLUSION

English is unquestionably the language of business and Business English, which is a variety of ESP, and shares a number of characteristics with General English, still differing in point of content; Business English is the English required when you do business; Business English became a topic to be taught distinctively in the late 60s and early 70s when it was already very clear for specialists that it was different from General English at least in point of vocabulary.

There have been four major influences over the last ten years with a great impact on the process of teaching and learning of Business English: the development of technology, new powerhouse economies, markets, financial sector. It seems that Business English is only a concept in Romania, thus teaching it is quite a challenging process.

The Business English teacher is primarily a language teacher and does not need to be an expert in any particular field of business, does not need a business background to succeed in teaching Business English. When used effectively, authentic materials help bring the real world into the classroom and significantly enliven the language class.

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