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FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

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Notes on the Volume from the Editors

As language teaching strategies, programs, and procedures are continually experiencing reassessment, new ideas keep surfacing. This issue of Annals of "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University. Linguistics, Literature and Methodology of Teaching *is meant both to disseminate the Erasmus+ Project VIR_TEACH: A VIRtual Solution for a comprehensive and coordinated training for foreign language TEACHers in Europe (Ref. 2018-1-ES01-KA203-050045) and to carry the modern teaching methods' review forward to address the contemporary age of digital communication in the twenty-first century. The expanding complexity of the means of communication and the openings created by technology put language skills to new applications. In addition, the challenges of intercultural communication have opened new perspectives on the central role that foreign languages have come to play in the advancement of contemporary societies and thus impact on foreign language learning and teaching. The Erasmus+ Project VIR_TEACH project is devoted to the creation of a digital tool to improve the postgraduate certificates on Masters on Education (Foreign Languages) and provide teachers and researchers with open-source tools and resources. In bringing together contributions on the ESP teaching in various fields and Multicultural Approaches in teaching foreign languages in the current era of globalized creation, we seek to stress the importance of improving and adapting teaching methods to nowadays challenges.*

Teaching, Innovating and Researching General Language *vs* Specialized Language

A Contribution to ESP Teachers' Training

Ana CUNHA[1], Amanda Maraschin BRUSCATO[2]

Abstract. *English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers plan their classes based on their students' needs. This paper focuses on what should be taught to future ESP teachers. It is based on an ESP teaching module written for the VIR-teach - A Virtual Solution for a comprehensive and coordinated training for foreign language TEACHers in Europe project. This paper analyses different aspects related to ESP, which include the differences between teaching English for Specific Purposes and English for General Purposes, and how teaching ESP is related to teaching methods and approaches. Hopefully, this paper will contribute to ESP teachers' training.*

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes; Methods and Approaches; Teachers' Training.

1. Introduction

Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) means teaching students how to use the English language in specific contexts. These contexts may be academic, occupational or individual. Once teachers understand the importance of planning their classes based on students' needs, we must discuss how to teach future teachers. What should we consider? What should be taught? These are the questions that we intend to answer here.

This paper is based on a teaching module of English for Specific Purposes created for the VIR-teach project, subtitled "A Virtual Solution for a comprehensive and coordinated training for Foreign Language

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Teachers in Europe". Thus, we are going to examine different aspects related to ESP and what should be taught to future language teachers.

First, we will discuss the emergence of ESP, the differences between teaching English for Specific Purposes and English for General Purposes, and the specificities of ESP teaching. Then, we will focus on course design and on ESP needs analysis, the main topics of ESP. Finally, we will see how teaching ESP is related to teaching methods and approaches. Hopefully, this paper will contribute to the education of future ESP teachers.

2. English for Specific Purposes

2.1. The Emergence of ESP

The end of the Second World War brought about new perspectives and changes in scientific, technical and economic activity at an international level. These changes resulted in the creation of a unified world ruled by two major forces: technology and commerce.

To best meet the demands of these forces, there was an increasing demand for an international language, the aim of which was to ease communication between partners all over the world. As emphasised by Crystal (1997: 13) "English was at the right place at the right time". Actually, the economic supremacy of the United States in the post-war era facilitated the emergence of English as the first international language used for most scientific and economic publications, becoming as such the necessary medium of communication, if not the only one.

This was an age of massive changes in all spheres, which translated into the need for an international language, or, to be more precise, as Mackey and Mountford (1978) called it, a "restricted repertoire" selected from the whole language that meets learners' needs within a well-defined context.

A revolution in linguistics has led to a change of focus, from presenting language as a set of forms and defining the features of language usage, to discovering the ways in which language is in fact used in real-life communication scenarios. The idea is that if the language varies from one situation to another, so it is possible to design language courses that suit different and specific contexts.

New developments in educational psychology contributed to the growth of ESP by emphasizing the central role of learners, their motivations and needs from the language course; therefore, designing specific courses to better meet learners 'needs was a natural extension of this rationale.

In today's globalized world English has become the *lingua franca* for communications in such key areas as politics and international relations, business and finance, culture, technology, science, etc. As a result, for many years now language learning has been considered crucial (Jenkins, 2018). So, the pressure to make individuals proficient in English has increased exponentially, giving rise to a growing demand for 'English as a foreign language' learning and teaching: "English now became subject to the wishes, needs and demands of people other than language teachers" (Hutchinson and Water, 1987: 7).

The fact that English has become the key to international trends of science, technology and business has created a new generation of learners who need to learn English and, most importantly, know why they needed it. Consequently, a new trend in English Language Teaching, ESP, emerged to suit different teaching situations, that is, to provide students of business, economics, medicine, biology, among others, with the knowledge of English they need to perform activities in their specific fields (Cunha, 2019).

2.2. ESP vs EGP Teaching

Hutchinson and Water (1987:53) describe, in a quite simple manner, the difference between the ESP and GE approaches: "in theory nothing, in practice a great deal."

ESP is a focused-English learning and teaching situation, in which teaching techniques and the learning environment are different from teaching general English, as the former was stimulated to a great extent by the need to communicate across languages in areas such as business. Scrivener (2005) defends that "ESP contrasts with the rather mischievous acronym LENOR (Learning English for No Obvious Reason); it implies that we are going to take the client's needs and goals more seriously when planning the course, and rather than teach general English, we are going to tailor everything to his or her character and particular requirements."

While teaching English for general purposes focuses on teaching the general language to all different learners, teaching English for specific purposes focuses on learners' training- or work-related needs. Widdowson (1983) characterizes EGP as having an educational aim and ESP as having a training aim, since the former is concerned with students' overall competence in the language, and the latter is concerned with students' restricted competence in the language. Restricted competence can be understood as the competence to use language in specific situations of their areas of expertise:

> "... the language of international air-traffic control could be regarded as 'special,' in the sense that the repertoire required by the controller is strictly limited and can be accurately determined situationally, as might be the linguistic needs of a dining-room waiter or air-hostess. However, such restricted repertoires are not languages, just as a tourist phrase book is not grammar. Knowing a restricted 'language' would not allow the speaker to communicate effectively in novel situation, or in contexts outside the vocational environment."
>
> Mackay and Mountford (1978: 4-5)

EGP teaches learners conversational and social genres of the language, while ESP teaches academic or occupational genres; in other words, in the latter learners are taught the language skills required for their immediate purpose, by means of selection of specific vocabulary and grammar. Some authors identify ESP as the teaching of English for Academic studies, or for vocational or professional purposes, as opposed to EGP (Brunton, 2009; Carver, 1983, and Hyland, 2006). Accordingly, the main differences between ESP and EGP are learners and their purposes.

We can say that EGP is likely to be taught in basic education, because students are supposed to learn overall English, and for many of them their main goal is to finish school. However, while the EGP learners in the previous context aren't all engaged in learning a foreign language, adults often are, since they tend to have a specific purpose. It is important to say that, although ESP is mostly taught to adults, it can be taught to people of all ages and with different levels of proficiency as well.

2.3. Specificities in ESP Teaching

Mackay and Mountford (1978: 2) claim that "ESP is generally used to refer to the teaching of English for a clearly utilitarian purpose." Strevens (1988) identifies a set of ESP's absolute and variable characteristics, which were revised by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), and can be summarized as follows:

Table 1 – ESP's absolute and variable characteristics

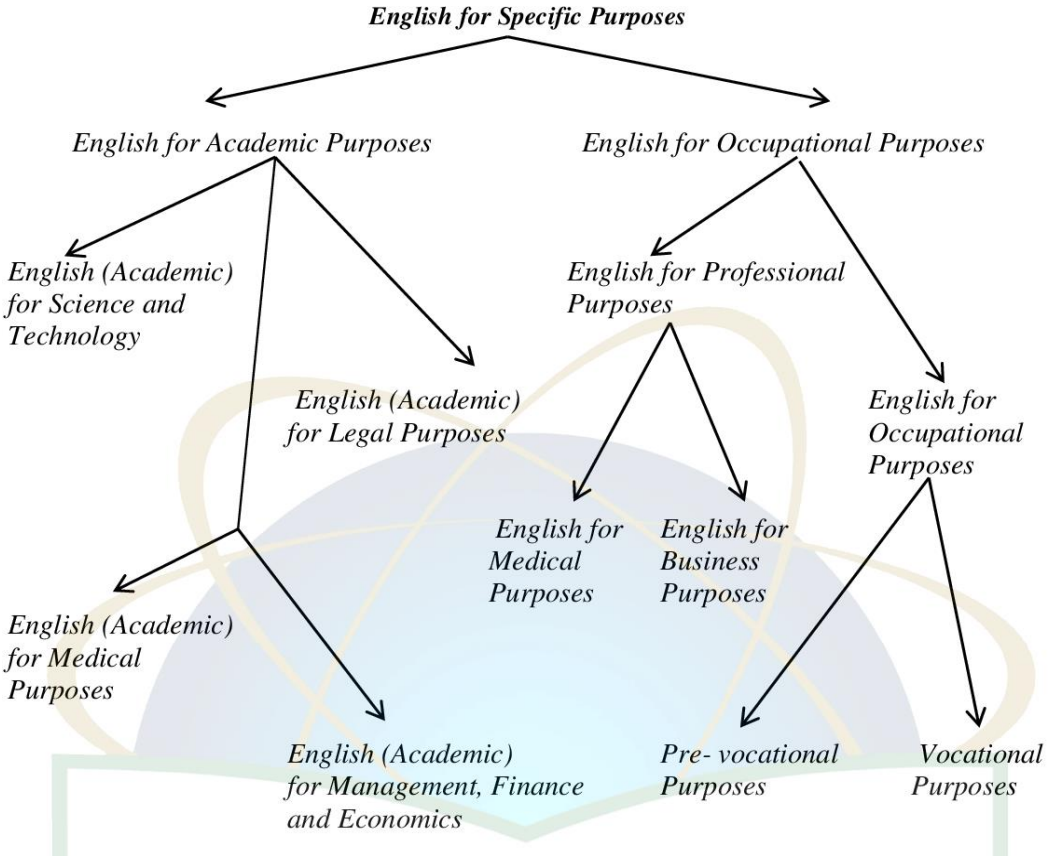
Absolute Characteristics	**Variable characteristics**
ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner	ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines
ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves	ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English
ESP is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities	ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation; it could be used for learners at secondary school level
	ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced learners
	Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but this approach can be used with beginners

Adapted from Dudley-Evans, Tony & St. John, Maggie. 1998. *Developments in English for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The above absolute and variable characteristics of ESP have gathered consensus amongst ESP researchers and apply to the different types of ESP. David Carter (1983) identifies three main types of ESP: English as a restricted language (i.e. English for waiters); English for Academic and Occupational Purposes (EAP, EOP); and English with specific topics. Within each of these purposes, there are many subject areas, and the same area can often be taught for both occupational and academic purposes, these two being the most generally and traditionally categorized purposes (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Robinson, 1991), at least for university level instruction.

The figure below describes the classification of ESP in detail:

Figure 1 – ELT Tree



(Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:6)

2.4. Course Design

> "The process by which the raw data about a learning need is interpreted in order to produce an integrated series of teaching-learning experiences, whose ultimate aim is to lead the learners to a particular state of knowledge"
> (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Since there are different purposes, course design will also differ. Course design refers to the planning and structuring of a course to achieve the pursued goals. Robinson (1991) describes it as the outcome of a number of elements, namely, the result of needs analysis, the course designer's approach to syllabus and methodology, and existing materials. In turn, Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 65) describe it as "an integrated series of teaching-learning experiences, whose ultimate aim is to lead the learners

to a particular state of knowledge." Thus, medical students may have to learn English to read and write academic genres, while doctors may have to learn the language to talk to foreign patients.

According to Bakhtin (1986), humans interact through speech genres. If we want to teach our students how to use the language, we must teach them specific genres, such as dialogues, emails, abstracts, etc. For each purpose, there will be different genres to teach. For example: learning how to write an email in English may be essential for businessmen, while learning how to write a paper will be vital for scientists.

Teaching English for specific purposes means planning each course based on learners' specific needs. This is very practical and concrete, because each course is designed to meet students' practical needs, that is, to teach them how to use English in specific situations of their areas of expertise. Course design includes syllabus development, instructional methodology or approach, and assessment procedures. Decisions in connection with these segments of course design are made in response to the learners' needs. Teachers need to determine which aspects of ESP learning will be included, emphasized, integrated and used as the core of the course. This is very strenuous, because English teachers aren't experts in all areas, and, to teach ESP properly, they may have to perform multiple roles, as identified by Dudley- Evans and St John (1998): that of teacher, collaborator, course designer and materials provider, researcher and evaluator.

The performance of these roles requires considerable knowledge of a linguistic, socio-cultural and pedagogical nature, necessary to inform the teacher's cognitive processes, particularly those involved in course decision making. Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 163) state that the "ESP teacher should not become a teacher of the subject matter, but rather an interested student of the subject of the subject matter.".

The necessary professional knowledge of the ESP teacher, which is gained through professional schooling, teacher training, and teaching experience, comprises both relevant theoretical concepts and performance skills, in other words, knowing what and knowing how. It directly impacts on all stages of the ESP process, namely the planning, design, teaching, assessment and evaluation of a course, largely determining its quality and consequent success.

Dudley-Evans (1998) defines ESP based on three aspects: needs analysis, which ascertains who the learners are and why they want to learn the language; the analysis of genres and language related to these needs, which shows what they need to learn; and the analysis of the best suited methods for each area, which is concerned with how students learn.

2.5. ESP needs Analysis

Needs' analysis is a crucial characteristic in ESP course design as Mc Donough (1984: 29) writes: "The idea of analysing the language needs of the learner as a basis for course development has become almost synonymous with ESP." Thus, to understand the situations that learners may experience in their area of expertise and its specific genres and vocabulary, ESP teachers usually apply questionnaires and interview their students, as well as analyse authentic speech genres in the field. Based on these findings, it is possible to design the course and to create or choose the best class materials.

Needs are defined as being the requirements that the students must meet in order to be able to communicate effectively in the target situation. They are also defined as what the students need to learn to acquire the language. There are two types of needs: target needs, which refer to what the learners need to do in order to be able to communicate effectively in the target situation; and learning needs, which refer to how the students will be able to move from the starting point (lacks) to the final destination (necessities).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) claim that it is not possible to base a course design simply on the target objectives, and that the learning situation must also be considered. They add that the target situation alone is not a reliable indicator, and that the conditions of the learning situation, learners' knowledge, skills, strategies, motivation for learning, the setting and the time allowed are of prime importance.

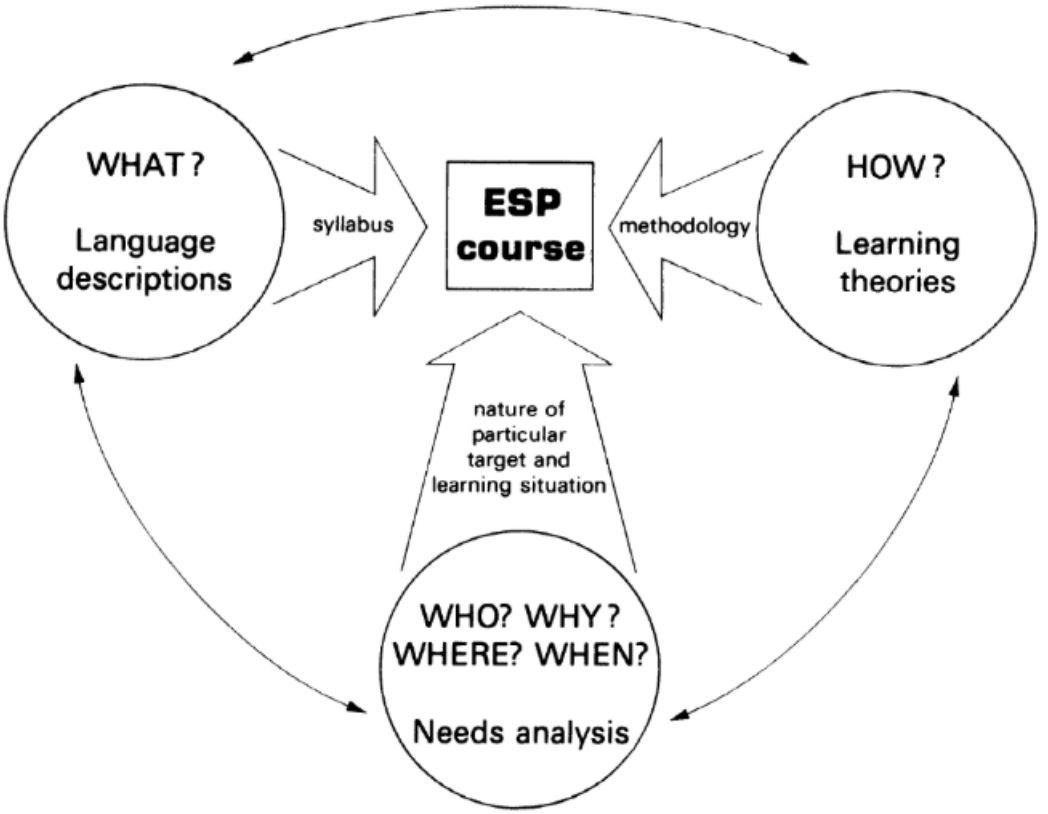
Thus, ESP focuses on learners' needs and on course design, which includes not only the content to be taught, but the teaching methods to be used as well. One can, therefore, support Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 19), to whom "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learners' reasons for learning"; and Widodo and Pusporini (2010: 150), who add that needs analysis aims to "bridge a gap between insider's perspective/assumption and outsider's perspective/assumption.".

3. Teaching Methods and Approaches

As we saw in the previous section, the moment of needs analysis is essential in English for Specific Purposes. We should reinforce that it doesn't analyse only the learners' academic, occupational or individual needs, but also the most appropriate teaching methods and approach for the student group.

Dudley-Evans (1998: 5) explains that "ESP is most effective when it makes use of the methodology that learners are familiar with in their educational studies or professional work". In keeping with what was discussed above, he argues that there are three main aspects that differentiate English for Specific Purposes from English for General Purposes: needs analysis, the analysis of genres and language related to these needs, and the use of the best suited methodology for the class. These three factors were organized by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) in the following figure:

Figure 1 – Factor affecting ESP course design



(Hutchinson & Waters, 1987:22)

Although the authors define English for Specific Purposes as a learner-centred approach, "what they mean is that ESP does not involve a particular kind of language, teaching material or methodology" (Rahman, 2015: 26), but focuses on learners' needs. Thus, every ESP teacher must be "well-trained in professional skills and flexible in approach in order to cope with the specific needs of his/her students" (Islam, 2011: 68).

English for Specific Purposes may be an approach to course design, but, regarding classroom teaching, ESP teachers should be able to choose the best teaching approach and methods based on their students' needs. This is why needs analysis is so important for ESP, it is responsible for the whole course planning.

According to Larsen-Freeman (2003: 8), "versatility allows teachers to deal more effectively with the unique constellation of students with whom they are working at any one time". Therefore, we are going to describe some of the possible methods and approaches for teaching ESP.

3.1. Technique, Method and Approach

First, it is necessary to clarify the difference between technique, method and approach. There is a terminological confusion in the literature, and it goes back a long way. Anthony (1963) already noticed this problem in the past century and proposed a clear definition of the terms, which we present below:

> The arrangement is hierarchical. The organizational key is that techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach. [...] An approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught. [...] Method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural. Within one approach, there can be many methods. [...] A technique is implementational – that which actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. Techniques must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well. (Anthony, 1963: 63-67)

Language teachers may apply various techniques and methods within one approach. Based on the audiolingual approach, for example, a teacher can opt for mimic and imitation methods and, within these methods, use the techniques of recorders and stereos, so that students can repeat structures and hear themselves.

Since the approach dimension is the broader one, the one that defines methods and techniques, we will focus on its description. There are four main language teaching approaches: the grammar-translation

approach; the audiolingual approach; the natural approach; and the communicative approach. While the grammar-translation approach wasn't theory-based, in the twentieth century linguistic and psychological theories were developed and, consequently, new methods of and approaches to language teaching emerged.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001: 1), "common to each method is the belief that the teaching practices it supports provide a more effective and theoretically sound basis for teaching than the methods that preceded it". Based on this statement, we can argue that all methods and approaches are valid and important. However, they do not have the same effectiveness in all contexts. Depending on the learners' specific purposes, some methods and approaches may be more appropriate than others.

Brown (2007: 48) explains that a new approach has emerged about every quarter of a century, "breaking from the old but at the same time taking with it some of the positive aspects of the previous [one]". While Marckwardt (1972: 5) saw these "changing winds and shifting sands" as a cyclical pattern, Mitchell and Vidal (2001) described it as the movement of a pendulum. This metaphor will become clearer soon when we define the characteristics of the four main approaches.

Though in the past century people believed that there was one best method or approach, nowadays we understand that none of them will be effective in all situations. As Brown argues (2007: 48), they are "too narrow and too constrictive to apply to a wide range of learners in an enormous number of situational contexts. There are no instant recipes. No quick and easy method is guaranteed to provide success". Since every student group and every context will be unique, teachers must ascertain their students' needs and, based on them, choose the best suited approach and methods.

3.2. The Approaches

Now that the terms method and approach were distinguished and we have stressed the importance of choosing them based on each specific context, we are going to consider the differences and similarities between the four main approaches identified above. We will discuss them in chronological order.

The oldest one is the grammar-translation approach. It was initially used to teach classical languages such as Latin. As the name already reveals, its main methods involve the translation of written texts and the grammatical analysis of sentences. It focuses on reading and writing skills, instructions are given in the students' native language, and grammar is

taught deductively. The teacher is the centre of the class and students play a passive role in the learning process.

During the Second World War, the audiolingual approach was developed. It was proposed by Bloomfield (1942) based on structuralism and behaviourism. While in the previous approach instructions were given in the students' native language, grammar was taught deductively and the focus was on reading and writing skills, this new approach focused on listening and speaking, grammar was taught inductively and instructions were given in the target language. Its main methods are mimicry and memorization, and it tried to prevent learners' errors. As with the grammar-translation approach, teachers' role is to transmit knowledge to students, but rather than translating written texts, students must repeat structures orally.

The third approach is the natural one. As with the audiolingual approach, only the target language is used in class, grammar is taught inductively, and the focus is first on listening and speaking skills. However, while in the previous approach students had to repeat structures, in this new approach they just speak when they feel ready to do so. This approach was proposed by Krashen and Terrel (1983) based on generativism and cognitivism, and it is called natural approach because the teaching method is also natural: learners should acquire a second language in the same way they have acquired their first one, that is, naturally.

Krashen and Terrel (1983) suggest five main hypotheses for second language acquisition: the acquisition-learning hypothesis; the monitor hypothesis; the input hypothesis; the affective filter hypothesis; and the natural order hypothesis. We will briefly define them.

The first one differentiates language learning, which is taught deductively, from language acquisition, which is taught inductively. According to this approach, second language acquisition must occur in the same way as first language acquisition: i.e., unconsciously. Therefore, teachers use the natural method: they only speak in the foreign language and wait until students naturally learn it, without repetitions or translations.

The second hypothesis suggests that every learner would have an internal monitor which corrects their own production in the target language. The third one says that teachers should expose their students to input in the target language which is comprehensible but also one step beyond learners' linguistic competence.

The fourth hypothesis proposes that learners have an affective filter, which may interfere in language acquisition if it is high. A high filter would mean a high level of anxiety, inhibition and insecurity. Finally, the

fifth hypothesis is about the existence of a natural order of language acquisition.

The last approach we are going to discuss is the communicative one. It was created in the late twentieth century, after Hymes (1972) wrote about the communicative competence as a reaction to Chomsky's distinction between linguistic competence and performance.

The communicative approach is based on functionalism and constructivism. According to Savignon and Berns (1984), Wilkins was one of the first contributors to this approach. It does not focus on one or two language skills but integrates them. Instructions are given in the target language, materials are authentic, and students are supposed to learn how to communicate fluently in real life situations through the communicative method, which is frequently applied in group activities.

Matamoros-González and other researchers (2017: 967) organized a table comparing seven features of the grammatical, audiolingual, natural and communicative approaches. The features compared were the theories that support each approach, the reason that motivated the creation of these approaches, the resources and techniques used for teaching a class using these approaches, as well as the role of teachers, students and the learners' mother tongue in the language teaching-learning process.

3.3. The Method

Now that we have defined the four main approaches and their homonymous methods, we are going to argue why there is no such thing as "the best" method or approach for all learners and situations. Before we defend our view, we would like to discuss Prabhu's arguments on why there is no best method.

Prabhu (1990) describes three possible arguments to support the claim that there is no best method. They are: it all depends on the teaching context; there is some truth to every method; and we need to rethink what "best" might mean.

The first one means that there is not one method or approach best suited to everyone but that different methods are better for different situations. Therefore, we would have to investigate what is the best approach and method for each context.

The second argument defends that different methods and approaches should be used in every context, because they are all helpful. Finally, the third argument suggests that, since there isn't as yet any adequate comparison of methods and their learning outcomes to enable a definition of "the best method", we should not discuss it. Instead, we

should discuss teachers' *sense of plausibility* to apply methods in real classrooms.

The author does not agree with the first two arguments. Prabhu argues that it would be too difficult to determine the best method for each context. However, this is exactly what English for Specific Purposes is about.

3.4. Considerations

As we have already discussed, English for Specific Purposes focuses on learners' needs. Thus, the whole course design is based on them, including the choice of the best suited teaching methods and approach. "The choice will depend on the professor's theoretical beliefs and the learners' needs. Although the professor would prefer to use the same approach in all cases, it may not serve for the group's aims" (Bruscato, 2019: 21).

ESP teachers should be able to put their personal preferences aside and use different methods and different approaches to meet students' needs. For example, the imitation method from the audiolingual approach may be necessary for speech therapy students who will one day need to teach foreign patients how to pronounce sounds correctly. On the other hand, the translation method, from the grammar-translation approach, may be important for anthropology students who will need to read and translate historical texts. For business students, the communicative method, from the communicative approach, is likely to be more effective as their occupation is based on communicating with stakeholders.

Our aim was to define the main teaching approaches and to justify why it is important for ESP teachers to analyse not only what, but also how to teach their students. All teachers want their students to learn, and, if they base their practice on learners' specific needs, they stand a better chance of achieving their goal.

4. Conclusions

In this paper, we have considered many aspects related to English for Specific Purposes. As we have seen, ESP is extremely important in today's world, because English is one of the most widely spoken languages around the globe and learners have specific needs, which may be academic, occupational or individual.

Since ESP teachers should base the design and planning of the language course on their students' needs, we must reflect on how to teach future ESP teachers. This paper was written based on the ESP teaching

module created for the VIR-teach project, and we have discussed ESP itself and how it is related to teaching methods and approaches.
Although some authors consider ESP a teaching method or approach in itself, we have seen that ESP teachers must be able to choose the best teaching methods (based on an approach) to their specific group of students. The content to be taught to each group will be different, and the methods to teach them should also be adapted based on students' needs.

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