

Областью применения экспертных методов являются преимущественно задачи долгосрочного планирования, прогнозные задачи с неформализуемой информацией и задачи верификации прогнозов.

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UDC 8

## THE ROLE OF LEARNING VOCABULARY IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

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#### Abstract

In the contemporary world, proficiency in English has become a vital asset across various domains. The role of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has gained prominence in higher education, where students are required to attain language skills tailored to their particular fields of study or professional aspirations. ESP serves as a bridge that connects learners with the language demands of their disciplines, making vocabulary development a crucial component of this educational approach. A well-developed vocabulary not only enhances communication but also deepens comprehension, allowing students to express their ideas with precision and confidence. The article explores the lexical approach in ESP and its significance in vocabulary teaching, the types of vocabulary, including technical and semi-technical terms, as well as the Academic Word List (AWL). It also discusses different vocabulary learning strategies and technology, which enhanced vocabulary for ESP students.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes, lexical approach, Academic Word List, chunking and collocations, metacognitive/cognitive strategies, vocabulary acquisition.

## РОЛЬ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ СЛОВАРЯ ПО АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ ДЛЯ СПЕЦИАЛЬНЫХ ЦЕЛЕЙ

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### Реферат

В современном мире знание английского языка стало жизненно важным фактором в различных областях. Роль английского языка для специальных целей (ESP) приобрела популярность в сфере высшего образования, поскольку студенты должны овладеть языковыми навыками, адаптированными к их специальностям. ESP служит мостом, который связывает учащихся с языковыми требованиями их дисциплин, делая развитие словарного запаса важнейшим компонентом этого образовательного подхода. Хорошо развитый словарный запас не только улучшает общение, но и углубляет понимание, позволяя учащимся выражать свои идеи точно и уверенно. В данной статье исследуется лексический подход в ESP и его значение в преподавании лексики, виды лексики, включая технические и полутехнические термины, а также академический список слов (AWL). В ней также обсуждаются различные стратегии изучения словарного запаса, а также технологии, которые увеличивают словарный запас учащихся ESP.

**Ключевые слова:** английский для специальных целей, лексический подход, академический список слов, деление слов на блоки и словосочетания, метакогнитивные/когнитивные стратегии, расширенный с помощью технологий словарный запас, овладение словарным запасом.

### Introduction

In our increasingly globalized world, we've come to recognize the pivotal role of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in various professional fields. As educators and learners, we often ask ourselves why learning vocabulary is important in ESP. The answer lies in the fact that specialized vocabulary forms the backbone of effective communication in specific domains, be it business, medicine, or engineering. This targeted approach to language learning has an impact on how professionals interact, collaborate, and succeed in their respective fields.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a unique approach to language teaching that focuses on meeting the specific needs of learners in various professional fields. We recognize that ESP has a significant impact on how professionals communicate and succeed in their respective domains. Unlike general English courses, ESP has a more targeted and practical approach to language learning. The primary objective of ESP courses is to equip learners with the language skills they need to function effectively in their professional environments. We aim to provide students with the tools they need to communicate efficiently and accurately within their chosen fields. This

approach enhances the relevance of what students are learning, enabling them to apply their knowledge immediately in their work or studies [1].

Some key goals of ESP courses include:

- to prepare students to read and understand field-specific materials in English;
- to familiarize students with technical terms relevant to their profession;
- to develop target performance competencies;
- to teach underlying knowledge specific to the field;
- to foster critical awareness and strategic competence.

ESP courses are built on a thorough assessment of learners' needs and the functions for which English is required in their professional context. This needs-based approach allows us to tailor the course content and methodology to meet the specific objectives of our students [2].

### **Differences from general English**

ESP differs from general English in several important ways:

**Learner profile.** ESP students are typically adults who already have some knowledge of English and are learning the language for specific professional purposes. In contrast, general English learners may have varying levels of proficiency and motivations for learning the language [2].

**Content focus.** While general English covers a broad range of topics, ESP concentrates on language in context, focusing on the specific field or discipline of the learners. This targeted approach allows students to apply what they learn in their English classes directly to their main field of study [2].

**Language skills emphasis.** In general English, all four language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) are usually given equal importance. However, in ESP, the emphasis on different skills is determined by the needs analysis of the learners. For example, an ESP course for business administration students might focus more on developing reading skills, while a course for aspiring tourist guides might prioritize spoken skills [2].

**Authenticity of materials.** ESP courses often use authentic materials such as textbooks, articles, and videos that are directly relevant to the learners' field. This approach helps students engage with real-world content and terminology specific to their profession [3].

**Methodology.** ESP employs a more practical and goal-oriented methodology compared to general English. We often use task-based and communicative language teaching methods to help learners develop the specific language skills they need in their professional contexts [3].

By understanding these key differences and objectives, we can better appreciate why learning vocabulary is important in ESP. The specialized nature of ESP requires a focused approach to vocabulary acquisition, ensuring that learners can effectively communicate within their chosen fields. This targeted vocabulary development is crucial for professional success and forms an essential part of ESP curriculum design.

### **The Lexical Approach in ESP**

The lexical approach has gained significant attention in recent years as an alternative to grammar-based approaches in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This method focuses on developing learners' proficiency with lexis, which includes words and word combinations. We believe that an essential part of language acquisition is

the ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases as unanalyzed wholes, or “chunks”. These chunks become the raw data by which learners perceive patterns of language traditionally thought of as grammar.

In ESP, we recognize the importance of lexical items in effective communication. The lexical approach makes a distinction between vocabulary-traditionally understood as a stock of individual words with fixed meanings and lexis, which includes not only single words but also word combinations that we store in our mental lexicons. This approach has an impact on how we teach and learn specialized vocabulary in ESP contexts.

### **Principles of lexical approach**

The key principle of the lexical approach is that “language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar”. (Michael Lewis, 1993) This means that lexis plays a central role in language teaching and learning. We emphasize that language production is the piecing together of ready-made units appropriate for particular situations. Comprehension of such units depends on knowing the patterns to predict in different contexts.

In ESP, we focus on relatively fixed expressions that occur frequently in spoken language within specific professional fields. For example, in business English, we might teach phrases like “I’ll get back to you on that” or “Let’s schedule a meeting to discuss this further”. By learning these chunks, ESP students can communicate more effectively in their professional environments.

To implement the lexical approach in ESP, we use various activities to develop learners’ knowledge of lexical chains. These include:

- intensive and extensive listening and reading in the target language;
- first and second language comparisons and translation carried out chunk-for-chunk, rather than word-for-word-aimed at raising language awareness;
- noticing and recording language patterns and collocations;
- working with dictionaries and other reference tools;
- working with language corpora created for use in the classroom or accessible on the Internet.

### **Chunking and collocations**

Chunking and collocations are essential concepts in the lexical approach for ESP. Chunks are groups of words that are often used together and have some grammatical structure. Collocations, on the other hand, are words that frequently occur together without much grammar involved. For instance, in business English, “to close a deal” is a collocation, while “If I were you, I’d consider the long-term implications” is a chunk.

We find that focusing on chunks and collocations has several benefits for ESP learners:

- increased fluency: Learning and using chunks allows students to process larger units of information more efficiently, leading to faster and more natural communication in their professional contexts.
- boosted confidence: By mastering common phrases and expressions specific to their field, learners feel more confident in their ability to communicate effectively.
- exposure to words in context: Chunks and collocations help students learn words in their natural context, including their connotations and usage patterns.

- improved thinking in English: Working with chunks forces learners to pay attention to important aspects of the language, such as prepositions, articles, and countable/uncountable nouns.

In ESP, we emphasize the importance of teaching high-priority lexis, which needs to be carefully selected and included in learning materials and class activities. We encourage students to analyze authentic passages containing target lexical items, helping them develop the ability to recognize and use chunks effectively in their professional communication.

By implementing the lexical approach in ESP, we aim to equip learners with the language tools they need to function effectively in their specific professional environments. This approach enhances the relevance of what students are learning, enabling them to apply their knowledge immediately in their work or studies.

### **Types of Vocabulary in ESP**

In English for Specific Purposes (ESP), we recognize the importance of different types of vocabulary to enhance effective communication in specialized fields. Understanding these categories is crucial for both teachers and learners to focus on the most relevant words and phrases for their specific needs.

#### **General service vocabulary**

The General Service List (GSL) plays a significant role in ESP vocabulary learning. This list, originally compiled by Michael West in 1953, contains approximately 2,000 words that are considered to be of greatest general use to English language learners [4]. These words form the foundation of English language proficiency and are essential for basic communication across various fields.

The GSL covers around 80 % of all words in written texts and 90 % of words in spoken English [4]. This high coverage makes it an invaluable resource for ESP students, providing them with a solid base upon which to build their specialized vocabulary. However, it's important to note that the GSL has some limitations. For instance, it includes some archaic terms like "shilling" while excluding more modern words such as "television" and "plastic" [5].

#### **Sub-technical vocabulary**

Sub-technical vocabulary refers to words that have meanings closely related to specific fields of study but also occur in general language. These words often take on particular meanings within specialized contexts, making them crucial for ESP learners to master. Examples include words like "abdomen", "cavity" and "muscles" [6].

Sub-technical vocabulary is particularly important in ESP because it bridges the gap between general English and highly specialized terminology. These words often have multiple meanings, some of which are technical in nature [6]. For instance, in computer science, the word "bug" has a specific meaning related to software errors, while in general English, it refers to an insect.

ESP teachers are typically more concerned with teaching sub-technical vocabulary, as it helps students navigate the nuances of their field without delving too deeply into highly specialized terms [6]. This focus allows learners to develop a more versatile vocabulary that can be applied across various contexts within their discipline.

#### **Highly technical terms**

Highly technical terms are words that have meanings specific to a particular field and are unlikely to be known in general language. These words typically cover only

about 5 % of texts in specialized fields [6]. Examples include “short circuit”, “bus-bar” and “fuse” in electrical engineering contexts.

While highly technical terms are essential for precise communication within a specific discipline, they are generally dealt with in subject classes rather than in ESP courses [6]. This is because these terms often require in-depth knowledge of the subject matter to be fully understood and used correctly.

However, ESP courses can still play a role in helping students develop strategies for learning and using technical terms effectively. This might include teaching students how to use context clues, analyze word parts, or use specialized dictionaries and resources specific to their field.

In conclusion, understanding the different types of vocabulary in ESP is crucial for why learning vocabulary is important in specialized fields. By focusing on a combination of general service, sub-technical, and highly technical vocabulary, ESP courses can equip learners with the language tools they need to communicate effectively in their professional environments. This targeted approach to vocabulary development enhances the relevance of what students are learning, enabling them to apply their knowledge immediately in their work or studies.

### **Vocabulary Learning Strategies for ESP Students**

We recognize that learning vocabulary is important in ESP, and effective strategies can significantly enhance students’ ability to acquire and retain specialized terminology. Research has shown that ESP students employ various approaches to vocabulary learning, with a preference for metacognitive strategies and a positive attitude toward technology as a supportive tool for vocabulary acquisition [7].

#### **Metacognitive strategies**

Metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating one’s learning process. In ESP vocabulary learning, these strategies play a crucial role in helping students take control of their own learning and comprehension. For instance, students might plan vocabulary exercises, monitor their progress, and evaluate their learning outcomes [8]. By employing these strategies, learners can become more engaged and self-directed, which is essential for mastering the specialized vocabulary required in their professional fields.

#### **Cognitive strategies**

Cognitive strategies involve direct manipulation of the language material to be learned. In ESP vocabulary acquisition, these strategies include techniques such as guessing the meaning from context, consulting dictionaries, and identifying parts of speech of new terms [8]. Additionally, cognitive strategies linked to learned vocabulary are occasionally utilized, helping students reinforce their understanding of new terms [7].

#### **Social/affective strategies**

Social and affective strategies involve interaction with others and managing one’s emotions during the learning process. In ESP vocabulary learning, these strategies can be particularly effective. For example, students often prefer to consult their classmates about new vocabulary items rather than asking their teachers [8]. This peer-to-peer learning approach can create a supportive environment for vocabulary acquisition and help students feel more comfortable exploring new terms.

To enhance the effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies in ESP, we believe it's crucial to incorporate these approaches into the curriculum deliberately. Research suggests that vocabulary learning strategies have to be purposefully taught to improve the existing situation [9]. By explicitly instructing students in these strategies, we can empower them to take control of their vocabulary learning and become more effective communicators in their specialized fields.

In conclusion, understanding why learning vocabulary is important in ESP goes hand in hand with developing effective learning strategies. By employing a combination of metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies, ESP students can enhance their ability to acquire, retain, and use specialized vocabulary in their professional contexts. As educators, it's our responsibility to guide students in developing these strategies and to create learning environments that support their vocabulary acquisition efforts.

### **Technology-Enhanced Vocabulary Learning in ESP**

In the realm of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), technology has revolutionized the way we approach vocabulary teaching and learning. The integration of digital tools and resources has opened up new avenues for students to acquire specialized vocabulary more effectively. We recognize that learning vocabulary is important in ESP, and technology provides innovative methods to enhance this process.

#### **Digital tools and resources**

The advent of digital tools has significantly transformed the landscape of vocabulary acquisition in ESP. These tools offer a wide range of resources that cater to the specific needs of learners in various professional fields. For instance, online corpora have emerged as valuable assets for ESP students. They provide learners with access to authentic language use within their specific domains, allowing them to explore word combinations and communicative patterns relevant to their field of study [10].

Course management systems have also proven to be effective in ESP instruction. These platforms enable instructors to create tailored learning environments that address the unique vocabulary needs of their students. By utilizing these systems, we can deliver specialized content and exercises that focus on the technical and semi-technical vocabulary crucial for specific professions [10].

Another noteworthy digital resource is the use of wikis in ESP classrooms. These collaborative platforms encourage students to engage actively with vocabulary learning. By contributing to and editing wiki pages related to their field of study, learners can reinforce their understanding of specialized terms and concepts [10].

#### **Mobile apps for vocabulary acquisition**

Mobile applications have emerged as powerful tools to support vocabulary development in ESP contexts. These apps offer flexibility and convenience, allowing students to learn anytime and anywhere. One notable example is Anki, a digital flash-card app that incorporates a spaced repetition system. This app has shown promise in supporting more effective and long-term vocabulary learning, particularly for academic words [11].

Other popular apps like Duolingo, Lingo Kids, Babel, and Open Talk have gained support from ESP teachers for their potential to improve students' vocabulary [12]. These applications often employ gamification elements, making the learning process more engaging and motivating for students.

Mobile-assisted learning has also demonstrated its effectiveness in scaffolding EFL learners' vocabulary development. This approach provides various affordances that augment L2 literacy developments more effectively. For instance, mobile-assisted FonFs (Focus on Forms) has been found to be an effective strategy for teaching academic words, contributing significantly to both receptive and productive vocabulary learning [11].

The integration of these digital tools and mobile applications in ESP classrooms has had a profound impact on vocabulary acquisition. Research has shown that the use of digital technologies in foreign language teaching can have a significant positive effect on students' vocabulary learning achievement [12].

As we continue to explore why learning vocabulary is important in ESP, it's clear that technology plays a crucial role in enhancing this process. By leveraging digital tools and mobile apps, we can create more engaging, personalized, and effective learning experiences for ESP students. These technological advancements not only support the acquisition of specialized vocabulary but also foster learner autonomy and provide opportunities for extended practice beyond the classroom.

### **Conclusion**

The significance of vocabulary in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) cannot be overstated. Throughout this article, we've explored the unique aspects of ESP and why learning specialized vocabulary is crucial for professionals in various fields. We've seen how the lexical approach, different types of vocabulary, and effective learning strategies all play a role in helping students master the language skills they need for their careers.

Technology has caused a revolution in vocabulary learning for ESP, offering new tools and methods to enhance the learning experience. From digital resources to mobile apps, these advancements have made it easier for students to engage with specialized vocabulary in meaningful ways. As we continue to develop new approaches to ESP, it's clear that a focus on targeted vocabulary acquisition will remain at the heart of effective language learning for specific purposes.

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