Introduction

This book focuses on the teaching of English for specific purposes (ESP), which may be a new area within English language teaching (ELT) for you. In order to contextualize our discussion of ESP, the book starts by highlighting the key features of English for general purposes (EGP) and by indicating how ESP differs from it.

English for General Purposes (EGP)

As its name indicates, EGP relates to the mastery of English without any specific use being prioritized. The target to be reached in EGP is students' proficiency, and the focus lies on the development of their general communicative ability.

Several decisions are taken before EGP students enter the classroom. These can be made by governments (e.g., curricular guidelines), language institutes (e.g., identification of the content to be assessed), textbooks (e.g., their language foci), teachers (e.g., their decision of what to teach), and other stakeholders. However, students are not usually consulted; that is, they are not asked why they are learning English and what exactly they want to study, for instance. In some contexts, that is understandable: Asking 5-year-old children how they plan to use English in their lives might be beyond

their understanding. The same might not hold true in relation to adults, for example.

EGP curricula are frequently determined a priority—even before students enroll for these courses. Because of their emphasis on general language, EGP courses prioritize interactional and social texts (e.g., face-to-face conversations between two friends, phone exchanges to book a hotel), and they generally focus on the skills of speaking and listening (Hamp-Lyons, 2001).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- What do you know about ESP?

- How does it differ from other English lessons?

ESP does not aim at improving students' English proficiency indiscriminately. Instead, students are acknowledged as important stakeholders who have decided to study this language for particular reasons. After these reasons are mapped, we, as teachers, can help them reach their goals.

The gold standard in ESP is to allow students to use English to fulfill their needs (e.g., read a manual, write a dissertation, listen to a lecture, present a sales pitch). For example, there is little point in teaching writing to bus drivers in an ESP course. For these professionals, the skills of listening and speaking are probably the most important ones since they will have to interact with passengers (e.g., charge the fare), colleagues (e.g., negotiate their schedule), and police officers (e.g., ask for directions if they come across road diversions).

ESP curricula cannot be predetermined in a social/educational vacuum; they need to be prepared in response to specific contextual factors. The texts to be used in ESP courses are likely to differ widely even when the development of the same skill is being targeted. For instance, ESP writing courses vary depending on the target students: Accountants might need to study financial reports, journalists will need to learn about news stories, and lexicographers should specialize in the writing of dictionary entries. In sum, the texts to be used in ESP should relate to the tasks that the students have to undertake in their daily routines.

Types of ESP

The specific purposes in ESP are generally related to either one's profession or one's academic studies (Dudley-Evans, 2001; Spiro, 2013). The former is referred to as English for occupational purposes (EOP; e.g., English for call center operators, English for bank tellers, English for servers), and the latter is termed English for academic purposes (EAP; e.g., pre- and in-sessional English language support offered at universities where English is the language of instruction).

In this book, we equate ESP with EOP; our discussion centers on the English to be taught so that our students can perform their jobs. There are two reasons for this. First, although EAP is a type of ESP (i.e., the academic purposes being one of the possible special purposes), it has developed as a field of its own. Second, there already is a volume on EAP in this book series (see Kostka & Olmstead-Wang, 2015), which is relevant to those working with university-level students or with students who are planning to join/ return to university.

Even if an occupation is specified, there will never be a single ESP course suitable to all professionals in that area. Figure 1 illustrates this in relation to ESP courses in legal English. All of the courses presented in Figure 1 relate to one another, but they differ in their degree of specificity. For example, an ESP course on legal English would not only focus on the needs of solicitors but also have to cater for judges, barristers, attorneys general, directors of public prosecutions, and so on. An ESP course for novice solicitors (i.e., those entering the profession) would differ from one

| Legal English |
| English for solicitors |
| English for experienced solicitors |
| English for experienced solicitors at a specific legal firm |

Figure 1: From General to Specific ESP Courses

for students who already have considerable professional experience. In short, ESP courses can vary in their degree of specialism.

Teachers' and Students' Roles in ESP

While ESP teachers may have some understanding of the fields in which their students work, these teachers do not have to be knowledgeable in all of these fields. A degree in law or medicine is not required of teachers in ESP courses for lawyers or doctors.

In ESP, teachers' and students' roles are different but complementary. Teachers are the language education specialists; they know (about) English in addition to having pedagogical skills. Students, on the other hand, have some knowledge of their professional field (generally in their first language) and usually have a real motivation to learn the language (e.g., communicate with clients, read a manual, be promoted). It is not possible to generalize, however, whether they know English. Liu and Berger (2015) state that ESP students typically have an intermediate or advanced knowledge of English, but this is not always the case. We have been involved in the development of ESP courses where the target students—airline mechanics and bus drivers— had very basic knowledge of English (if any).

Given these profiles, a truly symbiotic relationship can be established in ESP courses. Teachers can learn with their students more about the latter's professional practices, while students can learn how to use English successfully at their workplaces. ESP can therefore be seen as a collaborative partnership where there is a real information gap and a communication need between teachers and students.

Materials in EGP and ESP Courses

One key difference between published EGP and ESP materials is that the former would generally be part of a textbook series while the latter would commonly be gathered in a single textbook. This relates to typical course length: EGP courses last longer than ESP courses. The brief duration of the latter relates to the pressures from the field where the students work—for example, they might need to learn English as soon as possible to be able to get their jobs done, and/or the course might be funded by the employer, who does not want to spend too much money on it.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Table 1 indicates the contents from the first two units of two textbooks. Study the table carefully and try to answer the following questions.

- Can you identify the EGP and the ESP book?

- Given our discussion so far, how do you justify your answers?

Table 1. Contents From Two Textbooks

Book	A		B	
Reference	Gomm & Hird (2001, p. 7)		MacKenzie (2008, p. 4)	
Unit	1	2	1	2
Topic	"Identity"	"Taste"	"The organization of the financial industry"	"Telephoning"
Skills — Speaking	• "Recognising famous people" • "Discussing what gives you your identity" • "Discussing an ambiguous situation & photographs" • "A telephone conversation" • "Anecdote: talking about your job, home town or family"	• "If you were a food . . ." • "Talking about food associations" • "Discussing good taste" • "Game: expanding sentences" • "Anecdote: describing your favourite restaurant"	• "Role play: Bank account terms and conditions"	• "Role plays: Arranging meetings, Asking for information"

continued on next page

Table 1. *(continued)*

Book		A		B	
Skills *(continued)*	Listening	● "People describing what gives them their identity" ● "Song: *My Girl* by Madness" ● "Boyfriend & girlfriend arguing on the telephone"	● "People talking about the food they associate with certain situations" ● "People describing food experiences abroad" ● "Friends discussing good taste"	● "The development of the financial industry; Going international"	● "Arranging meetings; Handling information"
	Reading	● "Extracts from *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* by John Gray" ● "A case of mistaken identity"	● "Article: a restaurant review"	● "Regulation and deregulation"	
	Writing	● "Writing about another student in the class"	● "Writing a restaurant review"		
Systems	Vocabulary	● "Vocabulary of personal values" ● "Word building"	● "Taste & its collocations"	● "Key vocabulary of banking products and services"	
	Grammar	● "Adverbials: types and position" ● "Phrasal verbs with objects"	● "Describing nouns" ● "Order of adjectives" ● "Test yourself: past tenses" ● "Fronting"	● "Permission, necessity and prohibition"	
	Pronunciation	● "Getting angry"	● "Expressing enthusiasm & reservations" ● "Expressions for agreeing & disagreeing"		● "Pronouncing the alphabet and saying telephone numbers"

Even without knowing the book titles (and we hope you did not cheat by looking up the references!), you probably realized that Book A is an EGP textbook—in this case, *Inside Out* (Gomm & Hird, 2001)—while Book B is an ESP textbook—namely, *English for the Financial Sector* (MacKenzie, 2008). Several features support our reasoning, some of which are summarized in Table 1.

Table 2 presents just one example of an ESP book. There is no recipe for what ESP materials should contain and how they should be organized. Their contents and structure are informed by the results of needs analysis, an important step in ESP design that is discussed in Chapter 2.

Table 2. Summary of Differences Between an EGP Textbook and an ESP Textbook

	EGP	ESP
Topics	General life (e.g., identity)	Specific to the occupation (e.g., financial industry)
Skills	Focus on all four skills	Selective emphasis (e.g., writing is not dealt with in the first two units)
Texts	Interactive, social, and informal (e.g., discussions, telephone conversations, introductions, arguments)	Informative (e.g., financial industry development), transactional (e.g., arrangements), and formal (e.g., professional and customer)
Language content	General knowledge of English (e.g., adverbials, order of adjectives)	Key aspects needed for the target professionals (e.g., words related to banking products/services)
Activities	Games, anecdotes, songs	Role-plays

Next Chapters

This introduction focused on the differences between ESP and EGP to help you more fully understand the former. The following five chapters focus solely on ESP. Chapter 2 introduces you to needs analysis, the first step in the development of any ESP course. It details what information you should gather and how you can do so. Chapter 3 explains the concept of genre and illustrates how you can engage in genre-based teaching. Consideration is then given to specialized vocabulary in Chapter 4, which discusses pedagogical matters such as what words/expressions need to be learned, how

these can be taught, and how students can develop their lexical knowledge independently. Chapter 5 deals with corpus linguistics, an area that has been the center of attention in ESP (cf. A. M. Johns, 2012). Based on real-life language use, corpus investigations provide ESP teachers with useful patterns to teach in their classes. The sixth and final chapter briefly summarizes the main topics discussed in this book and indicates how you may develop your ESP learning in pedagogical and research terms.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

As you explore the following chapters, keep asking yourself whether/how the suggestions presented in the book

- relate to your experience as an English language teacher, and

- can be implemented in your own teaching context.