**People' s Democratic Republic of Algeria**

**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

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**Introduction to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) : Lectures for Third-Year LMD/ Semester 2 Students/Semester**

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**10. The Specialized Discourse**

**Objectives:** This lesson seeks to present the notion of the “specialized discourse” and its corresponding terms: distinctive features , discourse community and the communicative purposes.

Knowledge of the specialized discourse is of great importance to the ESP practitioner. The knowledge of the distinctive features of a special domain will give insights into how to teach it.

**10.1.Definition of the Specialized Discourse**

The specialized discourse (SD) is a discourse related to a special domain. It can be spoken or written. A specialized discourse can be called “ a professional language” “special language” It has characteristics that guarantee its distinctiveness from other types of Englishes. Sicentific English Medical English Business English …etc. are examples of specialized discourses. The knowledge of the specialized discourse will provide insights into how the specialized discourse will be taught to a group of ESP learners.

* 1. **The Distinctive Features of the Specialized Discourse**

Investigating the specialized discourse should be conducted on different levels of the language. The distinctiveness and differences are shown on different linguistic levels: lexical level, syntactic level grammatical level and discourse level. The features are resulted from the statistical operations realized on the different spoken or written texts. Features are taught to ESP learners and to the community of practice so as to use them while producing their own texts. Those distinctive features develop to have the status of conventions especially in the highly specialized domains. Certain specialized domains develop a highly technical language called a jargon which is most of the time impenetrable and difficult for the non-initiated.

**10.3.The Discourse Community and The Community of Practice**

The two terms can be used interchangeably. According to Swales (2016:9) “a discourse community is a group of people who share a set of discourses, understood as basic values and assumptions, and ways of communicating about their goals.”.<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discourse_community>, cited in Swales, 2016: 9) .

Being a member of any discourse community then implies to respect the conventions set by the group. The mastery of those conventions will help in producing texts widely accepted by the audience of the same discourse community. According to Swales, there are six defining characteristics to a discourse community. He states that

A discourse community:   
1) has a broadly agreed set of common public goals;   
2) has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members;   
3) uses its participatory mechanisms to provide information and feedback;   
4) utilizes and possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims;   
5) In addition to owning genres, it has acquired some specific lexis;   
6) has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discoursal expertise**.** (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discourse_community>, cited in Swales, 2016: 9)

**10.4. The Communicative Purposes of SD**

Each specialized discourse ensures a number of communicative purposes shared and set by the members of the discourse community. Communicative purposes are the final tasks to be performed via using language . They are of both types spoken and written language related tasks such as writing laboratory reports, pilot-to- air traffic controller conversation, writing grant proposals, maintaining a business negotiation …etc. Both parties senders( writers or speakers) and audience or receivers ( readers or listeners) have to belong to the same, or at least to a related, discourse community so as to achieve the target communicative purposes.

**Tasks:**

* Why is it important to get knowledge about the specialized discourse by ESP teachers ?
* Mention four discourse communities and provide five communicative purposes for each one of them.
* What levels of language are the indicators of the specialized discourse distinctiveness?

1. **Scientific English**

**Objectives:** This lesson defines the Scientific English and presents its types and its different communicative purposes.

Scientific English (SE) is also called English for Science and Technology (EST). The two terms are often used interchangeably even though they are different. The former refers to the texts whether spoken or written that belong to the domain of science whereas the latter refers to the English to be used in ESP teaching and learning.

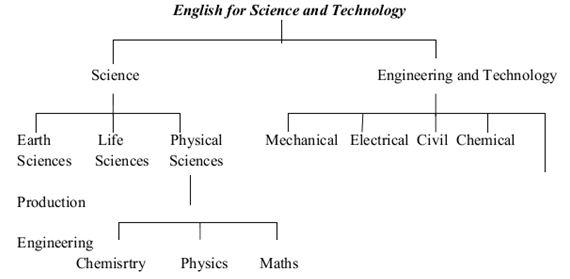
Science contains different domains such as medicine, biology, physics. Each domain can be divided into different sub-domains and the sub-domains can be also divided into other sub-domains and so on. The subdomains can have similar features with the main one, however each subdomain has its own linguistic uniqueness which makes it distinctive from the rest of the kinds. For example in English for Aviation ( main domain), we can find many subdomains such as English for Aeronautics, English for Pilots, English for Cabin Crew (Flight Attendants), English for Ground Crew, English for Mechanics, English for Aviation Business Executives, English for ATCs (Air traffic Controllers), English for Aircraft Engineers and Ground Maintenance, English fir Airport Security Officers…etc.

* 1. **Definition of Scientific English**

According to Robinson, there is though broad agreement that scientific English is general English plus the extra components of science. (Robinson 1980 p:17). This means that the SEE is not a totally new invented language. It shares the same rules of grammar, syntax…etc with the general English. However, the scientific English of some domains has a special English with special constructions that do not respect the language rules of general English.

According to Robinson 1991, “…the general conclusion…is that “science” is not a homogeneous linguistic entity, that the writer’s purpose and audience rather than the topic are the determinants of linguistic forms.” (p 24). The difference between SE and GE is also signaled by Strevens. He states that “the differences between scientific language and general language can be explained not in terms of the basic components of the language, but in terms of…the statistical properties of the mixture in which they occur, and the intention, the purpose behind their selection and use”. (Strevens, 1977: 153).

Kennedy and Bolitho (1984) claimed that EST contributed in the development of ESP since English was required by scientists and technologists.. EST can be furthermore divided into sub-branches, as Swales’ diagram below explains:



**Figure 15: Subcategories of EST (Swales. 1988, p. 89)**

* 1. **Communicative Purposes of Scientific English**

Scientific English also refers to the different writings of different genres. Goldbort (2006) stated that “the geneticist Bentley Glass observed that there are “at least five distinct obligations” shared by scientists in their professional communication:

• publishing their methods and findings truthfully, clearly, and fully so that they can be verified and extended by fellow researchers;

• disseminating their findings more widely through abstracting and indexing media;

• writing critical reviews that synthesize current knowledge in their field;

• sharing their knowledge and its practical implications with the public;

• teaching what they know to future generations of scientists.”

Goldbort (2006 p:04)

We can deduce that scientists write to achieve different communicative purposes. Therefore, the norms and standards of writing each special genre is tied by rules set by the community of practice of each domain.

**11.3. Types of Scientific English**

There are three main types of scientific English. These types are based on the type of relation that exists between the writer and his/her audience

**11.3.1. Scientific Language**

It is also known as expert-to-expert-communication. In this type, both senders and receivers are experts in their domain. The texts belonging to this type are characterized by having a high degree of abstraction and a high proportion of standardized terminology.

The communicative purpose shared by the community of practice of this type is to develop and refine the general knowledge of the domain.

**11.3.2. Practically Oriented Discourse**

This type is concerned with the expert-to-expert-communication while solving practical problems occurring in their daily work. This kind of discourse can be found in daily laboratory works conducted by scientists such as running experiments and collecting data. This type is less formal than the first one.

**11.3.3. Discourse of Popular Science and Domain-Oriented Didactics**

In this type of discourse, the sender-receiver relations are always asymmetric. The sender has a higher degree of relevant knowledge than the receiver (s). Examples of this types of discourse are: communication between experts and consumers (e.g., in manuals) and between experts and novices (e.g., in textbooks) as well as the communication of domain-specific knowledge in magazines for popular science. The purpose of this kind of communication is to convey structured knowledge of the domain to receivers who lack this knowledge.

**Tasks:**

* What makes scientific English different from General English?
* How can the relationship between senders and receivers decide about the types of SE?

1. **. Linguistic Features of Scientific English**

**Objectives:** This lesson aims at presenting the distinctive features of scientific English. It will also equip students with expertise to conduct their own investigation of the distinctive features of other specialized discourses.

**12.1.The Distinctive Features of Scientific English**

The distinctiveness of Scientific English compared to General English is shown through different levels: the lexical , the syntactic, the discourse and stylistic levels.

* + 1. **The Lexical Level**

Scientific English is characterized by the lexical density since the number of lexical items is higher than the number of the grammatical ones. Most scientific terminology has Latin or Greek origins.

Scientific English also uses high level of style. “diglossic character” of English was raised by Crystal, D (2004), in which he presents “low” and “high” levels of style. Some examples are shown on table 06 below.

**Table 06 :** Examples of “low” and “high” Levels of Style

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **General Concept** | **Scientific Term** |
| -Sth is shapeless  -sleeplessness  -give  - look for | -it is amorphous  - Insomnia  - Provide  - Search |

The demand for high degree of nominalization in the scientific language is signalled by Briones et al (2003). According to them the use of noun compounds (NCs) fulfills the following functions:

- Objectivity: The use of NCs aims at presenting the information in less personal way because of the exclusion of the personal pronouns and modal verbs.

- Thematic Progression: The rheme of a clause functions as the theme of the following. Therefore, focus will be on NCs

- Synthesis: longer phrasal constructions will be reduced by using NCs. This will make scientific language more compact.

- Concise referencing: Long descriptions will be avoided using NCs because nominalizations act as a powerful referent in discourse and serve as ad hoc names for concepts.

- Summary: NCs are used to sum up the longer sections.

**12.1.2. The Grammatical Level**

The scientific discourse is characterized by the following grammatical features.

1. **Pronoun References**

SD avoids the use of personal pronouns . The impersonal scientific style can be obtained by passive versus active wording or by replacing ‘I’ and ‘We’ with ‘it’ or ‘there’.To avoid personal references, we also often make substitutions like “this paper suggests” instead of “we wish to suggest” and “ The data in this study show” instead of “Our data show.”Impersonal scientific style can also be obtained through the use of **It** and **There. E.g.**

It is essential…./ There are a number of reasons…

1. **Passive versus Active Wording.**

The use of passives aims at putting important information and ideas in an initial position. Passive voice is used to avoid personal references. The passive voice maintains objectivity in the scientific documents since focus will be on the action itself rather than on other elements. Choice of active or passive forms by writers of the scientific discourse must be in relation to such factors as: agency, logic, readability, focus, emphasis and consistency.

1. **Precision in Tense Usage**

The appropriate use of verb tense in different parts of a scientific document increases the precision and the objectivity of scientific writings. **-** Verb tenses are an important means of differentiating between the reporting of experimental observations (performed in the past) and their discussion (which includes present commentary).

**-** Conclusions about the research may be in the present tense, but those that generalize a finding should be kept in the past tense

- Statements in the past tense generally are more rigorous scientifically. The regular The present simple tense is widely used in the scientific discourse. The use of present tense is more appropriate in discussions or in developments that include mathematical equations. The present tense is used for:

**- Scientific definitions:** e.g. “A generator is a machine that transforms mechanical

energy to electrical energy”.

**- Scientific rules**: e.g. “Like charges repel each other, unlike charges attract”.

**- Description of charts:** e.g. “Figure 3 shows the results of the research”.

**- Description of serial processes:** e.g. “A substantial horizontal thrust, provided by the jet or the propeller, drives the aircraft through the surrounding air, while the wing deflects downwards the mass of air flowing on to it”.

**d- Extensive use of non-finite verb phrases and non finite-clauses:**

1. **Complex sentence structure:** with more than one clause, often in complex degrees of dependency and with much embedding due to the long nominal groups. This makes the sentence fairly densely packed with information.
2. **Use of modals for hedging:** in making carefully weighted claims. For example the modal “may” reduces commitment.
3. **Avoidance of using contracted verb forms:**

Can’t cannot

Doesn’t does not

**12.1.3.** **Discourse and Style Levels**

The style of scientific writing should be simple and clear because of the nature of its purpose which is communicating complex information. The formal and objective style is adopted. Spoken negatives are to be avoided in the scientific writing. Clarity, brevity and precision should be achieved by using simple structures of sentences. There should be a smooth flow of ideas and a smooth transition between sentences and between paragraphs.

* 1. **Formulaic Language**

Some practical scientific domains use a type of language that is formulaic. A formulaic language is a ready-made phrases, expressions or sentences. According to Wary, formulaic language or the formulaic sequence is

“a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or

appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored, retrieved whole from memory at the

time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language

grammar”.

(Wray, A. 2002: 9)

Bybee (2006: 720) defines formulaic sequences “as a particular string grows more frequent, it comes to be processed as a unit, rather than through its individual parts. As it is accessed more and more as a unit, it grows autonomous from the construction that originally gave rise to it.”

The call for plainness in scientific English has given birth to theories interested in document readability. For example, the APA that gives guidelines of scientific writing is widely used in SE.

Readability formulas are designed to measure qualities of writing that comport with a scientific style, with simple, direct and concise wording. Stand-alone style and grammar checkers also had been marketed under such names as RightWriter, CorrectGrammar, Editor and Grammatik. These programmes use readability formulas, such as Flesch-kincaid, Dale-Chall, Spache, and Gunning, to measure the number of technical words, number of syllables, and length of sentences and paragraphs in a written work.

To know how readability formulas work, the Gunning Fox Index (GFI) is presented through these three simple steps.

* **Average Sentence Length ( ASL ):** Count the sentences in several 100-word samples and then divide the total word count by the sentence count.
* **Percentage of hard Words ( PHW ):** Count the words in your samples that have at least three (3) syllables, excluding proper names, simple compound words (eg: afternoon, humankind ), and verbs with three syllables due to –ed, -es, -ing endings ( eg: enriches, extruded )
* **Gunning Fox Index ( GFI ):** Add your ASL and PHW from the first two steps and multiply that sum by 0.4. For example, an ASL of 15 and a PHW of 21 adds up to 36, which when multiplied by 0.4, yields a GFI of 14.4.

The GFI value represents the document’s level of difficulty as a grade level which is in this case means that readers should have a grade of 14.4 or college sopho-more reading ability.

**Assignment:** Investigate the distinctive features of English for Biology.

**13. Business English**

**Objectives:** the lesson aims at introducingand presenting the distinctive features of Business English

**13.1. Definition of Business English (BE)**

Business English is one important branch of ESP; it is used by millions of people all over the world. It covers different domains such as finance, trade, business management,and marketing. Business English can refer to English used while conducting business works , or the subject taught at universities. In the Algerian context, it can be taught to students of Commerce branch , and students of Economy and Management branch

* 1. **Linguistic Features of Business English**

Business English is a specialized discourse. Therefore, the language of BE is pecular and distinctive. The distinctiveness is shown on lexical, grammatical, syntactic and discourse levels

**13.2.1. The Lexical Level**

The business English vocabulary is characterized by:

1. **The use of Abbreviation and the Specialization of Vocabulary**

Table 07 below presents examples of frequently used abbreviations in BE.

**Table 07 :** Abbreviations with Special Meaning Adapted from JIANG Yanxin(2015)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Word** | **Meaning** |
| C. W. O  B/L  L/C  W. P. A  C. O. D  D/A  T/T  D/D  FOB | cash with order  bill of lading  letter of credit  with particular average  cash on delivery  documents against acceptance  telegraphic transfer  documents against payment  free on board (bearing all costs by buyers and risks of loss of or damage to the goods |

Writing special types of documents related to business of export and import is a an important skill to be taught to BE students. These documents are: commercial invoice, bill of lading, insurance policy, customs invoice, draft/bill of exchange, inspection certificate, performa invoice, license certificate of origin, and packing list.

1. **The Formalization and Standardization of Vocabulary**

Because BE is widely used by a very large discourse community from numerous countries there should be a sort of standardization of terms. The formal and high standard of language is used as shown in table 08 below.

**Table 08**: High Standard of BE Vocabulary (Adapted from JIANG Yanxin 2015)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Low Standard** | **High Standard** |
| In spokn business discourse | * Go on * Add to * for * because * if * like | * Continue * - supplement * for the purpose of * on the grounds that * in the case of * in the event of |
| In written business discourse | -Buy  - begin  - tell  -need, want  -say  - enough | -Purchase  -commence  - inform  - require  - state  - sufficient |

1. **Polysemy, Compound and Borrowed Words**

Polysemy is having multiple meanings for on single word. It has a Greek origin: “Poly”means “many”, and “semy” means “meanings”. In BE many words have different meanings.Table 09 blow presents the different meanings of the word “Average” in BE

**Table 09:** Different Meanings of “Average” (Adapted from JIANG Yanxin 2015)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Word** | **Meanings** |
| Average | **-** an intermediate level of price  - the loss of a ship or cargo which is caused by damage at sea  **-** Sometimes used in the insurance industry |

Many compounds are widely used for example: “E-Commerce”, “online publishing”,

“cyber-marketing”, “network marketing”, “value-added service”. BE has witnessed also the appearance of new words (neologisms) such as “fallen angel” which means “a professional word of international financial field, which refers to the high prices of securities of a big company drop suddenly because of some negative news”. (JIANG Yanxin 2015: 31)

**13.2.2. Syntactic features of Business English**

Business English sentence tends to be concise and simple. Tightness and parallelism that exist in BE legal documents and contracts, is another feature of BE. The conciseness of Business English sentence is maintained by “the use of simple sentence, compound sentence, parallelism sentence and short ones. They play a very important role in disseminating business information quickly and effectively, avoiding being misunderstood.” (JIANG Yanxin 2015:31)

**13.2.3. Stylistic Features of Business English**

BE uses plain language with simple and concise sentences. Business English tends to use the formal style with high standard of language. Polite forms are often used. BE legal documents are characterized by the minimal use of punctuation.

**Assignment:** Investigate the distinctive features of English for Advertising.

1. **Legal English**

**Objectives :** By the end of the lesson, students will be equipped with the distinctive features that make the legal English unique.

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* 1. **Definition of Legal English (LE)**

Legal English is the English used by lawyers and other legal professionals such as advocates ,judges and legislators in the course of their work. It also refers to the English of Legal Documents and the English of Law. LE is difficult to understand for the non- initiated because of the use of great number of technical terminology.

* 1. **The Distinctive Features of Legal English**

LE is characterized by its linguistic uniqueness. The unusual use of language is shown on the different lexical, grammatical and discourse levels.

* + 1. **The Lexical Level**

In the Legal writing, there are a number of words and phrases from a Latin origin such as: “ad hoc”, “de facto”, “bona fide”, “inter alia”, and “ultra vires. LE also uses a mixed language resulted from the usage of pairs of words from different languages such as the following mixed language doublets: "breaking and entering" (English/French), "fit and proper"(English/French), "lands and tenements" (English/French), "will and testament" (English/Latin). LE also uses long and complicated noun phrases to compact a huge amount of information.

* + 1. **The Grammatical Level**

Particular structures of sentences are used in LE. Tightness and precision are very important features in LE, this is why, it uses declarative sentences with long and complex structures. LE also uses the passives and non-finite verbs. A special use of the modal “ shall” is also marked which indicates obligation.

* + 1. **The Discourse Level**

LE is characterized by the minimal use or absence of punctuation, absence of spacing and indentation. The Legal Discourse in its both forms, spoken or written texts, is highly structured and organized. Legal texts are numerous. Here are some examples of legal documents (contracts, licences, etc); court pleadings (summonses, briefs, judgments, etc.); laws ( Acts Of Parliament and subordinate legislation, case reports) and legal correspondence. Each text has its own characteristics and achieves the intended communicative purposes of the community of practice.

**Tasks:**

* What makes the Legal English difficult for the non-initiated and for those who do not belong to the Legal Discourse Community?
* List some types of legal documents.
* Investigate the distinctive features of “ The English of Press”.

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