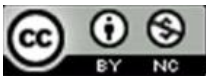


Communicative Strategies in Teaching ESP in Higher Education

ABSTRACT

In the modern digital world, English has firmly established itself as the primary medium of international communication across academic, professional, and institutional domains. The increasing mobility of students and professionals, together with the expansion of international cooperation, has intensified the demand for specialized language competencies tailored to specific disciplinary contexts. In the context of increasing globalization and the growing demand for discipline-specific language competence, ESP originated a crucial approach to language instruction. In the context of increasing globalization and the growing demand for discipline-specific language competence, ESP has emerged as a crucial approach to language instruction. The topicality of the present study is conditioned by the theoretical foundations and pedagogical applications of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in higher education. The present study addresses the theoretical foundations and pedagogical applications of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in higher education, with particular emphasis on communicative strategies applied in the

* e-mail: tatevikkirakosyan@ysu.am



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Received: 09/06/2026

Revised: 19/06/2026

Accepted: 30/06/2026

© The Author(s) 2026

process of teaching students of International Relations and Psychology. The methodological framework encompasses key ESP principles, including needs analysis, learner-centered instruction, task-based learning, and the integration of authentic materials. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, incorporating theoretical analysis, comparative methodology and classroom observation.

The paper concludes by offering pedagogical recommendations aimed at improving ESP teaching in higher education, particularly for disciplines requiring advanced communicative competence in English.

Key words: Communicative strategy, Language competence, Mix method, Learner-centered instruction, English for Specific Purposes

ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

Հաղորդակցական ռազմավարությունները որպես արդյունավետ մոտեցումներ բուհում մասնագիտական անգլերեն դասավանդելիս

Ժամանակակից թվային աշխարհում անգլերենը հաստատվել է որպես միջազգային հաղորդակցության հիմնական միջոց՝ ակադեմիական, մասնագիտական և ինստիտուցիոնալ ոլորտներում: Ուսանողների և մասնագետների աճող շարժունությունը, ինչպես նաև միջազգային համագործակցության ընդլայնումը խթանել են մասնագիտական լեզվական հմտությունների պահանջը, որոնք հարմարեցված են կոնկրետ միջգիտակարգային միջավայրերին: Համընդհանրացման (գլոբալիզացիայի) ընդլայնման և ոլորտային լեզվական կարողությունների աճող պահանջի պայմաններում մասնագիտական անգլերենը (անգլերենը հատուկ նպատակների համար/ԱՀՆՀ/ ESP-ն) ձևավորվել է որպես լեզվի ուսուցման կարևոր մոտեցում:

Սույն ուսումնասիրության արդիականությունը պայմանավորված է բարձրագույն կրթության մեջ ԱՀՆՀ-ի (ESP)

տեսական հիմքերով և մանկավարժական կիրառություններով՝ մասնավորապես շեշտադրելով հաղորդակցական ռազմավարությունները, որոնք կիրառվում են միջազգային հարաբերությունների և հոգեբանության ոլորտներում մասնագիտացող ուսանողների ուսուցման գործընթացում: Այս տեսանկյունից մեթոդաբանական սկզբունքները ներառում են ԱՀՆՀ-ի (ESP-ի) հիմնական բաղադրիչները՝ կարիքների վերլուծություն, ուսանողակենտրոն ուսուցում, առաջադրանքահեն ուսուցում և իրական նյութերի ինտեգրում: Կիրառվել է խառը մեթոդ, մոտեցում, որը ներառում է տեսական վերլուծություն, համեմատական մեթոդաբանություն և լսարանային դիտարկում:

Ներկայացված են մանկավարժական և ուսուցողական առաջարկություններ, որոնք միտված են բարձրագույն կրթության մեջ ԱՀՆՀ-ի բարելավմանը հատկապես անգլերենի զարգացած հաղորդակցական հմտություններ պահանջող մասնագիտություններով ուսանողների համար:

Բանալի բաներ՝ Հաղորդակցական ռազմավարություն, լեզվական հմտություն, խառը մեթոդ, ուսանողակենտրոն ուսուցում, անգլերենը հատուկ նպատակների համար

РЕЗЮМЕ

Эффективные коммуникативные стратегии при преподавании английского (языка) для специальных целей (ESP) в вузе

В современном цифровом мире в академической, профессиональной и институциональной сферах английский язык утвердился как основное средство международной коммуникации. Наряду с расширением международного сотрудничества, возрастающая мобильность студентов и специалистов, стимулировала потребность в специализированных языковых навыках, адаптированных к конкретным дисциплинарным контекстам. Расширение международного сотрудничества и возросшая

мобильность студентов и специалистов обусловили потребность в специализированных языковых навыках, ориентированных на конкретные дисциплинарные контексты. В условиях углубляющейся глобализации и растущего спроса на предметно-ориентированную языковую подготовку английский для специальных целей (АСЦ / ESP) сформировался как самостоятельное и значимое направление в обучении языку.

Актуальность данного исследования обусловлена теоретическими основами и педагогическими применениями английского языка для специальных целей (АСЦ) в высшем образовании с особым акцентом на коммуникативные стратегии, применяемые в процессе обучения студентов, специализирующихся в области международных отношений и психологии. Актуальность настоящего исследования определяется необходимостью осмысления теоретических основ и педагогических приложений АСЦ в системе высшего образования — с особым акцентом на коммуникативные стратегии, используемые в процессе обучения студентов, специализирующихся в области международных отношений и психологии. С этой точки зрения методологические принципы охватывают АСЦ включая анализ потребностей, обучение, ориентированное на обучаемого, обучение на основе задач, а также интеграцию аутентичных материалов. Методологическую основу исследования составляют ключевые принципы АСЦ: анализ потребностей, личностно ориентированное обучение, обучение на основе заданий, а также интеграция аутентичных материалов. В работе применяется смешанный метод, сочетающий теоретический анализ, сравнительную методологию и аудиторное наблюдение.

Предложены педагогические и учебные рекомендации, направленные на улучшение преподавания АСЦ в высшем образовании, особенно для студентов в области дисциплин, требующих развитой коммуникативной компетенции английского.

Ключевые слова: Коммуникативная стратегия, языковая компетенция, смешанный метод обучения, Личностно ориентированное обучение, английский язык для специальных целей. потребностей,

Introduction

The rapid expansion of globalization has significantly transformed the role of English in higher education, positioning it as the dominant language of academic and professional communication. As a result, universities increasingly emphasize the development of specialized language skills tailored to students' future careers.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has emerged as a response to these demands, focusing on the acquisition of language competencies directly relevant to particular disciplines. Unlike traditional language teaching approaches, ESP prioritizes functional language use, contextual relevance and learner needs.

Students of International Relations and Psychology represent two distinct academic groups with specific communicative requirements. International Relations students require advanced communicative competence for diplomatic negotiations, policy discussions, and participation in international forums. In contrast, Psychology students must engage with complex academic texts, conduct empirical research, and communicate findings within scholarly and professional communities.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of communicative teaching strategies within ESP and to evaluate their impact on students' professional language development. Unlike general English instruction, ESP is characterized by its focus on the development of language skills that are directly relevant to particular fields of study or professional practice.

The present study seeks to examine how communicative teaching methodologies within ESP can effectively address various needs.

Specifically, it aims to analyze the role of communicative activities in fostering professional language competence and to identify pedagogical strategies that enhance learning outcomes in ESP classrooms.

According to Hutchinson and Waters ESP is an approach in which all decisions regarding content and methodology are based on learners' specific reasons for learning (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This definition underscores the centrality of learner needs and places ESP within a broader pedagogical paradigm that prioritizes relevance, functionality, and contextualization.

Within this framework, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has gained prominence as an approach that aligns language instruction with learners' academic and professional objectives.

The findings indicate that communicative ESP instruction significantly enhances learners' motivation, engagement, and ability to perform professionally relevant communicative tasks. Furthermore, the study reveals a strong student preference for interactive and practice-oriented activities such as role-plays, simulations, debates, and case study analysis.

Communicative Language Teaching in ESP Contexts

ESP is not merely a category or subcategory of language teaching, but a comprehensive approach well-supported by the combination of linguistic, cognitive, and disciplinary knowledge. Dudley-Evans and St John define ESP according to its absolute and variable characteristics, focusing primarily on specific learner needs, its use of discipline-specific methodologies, and its emphasis on relevant language features (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Highland further elaborates that ESP involves not only the acquisition of specialized vocabulary but also the mastery of discourse conventions, rhetorical structures, and communicative practices specific to academic and professional communities. Thus, ESP instruction must move beyond surface-level language teaching and engage with the deeper epistemological frameworks of the disciplines it serves (Highland, 2006).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) constitutes the methodological backbone of contemporary ESP instruction. Rooted in the functional view of language, CLT posits that language is primarily a tool for communication rather than a system of rules to be memorized.

Berns conceptualizes language as social interaction, highlighting the importance of context, purpose, and participant roles in shaping communicative behavior. From this perspective, language learning is most effective when learners are actively engaged in meaningful interaction that reflects real-world communicative demands (Berns, 1990).

It is generally accepted that communicative activities are great opportunities for learning. But what goes in to making a communicative activity a success? The truth is, the success of communicative pair and group work activities is almost always determined by the work the teacher does before the students begin the activity itself. This includes both what is done by the teacher before the class starts and what is done in class to set up the task.

Before looking at the role of the teacher, it might be worth clarifying what is meant by "communicative activities". These are fluency-based activities. While such activities may involve students practicing a particular grammatical form, they are likely to do more than this. The key element is that the activity is based around a realistic situation. This could be anything from an encounter in a department store, to a group of friends discussing holiday plans. Within this kind of context, the students should be required to negotiate for meaning. This is likely to require multiple turn taking.

Communicative activities often throw up language needs for which the class work has not prepared the students. Writing out a sample dialogue can often highlight these needs. It can also enable the teacher to get a sense of potential demands/pitfalls in the activity. This kind of planning allows the teacher to identify potentially useful conversational

gambits, and to consider what is needed to ensure a reasonably natural flow to the conversation.

CLT emphasizes the development of communicative competence, a multidimensional construct encompassing grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. In ESP settings, this competence must be contextualized within the specific communicative practices of the target discipline.

Communicative activities occupy a central role in ESP pedagogy, as they provide learners with opportunities to use language in meaningful and contextually relevant ways. These activities are designed to simulate real-life situations, thereby bridging the gap between classroom learning and professional practice.

The effectiveness of communicative activities lies in their ability to create a genuine need for communication. Unlike traditional exercises that focus on form, communicative tasks prioritize meaning and interaction, encouraging learners to negotiate meaning, express opinions, and collaborate with peers. So, communicative activities serve as a core component of ESP. A wide range of communicative activities can be employed in ESP classrooms, which can be highly effective in teaching International Relations and Psychology students. For this purpose information-gap activities are very effective in international relations' group as they require learners to exchange information in order to complete a task, thereby promoting interaction and negotiation of meaning.

Role-plays and simulations are particularly valuable in both International relations and Psychology groups, as they allow students to enact professional scenarios such as diplomatic negotiations or psychological consultations. These activities foster not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic and interpersonal skills.

Case studies are especially relevant for Psychology students, enabling them to analyze real or hypothetical situations and apply theoretical knowledge in a communicative framework.

Debates and discussions are highly effective for International Relations students, as they develop critical thinking, argumentation skills, and the ability to articulate complex ideas.

The shift toward communicative methodologies necessitates a redefinition of the teacher's role. Rather than serving as the primary source of knowledge, the teacher functions as a facilitator, organizer, and guide.

The teacher is responsible for designing meaningful tasks, providing appropriate scaffolding, and creating an environment conducive to interaction. Additionally, the teacher must balance the need for fluency development with the provision of corrective feedback, ensuring that learners achieve both accuracy and communicative effectiveness.

Other important components of ESP instruction are activities that develop listening and speaking skills. The latter is a fundamental component of communicative competence, particularly in professional contexts where accurate comprehension is essential. Contemporary research views listening as an active, interpretive process that involves both bottom-up and top-down mechanisms.

Bottom-up processing involves decoding linguistic input, while top-down processing relies on background knowledge and contextual cues. Effective ESP instruction must integrate both processes, enabling learners to develop comprehensive listening skills.

Speaking in ESP contexts encompasses a range of communicative functions, including interaction, transaction, and performance. Interaction talk involves social communication and relationship building; talk as transaction focuses on the exchange of information; and talk as performance refers to structured presentations and public speaking.

For students of International Relations and Psychology, ESP courses provide practical language skills that support academic research and professional interaction. For students of International Relations, communicative competence is essential for engaging in diplomatic discourse, negotiating

agreements, and participating in international forums. ESP instruction should therefore emphasize activities that simulate real-world political and diplomatic contexts. On the other hand psychology students require proficiency in academic reading, writing, and professional communication, where ESP courses should focus on developing skills related to research analysis, case study discussion, and academic presentation. According to Swales and Feak successful participation in academic communities requires mastery of rhetorical conventions and organizational patterns characteristic of academic discourse (Swales and Feak, 2012) The following methodological approaches are central to ESP instruction. The methodology focuses on teaching English that is directly connected to the professional needs of learners and is based on several important principles such as needs analysis, learner-centered instruction, authentic materials, and task-based learning. Researchers such as T. Dudley-Evans and M. St. John emphasize that ESP courses should be designed to meet the specific academic and professional needs of learners (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

Needs analysis is considered to help teachers identify the specific language requirements of learners and design appropriate teaching materials. As for instance for International Relations students, English is required for diplomatic negotiations, international conferences, policy analysis and political discussions.

For Psychology students, English is required for reading psychological research articles, writing academic papers, presenting research results, discussing case studies.

ESP teaching emphasizes **a learner-centered approach**, where students actively participate in discussions, presentations, and professional simulations. This approach encourages students to use language in meaningful contexts and supports the development of communicative competence. According to Jack C. Richards, learner-centered teaching helps students become more independent and motivated language learners (Richards, 2001).

The use of **authentic materials** is an important element of ESP methodology because they expose learners to real academic and

professional contexts. For International Relations students such materials may include diplomatic speeches, international agreements, policy reports and political analyses. For Psychology students, authentic resources may consist of scholarly journal articles, case study reports, and research summaries.

Through the use of these materials learners become familiar with discipline-specific discourse and vocabulary (Hyland, 2006).

Task-Based Learning is widely used in ESP courses because it allows students to practice language through realistic professional tasks. According to David Nunan, task-based learning focuses on the completion of meaningful tasks that reflect real-world language use (Nunan, 2004). For International Relations students these are diplomatic negotiations, debates on global political issues, writing policy reports and for Psychology students- presenting research findings, analyzing case studies or discussing ethical issues in psychology.

Mixed-methods approach such as theoretical analysis, comparative analysis, classroom observation and student survey is also studied among IR and Psychology undergraduates and shown very effective in communicative ESP instruction. Each of these functions should be systematically integrated into ESP curricula under specific pedagogical approach.

The findings reveal that communicative ESP instruction has a positive impact on student motivation and language proficiency. Students reported increased confidence in using English for professional purposes and expressed a strong preference for interactive learning activities.

Notably, International Relations students favored debates and simulations, while Psychology students showed greater interest in case studies and research-oriented tasks. These differences highlight the importance of tailoring ESP instruction to disciplinary needs such as incorporate communicative and task-based approaches, utilize authentic materials, address discipline-specific communication needs, promote learner autonomy and interaction. According to Diane Belcher, ESP programs

help bridge the gap between language learning and professional practice (Belcher, 2009).

The findings of this study provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of communicative ESP methodologies in higher education. The high percentage of students favoring interactive activities confirms the central assumption of communicative language teaching: that language is best acquired through meaningful use.

The data also highlight the importance of discipline-specific adaptation. While both groups benefit from communicative approaches, their preferences differ according to academic needs. This supports Hyland's assertion that ESP must be tailored to specific discourse communities (Hyland, 2006).

Furthermore, the improvement in students' confidence and fluency suggests that communicative activities not only enhance linguistic competence but also contribute to psychological factors such as motivation and self-efficacy.

The relatively low preference for traditional exercises indicates a shift away from teacher-centered instruction toward more dynamic and learner-centered approaches.

In sum, ESP courses help students develop these skills through activities such as research presentations, report writing, and critical discussion of professional texts. It has become increasingly important in higher education because it prepares students for professional communication in international environments.

Conclusion

In conclusion we can state that the study investigated the role of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in higher education. This study investigated the role of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in higher education, with particular emphasis on communicative teaching strategies applied to students of International Relations and Psychology. The study examined key ESP principles, including needs analysis, learner-centered instruction, task-based learning, and the use of authentic materials.

Furthermore, this study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining theoretical analysis with empirical data collected through surveys and classroom observations. A mixed-methods research design, allows for a comprehensive analysis of ESP teaching practices and their effectiveness in real classroom settings. A mixed-methods research design was employed, combining theoretical analysis with empirical data collected through surveys and classroom observations, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of ESP teaching practices and their effectiveness in real classroom settings. The findings demonstrate that communicative ESP instruction significantly enhances students' motivation, engagement, and professional communication skills. Classroom observations indicated that students generally prefer interactive learning formats and report increased confidence in professional communication, though individual responses vary according to language level and personality.

The paper concludes with pedagogical recommendations aimed at improving ESP curriculum design and highlights the importance of communicative competence in preparing students for global professional environments.

Based on the findings, several important implications can be drawn:

- ESP courses should prioritize interactive and task-based learning
- Teachers should incorporate discipline-specific communicative tasks
- Authentic materials should be systematically integrated
- Classroom environments should promote active participation and collaboration
- Assessment should include performance-based tasks

This study also demonstrates that communicative ESP teaching methodologies play a crucial role in developing professional language competence among university students. By aligning instruction with learners' academic and professional needs, ESP enhances both motivation and practical communication skills.

The results confirm that students benefit significantly from interactive, context-based learning environments. For disciplines such as International Relations and Psychology, where communication is central to professional

success, ESP provides essential tools for effective participation in global contexts. ESP represents a dynamic and highly relevant approach to language teaching in higher education. By aligning instructional practices with learners' professional needs and emphasizing communicative competence, ESP contributes significantly to students' academic and professional success.

References

1. Belcher, D. (2009). *English for specific purposes in theory and practice*. University of Michigan Press. Ann Arbor, MI, USA, 336 P.
2. Berns, M. (1990) *Context of Competence: Social and Cultural Considerations in Communicative Language Teaching*. Plenum Press, New York, USA, 250p.
3. Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in ESP*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 301p.
4. Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for specific purposes: A learning-centered approach*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 183p.
5. Hyland, K. (2006). *English for academic purposes*. Routledge, London, UK/ New York, USA, 363p.
6. Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 222p.

7. Swales, J., & Feak, C. (2012). *Academic writing for graduate students*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI, USA, 408p.
8. Richards, J. C. (2001). *Curriculum development in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 321p.