

## TEACHING GRAMMAR IN ESP CLASSES

**Lindita Skenderi**

University of Tetovo, Tetovo, Republic of Macedonia, [lindita.skenderi@unite.edu.mk](mailto:lindita.skenderi@unite.edu.mk)

**Suzana Ejupi**

University of Tetovo, Tetovo, Republic of Macedonia, [suzana\\_e2007@hotmail.com](mailto:suzana_e2007@hotmail.com)

**Abstract:** English for Specific purposes is a widely used branch of linguistics which is taught as separate subject in different schools and universities. It is known with the abbreviation ESP. Much is known about ESP generally, but little is known about how much grammar is included in the textbooks aimed for ESP teaching and learning. There are often textbooks published and used in those classes, but grammar is not presented enough in those materials. This paper aims to show that when there is not enough material for teaching grammar in ESP, the teachers should improvise or create some kinds of exercises to fill the gap. These examples shown below are authors' ideas for few grammar units such as present tense, conditionals and past simple tense. These exercises are more attractive for the learners because they are different from the standard books. This is especially important with the young generations which are somehow bored by being slaves of the books. The paper does not include all branches of ESP but covers only few of them. The authors give definitions of ESP, as part of a literature review and then the examples given start with Business English. Besides, the paper includes other examples of video and text exercises for Medical English and English for Arts.

**Keywords:** ESP, grammar, exercises, books

### INTRODUCTION

English for Specific purposes is a branch of applied linguistics which is aimed for learners of specific fields. It is known with the abbreviation ESP. It usually refers to ways of teaching English to university students with curricula compatible to their study programs. It is also taught to people who are already employed and need to learn English specifically for their job. The programs include necessary and particular vocabulary and skills. As such, it could be in hand of those who need it strictly for different domains such as: medicine, science, arts or any other field. Globalization has enhanced the need of speaking English as a passing-visa to a more successful career for every profession. But, where are the roots of ESP? Initially, there has been a branch of language for specific purposes (LSP) which “can be traced as far back as the Greek and Roman empires” (Dudley-Evans and ST Johns, 1998). Regarding English for Specific Purposes as it is used today (ESP), it appeared around the end of Second World War and researchers claim that it was some kind of phenomenon grown out of language learning trends, and it was not really planned to be developed. According to researchers, ESP has found ways to operate in diverse forms, but there are three main reasons seen as the ones which made ESP emerge at the time that it did. These reasons are the needs and demands of a brave world, undoubtedly a revolution in the field of linguistics and the most important one: the focus on the learner. The last one is still the stamp of the ESP of today's world. The focus on the learner and his needs are basically the elements that keep ESP so attractive not only for the learners themselves but for language researchers as well.

### DEFINING ESP

Various definitions have been given about ESP by researchers of the language field. For example, Falas (2016), claims that “As any other kind of language teaching, English for Specific Purposes is first and foremost based on the process of learning, a process which nevertheless addresses the needs of certain communities of learners, namely individuals interested in acquiring some professional skills and performing jobrelated practices”(1). While Chmel defines ESP as “The field of English for Specific Purposes comprises efficient, intensive and scientifically grounded subject oriented on the development of professional communicative competence of engineering students”. Chilingaryan (2014) states that ESP has absolute and variable characteristics. Meeting specific need of the learner through grammar, lexis, discourse are in the first group. The variable ones are connected to specific teaching situations designed differently from learning general English. The absolute characteristics of ESP are:

- meet specific needs of the learners;
- the used methodology serves to the specific discipline;

- the focus is centered on the language

On the other hand, Belcher (2006) indicates that it is required willingness by the part of the teachers, because the ESP approach in fact sometimes represents an area of unfamiliar domains. Besides being lectured for strict programs, ESP is also part of curriculums in almost every university, depending on the program where it is included. The main purpose is preparing specialists in fields of different backgrounds. However, ESP is also promoted by organizations and companies which organize courses meant to improve and enhance the level of English of their employees. Those courses prepare the employees for different professional situations which can help the successful building of the company. Since it is a specifically designed curriculum, teaching ESP carries some challenges in the way how it is delivered to the learners. One of the challenges is undoubtedly teaching grammar to ESP students. Scholars and teachers have worked and researched on this issue and of course there are some fruitful and important suggestions and ways how to teach grammar in the classes aimed for specific use of language. Teachers sometimes find it unnecessary to pay too much attention to the grammar, and that is also seen the same way by students too. Teaching reading, writing or focusing on building and enriching vocabulary is not the only way of teaching ESP successfully, let alone not the best one.

Grammar is a difficult part of the language learning process and this is probably accepted by teachers and students too. However, according to DeKeyser (2005) there are some factors which play a role in its difficulty. Those are the complexity of: meaning, form and the relationship between form and meaning. Grammar is the part which in fact gives ESP learners the way how to understand the meaning of the sentences, or how to properly use the vocabulary they learn in their ESP classes. It has always been a topic of discussion the issue whether grammar is needed or not in ESP classes. Moreover, the discussions have continued on how or how much grammar should be taught to ESP learners. Chen, states that grammar is mainly concerned with the structure of a language and it also contributes to producing sentences. He believes that the ability to perform language skills as reading, speaking, listening and writing joined with grammar knowledge is very much needed in teaching ESP.

It is easy to say that if grammar is presented in meaningful context, in areas that are part of the learner's interest or are an attractive topic, but is that true and really in hand of ESP teachers?

In order to make it attractive, teaching ESP should be based on creative ideas planned by the teachers which will make the classes more acceptable and easier to remember. Onofreiet al.,(2012) suggest reinforcement of all the stages in the teaching order, starting from the warm up, lead in, pre and post translation part, and follow up assignments. They point out that "suggestopedia" could be an attractive way how to introduce a grammar part which should be taught. Suggestopedia is one of famous approaches in learning a foreign language, which was developed by the Bulgarian psychotherapist Lozanov. According to him, using this approach learner can acquire a foreign language three to five times quicker than through any other method or approach.

When it comes to these modern approaches, it should be mentioned that including video materials and visual elements can help a lot in offering a relaxed and more acceptable way of learning grammar. In this respect, videos are worldwide multimedia tools that include visual and audio content. The contents of videos are creative and offer diversity. They can arouse interest in learners and also make them curious. Chmel, states that videos are a very important tool for teaching ESP but they are at the same time a little bit underestimated. He claims that using videos in teaching can play different roles and it should be seen as a tool which "It drives active learning in the class, stimulates hearing and visual sensors which, in its turn, increases attention and trains memory, helps to master language skills of students and, consequently, build the learners' self-confidence.

At this point, it is very important to mention that technology use in the classroom is unavoidable and therefore teachers should find ways how to incorporate it in their classes in order to achieve quicker and better goals.

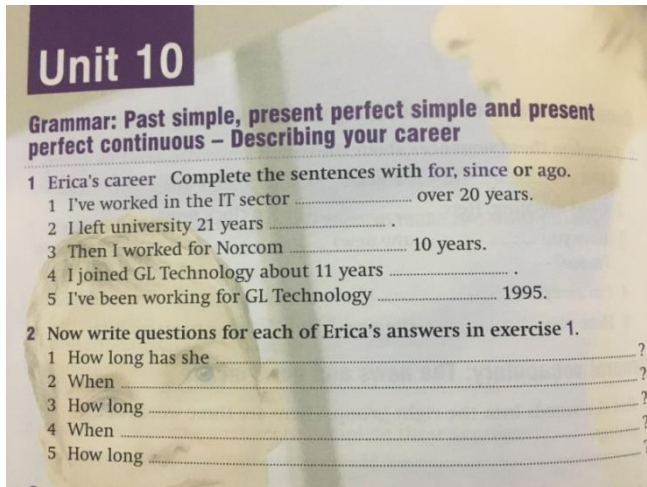
Besides all, Pop and Berariu, (2015) claim that "Despite being considered obsolete, grammar teaching/learning has given generations of fluent foreign language speakers, although some methods such as the teaching of sets of rules failed to make more fluent speakers and writers and were, therefore, discontinued" (76). The material that follows presents some examples how to teach grammar in ESP classes, in cases when there is material provided and when there is nothing ready given to introduce grammar-wise.

### **BUSINESS ENGLISH**

Business English is probably one of the most needed and spread program of ESP. When it comes to books and materials, this part of ESP has a lot to offer. Top world publishers like Oxford University Press, Cambridge Press and Pearson offer variety of books particularly for Business English. Such examples are Business Result and

ProFile. Initially, if learners of Business English should be introduced with present simple tense, it could start with asking them to describe their routines, whether daily weekly or monthly. Then they could be triggered to use words related to their field, such as meetings, CEO, secretary, documents even further professional vocabulary.

As there are many materials for Business English, it is just a matter of the curricula or the choice of the teacher which materials will be used in class. The following image is cropped from a booklet published by Cambridge, which is meant for Professional use.



It is a simple exercise about tenses in some sentences which are related to work and business. This is very easy for a teacher who doesn't have a lot of time to prepare for the class. But, it is not the most attractive way to teach a grammar lesson.

In order to have some more interesting activities in class, students could watch a short video of daily routine of a businessman, or a successful person. This would be a practice for their ears with a professional vocabulary and undoubtedly basic use of the tense they are expected to learn. Then, learners could be told that the lesson is about the specific tense and write on the table few of the sentences mentioned in the video. Those sentences are explained and more importance is given to main characteristics of the tense that they should

remember. Through the video, learners are not only indirectly introduced the lesson of the day, but they are one step closer to remembering what they have heard because of being digital presentation.

The image above is a screenshot from a motivational video about entrepreneurs. Many sentences are structured in present simple and also displayed in the screen besides being heard. This could be a very attractive and motivational way to use it in a grammar class of ESP learning. There is no better way how to grasp the attention of the learners through a video which is closely related to their future job. The initial sentence "What does it mean to be an entrepreneur" is itself written using present simple, and it could be further used to explain the characteristic of the changes in the third person singular. Another sentence used is "Only rare human beings have these qualities", and this, besides being motivational is easy to remember and learners register the use of have for plural, in this case the noun of "beings". For more, students can be asked to watch the video again and take notes of verbs that are in present and present them after watching the video for the first time. They could also be assigned homework to find similar videos online, and write few sentences about those videos using present simple, and present those in the upcoming class. In that way they are not directly engaged in boring grammar exercises, but finding grammar elements in materials related to their current job (if they are employed) or their future career (if they are students). It is obvious that there is a difference between these two types of presenting a specific material in front of the learners. The second one which includes the video requires more time to find it and relate to a grammar lesson. Busy teachers find it harder to prepare these extra materials, but when there are good results at the end of the assessment everything is worth the time and effort put in doing something.



### ENGLISH FOR MEDICINE/ MEDICAL ENGLISH

Another example of teaching tenses could be taken for learners of medical English. There are some kinds of books offered specifically for the field of Medicine, but most of them do not involve teaching grammar. What is more important, few of them emphasize that the aim of the coursebook is to help the development of communication. In these situations, the teachers design their own materials which will help them deliver the message to the students and achieve the objectives of the lessons. Due to lack of enough materials, there is again need of creativity. The following example is just a suggestion how to make an attractive entrance to a grammar lesson for students who study medicine. Since Grey's Anatomy is one of the most watched series all over the world, it is also known that is one of the favorite to the doctors. The image below is taken from a video on YouTube, where 10 short and emotional moments are taken of the movie. Some of those sentences could be used in introducing past simple tense.

As it could be seen in the image, one of the sentences is “You happened to me”, whereas the video contain other sayings used in the past simple tense such as “You took a piece of me” and “You died in my arms”. After watching the video, the learners can be asked about these three sentences and required to explain the tense used. Moreover, there is a very good way to introduce them to the past simple form of the regular and irregular ones. So, learners could see the difference between getting the suffix of -ed in the end, or changing completely from the root of the verb itself such:

- Happen-ed
- Die-d
- Take – took



Grey's Anatomy- Top Speeches

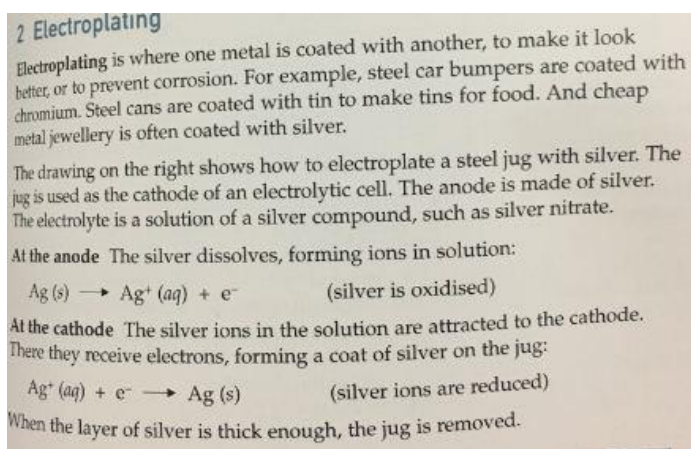
### English For Science

It was mentioned previously that grammar is hard and that is true, but some parts are a little bit harder than others. One of those is the Passive and active voice. That seems to be very hard to understand by most of learners of English as foreign language, and therefore some teachers pay very little or no attention at all in order to avoid lack of success. The following practical example is related to English for Science or more specifically Chemistry. The text below is scanned originally from a Chemistry book, published by Oxford University Press. It includes some sentences used in passive voice.

The following sequences are taken from the text and they are in passive voice.

- ...metal is coated
- ...car bumpers are coated....
- ...the jug is used....
- ...the anode is made of silver....
- ....attracted to the cathode....
- ....silver ions are reduced.....
- ....the jug is removed....

This paragraph in the book can be translated in the mother tongue of the learners, and then easily explained why and how passive is used. After that, students can be given another text from the same book, and asked to find passive sentences and turn them into active. It is the job of the teacher to analyze the book and find a suitable text where learners can really find passive sentences. Moreover, they should be able to make the





difference between active and passive sentences. If students of Chemistry are given a text about philanthropy or something they are not interested in, it will be very hard to catch their attention.

### **ENGLISH FOR ARTS**

University study programs in the field of Art also include English language as a course for students. Sometimes it can be an elective course, but sometimes it's mandatory. Even if it does not stand as ESP, only as English Language lecturers usually try to fit into the needs of the future artists. There are books offered particularly for this branch of English, but sometimes it is hard to get to them, especially when it comes to countries in the Balkan where it is complicated to order a book, let alone ask the students to buy books online. In that case, the teacher should find a way how to make the class more attractive when there is grammar to teach. It can't be said that it's easy, instead there is a lot of preparation needed. For instance, if the lesson is about Conditional clauses, more specifically Second Conditional a teacher can use a song in the classroom. Such example is the song of Beyonce titled "If I were a boy". The students can listen to the song in the beginning, and the lyrics should be shown on screen. After listening, they can be given worksheets with the lyrics of the song and some gaps which should be filled in after listening to the song again. The following lines are taken from the lyrics:

**If I were a boy - Beyonce**

Even just for a day  
I'd roll outta bed in the morning  
And throw on what I wanted and go  
Drink beer with the guys  
And chase after girls

**I'd kick it with who I wanted**

And I'd never get confronted for it  
Cause they'd stick up for me

**If I were a boy**

**I think I could understand**

How it feels to love a girl

**I swear I'd be a better man**

**I'd listen to her**

Cause I know how it hurts  
When you lose the one you wanted  
Cause he's taken you for granted  
And everything you had got destroyed

**If I were a boy**

**I would turn off my phone**

Tell everyone it's broken  
So they'd think that I was sleepin' alone  
I'd put myself first  
And make the rules as I go  
Cause I'd know that she'd be faithful  
Waitin' for me to come home  
To come home

The teacher can also ask the students to make combinations of the sentences in order to make it simpler. Such examples are:

- *If I were a boy, I would listen to her.*
- *If I were a boy, I'd put myself first.*

First of all, the song will make the class less boring. Plus, it is a song that is known and heard by most of the young students today. Of course not the whole song is written in second conditional but these sentences are easy to catch the main elements of this grammar part. For more, there are also songs where first or third conditional are used, so they could be taken as examples too. The main goal is to present the grammar part in the class in a more attractive way and easier to remember.

## CONCLUSION

Students or learners generally put emphasis on and pay great importance to learning grammar, but they should be informed that grammar is definitely not the most important aspect of language learning. This could be easily proven by few examples. There are a lot of people who know perfect rules of grammar but still can't understand much of spoken language. Also, little children who learn language from TV or communication prove that you don't really need grammar to learn a language. When language courses are focused exclusively on grammar it can be said that learners in fact are learning about English, not English. Communication is the key of a language, especially when it comes to ESP, that's why learners should be encouraged to use English even if they make mistakes. However, some instruction in grammar in ESP classes is necessary and sometimes unavoidable. Especially when it comes to written part, grammar rules help students to see their grammar errors and correct them. A lot of time and good focus is needed to prepare for grammar classes. One of the main points is to be sure that as a teacher you understand the structures that you plan to teach. This will make the presentation clear and understandable. An important thing is to make sure that your students are able to use the grammar they learn in class. A way to put this into practice is to use worksheets that include writing exercises with grammar practice requirements. Other ways mentioned in the above paragraphs above, and taken as examples are self-thought creative ideas which could be used in grammar ESP classes. Grammar has its own importance in language learning and this should not be neglected. It must be seen as an element which will serve as a "glue" between other skills learned and will give sense to the rest of language parts taught in any type of ESP classes. It is important for the teacher to be able to teach students that grammar is not going to cause them struggles but will serve to them and help them in different language learning situations.

## CITED WORKS

- [1] Belcher, D. (2004). Trends in teaching English for specific purposes. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 24, 165–186.
- [2] Chen, Zhaojun. "Grammar Learning Strategies Applied to ESP Teaching." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, Mar. 2016, pp. 617–621., doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0603.23.
- [3] DeKeyser, R. M. (2005). What makes learning second-language grammar difficult? A review of issues. *Language Learning*, 55(1), 1-25.
- [4] Dudley-Evans, T. and St Johns, M. J. (1998) *Developments in ESP a MultiDisciplinary Approach* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [5] Fălăuş A, 2017 IOP Conf. Ser.: Materials Science and Engineering, doi:10.1088/1757-899X/200/1/012059
- [6] Onofrei et al., *A challenge: teaching ESP in a creative manner* Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 70 (2013) 340 – 345
- [7] POP, Anisoara, and Cristine Berariu. "TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED GRAMMAR PRACTICE FOR ESP ." *Academica Science Journal Psychologica Series* , vol. 1, no. 6, 2015, pp. 76–83.
- [8] V.V. Chmel, USE OF VIDEO MATERIALS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES; УДК 81.271.12

Secondary sources:

- [1] "Grey's Anatomy- Top Speeches." YouTube. YouTube, 05 September 2016. Web. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mO78yhRQNdg>>.
- [2] " Entrepreneur [ the Self Made ] Epic Motivational Speech." YouTube. YouTube, 04 September 2015. Web. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3AkjzDHuWKM>>.
- [3] "Top 14 Judge Judy Quotes." YouTube. YouTube, 10 December 2016. Web. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UJ4eV3fC1I>>.
- [4] <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/beyonceknowles/ifiwereaboy.html>