6. Types of classes with respect to their content

When it comes to content, classes can be divided according to two broadest criteria, **the type of language being taught** (general or specific) and **the purpose** (general classes, conversational classes, exam classes, etc.)

Purpose-directed classes

The distinction to be made with respect to the type of adult classes is what purpose the class serves. As mentioned before, adult courses should undergo a detailed needs analysis and be supported by a strong course design. The distinction to be made here is the one between general English classes (here understood as classes with not specific purpose) on one hand, and the classes with a highly focused purpose, e.g. exam preparation classes, conversational classes and other types of classes specially tailored to meet learners needs.

General and specific language classes

General English: there are numerous definitions of general English each of them highlighting a different aspect or more aspects of teaching, learning or linguistics. A definition regarding the standard versus non-standard English is that general English is the English which is contrasted with a usage, variety, dialect, or register. E.g. Cockney is not general English. Another definition, regarding its users, states that General English is semi-technical term for a course in English, usually as a mother tongue within a framework of general education, usually teaching reading, listening, speaking and writing. In Linguistics, General English is a range of English that includes the standard but contrasts with specific accents and dialects. The last definition, the most relevant for the field of teaching methodology is that general English (also English for general purposes) is a term in language teaching for a broadly based, usually long-term EFL or ESL course, in contrast to English for Specific purposes.[1] It may be concluded that general English, and subsequently, a **general English class** is a type of English class where general (non-specific) grammar and vocabulary is taught. It is the class where language skills are taught in and for general, everyday use. As compared to ESP class, a General English class has more freedom. General English classes are designed to build and improve general English skills.

As opposed to general English classes, another type of classes are the **business** and so-called **ESP classes** (English for Specific Purposes). The term business English and English for specific purposes are sometimes used interchangeably, especially in such cases when both of them are distinguished from general English classes. ESP classes share some common characteristics with business English classes in that both business and ESP classes require teaching of a specific range of vocabulary and both types rely on using English in specific environments. On the contrary, some methodologists state that to use the terms business classes and ESP classes interchangeably is quite a common misconception as both types of classes use a different range of vocabulary, may require different skills and are designed to meet different requirements of students. For the purpose of this book, the two types of English classes will be put in one

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[1] https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/general-english

category – **Business and ESP classes**. Then, ESP is an advanced approach to language teaching in which all the choices related to the content and strategy are supported on the learner's reason for learning. A class may be considered a business and / or ESP when has the below characteristics:

ESP class is designed for mature learners in an expert work situation. [2]
ESP is usually designed for intermediate (B1) level and above.
ESP class is all based on learner's requirement, inspiration related to job.
ESP class has particular range and use of vocabulary
ESP class uses different tactics to accomplish its target
ESP class is often used for e-commerce or business communication purposes.

Needs Analysis and ESP Course Design

Needs analysis is often considered the most important part of ESP course design. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) in Richards and Burns 2012[3] believe that what distinguishes ESP from general English is the awareness of a need. **Two key components** of a needs analysis are **target needs** and **learning needs**. A target situation analysis looks at the learner's future roles in English and attempts to specify the linguistic skills and knowledge that is required for them to perform competently in these roles. A learning situation analysis examines what the learners can do at the beginning of the course, as well as information on their subjective, felt and process-oriented needs. Needs, then, is an umbrella term. It includes necessities, lacks, and wants.
Necessities is need determined by the target situation, that is, what the learner needs to know and be able to do to function effectively in the target situation.
Lacks consider what the learner knows and can do already as well as the gap between target and existing proficiency.
Wants is the learner's views of what they need.
There is a number of ways of gathering information about needs. One of these is to carry out a review of the published literature for previous needs analyses, research data, and materials that can be used to inform the analysis. A further strategy is to talk to colleagues who may have experience with similar groups of learners as well as former students, employers, and sponsors. Data on the learners can be obtained through the use of surveys, questionnaires, as well as by looking at past study records and assessments of their language proficiency. It is also important to analyse, if possible, examples of sample texts the students are required to produce. While it is not possible (or necessary) to use all of these data collection methods, it is important to use several approaches to gathering this information, rather than just one. Multiple sources add both breadth and depth to an analysis. They also offer important way of validating the findings obtained from each of these sources (Long 2005) in (Richards and Burns 2012).

Language and ESP Teaching

In 1987, Hutchinson and Waters famously said "the fact that language is used for a specific purpose does not imply that it is a special form of the language, different in kind from other forms." English for Specific Purposes they argued is "not a matter of Science words and grammar for scientists, hotel words and grammar for hotel staff and so on". This view has

[2] http://www.writeawriting.com/writers/what-is-the-difference-between-esp-and-general-english/
[3] BURNS, A., RICHARDS, C. R.: Pedagogy and Practice in Second Language Teaching, Cambridge University Press 2012

subsequently been refuted by researchers working in the areas of corpus studies and genre analysis. Biber (1988) in Richards and Burns (2012), for example, in a large-scale corpus study found a wide range of linguistic variation within the genres he examined, some of which he describes as "surprising and contrary to popular expectation" (Biber 1988). Biber's (2002) conclusion is that "different kinds of texts are complex in different ways (in addition to being more or less complex)", and that many earlier conclusions that have been reached about specific purposes language "reflect our incomplete understanding of the linguistic characteristics of discourse complexity". Hyland (2002, 2004) equally argues for specificity in ESP teaching. His research has shown how the use of language varies in terms of rhetorical patterns and linguistic features across disciplines, especially in their written genres. These language differences, then, need to be accounted for in special purposes teaching.

Some facts from the history of ESP

The term ESP emerged more than 50 years ago. The notion of a language for specific job-related purposes appeared in the 60s and in early 70s of the 20th century and was connected with the pioneering research of Halliday, MacIntosh and Strevens (1964). According to Hutchinson and Waters 1087 (in Jendrych 2013) there were three main reasons for emerging of all varieties of ESP: The demands of the new WWII, a revolution in Linguistics, and a focus shift from the teacher to the learner.[4] A significant discovery in that time was that the ways which we speak a language and write in a language vary. The significance of this discovery was that, as a result of these variations in language use, language teaching could be tailored to both spoken and written professional situations. In the late 1960s and early 1970s there were first attempts to teach English for Science and Technology (EST). It was the first variety of language for specific purposes that received scientific attention. Another significant discovery came from the psychology of learning – the research showed that another focus shift was needed – the shift from language delivery to language acquisition. Focus on learner's needs was as important as the methodology of language teaching.

Questions

1. What is the difference between a general and a specific class with respect to their content?
2. Define general English from different perspectives
3. What does the abbreviation ESP stand for? Describe this type of class with respect to its content, approach and needs analysis.
4. Give an outline of the history of ESP
5. Comment on the special treatment of language and vocabulary in an ESP class.
6. Characterize General English and contrast it with ESP.
7. Is there a difference between Business English and ESP? What are some of the possible perspectives of looking at this problem?
8. Name and explain 6 characteristics of Business/ESP class
9. What are the two components in ESP classes needs analysis? Briefly explain each of them.
10. What components does a learning situation analysis contain? (3)

Case study

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[4] JENDRYCH, E.: Developments in ESP Teaching in Studies in Logic, Grammar and Rhetoric 34 (47), Kozminski University, Warsaw 2013

You are a self-employed teacher planning to deliver ESP classes (of your choice). Your students are at B1 level and your contract is for 30 lessons (60 min each). Suggest teaching materials for your new class. Your students are quite strong in grammar (they just need occasional practice). More importantly, they lack vocabulary in the field (of your choice). Explain your choice of teaching materials and preference over the other teaching materials that you decided not to use.