A Journal On
English For Specific Purposes

Selected papers from:
Fourth International Language for Specific Purposes Seminar, 2003. 'LSP in Practice: Responding to Challenges'

Volume 9
2003
Aims of the journal – *ESP Malaysia* is a refereed journal dedicated to the investigation, teaching and learning of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It hopes to provide a much-needed forum for ESP practitioners to exchange research findings, experience and views on matters related to the use of ESP.

Articles are invited from all ESP practitioners in the following areas: Research in any ESP-related areas, ESP teaching methodology, reports on ESP courses, projects, ‘techniques that work’, course and materials design, testing and evaluation, book reviews and other areas contributing to the development of ESP.

To submit manuscripts:

Mail to : The Editor  
ESP Malaysia  
Department of Modern Languages  
Faculty of Management and Human Resource Development  
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia  
81310 UTM Skudai, Johor  
MALAYSIA

Fax to : 607-5566911

E-mail to : espmalaysia@yahoo.co.uk
CONTENTS

Editorial i

Ridwan Abdul Wahid Writing on the Job: A Study of Two 'Mud' Engineers 1 - 23

Zaidah Zainal The Effect of Text Sources on Reading Comprehension 25 - 42

Jariah Mohd. Jan E-mail Communication at Workplace: Implication for ESP Practitioners 43 - 73
Chong Wei Yee

A.H. Abdul Raof An Empirical Approach Towards Developing a Performance Rating Scale: From Research to Practice 75 - 94

Wen-shuenn Wu A Quantitative Study of University Students' Collocational Competence in an ESP Context 95 - 119

Jayapragas Gnaniah English for Professional Purposes Through Integrated Problem-Based E-Learning: A Proposal 121 - 146

Norizan Abdul Razak IT Training for ESP Practitioners: A Newfound Direction 147 - 156

With Compliments From

ESP Malaysia

Department of Modern Languages
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
81310 UTM Skudai, Johor
E-mail Communication at the Workplace: Implication for ESP Practitioners

Jariah Mohd. Jan
University of Malaya

Chong Wei Yee
Taylor’s College

Abstract - The emergence of English as a global language for business and information technology created the need for a shift from the traditional language teaching which emphasises on general English to the new approach of language teaching that addresses the immediate need of the learner in mastering language for specific purposes. The scope of general English is quite extensive for learners as they are expected to learn every aspect of the language without considering the specific learning context and therefore, it is like learning language in a vacuum.

The aim of this study is to investigate the language used in e-mail communication at the workplace in order to provide new insights to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) practitioners and to develop English language modules related to genre-based methodology for the appropriate use of e-mail messages.

The tri-strata concept (field-mode-tenor) developed by Martin (1997) is used as a model to analyse the data. The findings of this study suggest that the different types of power relation (downward/ upward/ horizontal communication) determine the writer’s choice of language. As such, the appropriate language use in e-mail communication will result in effective e-mail writing and contribute to greater professionalism at the workplace.

Introduction

The emergence of English as a global language for business and information technology is a catalytic reaction from the rapid growth of e-mail communication in the international business organisations. English is undoubtedly the main medium of communication that runs
this electronic channel, as e-mail was basically the result of American technology. Therefore, the need to investigate and highlight the specific language features and functions of e-mail language is inevitable for the advancement of English for Business Purposes (ESP) research.

In this study, the researcher attempts to relate the principle of English for Occupational Purpose (EOP), specifically English for Business Purposes (EBP) to the study by mapping the root and development of ESP. As the foundation of ESP is subject-specific, the focus of this study is for occupational purpose that relates to the use of e-mail communication at the workplace. In particular, it looks at how the language of administration is used in e-mail communication in order to carry out specific administrative duties in a particular college.

It is argued that the scope of General English is too extensive for learners. English varies according to subject matter and in this sense, it is indeed a task for learners to master English across all disciplines. Therefore, the concept of ESP is introduced to overcome the demands of the extensiveness of English. ESP assumes that the learner can use English in a particular setting without learning every aspect of the language in every subject.

**English Language and Electronic Mail in the Business Context**

The extensive growth of international business in recent years has prompted a greater need for an international language for business and new technologies to reduce the geographical constraints. The role of English as an international language has become more significant with the expansion of information highway for business communication.

In the business context, time is often equated with money and therefore electronic mail has become the preferred means of communication at the workplace. This electronic mail network is used widely by business organisations in Malaysia due to the many advantages offered as a tool of communication. It is time-saving, cost-saving, paperless and can be recorded for future reference.

Sending information in the form of messages through the e-mail is faster and more efficient compared to the regular mail because messages can be sent to a number of different receivers at one time and it is also a connected discourse. As a connected discourse, the communicative
E-mail Communication at the Workplace

...result of American height the specific inevitable for the search.

principal of English for Business development of focus of this study use of e-mail looks at how the communication in order to college.

...too extensive for ad in this sense, it pass all disciplines. me the demands of the learner can use very aspect of the

less Context

...a recent years has age for business and traits. The role of more significant with communication.

...money and therefore communication at the 1 widely by business as offered as a tool of paperless and can be

...although the e-mail is faster because messages can e time and it is also a se, the communicative

purposes and the contexts of these messages only need to be established once because e-mail communication enables continuity in the development of texts.

Communication Channels

An effective communication system is a vital tool for business organisations to stay intact in this competitive globalisation era. A highly utilised mode of communication in this day and age is the electronic mail. The electronic mail is commonly used at the workplace to transmit messages internally and externally i.e. within and outside an organisation. The pattern of organisational communicative flow needs to be observed in order to determine the form of communication and the type of communication channel used in an organisation. Communication flow by definition refers to the patterns of communication flow "that represent potential established conduits through which managers and other organisation members can send and receive information" (Bartol, 1998:459).

According to Bartol et al. (1998:460-461),

An important consideration in assessing organisational communication is the movement of information throughout various parts of the company. When information does not reach the individuals and groups that need it for their work, serious effectiveness and efficiency problems can result.

In general, there are two major directions of communication flow in organisations namely vertical and horizontal communications. According to Bartol (ibid.:461), vertical communication involves the exchange of messages "between two or more levels of organisational hierarchy" while the horizontal communication refers to "lateral or diagonal message exchanges either within work unit boundaries, involving peers who report to the same supervisor, or across work unit boundaries, involving individuals who report to different supervisors".

Bartol also highlighted that vertical communication involves the upward and downward communications. The upward communication is the "vertical flow of communication from a lower level to one or more higher levels in the organisation" and the downward communication refers to
Cover graphic by
Sham & Adzhar