

English for Specific Purposes: a technical English guideline for 6th level general English students in the International Business career at PUCESE 2014

Diana Carolina Vásquez Santamaría
Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador in Esmeraldas
diani_c7@hotmail.com

Abstract

This study follows the steps of the scientific method to test the effect of creating and applying a Technical English guideline for 6th level General English students in the International Business career at PUCESE. Some students from the above-mentioned career were asked about their opinion regarding the teaching of Technical English related to their profession. Most of the students polled said they would like to learn this branch of English in order to increase their Business English vocabulary. Based on these results, the guideline was applied through an 18-hour course focused on English for Academic and Occupational Purposes (EAOP). It is part of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which is a sphere of teaching English language that takes into account the learners' language needs. The guideline content was taught through the application of the Task-based Language Learning (TBLL) method, which focuses on meaning rather than forms of the language. The results collected after applying the guideline showed these students were all satisfied with the development of this project since they had the opportunity to improve their Technical English knowledge and increase their business vocabulary through exposure to real trade situations and a number of practical activities aimed to promote significant learning. The students involved also said all their expectations regarding the content (vocabulary) and the methodology were covered during the course period. It is concluded that the creation and application of the ESP based guideline had a positive effect on the participants, who were able to learn the English language related to their professional career.

Key words: *Technical English, International Business, Guideline, Creation, Application.*

1. Introduction

The worldwide growing interest in English stresses the need for a new sphere of teaching the English language. It is English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which focuses on providing students with the required language for their specializations. ESP is a learner-centered approach to teaching English as an additional language (Hutchinson and Waters: 1994) ; it helps students to develop communicative competence in a specific discipline such as academics, accounting, agrolgy, business, teaching, and engineering. (Talebinezhad, 2001).

Carter (1983) identifies three types of ESP: English as a Restricted Language, English for Academic and Occupational Purposes (EAOP), and English with Specific Topics.

This project is based on the EAOP branch, since it is expected to apply a Technical English guideline for 6th level General English students in the International Business career at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador in Esmeraldas (PUCESE). The main purpose of this guideline is to provide the above students with the specific vocabulary they need for their occupations.

Through the application of this business English guideline, the above mentioned students will be made aware of the most common vocabulary used in the port and customs in Esmeraldas.

It is important to develop this work since professionals around the world are being requested to be able to handle their occupations in English, due to the fact that it is considered as a lingua franca. Being aware of this technical vocabulary, these students will be involved in the important role Esmeraldas plays in the international business process in Ecuador.

The general objective was to design and apply a Technical English guideline for 6th level General English students in the International Business career at PUCESE. The specific ones were: to diagnose the English level these students have regarding Technical English; to coordinate the technical vocabulary to be taught with the International Business School Director; to collect International Business students' opinions regarding the development of this project to verify the need of its execution; to develop the guideline based on the students' learning needs and background.

2. Methods

The scientific method was applied for this study as shown below:

- ✓ **Ask a question:** How will the application of an ESP based guideline affect the knowledge of vocabulary for 6th level General English students in the International Business career?
- ✓ **State a hypothesis:** The application of an ESP based guideline will increase the business vocabulary knowledge of 6th level General English students in the International Business career.
- ✓ **Conduct an experiment:** Application of the ESP based guideline throughout a course.
- ✓ **Analyze the results:** Surveys will be done before and after the application of the ESP based guideline.
- ✓ **Make conclusions:** Based on the results collected by the surveys.

2.1 Techniques

- **Observation:** Before designing and applying the ESP based guideline, the General English lessons of the learners under study were observed in order to get some information about the structure of such lessons.
- **Survey:** Two surveys were applied. The first one was aimed at the International Business students involved in this project; it was done before the application of the guideline. The second one was aimed at the students who attended the course where the guideline was applied. The purpose of these two surveys was to know how

important it was for these students to create this ESP guideline and how useful it was at the end of the course.

- **Interview:** It was aimed at the Director of the International Business School as well as the Coordinator of the Language Department at PUCESE in order to know their opinions about the development of this project. Likewise, the interview was performed in order to get some suggestions regarding the vocabulary that should be taught through the guideline.

2.2 Research design

Descriptive: It allows describing the characteristics of the population involved in the development of this project. The population for this project is detailed in the next point.

Proposal: Because this research is based on a proposition, which consists on the application of an ESP based guideline in order to increase the international business vocabulary of 6th level General English students in the International Business career. This document provides a detailed description of the proposed guideline. It is similar to an outline of the entire research process that gives the reader a summary of the information discussed in this project.

Bibliographical: This research gathered information from published materials such as books, magazines, journals, newspapers and various specialized documents. In addition to printed materials, online information was also used.

2.3 Population and sample

2.3.1 Population

- First survey: 70 students from 4th to 8th level of the International Business School at PUCESE.
- Second survey: 6th level General English students in the International Business career at PUCESE, who attended the 18-hour course where the guideline was applied.

- Interview: Msc. Chiara D. Fuller, Coordinator of the Language Department and Mr. Francisco Mila, Director of the International Business School at PUCESE.

2.3.2 Sample

- First survey: 50 students from 4th to 8th level of the International Business School at PUCESE.
- Second survey: 10 International Business students in 6th level of General English at PUCESE, who attended the 18-hour course where the guideline was applied.

3. Results

First survey

The results in figure No. 1 show that most of the students (87%) think that the General English knowledge they are acquiring is not suitable for their profession. They also reveal they are not able to communicate properly with a native English speaking businessman. Therefore, these students think it is necessary to modify the curriculum of International Business regarding the teaching of English.

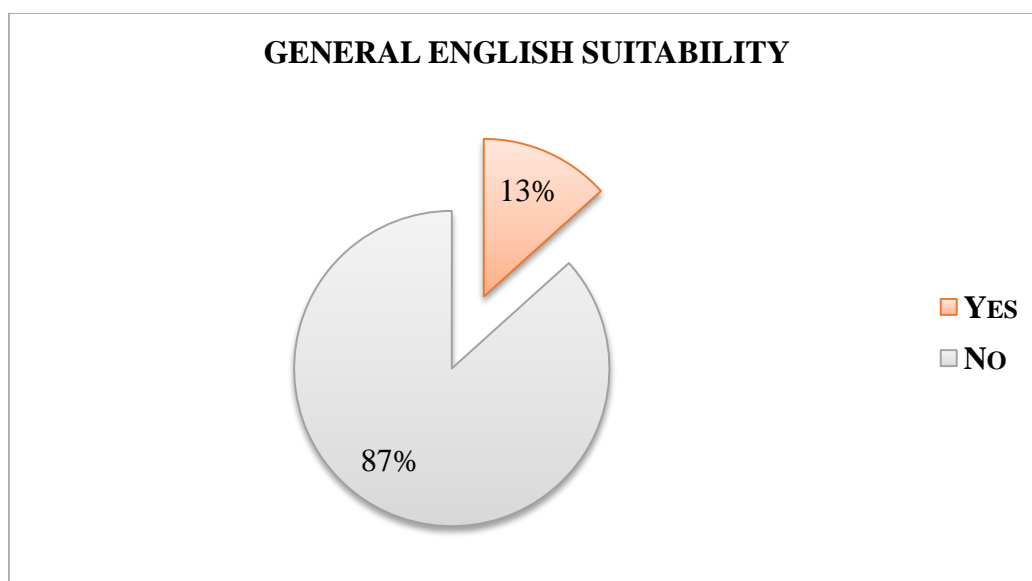


FIGURE No. 1: General English suitability

Concerning knowledge of technical vocabulary, as it can be seen in Figure No. 2, most of the sample (82%) states not knowing the English vocabulary used at international business workplaces in Esmeraldas. Thus they are unaware of ESP, which is understandable since they have been studying General English throughout their whole career.

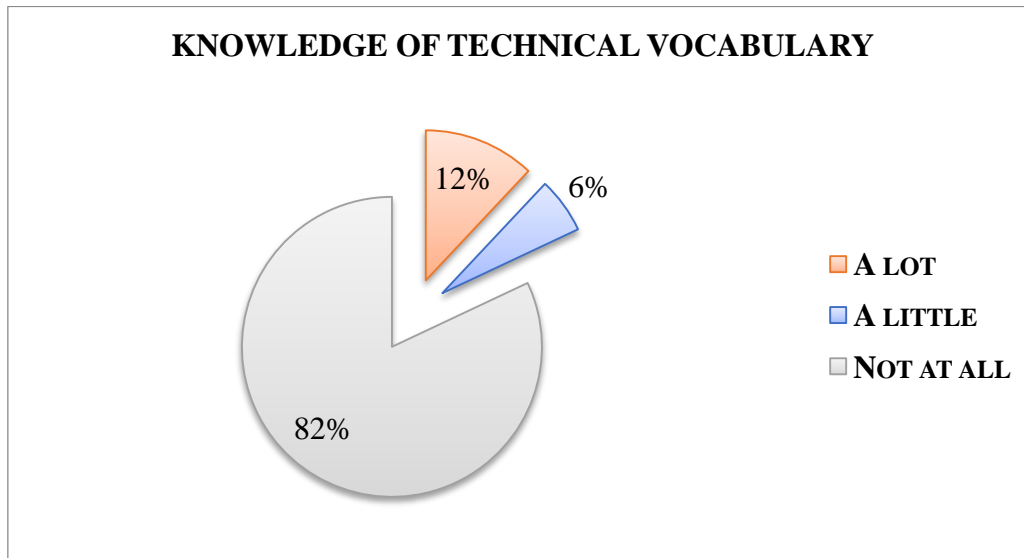


FIGURE No. 2: Knowledge of Technical English vocabulary

In relation to the kind of activities they would like to include in the Technical English Guideline, most of the students would like to practice and improve their speaking skills through role-playing activities such as “USA business trip”.

Regarding suggestions that the students liked to share, many different suggestions were collected. They can be summarized by saying that the students involved in this research would like to recommend to include the teaching of Technical English in their career. Likewise, these students would like teachers to increase the motivation for the English learning process through practice.

Second survey

After applying the guideline, it was necessary to know the participants’ reactions and viewpoints about the effectiveness of this project. Consequently, another survey was applied to the 10 participants of the course; the following analysis summarizes their opinions.

Regarding the content, presentation and duration of the course, these students said they were correct and proper to acquire the new vocabulary, and thus their expectations were all covered. It can be understood as the satisfaction of their wishes for learning Technical English reflected in the results of the first survey.

Likewise, all the participants think the four goals established and socialized before the application of this guideline were fully reached during the lessons. These results reflect the project was successfully executed. Therefore, their overall evaluation of the course was excellent and they agreed on suggesting this course to other classmates in order to help them to increase their Technical English knowledge.

Interviews

Two interviews were held; the first one was aimed towards the Coordinator of the Language Department at PUCESE, MSc. Chiara D. Fuller, in order to get information about the possibility of carrying out this project with the support of this department. She agreed with the development of this project since she thinks it is important to promote the teaching of Technical English for International Business students. Therefore, she offered her technical support to prepare the guideline.

The second interview was aimed at the Director of International Business School in PUCESE, Mr. Francisco Mila, in order to gather information about the vocabulary these students need to learn based on his experiences. Likewise, he was interviewed in order to ask his support for the coordination of the course. During the interview, Mr. Francisco Mila talked about the necessity of developing this project, since it would help some students from this school to increase their Technical English knowledge, so they will improve their professional curriculum and be involved in the international business world.

The support of these two authorities made it possible to develop the ESP based guideline and apply it during the certified 18-hour course.

4. Discussion

In the first survey applied to students, it can be said that most of these students think the General English knowledge they are acquiring regarding their professional career is not correct.

When students were asked about ESP most of them said they did not know this branch of English. Likewise, they said they are unaware of the English vocabulary used at international business workplaces in Esmeraldas. Also, they revealed they are not able to communicate properly with a native English speaking businessman.

Therefore, the results show that students think it is necessary to modify the curriculum of International Business regarding the teaching of English. Thus, most of them suggested to the Director of their school to include the teaching of Technical English and increase the motivation of the English learning process through practice. It can be understood as the application of a new teaching method based on tasks which offers the opportunity for 'natural' learning inside the classroom.

These results show that the survey respondents agree on the application of an ESP based guideline including activities that provide students with the opportunity to improve the speaking skill and simulating situation such as "USA business trip", which can be interpreted as a desire to practice speaking in a real context, for example through activities performed in international workplaces such as ports, customs, etc. Based on the answers of this survey, it was considered necessary to apply the ESP based guideline during an 18-hour course from Nov. 08 to Dec. 13, 2014.

Based on the information above it can be concluded that the data gathered through these two surveys were useful for the development and evaluation of this project.

Conclusions

- The General English being taught to International Business students in PUCESE is not satisfying their professional expectations.
- The teaching of Technical English to International Business students should be considered by the competent authorities.
- The application of the ESP based guideline helped the participants to increase their international business vocabulary.

- The application of the Task-based learning method was successful for teaching international business vocabulary.

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