

Historical Review of Business English as a Part of English for Specific Purposes

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Abstract

This article considers Business English and its emergence in research papers. It explains why Business English is considered to be a part of English for Specific Purposes and gives definition of Business English and English for Specific Purposes. However, the article's main purpose is to investigate research on how Business English developed, how it is represented now and future prospects of Business English within the framework of English for Specific Purposes.

Keywords: Business English, English for Specific Purposes, historical review

Introduction

Language represents one of the main means of communication between people. However it never stays invariable, undergoing changes and experiences development in accordance with the changing patterns in communication and relationship within people. These facts can easily be revealed by the historical research of the language and the scientific works. Complete historical research of any language is really hard as language is complex and difficult. The focus of this research is business English, its appearance and development in research papers and its prospects in future.

Business English can be variably defined depending on the scope the researcher is examining. The term is broad and it represents every linguistic aspect used in business activities, in oral or in written form; these are vocabulary used in business, trade, finance and international relations, typical business communication skills such as presentation, negotiations, meetings, correspondence or report writing. Due to its specific character it is considered to be "a part of English for Specific Purposes and can be considered a specialism within English language learning and teaching" (Business English)

Many scientists have tried to formulate exhaustive explanation of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). However, it appeared to be quite difficult. According to Swales, ESP is a subdivision of a wider field, Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), which is defined as: "...the area of inquiry and practice in the development of language programs for peo-

ple who need a language to meet a predictable range of communicative needs." (Swalws, 1992)

Dudley-Evans and John distinguish absolute and variable characteristics of ESP and offer us the definition of ESP as follows:

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 centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre.*

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."* (Dudley-Evans, John, & Jo, 1998)

This definition shows that ESP is not necessarily concerned with a specific discipline, nor does it have to be

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aimed at a certain age group or ability range. It should be seen simply as an 'approach' to teaching, or what Dudley-Evans describes as an 'attitude of mind'.

It is really interesting to note the emergence of ESP in the scientific research. According to Ann Johns' historical review, ESP presents at least three problems. The first is where to begin, since ESP has a long history. Ann Johns and other experts agreed that 1960s is the crucial period for several reasons. First, John Swales started the movement history in his *Episodes in ESP* from 1960s. Another reason is the industrialization which demanded the broad usage of the language for the specific purposes and required the communication of the people connected with similar occupation or interests. Moreover, growth of science and technology advanced ESP appearance in historical sources. That generated appearance of ESP courses and different approach towards ESP – it was considered as unique type of language worth further analysis and study.

The second problem seems to be a lot of materials published in local or international journals. A lot of international organizations or research publications are actively involved in promotion of research on English for Specific Purposes. Among them should be mentioned the Latin American ESP community and ESP journals in Brazil, Asian ESP journals and the European Association of language for specific purposes and so on. Due to the variety and enormous amount of works it is really hard to define which researcher to use and cite.

The third problem that confronts the reviewer is making clear distinctions between research and practice. ESP is assumed to be the practitioners' movement at its core devoted to establish the needs and relevant discourse features for a targeted group of students. As Johns notes, the majority of works in the journals were devoted to pedagogical issues with only a few dedicated to purely research matters. (Johns, 2013)

Business English as part of English for Specific Purposes has emerged in the research papers relatively late as the main focus of ESP were English for Academic Purposes and the English for Science and Technology. That happened due to the development of science and technologies in 1950s or earlier. However, English for Academic Purposes implied two broad branches, such as: English for general purposes and English for Specific Purposes. The latter implied the elements of business English and were united under the umbrella term – English for Business Purposes. The early researches are mainly focused on teaching and discussing of English under the term – Business for Occupational Purposes, which meant that this field is very narrow and concentrates on the occupation and its fulfillment. The language here is used as the mean of communication to order

and receive something important. However, the research papers are mainly focus on the written language as at that time a few personal meeting opportunities were possible. The letters were mainly simple with avoidance of ambiguity. Gradually, the perfection of business partnership advances the personal interaction and that emerged more researches dedicated to negotiations and meeting. However, according to Bargiela-Chiappini and Zhang "*early linguistic analyses of business negotiation and business meeting remained relatively isolated examples of empirical research in the use of English in Business. It was not until the 1990a that discourse analyses, contrastive ethnography, laid the foundation of a multimethod approach to "business discourse"*". (Bargiela_Chiaappini & Zhang, 2013)

It is important to clarify the implication of the umbrella term of Business English. Business English defined as the mean to meet specified needs of learners and the communication among businesses implies two subdivisions. They are English for General Business Purposes and English for Specific Business Purposes. Their former Purposes is dedicated to pre-experienced learners, who study business English but have not defined the specific field of their activities yet, English for Specific Business Purposes is mainly devoted to job experienced learners who are qualified in their field and need improvement in language to advance.

The interest of the job-experienced learners is considered by the discourse makers and book publishers. They even conduct surveys to investigate the interest and the needs of the learners and to create the books and discourse in accordance of their demands. One of the most interesting surveys was conducted by Global English in 2010. According to them more than 26,000 subscribers from 152 countries were participated in the survey. The subscribers were asked a range of questions, with three of them of particular interest.

The first asked about the importance of knowledge of the English language in their current jobs. 74% of respondents answered that English is required. 18% said it is important and only 1% said it is not important now or in the future.

the next question concerned the frequency of usage of English in their jobs. 55% said that they used English daily to do their job. That is 6-7% more compared to the results of the survey conducted in 2007 by Global English.

The third question deals with knowledge of English language and its role in promotion at a company. 69% said that English is required to get promotion, while 24% answered that it is important. (GlobalEnglish, 2010)

The survey shows that Business English is demanded and interest toward the language is increasing. Moreover, since the 1990s a lot of international researchers have been interested in business English, which they examine from

various angles. In Europe, a group of Scandinavian scholars established themselves as proponents of a discourse-based approach to business practices, especially intercultural negotiations. Australian researchers analyzed intercultural interactions in the workplace and business negotiations while in New Zealand a large collection of recordings from institutional and organizational settings were accumulated. In the UK the possibility of a multidisciplinary approach to the study of business meetings as organizational phenomena was first documented in 1994.

English not only unites the people completely unknown to each other, it is also the language which unites the researchers and makes them think differently which leads to the development of the science and discovery of new things. One of the reasons that makes scientists think and rethink their investigations is the changing world with the new style of life and increased demands. The process that unites people more and that requires lingua franca or a bridge language among the different people is globalization. Globalization, the worldwide movement toward economic, financial, trade and communication integration, emerged the need of communication especially for the business people as normally they are greatly interested in expanding their business across the borders of their own country. The need of global communication set the importance of the existence of a language understandable to all individuals involved in business. Modern business and communicational development revealed that English was used widely to enable business partners to communicate effectively. However, it appeared that General English is not the best means to improve business communication so at the beginning of the 20th century the narrow branch of language appeared to be more sophisticated for the business communication that was later termed Business English. A lot of writers have dedicated their works to business English since the beginning of the 20th century providing the certain rules and the special patterns for perfect usage of the Business English language. The aim of their work was to give ready-made linguistic formulas for individuals to avoid misunderstanding in business communication. As the field of Business English evolved, linguistic formulas were adjusted to adapt to particular worldviews and cultures.

These adjustment entailed alteration of the language patterns recommended for the business environment usage. Modification of adopted and understandable linguistic formulas became the subject of examination, investigation and study among scientists. Firstly, they tried to study and collect those variations; secondly they examined the accessibility of those changes to different business environment and finally they tried to explain the causal reasons of business English alteration. Scientists consider that the main

reason is the cultural differences defined as the different perception of the world and the business partnership. Many scholars have used journals, organizations and activities to promote researches on the relation of Business English to culture. A lot of interesting discoveries were made and more are expected.

Future of Business English, within the framework of ESP, seems likely to grow and flourish. It is vital to understand the essence of English for Specific Purposes and the role Business English in the development of this field. It is evident that many institutions offer special courses to young people in order to improve their abilities. However, more active actions and sophisticated multidisciplinary approaches towards Business English and English for Specific Purposes will encourage the researchers to get closer and to share their investigation with the community interested in the same field that will definitely lead to the new openings. Globalization will continue to fuel new demands and promote new visions not only towards of Business English but of the language itself.

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