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UNIT I

English Structure and Function: An ESP Perspective

What kind of knowledge does a student need to be able to have a conversation in English?

How do people actually use conversation to get things done, pursue relationships and negotiate various kinds of knowledge?

1.1. Introduction

In the last twenty century, scientific interdisciplinary research has evolved due to information and communication technologies along with development of Internet.

This has given rise to communicative situations, new cultural models, new varieties of English language, discourse and a flurry of new terminology and phraseology.

The English language has a dual function: it communicates **ideational meaning**, in terms of the information and ideas expressed, and at the same time it also communicates **interpersonal meaning** (Halliday, 2014), expressing the degree of friendliness, or status difference. In addition, language takes meanings from the context in which it is used, and in spoken language in particular the distinctions between language and context, and language and culture, begin to blur. Anthropologists have demonstrated that, to interpret language, a student draws on a considerable amount of cultural as well as linguistic knowledge. The function and connotation of any conversational exchange involves the student to know the values and expectations about language held by those speakers in a particular context. The perception of the world depends on ideologies. The concept of power constrains our language use and, therefore,

communication with others. The notion of **context**, accounting for the situatedness of talk or text requires relevant properties of participants and their social identities, roles, and relations as well as social actions performed in such a situation.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was born in the 1960s as a technical text-analysis area. The study of language use over language form strengthened at the end of the decade and materials development became a popular trend. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the consolidation of the movement in the emphasis on language skills and booming research.

The field of ESP, which addresses the communicative needs and practices of professional or occupational groups, has developed rapidly in the past forty years to become a major force in English language teaching and research. In the years since, ESP has consistently been at the cutting-edge of both theory development and innovative practice in applied linguistics, making a significant contribution to our understanding of the varied ways language is used by communities. Drawing on a range of interdisciplinary influences for its research methods, theory, and practices, ESP has consistently provided grounded insights into the structures and meanings of texts, the demands placed by academic or workplace contexts on communicative behaviors, and the pedagogic practices by which these behaviors can be developed. Considering that change is a constant in our globalized world, where the need for cross-cultural communication increases, ESP, will continue to build on its history by tracing its path in the years to come.

In ESP instruction, the professor plays a central role in recognizing the significance of pre-reading activities for facilitating comprehension. Such activities are essential in activating learners' prior knowledge and constructing relevant background information, thereby enabling new material to be more effectively integrated into the learners' existing cognitive frameworks.

Text comprehension is extensively regarded as an interactive process involving the background knowledge of readers and the information to be comprised within the lines of the text. Consequently, the responsibility of the teacher is to provide adequate linguistic and contextual support through the strategic implementation of pre-reading tasks. These tasks may include vocabulary pre-teaching, pre-questioning techniques, and the use of visual or pictorial context. Through these strategies, students are guided to activate relevant schemata necessary for effective interpretation and meaningful engagement with the text, thus contributing to the development in point of critical thinking skills.

ESP consists of English language teaching that is, as follows:

- ◆ designed to meet the needs of students;
- ◆ related in content theme or purpose;
- ◆ centered on the language- analysis of discourse, syntax, semantics.

The characteristics of ESP:

- ◆ authentic material
- ◆ purpose-related orientation
- ◆ self-direction

The students are to record as many details as possible and to carry out supplementary reading that pertains to the lecture topics.

The information age the world lives in has determined bilingual and multilingual communication to become a significant issue in our modern society where language plays a special role in the transmission of specialized knowledge. It is important to remember that U.S. leadership after the Second World War greatly influenced international relations and English started to be considered as "Lingua Franca" (ELF), namely the language of international communication. ELF is less a fixed *variety and more a process of*

accommodation, which, though it may display some recurrent features, remains in constant flux as speakers interact with each other.

Understanding English as a *lingua franca* is thus essential for students engaged in academic study, as it highlights the importance of communicative effectiveness, contextual awareness, and intercultural competence over native-like performance. Within this perspective, language learning becomes not merely the acquisition of linguistic forms, but the development of the ability to negotiate meaning, construct knowledge, and participate effectively in global academic discourse.

Within an ESP-oriented approach, this reconceptualization has direct pedagogical implications. Teaching and learning academic English involves raising students' awareness of genre conventions, disciplinary discourse practices, and the role of context in meaning-making, while encouraging flexibility, critical reflection, and strategic language use. In this sense, English as a *lingua franca* is not merely a tool for communication, but a central medium through which academic knowledge is produced, interpreted, and shared.

As English functions as a *lingua franca*, it becomes increasingly detached from exclusive associations with native-speaker communities. Research in English as ELF has emphasized that English in international contexts operates as a dynamic and adaptive communicative resource rather than as a fixed linguistic system (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins, 2015). Meaning in *lingua franca* communication is not simply encoded in linguistic forms, but is co-constructed through context, shared knowledge, and pragmatic negotiation (Mauranen, 2012).

The following aspects must be considered to raise the students' awareness of the linguistic system underlying a specific genre and to understand the structure of texts of a discipline:

- ◆ lexical and syntactical points as well as subject-specific terminology; nominal use; metaphorical use of words; iconic language; active vs passive use; modality; distinctive usual presence of verb tenses;

- ◆ discourse features, coherence and cohesion; intentionality; topicality; discursive organization; persuasive devices.

Determining the basic categories for each culture, whether any categories are universal or general, and how such contextual categories govern specific structures of text and talk is an empirical task – for example, when a power relation between participants influences the choice of personal pronouns, or when the speaker's knowledge of the recipient's background shapes the presupposition structure of the discourse. As each of the following concepts (professor, university, and student) one might need a vast amount of further information in order to account for the specificities of discourse production, for example, time periods, types of agents, institutions and their relevant properties and actions. Local level information is always active because it needs to control all current discourse structures, whereas global level information may be backgrounded and activated when needed at certain moments in discourse production. The perception of the world depends on ideologies. The concept of power constrains the language use and, therefore, the communication with others. Without an understanding (i.e., apperception) of how rapport and interlocution work, there is little chance of knowing how to function effectively or of improving intra- or intercultural relations.

1.2. Context and meaning

In a broad sense, context may include the following overlapping elements, all of which influence how particular words and phrases are used and interpreted:

- the relation between speakers
- their past shared experience, and current conversational goals
- the social events of which the conversation is a part
- broader cultural values and expectations.