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ESP DEFINITIONS

Defining ESP has proven to be so problematic to researchers and "producing a simple definition of ESP is not an easy task" (Strevens, 1987:109). Through time, scholars provided different definitions of ESP.

According to Mackay and Mountford (1978: 2) "ESP is generally used to refer to the teaching of English for a clearly utilitarian purpose." That is to say, that English should be taught to achieve specific language skills using real situations, in a manner that allows them to use English in their future profession, or to comprehend English discourse related to their area of speciality. In the same vein Robinson (1991: 2) states that generally the students study English "not because they are interested in the English language or English culture as such, but because they need English for study or work purposes". Anthony (1997: 9-10) argued that "some people described ESP as simply being the teaching of English for any purpose that could be specified. Others, however, were more precise describing it as the teaching of English used in academic studies or the teaching of English for vocational or professional purposes". This denotes that, the role of ESP is to help language learners to build up the needed abilities in order to use them in a specific field of inquiry, occupation, or workplace.

In 2001 Richards states that ESP teaching aims are: preparing non-native speaking students for study in the English-medium academic context; preparing those already fluent or who have mastered general English, but now need English for specific usage in employment, such as engineers, scientists, or nurses; responding to the needs of the materials of English for Business Purposes; and teaching immigrants the English needed to deal with their job situations. Hence in ESP, "language is learnt not for its own sake   or for the sake of gaining a general education, but to smooth the path to entry or greater linguistic efficiency in academic, professional or workplace environments" Basturkmen (2006: 18).

All the above definitions (from 1978 to 2006) can be considered as common core, because they described ESP as teaching specific content and skills of English to specific group of learners aiming at communicating effectively in academic or vocational situations.

ESP is a recognizable activity of English Language Teaching (ELT) with some specific characteristics. Dudley-Evans and St. Johns' tried (1998) to apply a series of characteristics, some absolute and some variable, to outline the major features of ESP.

Absolute Characteristics:

1. ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners;
2. ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;
3. ESP is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genre appropriate to these activities.

Variable Characteristics:
1. ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
2. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English;
3. ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level;
4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students.

5.Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems, but it can be used with beginners.

(Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998:4)

It is obvious that the absolute characteristics are specific to ESP because learners' needs are of central importance when designing language activities. Concerning the variable features, ESP courses can be designed for a specific group using definite teaching methodology, nevertheless, all learners' categories and

disciplines can be concerned with ESP. For that reason ESP should be seen simply as an 'approach' to teaching, or what Dudley-Evans and St. John illustrate as an 'attitude of mind'. Similarly, Hutchinson and waters' (1987:19) stated that, "ESP should properly be seen not as any particular language product but as an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning".

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