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## Surviving in an Unfamiliar Field: Strategies for ESP Teachers

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**Abstract:** The article introduces ESP (English for specific purposes) and highlights its significant role in teaching English in non-linguistic study fields in which specific areas such as business, law, medicine is the main focus. The writer recommends five strategies (identify learning objectives, apply needs assessment, use authentic materials, do self-study and be honest) that can be applied by English teachers if they want to survive in a new environment. As a result, already practicing ESP teachers or new teachers can use to manage their new ESP classroom and, in this way, assist students to become successful in their course.

**Key words:** strategies, course objectives, ESP, ESL, EFL

In recent years, it has become commonplace for ESL (English for specific purposes) teachers to teach English for specific purposes because of the increasing demand caused by most probably globalization. Interestingly, ESP teaching emerged in twenty first century when it became obvious that teaching General English does not meet the needs of students who are studying in different fields of study. However, teaching ESP is not easy for ESL (English as a second language) and EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers, so they need to be trained or at least follow guidelines that can lead to successful instruction of their students (Axmadjonov, 2018). ESP courses such as Business English, Legal English require teachers to command both the language and

the discipline they taught in required level. Among the most necessary steps can be conducting needs assessment, designing syllabus and developing instructional materials for new and intimidating courses.

English for special purposes differs from General English in that the students of "English for special purposes" courses can range from young adult to adults who speak English at a basic or advanced level and need to deepen their knowledge in the professional field. The main goal of the course participants is to study English to perform specific tasks directly related to professional activities (Axmadjonov, 2018).

Moreover, the course for the study of English for special purposes is based on the needs of students, covers the range of vocabulary and grammar that students need for a particular study field, for example, business communication - both verbally and in written form. The English course for special purposes mainly focuses on learning the language in context and using specific terminology. The areas of learning English for special purposes are not limited in any way, the main thing is desire, determination and engaging students with assessment (Becker, 2016).

It is obvious that teaching a language requires organized lesson plans, well thought instructional materials, and neat assessment criteria. However, in the case of ESP classes, course instructors ought to contribute more time and effort because it is not

solely about grammar or vocabulary. Responsible ESP teachers need to work hard in order to feel confident in the classroom.

The first and foremost step to be taken prior to teaching is *identifying student expectations to do course planning*. It is clear that teachers need to prepare materials for classes as it is their responsibility to give quality education so that students will successfully cope with their real-world tasks. Prior to the preparation of instructional materials, it is necessary to get course objectives because then lesson planning takes place. When developing a program for students in this course, we must first find out the needs of the group, find out why they need a language, in what areas they want to use it, what communication will dominate: oral or written. The basis of the English language course for special purposes is, first of all, the wishes of students and their needs. This course has a direct practical focus. Students approach the study of English through an area that they already know and relate to. This means that they are ready to apply the knowledge in real time in their professional activities. Interestingly, after completing the course, students continue to study English, as their occupation motivates them to communicate with foreign colleagues, read additional literature in English and acquire new knowledge. English language programs for special purposes are designed for people who want to achieve great success in their profession. For this, it is recommended that teachers get answer to these questions (Moorhead, 2020):

- a) How long will students study to achieve the course objectives?
- b) What are the students' weaknesses in specific purposes?
- c) Are reading, listening taught separately from writing and speaking in an ESP course?
- d) What are the objectives of the course? Do the objectives apply to all students (international, local) regardless of the education backgrounds?

e) Is the ESP course going to be taught as optional or mandatory?

f) What are the expectations of different stakeholders such as course administration, course instructors?

As soon as the answers to the questions are provided, teachers will have a broader understanding of students' expectations from the course and then they can turn to planning the course which is the crucial moment in the process.

Afterwards, teachers ought to collect as much information as possible about students in order *to conduct needs assessment*. For this, students may be asked to fill in a questionnaire and take diagnostic test prior to beginning of the lesson. It is preferable for teachers to ask their students to do it as early as possible. This is significant for teachers as data will tell much information about students' drawbacks in ESP course and this will lead to making necessary modifications to lesson plans. This process is quite essential because student's education and learning styles differ from one another and teachers will have tailor instructional materials accordingly. Some may have been working in a particular specific purpose and they want to learn from the course. Another may just have started studying for example, business English (Moorhead, 2020).

In order to immerse students into the real situations where the language is employed, *use of authentic materials for ESP classroom* is a must. Additionally, teachers can obtain course textbooks from a library to prepare for lessons, they can pull out some terminology from the coursebook that are challenging for students. Reading authentic sources such as publications in the field that they are teaching, for example, The Economist, The Financial Times, The Science magazines is the most crucial practice to experience real life situations. BBC online resource is another very useful website that publishes up-to-date news in any field. Students can also be assigned to read articles from authentic sources. While reading they can pull out field specific vocabulary and then they can be involved in

classroom activities like jigsaw in which they share information from an article.

It is a good idea that instructors do not make an expert out of themselves as some students are involved in the field for a long time and it gives teachers a chance *to utilize the students' knowledge and experience* during the classes. Collaboration with relevant people around can be beneficial to cope with problems that teachers may encounter in the classroom. They can be lawyers, medical personnel, business people and people working in other fields. Another most important thing is to attempt to find resources such as textbooks, instructional materials that students' make use of to study for core subjects. English teachers can use them to learn more about students' needs. This will help teachers prepare well for English classes. Last but not least, professors of a certain subject area can be contacted to consult to talk about students' strengths or weaknesses and interests. Besides, English teachers can participate in lectures or tutorials to observe students and the content they are being taught. All of this will be useful for teachers if they really determine to do them. Consequently, they probably feel more comfortable in their ESP classroom (Moorhead, 2020).

We hypothesize that the one of the solutions to this pressing problem connected with ESP teaching is to introduce *an interdisciplinary approach* using interdisciplinary theory. The interdisciplinary approach will help to synthesize and combine knowledge from different disciplines with the collaboration of teachers to develop tasks that simulate real-world work functions. Applying interdisciplinary theory can solve the following challenges: By studying one object from the perspective of another field, you can find information about new properties of the object of study. Interdisciplinary theories that combine teaching English with other specialties are applied and implemented in the curriculum. The successful introduction of the specialization details of English courses for specific purposes is possible based on an

interdisciplinary approach (Maletina et al., 2015). Many scientists made their contribution to the development of the theory of interdisciplinary studies which is worth mentioning since these ideas are the useful to be studied by ESP teachers.

It is advisable that teachers tended to be honest with students at the very beginning of the course. They should tell students that they are not a business person, a lawyer, or an economist who is expert in the fields of economy, business or law. Learners should know that you do not have to know everything about a subject area. They should know that you are an English teacher who knows basics of business, medicine which is enough to teach ESP, manage and guide students.

It is totally fine when teachers cooperate with students in explaining some key specific purposes terms. This is a win-win for both sides. Making it clear for students that teachers are there to guide not to give expertise knowledge will ease the tension before it gets worse. This cooperation may work in the way that teachers will often times assess students' English language ability and students can assist teachers in assessing their specific purposes knowledge (Moorhead, 2020).

In conclusion, foreign language teaching is not an easy job since teachers need to be trained. English for specific purposes, on the other hand, as a separate discipline may cause more challenges for ESL/EFL teachers. Thus, they need to spend more time and make significant contributions to manage classroom and lead students to better learners.

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