

**ESP LANDMARKS: STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH  
TO LAW STUDENTS**



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## Preface

This book stemmed from the need to identify the landmarks and principles leading to the creation of a methodological framework for syllabus and course design in the broader field of English for specific purposes, with special emphasis on legal English.

Although I have designed 4 courses for law students and one course for civil servants so far, some time ago I felt the impetus to establish a theoretical context for my endeavours and practical approaches to legal English. And this is how *ESP Landmarks: Strategies for Teaching English to Law Students* came into being.

In order to achieve its main goal, i.e. presenting an *ESP* methodology, the book is divided into two main parts: *Theoretical Landmarks* and *Practical Issues*.

The first part, which prevails in terms of density and quantity of information, focuses on the coordinates of an *ESP* methodology, without neglecting practical elements. It consists of eight chapters:

In Chapter 1, *An Introduction to ESP*, English for specific purposes is defined as “a flexible discipline”, an enhancer of career opportunities, since it explores, *inter alia*, the students’ needs in terms of the language required and the learning context. This first chapter also pinpoints *ESP* features and makes an overview of the most important developments which have been noted in *ESP* research, dominated by a text/discourse analytic perspective.

Chapter 2, *A Methodology for Teaching ESP*, represents an attempt to answer the question ‘Is there a methodology for teaching *ESP*?’. Some argue that there is no such methodology, but others, with whom I agree, consider that specific *ESP* teaching has its own methodology which reflects and integrates the methodology of the disciplines and professions it serves. Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) insist that *ESP* methodology makes use of tasks and activities complying with the students’ specialist areas and their specialist knowledge.

The most complex chapter, the third, entitled *Designing ESP Materials*, discusses a wide range of issues: types of *ESP* materials, ‘problematic issues’ for *ESP* teachers, evaluation and selection of materials used in class, importance of authentic materials, etc. This chapter also analyzes notions like ‘communicative competence’ or ‘intercultural competence’ as key aspects in the teaching of foreign languages, and

provides a model for developing an ESP course in the context of a theory of needs analysis whose main purpose is generally seen as the designing of a curriculum which has to meet the needs of a particular group of learners.

Chapter 4, *Teaching Legal English: The Lexical Approach*, describes this kind of approach, for most teachers and researchers agree that teaching ESP means teaching specialist vocabulary. Aspects of synonymy, polysemy or homonymy, problems related to affixation or false friends which may bar communication and cause lexical vagueness are integrated in this chapter. It also provides a model for selecting words to be taught, with emphasis on the selection of legal terms and phrases.

*Strategies for Teaching Legal Vocabulary* is the fifth chapter, which includes a diachronic perspective on vocabulary teaching methods underlying different theories of learning. It is devoted to presenting and practising vocabulary techniques.

The role of grammar in teaching ESP is outlined in Chapter 6, *Teaching Grammar*. Unfortunately, time and syllabus constraints prevent teachers from paying much attention to grammar. However, there are researchers who think that grammar learning strategies should weigh more in ESP learning.

The main errors that students make in the process of learning legal English are captured and collected in Chapter 7, in the context of *A Theory of Error Analysis*.

The theoretical part ends with *Conclusions*, in the form of Chapter 8.

As a natural prolongation of the first part, Part II, entitled *Practical Issues*, focuses on practical aspects which add value to the theoretical framework dealt with before. The exercises meant to enlarge the legal vocabulary of the students also aim to engage critical thinking and enhance comparative knowledge of legal systems from the perspective of specialized lexis and different legal cultures. This part contains a brief glossary of legal terms under the name of 'Law terms everyone should know'.

I hope that students and all those who are in the position of teaching English for specific purposes, in particular English for legal purposes, will find this book useful first of all from a theoretical standpoint, which yet remains the basis for developing an analysis of practical aspects in the teaching process.

*The author*

# **PART I**

## **Theoretical Landmarks**





# Chapter 1

## AN INTRODUCTION TO *ESP*

### 1.1. Preliminary issues

A few decades ago, learners of English who wanted to progress were most probably offered courses on “advanced grammar, vocabulary building and an introduction to some at least of the classical authors of English and American literature” (Alcaraz Varó & Hughes, 2014: 1). The major role of English as *lingua franca*, as the international language of legislation, politics, trade, tourism, marketing, etc. was highly disregarded, especially in the universities. Even today, providing degree courses in modern languages that do not focus on the systematic study of the works of the consecrated authors, of the history of language or civilization seems much less important to some teachers. They seem to disagree with “what looks like the increasing Philistinism of the market-driven ‘global village’ so dear to entrepreneurs and university managers alike” (Alcaraz Varó & Hughes, 2014: 1). Back in the 1990s, in Romania, it was almost inconceivable to have a genuine academic career if one taught foreign languages at a faculty other than the Faculty of Letters.

This view was also common abroad, where some authors claimed that English for specific purposes introduced a change in status of English language teaching, “low priority in timetabling; lack of personal/ professional contact with subject teachers; lower status than subject teachers; isolation from other teachers of English doing similar work; lack of respect from students” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, in Sierocka, 2008: 37).

There might be a bent for exaggeration in these words, but fortunately, time has redressed the balance and now teaching ESP, for instance teaching English to law students, has turned into a pioneering, challenging and equally rewarding career.

Recent years have seen the expansion and popularity of Applied Languages degrees, which proves that a radical change has occurred in the role of universities. Translation studies have become indispensable. We have witnessed the evolution and enlargement of the European Union, the impact of its institutions, and consequently, the ever-growing number of degree courses providing both the modern languages component and modules on EU law, business studies, politics, international relations, to name just a few of the subject areas.

Given the prominence of English as the dominant world language of contemporary communication, the phenomenon of teaching English for specific purposes (ESP), also called English for special purposes (Richards & Schmidt, 2002: 186), or English for specialized purposes (Vizental, 2008: 132), or English for professional purposes, as some prefer to call it (Alcaraz Varó & Hughes, 2014: 2), has been inevitable. ESP has expanded to such specific areas as: English for academic purposes (EAP), English for occupational purposes (EOP), English for vocational purposes (EVP), English for medical purposes (EMP), English for business purposes (EBP), English for legal purposes (ELP), and English for sociocultural purposes (ESCP) (Belcher, 2009).

There is currently a trend to learn ESP as an enhancer of career opportunities, and ESP teachers enjoy a much higher status than a decade or two ago.

## **1.2. ESP definition and features**

### **1.2.1. ESP definition**

Since ESP seems “a flexible discipline”, different specialists have defined it differently (Javid, 2013: 139). There are as many definitions of English for specific purposes (ESP) as the number of linguists who have tried to define it, among which:

- an approach to English language teaching which is directed by specific reasons for learning (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 8)
- the teaching of English for clearly utilitarian purposes (Mackay & Mountford, 1978: 2)
- the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language where the goal of the learners is to use English in a particular domain (Ahmed, 2014:1).

Of these, the approach proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) has become widely known, especially due to its focus on students’ needs as the foundation of ESP in terms of the language required and the learning context (Sierocka, 2008:34).

Robinson (1980, in Javid, 2013) refers to ESP as the teaching of English to learners with specific goals and purposes: professional, academic, scientific, etc.

Strevens (1988) makes a distinction between four absolute characteristics and two variable characteristics of ESP. The absolute characteristics are:

1. designed to meet specified needs of the learner