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BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY USE IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

English for Specific Purposes (**ESP**) has a long history and has become increasingly popular since the 1960s [1, c. 9]. In the beginning, teachers often thought that in ESP courses, teaching specific vocabulary was their task. However, in many situations adult professionals know the technical terms related to their field much better than the teacher, who often does not know the field-specific terminology [8]. What learners need is to learn how to use those words in sentences, how to understand authentic texts with certain field-specific expressions, or how to communicate effectively in typical situations that arise in their jobs. This is why the analysis of needs, discourse genre, and linguistic corpora has become so important [5; 7] in ESP.

Just as in general English language teaching and learning, technology in its various forms has long been used in ESP, whether in the form of a tape recorder or sophisticated digital technology. ESP teachers have always used available tools to devise materials and create situations relevant to their students' needs [2]. However, technology's role in language learning in general, and in ESP in particular, has changed over time and significantly so in recent years. Not only has the view of learning changed with time, from the behaviourist to communicative to an integrative view, but technology has also evolved and become more ubiquitous in everyday life, and particularly in the professional world. Both of these have affected how technology is employed in ESP lessons.

There are many different technologies that are successfully used in ESP courses from the traditional tape recorder or CD player, to interactive whiteboards, ICT, Web 2.0 tools, mobile technologies and 3D virtual environments, etc. As ESP puts emphasis on the needs of learners, and authentic materials and tasks, IT has become a very suitable tool for ESP, allowing ESP learners to collaborate and engage in authentic communication in their professional discourse community, to access up-to-date information relevant to their profession, and to publish their ideas, which can all give them a sense of empowerment as learners.

Some benefits of technology in language learning are the same for ESP learners as for general English learners. For example, finding native speakers as learning or communication partners or reading or watching the news in the target language for those who do not have easy access to these locally. In lessons, teachers can bring the outside world into the classroom, provide authentic contexts in which English is used, expose students to different varieties and accents of English, and give students listening practice. But, whereas in general English lessons even the teachers themselves can be a valuable resource for listening, speaking and authentic language use, in many cases technology, whether, for example, in the form of videos or on the internet, is the only means for ESP students to access the specific language they need in order to communicate appropriately. Butler-Pascoe [4, c. 1] states that it is the 'hybrid nature of ESP', having to teach both the language and the 'field-specific content' that makes it challenging for teachers, who often do not have the field-specific knowledge to teach. Although it is not usually the case that teachers also have to teach the content, especially when teaching adult professionals, they do need to teach the field-specific language, which they might not always know, and which changes and develops over time.

When teaching professionals, the needs also go beyond the language itself; they also require the use of authentic tasks, tools, and context [3; 6]. According to Butler-Pascoe [4, c. 2], 'at least three primary models exist for delivering ESP instruction:

1. ESP taught by English teachers using field-specific content.
2. Field-specific courses taught by teachers in the disciplines using English as the language of instruction.
3. A collaborative model in which both English and field-specific teachers have joint input into the development and/or teaching of the course'

and 'innovative uses of today's technology' can play an important role in all three. Interestingly, Butler-Pascoe [4] mentions that, besides being used for teaching and learning ESP, the same technologies can also be used to help ESP teachers communicate with each other and their students.

Butler-Pascoe [4, c. 2–3] lists 14 advantages of technology for ESP:

1. Provides interaction and communicative activities representative of specific professional or academic environments.

2. Fosters understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of the language as practised in various fields and professions.

3. Provides comprehensible field-specific input and facilitates student production.

4. Provides sheltering strategies for language development and content-specific understanding (modelling, bridging to students' background experiences, contextualising, metacognitive activities, etc.).

5. Uses task-based and inquiry-based strategies reflective of tasks in discipline-specific settings and situations.

6. Uses authentic materials from specific disciplines and occupations.

7. Supplies authentic audiences, including outside experts in specific fields.

8. Supports cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills required in the disciplines.

9. Uses collaborative learning.

10. Facilitates focused practice for the development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills across the curriculum and disciplines.

11. Is student-centred and addresses specific needs of students.

12. Uses multiple modalities to support different learning styles.

13. Meets affective needs of students: motivation, self-esteem, and autonomy.

14. Provides appropriate feedback and assessment of content knowledge and English skills.

Whether they like technology or not, ESP teachers today cannot afford not to integrate technology into their courses, because technology plays an essential role in their learners' everyday professional lives, in which they need digital and electronic literacy skills to communicate internationally across cultural borders using different media, and to become autonomous learners who can keep up with the fast-paced professional world.

In ESP the reason for using technology is not only or always because it makes learning the language more effective or efficient, but also because it can offer tools that simulate real life work situations, while giving students the opportunity to acquire and practise essential 21st century professional skills.

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