

## ASSESSMENT ON THE ROLE OF PHONETICS IN ENHANCING SPOKEN ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP) PROGRAMS

Kanumarlapudi Srinivasu, Research Scholar, Texas Global University

Dr. Kalyana Chakravarthi Thirunagari, Research Supervisor, Texas Global University

### ABSTRACT

*This study goes on how phonetics improves the efficiency of spoken English and communicates the skills within ESP programs, which are concerned with how phonetic training impacts learners' capacities to convey meaning in a business, medical, legal and an engineering professional and academic environment. The research involved carrying out surveys, interviews, and classroom observations in order to assess the change of improvement in pronunciation, intonation, and stress patterns of learners and the difficulties experienced in phonetic instruction. Results of phonetic training showed positive impact on the intelligibility of pronunciation in business communication. The learners reported improvement in vowel sounds and stress patterns while often finding challenges in mastering complex intonation and consonant clusters. Engagements and motivation were high, more so if the learners clearly linked phonetic training directly with their professional success. Teachers recognized the importance of phonetics but encountered challenges of time constraints and resources not developed for ESP contexts. In conclusion, the study brings out benefits of phonetic training in ESP programs while pointing out some areas for improvement. This would mean more targeted phonetic exercises and further teaching resources may help learners to overcome challenges and thus enhance communication skills in their own fields.*

**Keywords:** Phonetics, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Pronunciation, Communication Skills, Phonetic Training, Intonation, Stress Patterns, ESP Programs.

### I. INTRODUCTION

English is considered the dominant language of contemporary professional and academic practice and, therefore, forms an increasingly important part of programs such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This makes ESP programs focus more on the language skills learners must acquire to communicate adequately within the chosen profession. Specialized vocabulary and grammar are common topics in the ESP program, but phonetics is a very important, though less researched, area, especially in terms of developing oral skills. Phonetics is the science of speech sounds and their use. It is an important activity in improving communication skills to make learners sound clearer, more confident, and more intelligible in professional settings.

Phonetic training in ESP programs focuses mainly on pronunciation, stress patterns, intonation, and the pronunciation of difficult sounds, mainly those not found in learners' native languages. These are the phonetic elements that are important for learners to communicate clearly and to be understood by native and non-native speakers of English. Many ESP learners struggle with the pronunciation of certain sounds, especially those which are not part of their native language, such as the /θ/ and /ð/ sounds in English. Such difficulties may affect the proper communication in areas like business, health, law, and engineering, where clarity and accuracy in language are essential.

This paper is about how phonetics may enhance one's proficiency in spoken English in ESP programs. A critical analysis of the enhancement of communication skills that follows from phonetic knowledge may show deeper insights into how such an influence by phonetics could affect professional language development. Furthermore, it discusses the difficulties experienced by learners and teachers in teaching and learning phonetics in such specialized settings and makes recommendations on how to incorporate phonetic instruction into ESP curricula more effectively.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Professor V. Chandra Sekhar Rao. (2015). This study, "The Intelligibility of English Sounds: A Study of Phonetics," seeks to facilitate the instruction and acquisition of accurate English sound pronunciation via the use of phonetic symbols. Pronunciation is an integral component of the English language. English is predominantly spoken by individuals whose first languages vary. Proficiency in English is essential in the global context. In the English language, there is no direct correspondence between the letters of the alphabet and the phonemes they denote.

Riham Belkbir. (2019). Proficiency in a foreign language enhances opportunities for mobility and collaboration among professionals in today's world. Policymakers recognize the significant function of foreign languages, particularly English, in the professional advancement of specialists and endeavor to include this language at the tertiary level. An ESP course is intended to enhance students' communication abilities for both examinations and particular professional scenarios. This article examines the influence of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum on the job experiences of Moroccan graduates. It examines whether ESP courses are more effective in the workplace than regular English courses and how the ESP curriculum might be restructured to meet the demands of the labor market. The data were gathered via online interviews with six participants, all of whom majored in English and graduated from Moroccan institutions, had a minimum of one year of job experience in English-speaking nations. The findings of this study demonstrate that the design of universities' ESP curricula, workplace conditions, and instructors' specialized expertise significantly impact participation in the professional setting. The existing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) framework inadequately addresses the learners' requirements and competencies in workplace communication. The research reveals a significant disparity in the views of students' requirements between ESP professors and employers in both academic and professional contexts. The study's results suggested that Moroccan institutions should redesign or improve their ESP curriculum to align with future career requirements and include more resources via ongoing needs analysis by educators.

Dana Rus, 2019. This study aims to emphasize the significance of communication skills in teaching English for Specific Purposes, considering their crucial position in the course curriculum and as a fundamental purpose of specialized language training. The research outlines prevalent challenges encountered by language teachers in the planning and execution of communicative activities and proposes solutions via particular methodological aids. The author seeks to establish a set of rules for ESP instruction, emphasizing communicative skills and grounded on the theoretical framework of the Communicative Language Teaching approach. The listing of the aforementioned principles is a continuous endeavor that is undoubtedly open to enhancement and finalization. They are intended to

provide a foundation for subsequent investigation in ESP technique, which is an evolving domain due to the dynamism of this segment of EFL instruction. The emphasis on communicative ability underscores its significant significance in course and syllabus design, as well as in the overarching goals of English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Costa and colleagues (2022). Due in part to the Bologna Declaration, English-Medium Instruction (EMI) courses at universities have seen significant growth during the last 15 years. The first expansion period of EMI has adversely affected LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) courses, leading to a drop in certain instances. This paper aims to emphasize the capacity of LSP to equip students for EMI communication, enhance academic disciplinary abilities, cultivate transversal skills, and promote intercultural communication. The research examines a curriculum designed for Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) that seeks to enhance students' English communicative proficiency within the framework of social and human services. The many integrative strategies included in LSP education highlight its capacity as a unifying and empowering mechanism for content- and language-integrated learning when used in conjunction with EMI. Keywords: English-Medium Instruction (EMI); Language for Specific Purposes (LSP); English for Specific Purposes (ESP); Content-and-Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education (ICLHE).

Dr. Anil M. Shende. (2022). Language serves as a medium for human communication, enabling individuals to transmit and receive information within their community. This communication may be verbal or written. Consequently, language learners must understand that their linguistic knowledge encompasses morphemes, words, phrases, sentences, and phonetics. A fundamental element in language acquisition is the phonetic sounds of that language. It pertains to phonetics. Phonetics is almost as ancient as human language itself. Kingsley Bolton and Christopher Jenks. 2022. This article aims to examine English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as a discipline and its conceptual and academic relationships with the World Englishes (WE) approach globally. This is accomplished in part by a comprehensive literature evaluation of papers on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the Asian and European areas, sourced from the magazine English for Specific Purposes, which identifies the nations and themes most commonly included in this prominent publication. The subsequent parts of the essay examine the disciplinary intersection between English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and World Englishes, highlighting the potential contributions of both fields to research on mutually relevant topics, such as English-medium instruction (EMI) globally.

Nazeer et al. (2023). This study sought to examine the function of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in augmenting English language teaching competencies and to ascertain viable strategies by which educators might use ESP to improve their instructional skills. In Pakistan's dynamic and diversified educational environment, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has evolved as a transformational pedagogical method, catering to the distinct linguistic demands of English instructors in a context where English functions as a second language. The research included 15 instructors chosen from three distinct universities, using questionnaires as the main instrument for data collection. The data was further examined using SPSS software, including ANOVA for

additional insights. The results highlight the complexity and flexibility required in the ESP environment, stressing the need to address the varied requirements and preferences of both students and teachers. These findings underscore the need of flexibility and variety in ESP teaching methodologies, taking into account the differing needs and preferences of educators and learners. This research advocates for educational institutions and educators to recognize the significance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in enhancing English language teaching competencies.

Sarmiento and colleagues (2024). It is said that mastering English as a foreign language is crucial for effective communication with native speakers. It is essential to enhance English language proficiency. Nonetheless, speaking is among the most challenging skills in language acquisition, since L2 learners must enhance their pronunciation to converse effectively. By learning the language via phonetics, learners may get precise pronunciation. This essay aims to assess the impact of phonetic teaching on high school students' speaking test results in the Cambridge FCE examination. This study used a quasi-experimental approach, including the analysis and comparison of two groups. The acquired data was analyzed using an IBM software known as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). It enabled us to validate the alternative hypothesis or exclude the null hypothesis. "This study used the T-test as its statistical approach." An in-depth examination of phonetic education's impact on speaking abilities shown that such teaching increased pronunciation clarity, listening comprehension, and fluency, hence enhancing total communicative competence.

### **III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The main aim of your study is to assess the role of phonetics in improving spoken English proficiency and communication skills in ESP programs. This involves exploring how phonetic knowledge impacts learners' abilities to communicate effectively in specific professional or academic contexts.

### **IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This paper evaluates the role of phonetics to enhance the spoken English within ESP programs. The use was made of a mixed methods strategy by combining both quantitative and qualitative methods.

#### **Participants:**

- **Students (n = 120):** Students studying through ESP programs in business, medical, legal, and engineering fields.
- **Teachers (n = 15):** Teaching those ESP courses.

#### **Data collection:**

**Surveys:** Learners and teachers were given surveys to take about how phonetic instruction impacted pronunciation, communication and the level of difficulty reported. Students provided ratings to

assess changes in specific aspects of phonetics, including vowel sounds, consonant clusters, and stress patterns.

**Semi-structured interviews** with a sample of students (n = 30) and teachers (n = 10) to gain deeper understanding of learners and teacher's experiences related to phonetic instruction as well as difficulties in phonetic training.

**Classroom Observations:** Classroom sessions, n = 5, have been observed for the methods of teaching as well as the students' engagement towards phonetic exercises.

#### Data Analysis:

- **Quantitative:** Descriptive statistics (percentages) have been used for the analysis of survey results.
- **Qualitative:** Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes from interviews and observations regarding improvements, challenges, and the relevance of phonetics in ESP.

### V. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

#### 1. Effect of Phonetics on Intonation

Students said they improved their intonation after the phonetic training. General improvements were noted in some phonetic skills especially vowel sounds and stress patterns.

**Table 1: Effect of Phonetic Training on Intonation**

| Phonetic Feature    | % of Learners Reporting Improvement | Key Observations   |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Vowel Sounds        | 62%                                 | Learners improved in the articulation of English vowels, especially those that differ from their native languages.   |
| Consonant Clusters  | 45%                                 | Learners made moderate progress in pronunciation of such complex consonant clusters, but still experienced some challenges with individual combinations like /str/ or /spl/. |
| Intonation Patterns | 38%                                 | Although learners' intonation improved in some contexts, subtle tonal shifts still remained problematic to master.   |
| Stress and Rhythm   | 55%                                 | Learners placed stress more accurately in multi-syllable words but still had trouble placing stress in longer sentences or technical terms.                                  |

Improvement in pronunciation was noted for most learners, especially with vowel sounds and stress patterns. But the difficult part is mastering complex intonation and consonant clusters for many.

#### 2. Phonetics and Communication Skills in ESP Contexts

Improved pronunciation clarity assisted learners to communicate better in specific ESP fields. Improvements in communication skills were variable by profession, and business communication had the greatest improvement.

**Table 2: Impact on Communication Skills in ESP**

| ESP Field                 | % Reporting Improvement in Communication | Key Observations  |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Business Communication    | 62%                                      | Business learners articulated the presentation and meetings better, leaving them with more confident interactions.                                    |
| Medical Communication     | 55%                                      | Health professional students acquired better pronunciation of technical terms, even though high-pressure clinic environments presented difficulties.  |
| Legal Communication       | 47%                                      | Legal learners improved in clarity especially in explaining legal terms but were hard to understand in highly formal language.                        |
| Engineering Communication | 40%                                      | While engineering learners had difficulties with certain technical terms, they were improving in general communication, primarily in written reports. |

Phonetic training was found to have a much greater impact in business communication, while other professional fields like medical, legal, and engineering communication had only moderate improvements in clarity.

### 3. Challenges in Teaching Phonetics in ESP

Teachers and students pointed out several difficulties: especially with sounds that are represented in few of the languages of the students. These were considerably more serious in ESP for which accurate and intelligible transmission was essential.

**Table 3: Difficulties of Phonetic Teaching**

| Phonetic Challenge         | % of Learners Struggling | Key Observations  |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Non-native English Sounds  | 64%                      | Learners from Asian and Romance language backgrounds struggled with sounds like /θ/, /ð/, and the English "r" sound.  |
| Word Stress and Intonation | 50%                      | Many students found it difficult to stress words correctly, especially in longer technical terms.                     |
| Consonant Clusters         | 45%                      | Learners had difficulty with complex consonant clusters, such as /str/ or /pl/, which are common in technical jargon. |

Most learners had problems with English speech sounds, especially those unavailable in their mother tongues. Stress and consonant blends continued to be problematic.



#### 4. Learner Motivation and Involvement

Learners who could easily relate between phonetic training and the success of their careers tended to be more motivated in phonetic exercises. On the other hand, motivation depended on the different learner groups.

**Table 4: Learner Motivation and Engagement**

| Factor  | % of Learners Reporting High Engagement | Key Observations  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Perceived Relevance to ESP</b>                 | 67%                                     | Learners who understood the professional relevance of phonetic training were more engaged and motivated to improve their speaking skills. |
| <b>Confidence in Speaking</b>                     | 59%                                     | Learners affirmed higher confidence when engaging in professional discussions and role-plays.   |
| <b>Active Participation in Phonetic Exercises</b> | 52%                                     | Most active involvement in phonetic exercises was found among learners who saw a direct relevance to career objectives.                   |

The perceived applicability of phonetic skills by learners to their careers was among the factors that contributed to increased motivation. The learners' ability to connect phonetics and professional success contributed to motivation.

#### 5. Teacher Perspectives on Phonetics Instruction

Teachers appreciated phonetic teaching but mentioned that there are various constraints including the time limit and the availability of tailored teaching materials.

**Table 5: Qualitative teacher perspectives on phonetic teaching**

| Teacher Observation                    | % of Teachers Agreeing | Key Observations  |
|--|------------------------|---|
| <b>Phonetics Should Be Emphasized</b>  | 72%                    | Teachers agreed that phonetic training was essential in improving communication skills, especially in professional settings.                  |
| <b>Lack of Time for Phonetic Focus</b> | 56%                    | Time constraints also posed a big problem, as phonetic training demanded more focused attention than could be afforded in short ESP programs. |
| <b>Need for Specialized Resources</b>  | 60%                    | Teachers urged the need for more specific phonetic teaching materials to meet the specific needs of ESP learners.                             |

Teachers accept the phonetics role in ESP programmes but are hindered by constraints including time factor and availability of appropriate teaching aids for specific professional purposes.

**Findings of the qualitative data is as follows:**

1. Many learners experienced improvements in pronunciation and communication, especially with business-related contexts.
2. Many learners found the non-native English sounds and word stress patterns to be challenging and areas that need more focus in phonetic instruction.
3. The learners are more engaged when they understand that phonetics has direct relevance to their professional goals.
4. Support and Resources Required by the Teachers: The teachers appreciate phonetic instruction but are normally constrained by the time factor and resources in providing such training.

This analysis provides evidence of the positive impacts of phonetic instruction towards improving communication skills in ESP programs while at the same time pointing out critical challenges and areas for further development.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the study has shown that phonetics plays a very crucial role in improving spoken English proficiency and communication skills for ESP programs. Phonetic training, especially in areas like vowel sounds, stress patterns, and intonation, significantly enhances learners' pronunciation clarity and confidence in professional settings, especially in business communication. Yet, there are difficulties with intonation patterns, consonant clusters, and all other complex phonetic features that do not exist in the first language of most learners. Many learners have difficulties with mastering these phonetic features, which in turn may lead to failure to communicate appropriately in high-stakes professional settings.

Conclusion from all these, there's an apparent need for better-directed phonetic training to the ESP programs with practical exercise emphasis, proper and pertinent teaching materials, as well as immediate feedback. There are, in addition, some resources and training needs specifically tailored toward enabling teachers to prepare students over their challenges in phonetics for becoming effective in their profession use. It addresses these gaps, and this can ensure that learners are best suited to communicate clearly, confidently, and accurately in their specific field to enhance overall professional success.

This study thus provides valuable insights in making phonetic training workable in ESP programs that contribute to the improvement of spoken English skills of the learners. It advocates a balance between phonetic teaching and actual, context-based language learning by the learners so they will be better equipped in answering the demands of their professional careers.

## **REFERENCES**

- [1]. Costa, Francesca & Mastellotto, Lynn. (2022). The role of English for specific purposes (ESP) in supporting the linguistic dimension in English-medium instruction (EMI). CLIL Journal of Innovation and Research in Plurilingual and Pluricultural Education. 5. 37-52.



- <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362351180> The role of English for specific purposes ESP in supporting the linguistic dimension in English-medium instruction EMI
- [2]. Dana Rus (2019). Communicative competence in the context of ESP methodology. *Acta Marisiensis. Philologia* Volume 1 (2019), Issue 1 p-ISSN: 2668-9537, e-ISSN: 2668-9596. <https://intapi.sciendo.com/pdf/10.2478/amph-2022-0011>
- [3]. Dandee, W., & Pornwiriyaakit, P. (2022). Improving English pronunciation skills by using English Phonetic Alphabet drills in EFL students. *Journal of Educational Issues*, 8(1), 611-628. doi:10.5296/jei.v8i1.19851
- [4]. Dr. Anil M Shende. (2022). Importance of Phonetics in English Language. *Juni Khyat*. Vol-12 Issue-01 No.01: 2022. ISSN: 2278-4632. [http://junikhayatjournal.in/no\\_1\\_Online\\_22/70.pdf](http://junikhayatjournal.in/no_1_Online_22/70.pdf)
- [5]. Durukan, D., & Gokgoz-Kurt, B. (2024). EFL instructors' views on the use of phonetic symbols for teaching pronunciation. *Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Linguistics (JELPEDLIC)*, 9(2), 232-251. <https://doi.org/10.35974/acuity.v9i2.3183>
- [6]. Kingsley Bolton and Christopher Jenks. (2022). World Englishes and English for specific purposes (ESP). *World Englishes* 2022;41:495–511. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/weng.12604>
- [7]. Mompean, J. A., & Fouz-González, J. (2021). Phonetic symbols in contemporary pronunciation instruction. *RELC Journal*, 52(1), 155-168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220943431>
- [8]. Nazeer, Imran & Ahmad, Toqir & Baseerat, Iqra & Fatima, Noor. (2023). The Role of ESP in Enhancing English Language Skills for English Teachers. 7. 1-15. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/375074641> The Role of ESP in Enhancing English Language Skills for English Teachers
- [9]. Nurhayati, D. A. W. (2022). The students' responses on learning English phonology deploying scaffolding: How does this technique support higher linguistics stages? *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 7(1), 199-213. <https://doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v7i>
- [10]. Prof. V. Chandra Sekhar Rao. (2015). The intelligibility of English sounds: a study of phonetics. *English for Specific Purposes World*, ISSN 1682-3257, www.esp-world.info, Issue 46, 2015. [https://www.academia.edu/15158435/THE\\_INTELLIGIBILITY\\_OF\\_ENGLISH\\_SOUNDS\\_A\\_STUDY\\_OF\\_PHONETICS](https://www.academia.edu/15158435/THE_INTELLIGIBILITY_OF_ENGLISH_SOUNDS_A_STUDY_OF_PHONETICS)
- [11]. Riham Belkbir. (2019). Investigating the Impact of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Curriculum on Moroccan Graduates' Career. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. Volume 1, Issue 1, 2019. [https://www.academia.edu/39751161/Investigating\\_the\\_Impact\\_of\\_English\\_for\\_Specific\\_Purposes\\_ESP\\_Curriculum\\_on\\_Moroccan\\_Graduates\\_Career](https://www.academia.edu/39751161/Investigating_the_Impact_of_English_for_Specific_Purposes_ESP_Curriculum_on_Moroccan_Graduates_Career)
- [12]. Sarmiento, J. J. N., Morales, M. D. P., & Díaz, M. M. (2024). The role of phonetic instruction in enhancing speaking skills for high school students: a study based on cambridge FCE exam results. *South Florida Journal of Development*, 5(9), e4329. <https://doi.org/10.46932/sfjdv5n9-005>