

The Growing Importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) In Albanian Higher Education

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Abstract: “European Union” that is the issue of the day and being a member of the European Union is what the Albanian government is striving for. There are always some criteria to be completed in order to be part of this new family, or better say meeting high standards that all the European countries possess. Definitely, this is a challenge for everyone, especially for the Ministry of Integration, which has set up structures which are working towards this target, showing a strong commitment to achieve this important goal, so that Albanian citizens enjoy the status that they deserve. I started with an introduction of the political situation of the Albanian country to represent somehow the social situation where on top of it stands the social interaction. Social interaction cannot function properly if there is a barrier in between, and everyone can guess that this barrier is the language. Language is the place of social activity. In order to have an effective and constructive dialogue, on the basis of it stands the language used by the participants. This language is English, which is the first language used according Wikipedia site where it is stated that: All 24 official languages of the EU are accepted as working languages, but in practice only two – English and French – are in wide general use and of these English is the more commonly used. Thus, a growing demand is seen towards the English language. This is the reason why this language is included in the Albanian school curricula from the third grade of the primary school and it continues even in secondary as well as in high school where students have to take the English exam as a Matura final exam, ending it on the second year of the University level and retake English language in their Master studies only the first year. Hence, it means that the Albanian students are in contact with the English language for more than a decade. Basically, it was seen an immediate necessity to introduce the ESP methods into the University level as an innovation, which in fact, was not new in the other countries of the region and the Balkans.

In this paper it is aimed to see the importance of the ESP methods in the Albanian higher education system. A survey is conducted to highlight the benefits that the students, who major in different fields ranging from social to exact sciences, acquire from using these methods.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, importance, method

1. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND ITS POWERFUL DOMINANCE IN THE ALBANIAN SOCIETY

Knowing English is vital to all the people in Albania. They consider this language as a way to belong to well educated society, the way towards a better education, better job opportunities etc. Furthermore, English is the language used everywhere you go. It is on top of any other existing language, it is like a queen ruling peacefully for a long time and making everyone so satisfied that she will never cease from being appraised by her people due to the chances, opportunities, facilities provided all the time.

Probably, someone might say why do I consider English as a “She”? It just came naturally, firstly, because in Albanian language ‘language - gjuhë’ belongs to the feminine gender. Secondly, on my mind I had the picture of Queen Elizabeth, as she was the one to encourage the English theatre, where the English language spread its wings and traveled the world carrying Shakespeare’s oeuvres miles away. Another reason is that even Shakespeare’s time is called the Elizabethan time. It was this great and prolific writer, who had a great impact on the language used by the society of that time as well as in the process of the language standardization, which was at the beginning of the long journey to this day, where we can definitely say that it has changed a lot. Anyway, the English vocabulary is enriched by over 1700 invented by Shakespeare.

Today the English language is indispensable if one has to interact with people of other countries. David Crystal, a famous linguist stresses that "This is the first time we actually have a language spoken genuinely globally by every country in the world," In Albania the same can be said, everyone is aiming to learn this language, even the older generation are attending private courses, as it is a must for several different reasons, which will be mentioned in this paper.

Recently in Albania the government fairly enough, has been paying a special attention to this language making it as one of the core curricula in the education system. This attention is rightly prompted by several immediate necessities.

One reason is to build a dynamic communication with the whole world, to learn from the experiences of developed countries, as Albania aspires to become one of the members of European Union.

Secondly, the linguist David Graddol says that English has consolidated its dominance as the language of the Internet, where 80 percent of the world's electronically stored information is in English. As a new millennium begins, scholars say that about one-fourth of the world's population can communicate to some degree in English. "English has become the second language of everybody," said Mark Warschauer, a professor of education and informatics at the University of California. English and globalization have spread hand in hand through the world, "Having a global language has assisted globalization, and globalization has consolidated the global language," he said. That process started with the dominance of two successive English-speaking empires, British and American, and continues today with the new virtual empire of the Internet. This so true even for the Albanian society; mostly they have become computer addicted for different reasons ranging from entertainment to assignments at school, or related to the job that they do. Tv channels, radio, movies, pop music deliver the sounds of English to almost every corner of the earth.

Thirdly, (Warschauer 2001) "It's gotten to the point where almost in any part of the world to be educated means to know English." This is the reason that the Albanian education system imposes English at the third grade of primary school. A new trend is emerging recently, there are some private universities, where the lectures are held in English even though students are to be graduated on economics, law or engineering. Furthermore, students cannot get their Master Degree if they not have an international certificate on English like Toefl, IELTS etc.

Another reason is that students who know English can find a part time job in the call centers, which are spreading day by day in Tirana. These centers employ people to advertize their products and knowing English gives you credits as it is the emblem of a globalized workplace. English has invaded the workplace along with the global economy.

On top of all the listed reasons is the one dealing with necessities that Albania has so as to have a direct communication with the world, regarding all the areas and all the fields. Enriching, expanding, gaining knowledge is essential especially when this interaction is with the developed countries of the European Union. "The limits of my language means the limits of my world"

2. THE NECESSITY OF THE ESP METHODS

Such exchanges and interactions with the internationals increase the need to have people who know not just general English, but to have an extensive English vocabulary on various specific scientific, judicial, political, social, fields. Hence, it is obvious that knowing English and using English for specific purposes is a challenge. It can be said that ESP is acquiring a special status in Albania. A person would be much more appreciated if he or she has a good command not only of the general foreign language, but of a specific field. Mohan (1986) adds that ESP courses focus on preparing learners "for chosen communicative environments" (p. 15). A foreign language speaker would be more comfortable in many situations if he /she knows the right vocabulary which is to be helpful and beneficiary in the job that this person is doing. Specifically, one who graduates on Economics and works as an economist might have the chance to exchange ideas, opinions, with other people in different conferences, workshops, or even communicate in the foreign language that he/ she possesses if he works for foreign or multinational companies, which are established here in Albania.

In Albania the number of English speakers is increasing day by day, but still it is noticed a deficiency in their English relevant to their area of expertise. Until recently most of the people would go to private courses to learn English for specific reasons. Still the number of the student majoring in different branches other than English is huge and not everybody has got the luxury of attending

private courses, as they are expensive. Hence, the attention should be reverted to the university level studies, where English is a subject covered the whole year. Here a question raises “Should students learn English by using the usual methods (what they learn is general, everyday use) or they must focus on learning English for specific purposes (where they learn and expand their vocabulary in the area they are actually majoring)?

Until recently in some Albanian universities the lecturers used the widely spread methods like: Headway, Blockbuster, Opportunities etc. Students who are faced again with the same method they had used in high school and gain no benefit from it, they lose interest, and they do like to attend the classes. This is the reason why universities are trying to include and use English for Specific Purpose Methods.

3. THE ORIGIN OF ESP AND WHY DO ALBANIAN NEED ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

The origins of ESP dated back in the 1960s, the definitions of ESP in the literature are relatively late in time. Notably, there are three reasons common to the emergence of all ESP: the demands of a Brave New World, a revolution in linguistics, and focus on the learner (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Dudley-Evans and St. Jones (1998) describe it as the teaching of English used only in academic studies, or the teaching of English for vocational or Professional purposes.

Coffey (1985) observes that ESP is “a quick and economical use of the English language to pursue a course of academic study (EAP) or effectiveness in paid employment (EOP)” (p.79). Lorenzo (2005) reminds us that ESP “concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures” (p. 1) He also points out that as ESP is usually delivered to adult students, frequently in a work related setting (EOP), that motivation to learn is higher than in usual ESL (English as a Second Language) contexts. Carter (1983) believes that self-direction is important in the sense that an ESP course is concerned with turning learners into users of the language.

General (language for no purpose) courses at any proficiency level almost always teach too much, e.g., vocabulary, skills, registers or styles some learners do not need, and too little, e.g., omitting lexis and genres that they do. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, it is more defensible to view every course as involving specific purposes. . . . (Long, 2005, p. 19)

Stevens (1988) makes a distinction between absolute characteristics and variable characteristics of ESP. The absolute characteristics are that ESP courses are:

- designed to meet the specific needs of the learner;
- related in content to particular disciplines or occupations;
- centered on language specific to those disciplines or occupations;
- In contrast to General English.

The variable characteristics are that courses may:

- be restricted in the skills to be learned;
- Not be taught according to a particular methodology.

Robinson (1991) also suggests two absolute criteria for defining ESP courses. The first is that ESP programmes are normally goal-oriented. The second is that they derive from a needs analysis. The needs analysis will state as accurately as possible what the learners will have to do when speaking the language.

4. CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration the importance that English has for an international communication we might say that this communication is not restricted to everyday language, but to different types of register where people exchange their ideas by employing certain functional styles, be it formal or informal, written or verbal. The Albanian government is prompting the learning of the English language by giving a high priority to this language and making it compulsory. Students cannot get their degree if they do not have a certificate of the English language issued by an international test center. Albanian student find it necessary to study English for specific purposes, as they are asked for many projects, assignment, course tasks etc. and the information is all in English. If they do not know

the right vocabulary used in the area of their studies, this will lead in deficiency. Applying ESP is very beneficial and I hope this will serve as an appeal for those university lecturers, who still use the conventional way of teaching and the methods used so far for general English use.

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Lediana Beshaj received a Bachelor degree in English Language as a Specialist of English and American Language from Tirana University (Foreign Language Faculty, English Department) in 2001. From 2008-2010 attended Master of Science Program at Foreign Language Faculty, English Department, where she got a degree in Master of Science in “Linguistics with a Didactics orientation”. The focus was on the necessity of intercultural communication in the process of teaching a foreign language and its effectiveness in acquiring it in a school environment. In 2011 - 2014 she was involved in the PhD program where she received a PhD. Degree from Tirana University, Foreign Language Faculty, English Department. Her PhD. thesis is a contribution on Comparative Linguistics with a focus on Phraseology.