

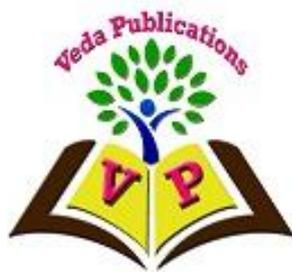


ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY: A GATEWAY TO THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD

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ABSTRACT



In a real communicative context, a professional plays dual roles such as speaking and listening to make his or her communication effective. Often, students with great desire to accomplish join professional courses. But their struggles begin at a very initial stage with the medium of language in which inputs are provided to comprehend and perform tasks. Conceptualizing with the help of English language becomes an arduous task. As a result, they develop low self-esteem, self-confidence, enthusiasm and feeling of inadequacy. This has also resulted in increased number of truants, dropouts and deviants. Among many professionals there is zeal to learn but the frustration that arises due to language barriers cripples their hope. What they lack is accuracy, lexis, pronunciation and fluency. A number of times they cannot sense the cultural ethos a profession requires from them due to their strong emotional attachment and bonding to their mother tongue.

In India, the interest to learn English language is deep-rooted and wide spread. It has become a link language for national and international commerce, diplomacy, education, fashion, government, industry, politics, science, technology and so on. Knowledge of English language in professional life is not just the country's window on the world but has invariably become highway to the IT and other job markets.



We need to have a holistic approach to communicative competence specifically, speaking skills. We need to focus on language learners cognitive, affective (or emotional) and social needs as we facilitate them to develop speaking skills because language is not just a cognitive, but also a social process which includes three primary factors namely, teachers, materials, and learners. It is very obvious that much of the learning takes place through the spoken language and mainly through the medium of English; the ability to speak and listen in the language of instruction will greatly facilitate students' participation in class and the learning of the subject matter. To speak in English, second language learners have to develop various pragmatic competencies. They need to know how to initiate and maintain conversations, to sustain group discussions, describe feelings and give reasons in an acceptable manner and ask for more information or assistance.

A lot of research work has been published in recent years in journals which focus on the socio-cultural and academic needs of students rather than their language needs despite the fact that it has been a significant barrier faced by the majority of professional students. Unfortunately, little attention has been paid to the language needs of professional students who are non-native speakers of English or those with English as a second language.

Research in ESP between 2000 and 2015 has been carried out in areas like needs analysis, syllabus design, testing and teacher training. Therefore what needs to be done is to explore the extent to which the teaching objectives mentioned in the syllabus are realized in an English classroom of a professional college, the extent to which the English Language Skills (LSRW) are taught in an English classroom of a professional college and the competence and the knowledge of theories of learning required of an English teacher to carry out a specialized syllabus designed for a specialized group and the actual competence of English Language teachers in a professional college. In addition, the possibility of utilizing texts which corroborate the language used in day-to-day affairs, as well as the use of context specific content to improve linguistic and communicative competence in English among

professional students from multi-cultural and multi-linguistic backgrounds .

ESP is the need of the hour. It is empowering learners through communicative skills to accomplish and produce optimum productivity. Globalization has definitely paved way to a larger extent in the growth of ESP. Furthermore, it has developed an intrinsic desire to communicate well in the work place which is extremely competitive and strenuous. Lack of communicative competence may instill fear among many professionals to express. Poor communicative competence could be attributed as a major reason for poor performance and lack of success.

The purpose of ESP is to learn the language and relate directly to what the learners need to do in their profession. The key purpose of teaching ESP to the students according to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) is to "meet the needs of the learner, it makes use of the underlying methodology and the activities of the discipline it serves, and it is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register) skills discourse and genres appropriate to these activities." According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) the simple way to understand ESP would be 'language facilitates a speaker to get things done according to one's wish and desire.' English for Specific Purposes focuses on the specific communicative needs of particular professional or occupational groups and it has emerged out of Halliday, Mackintosh and Strevens's (1964) work on 'The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching'. The growth of ESP was influenced, on the one hand, by socio-political aspects such as US leadership after the Second World War which contributed to the fact that English was considered the lingua franca of commerce, medicine, technology and business; on the other hand, it was influenced by the new linguistic trends and communicative theories on language. The two important characteristics which are axiomatic are the sense of purpose and the sense of vocation in which application of the language is paramount. It enables the language to work on immediacy and relevance which may not be so in other branches of ELT since ESP has been realized in an era of globalization and English has become a link language.

In professional colleges, vocational learning and training have made English language more



practical and application-oriented and also utility-oriented. General English enables a professional to perform a number of purposes in his or her daily life like to go shopping, to converse with other people at an informal level and focuses on the fundamentals of grammar, whereas, ESP develops confidence and optimum productivity. According to Tom Hutchinson and Allan Waters (1987), ESP can neither be considered as methodology nor does it have particular teaching material. It should be seen as an approach and not as a product which is based on learners need. The contextual use of language is more emphasized in ESP than grammar and language structures.

The dynamic and rapid growth of English as language of international communication paved way for its indispensable need in all spheres of life spreading downwards and upwards to people who had never needed English language before. It could be professionals, politicians, business class, nurses, site foremen, call center professionals and so on. Consequently, many organizations have started to offer ESP courses to enhance the communicative competence of their employees. The need and emphasis on learning ESP are greater than in the past. Every profession and vocation has different ways of thinking; different cultures and ethos are reflected in their need and use of English language. Such understanding plays a pivotal role in establishing and stressing the need of English for specific purpose so that the needs and the reason are incorporated while designing the curriculum. Analyzing the importance of the genre helps to understand the particular style and features related to a particular specialization. Because every profession has its own style, needs and dynamics with which it operates and functions effectively. It is against the backdrop of these observations that this paper assumes significance.

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