



ТЕОРІЯ І ПРАКТИКА НАВЧАННЯ

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English for workplace readiness: teaching students to communicate professionally

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***Abstract.** This paper explores the integration of workplace readiness skills into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curricula with a focus on teaching students to communicate professionally. As the global job market demands effective communication across languages and cultures, the need for language instruction that mirrors real-world professional settings is more pressing than ever. The paper outlines the definition of workplace readiness within the ESP framework, examines pedagogical strategies and technological tools, discusses the use of authentic materials, and proposes effective assessment strategies. Practical challenges and recommendations for implementation are also addressed.*

This study argues that preparing students for the workplace requires more than grammatical accuracy—it necessitates an understanding of discourse practices, workplace etiquette, intercultural competence, and the ability to perform specific communicative tasks such as writing reports, delivering presentations, and managing professional correspondence. Drawing on current research and case studies from



various global educational contexts, the paper demonstrates that a learner-centered, contextualized, and task-based approach can significantly enhance students' preparedness for their future careers.

Furthermore, the integration of digital tools and authentic materials not only supports language development but also familiarizes learners with technologies and communicative practices prevalent in contemporary professional environments. Assessment is framed not as a final judgment but as an ongoing, reflective process aligned with real-world expectations.

Ultimately, the goal is to equip students—especially those from non-linguistic disciplines such as engineering, medicine, economics, and science—with the communicative and pragmatic competence needed to succeed in international and multicultural workplaces. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for educators seeking to improve the employability and professional confidence of their students through effective ESP instruction.

Keywords: *English for Specific Purposes, professional communication, workplace readiness, language instruction, technical skills, technology integration, authentic materials, assessment, pedagogical approaches, career communication, business English, career development English.*

Англійська мова для професійної готовності: навчання студентів професійному спілкуванню

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Анотація. У цій статті розглядається інтеграція навичок готовності до професійної діяльності в курси англійської мови за професійним спрямуванням (ESP), з особливим акцентом на формування здатності студентів професійно спілкуватися англійською мовою. З огляду на зростаючі вимоги світового ринку праці до ефективного міжмовного та міжкультурного спілкування, нагальна потреба у викладанні мови, що відповідає умовам реального професійного середовища, стала очевидною. У роботі подано визначення поняття готовності до професійної діяльності в межах ESP, розглянуто педагогічні стратегії та технологічні інструменти, описано використання автентичних матеріалів і запропоновано ефективні методи оцінювання. Також проаналізовано виклики та запропоновано рекомендації для впровадження.

Автор доводить, що підготовка студентів до роботи вимагає більше, ніж просто володіння граматикою – необхідно розуміння професійного дискурсу, ділового етикету, міжкультурної компетентності та вміння виконувати конкретні комунікативні завдання, як-от написання звітів, виступи з презентаціями, ведення ділового листування. Спираючись на сучасні дослідження та приклади з практики університетів у різних країнах, стаття демонструє ефективність підходів, орієнтованих на студента, контекстуальність і виконання реалістичних завдань.

Інтеграція цифрових інструментів та автентичних матеріалів сприяє не лише розвитку мовних навичок, а й ознайомлює студентів з технологіями та формами комунікації, поширеними в сучасному професійному середовищі. Оцінювання розглядається як безперервний, рефлексивний процес, що відповідає реальним очікуванням.

У підсумку, мета полягає в тому, щоб забезпечити студентів — особливо з неспеціалізованих мовних дисциплін, таких як інженерія, медицина, економіка та науки — комунікативною та прагматичною компетентністю, необхідною для успішної професійної реалізації в міжнародному середовищі. У статті



запропоновано практичні рекомендації для викладачів, які прагнуть підвищити конкурентоспроможність і професійну впевненість своїх студентів через ефективне навчання ESP.

Ключові слова: англійська для специфічних цілей, професійне спілкування, готовність до роботи, мовна підготовка, технічні навички, інтеграція технологій, автентичні матеріали, оцінювання, педагогічні підходи, професійна комунікація, англійська для бізнесу, англійська для кар'єрного розвитку.

Introduction. In an increasingly interconnected world, English has become more than just a language for communication; it is now the global lingua franca, especially in professional and academic settings. Across a variety of industries, including business, technology, science, and healthcare, English proficiency is considered an essential skill for career advancement and international collaboration. In this context, the ability to communicate effectively in English is not just a matter of fluency but of workplace readiness — a combination of language skills and professional competencies that prepare students for real-world challenges.

For non-language major students, this requirement poses a unique challenge. These students, who may be studying disciplines such as engineering, economics, medicine, or computer science, often receive limited exposure to English instruction beyond basic conversational skills. However, with the increasing globalization of industries and the widespread use of English in professional communication, it is essential for students to master specialized English skills tailored to their fields. These skills go beyond basic grammar and vocabulary and include the ability to write professional emails, deliver effective presentations, participate in meetings, and negotiate across cultural boundaries.

The concept of "workplace readiness" in this context refers to equipping students with the necessary language tools to function effectively in professional settings where English is the primary mode of communication. This includes learning how to use



appropriate registers, understanding cultural nuances in communication, and mastering the professional formats and protocols that are expected in various industries. As such, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) plays a pivotal role in addressing these needs by providing targeted instruction that prepares students for their future careers.

Formulating the objectives of the article. The aim of this paper is to explore the role of ESP in preparing students for workplace readiness, focusing on the development of practical communication skills. It examines how English language instruction can be tailored to suit the professional demands of non-language major students, offering strategies for incorporating workplace-relevant tasks into the curriculum. In particular, this paper highlights the importance of task-based learning, project-based approaches, and the use of authentic materials to bridge the gap between academic English and the language used in professional settings.

Literature review. Workplace readiness is a multifaceted concept that extends beyond technical knowledge and professional expertise. It encompasses a broad spectrum of both hard and soft skills, including communication, collaboration, adaptability, and problem-solving, which are essential for effective performance in today's globalized and multicultural work environments. The importance of these competencies becomes particularly evident in sectors where English serves as a lingua franca for professional communication.

Through the analysis of relevant case studies and a review of feedback from employers and industry experts, researchers have emphasized the need for English language teaching to shift its focus towards workplace-oriented skills. Hutchinson and Waters argue that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) should be designed around the needs of learners in specific professional contexts [1]. Similarly, Dudley-Evans and St. John stress that ESP should be dynamic and learner-centered, reflecting real-world communicative practices [2]. Basturkmen adds that effective ESP course design must address specific professional tasks and discourse genres [4].



Anthony and Hyland emphasize the growing demand for English for Academic and Professional Purposes, advocating for curricula that incorporate authentic tasks and materials [3; 5]. According to Flowerdew and Peacock, the integration of genre-based approaches helps learners develop the skills needed to produce discipline-specific texts [10], while Bhatia highlights the importance of genre analysis for understanding professional language use [12].

Despite strong theoretical support for such approaches, educators and learners continue to face practical challenges in implementing effective ESP instruction. D'yakova identifies a lack of authentic teaching materials as a major obstacle [7], while Melnyk discusses the difficulties posed by transitioning to digital learning environments [8]. Vorobiova notes that professional communication skills are often neglected in traditional foreign language instruction [9]. Romaniuk also emphasizes the importance of updating teaching methods to match the evolving demands of the legal profession in Ukraine [15].

To overcome these challenges, scholars propose a variety of strategies. These include integrating real-life workplace scenarios into instruction, involving industry professionals in syllabus development, and improving instructors' awareness of professional discourse norms. Collaborative course design and learner-centered methodologies are also recommended as effective ways to increase the relevance and impact of ESP courses [2; 6].

Ultimately, the literature advocates for a paradigm shift in English language education—one that prioritizes real-world applicability and prepares graduates not only to use English accurately but also to function confidently and effectively in diverse professional contexts. This shift is essential for enhancing graduate employability and supporting long-term career success in competitive, globalized job markets.

Identification of previously unresolved parts of the overall problem. In the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), workplace readiness refers specifically



to the language skills that students need to function proficiently in professional environments. Unlike general English language instruction, which focuses on basic conversational skills and grammar, ESP is designed to equip students with the specialized vocabulary, communication strategies, and professional etiquette required in their future careers. For non-language majors, this means learning not only how to speak and write in English but also how to navigate the specific linguistic and cultural expectations of their chosen industry [11].

Research results Workplace readiness in the context of ESP refers to the combination of language proficiency, soft skills, and field-specific knowledge that enables students to function effectively in professional settings. It includes a range of competencies, such as:

- Understanding and producing professional documents (emails, reports, proposals)
- Participating in meetings and presentations
- Engaging in cross-cultural communication
- Using appropriate register and tone in professional discourse

These skills go beyond grammar and vocabulary, encompassing communicative strategies and intercultural awareness. In ESP, workplace readiness is tightly linked to the learners' career trajectories. For instance, an engineering student may need to explain technical processes in English, while a business student must master persuasive writing and negotiation language [2].

ESP instructors must therefore identify the communicative events relevant to a given profession and build tasks that reflect those real-life situations. Needs analysis plays a pivotal role here, helping to tailor course content to the students' future workplace requirements. Workplace readiness is also dynamic—it evolves with changes in industries, technologies, and global communication norms. As such, ESP courses must remain flexible and responsive to current professional standards.



Effective pedagogy in ESP relies on student-centered and task-based approaches that mirror real-life professional interactions. Among the most successful methods are:

- **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT):** Students complete meaningful tasks—writing a business email, leading a team meeting, or preparing a project proposal—that replicate actual workplace demands.
- **Content-Based Instruction (CBI):** Language learning is integrated with field-specific content, allowing students to acquire terminology and communication strategies relevant to their disciplines.
- **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT):** Emphasizes fluency and interaction, encouraging learners to express their ideas and opinions confidently in professional scenarios [12].

ESP instructors also benefit from incorporating project-based learning, collaborative activities, role-plays, and case studies. These strategies foster not only language development but also teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills essential in modern workplaces [5].

A crucial element in professional communication instruction is feedback. Timely, specific, and constructive feedback helps students refine their performance and become aware of the norms and expectations of workplace interactions [13]. Peer assessment and self-assessment further engage learners in reflective practices, promoting autonomy and lifelong learning.

Modern workplaces are technology-driven, and ESP instruction must mirror this reality. Integrating digital tools into the classroom enhances both language acquisition and technological literacy. Examples include:

- **Video conferencing platforms (e.g., Zoom, MS Teams):** For simulating virtual meetings and interviews
- **Learning Management Systems (LMS):** For collaborative projects, discussion forums, and asynchronous communication



- **Digital writing tools (e.g., Grammarly, Hemingway):** For improving clarity and professionalism in writing [6]

Authentic materials are equally crucial. They provide exposure to the formats, vocabulary, and communication styles used in real professional contexts. These materials include:

- Job advertisements, CVs, and cover letters
- Company reports, white papers, and technical manuals
- Business correspondence and emails
- Recorded meetings, webinars, and interviews

Using these resources, students develop familiarity with genre-specific conventions and real-world communication challenges. Moreover, integrating media content such as podcasts and professional YouTube channels helps students tune into native speech and workplace jargon, boosting both comprehension and confidence [14].

Assessment in ESP should reflect real-world tasks and evaluate both language proficiency and communicative competence. Effective strategies include:

- **Performance-based assessment:** Presentations, role-plays, mock interviews, and written reports
- **Portfolio assessment:** Compilation of students' work over time (emails, reports, reflections) demonstrating growth and application
- **Peer and self-assessment:** Encourages metacognition and responsibility for one's learning [4]

Rubrics aligned with workplace communication standards ensure transparency and consistency. It is also beneficial to involve industry professionals in evaluating student performance, adding authenticity and relevance to the assessment process. Formative assessment should be ongoing, allowing for adjustments and targeted feedback.

Institutions worldwide have implemented innovative ESP programs aimed at enhancing workplace readiness. Examples include:



- A university engineering faculty offering a collaborative course with industry partners, where students present real project proposals in English to professional engineers.
- A medical college developing a simulation lab for doctor-patient communication scenarios in English.
- Business schools integrating intercultural communication modules using international case studies [10].

Such programs highlight the value of partnerships between academia and industry, as well as the benefits of experiential learning environments that reflect actual workplace conditions [7].

While teaching ESP for workplace readiness is rewarding, it presents several challenges:

- **Diverse student backgrounds and needs** require flexible, differentiated instruction
- **Balancing language skills with field-specific knowledge** can be difficult, especially with limited classroom time
- **Technological advancements** require ongoing instructor training and curriculum updates
- **Motivating students** who may not yet see the immediate relevance of professional communication [8]

To address these, instructors should:

- Personalize instruction and provide field-specific resources
- Use case-based learning and role-plays to simulate real tasks
- Engage in continuous professional development
- Integrate gamified and interactive tools to boost motivation

Creating partnerships with industry and using feedback from alumni can further enhance course relevance and impact.



The role of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in preparing students for professional communication in the workplace is both crucial and increasingly relevant. As global industries continue to evolve, the demand for skilled communicators who can navigate professional environments effectively has never been higher [3]. This manuscript has explored various aspects of teaching professional communication within ESP courses, emphasizing the importance of equipping students with both the language proficiency and the professional skills required to succeed in diverse workplaces [15].

In particular, we have examined how to define workplace readiness in ESP, the pedagogical approaches that foster effective professional communication, the integration of technology and authentic materials, and the assessment strategies that can best measure students' progress. Despite the many advantages of ESP programs, educators face a range of challenges, from addressing diverse student needs to adapting teaching methods to the rapidly changing technological landscape. However, by identifying these challenges and implementing strategies to overcome them, educators can create a dynamic and effective learning environment that supports students' growth as communicators.

Conclusions. Workplace readiness is not just about mastering language skills but also about understanding the nuances of professional environments. This includes knowing how to write emails, participate in meetings, create professional reports, and communicate effectively in both written and spoken forms. By focusing on workplace readiness, ESP courses provide students with the tools they need to succeed in their careers, which are often more specific and career-driven than general English language courses. ESP programs, particularly those centered around professional communication, are essential in preparing students to adapt to the professional world's communication demands [1].

Furthermore, by integrating industry-specific content into language instruction, ESP courses offer a contextualized approach that bridges the gap between academic



learning and real-world application. Students are better prepared to use English in their professional lives, whether it involves writing a report, conducting a job interview, or delivering a business presentation. This approach not only improves students' linguistic abilities but also their confidence in applying those skills in professional contexts [9].

The pedagogical approaches outlined in this manuscript—such as task-based learning, content-based instruction, and the communicative language teaching approach—have been shown to foster an engaging and effective learning environment. These approaches help students develop practical language skills by focusing on real-world tasks and situations they will encounter in the workplace. Additionally, the use of technology and authentic materials plays a significant role in simulating real-world environments, allowing students to practice and refine their communication skills using tools they will use in their careers.

By incorporating authentic materials, such as industry-specific articles, reports, and case studies, educators can give students insight into the language they will need to succeed in their chosen fields. Furthermore, the integration of technological tools, such as digital platforms for collaboration and virtual meetings, ensures that students are not only prepared for written communication but also capable of navigating modern digital workplaces.

Effective assessment is central to determining whether ESP students have achieved workplace readiness. A comprehensive approach that incorporates both formative and summative assessments is essential for measuring progress and providing ongoing feedback. Formative assessments, including peer and self-assessments, quizzes, and simulations, allow students to engage with their learning continuously, making adjustments based on feedback. Summative assessments, on the other hand, such as written reports, oral presentations, and portfolios, provide a final measure of students' ability to communicate professionally in their field [3].

Moreover, using rubrics and criteria-based assessments ensures objectivity and transparency, helping students understand the specific expectations of professional



communication. The use of a variety of assessment methods ensures that both linguistic abilities and practical communication skills are evaluated, offering a holistic view of students' readiness for the workplace.

While the benefits of ESP courses are clear, they are not without challenges. Diverse student backgrounds, varying levels of language proficiency, technological advancements, and student engagement remain significant obstacles in many educational settings. However, with the right strategies, these challenges can be mitigated.

By personalizing instruction, differentiating learning experiences, and fostering a practical, contextualized learning environment, educators can address the varying needs of students and ensure that all learners, regardless of their starting point, are supported throughout their educational journey. Additionally, engaging students by demonstrating the practical value of workplace communication skills and incorporating interactive technologies and real-world scenarios can help sustain motivation and enhance engagement.

Educators must also embrace continuous professional development to stay current with the latest tools, trends, and best practices in both language teaching and the professional world. This ensures that students are learning the most up-to-date communication strategies and can apply their skills in modern professional contexts. In conclusion, teaching professional communication within ESP courses is a powerful tool for preparing students for the demands of the workplace. By focusing on workplace readiness, adopting appropriate pedagogical strategies, integrating authentic materials and technology, and using comprehensive assessment methods, ESP instructors can help students develop the language skills and professional competencies they need to thrive in their careers.

As the professional world continues to evolve, so too must the approaches to teaching English for workplace readiness. Educators have the responsibility to ensure that students are not only proficient in English but also skilled communicators who can



navigate complex professional environments with confidence and competence. With thoughtful planning, a student-centered approach, and ongoing professional development, ESP programs can effectively bridge the gap between academic learning and the professional world, giving students the best chance to succeed in their careers.

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