

Main Characteristics of Teaching Business Grammar in the ESP Context

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Abstract

The target goal of the current paper is to thoroughly analyse and introduce the main characteristics of developing ESP learners' Business Grammar skills in the light of theoretical foundations, developmental patterns and pedagogical implications. Grammar instruction in ESP requires a targeted, functional and context-sensitive approach. It should be purpose-driven, supporting the communicative needs specific to a profession or discipline, e.g., medicine, law, engineering, business, etc. The development of ESP learners' grammar skills differs from that of General English learners because it is targeted, contextualized, and need based. Thus, teaching Grammar in ESP must be strategically aligned with disciplinary discourse and genre conventions, as each discipline has its own conventional grammar patterns. Success depends on the ability of both the ESP teacher and learners to integrate grammar as a communicative functional tool, not just as a set of rules in overall instruction.

Keywords: *Business, grammar, communicative needs, skill development*

Grammar is crucial for English language learning especially for ESP students who rely on correct usage of the language for their professional and future success. In specialized areas, grammatical structures provide a way in which information may be clearly conveyed. Since ESP students are required to present complex ideas in professional settings, it will be essential for them to understand various grammatical structures. Despite the significance of grammar, the mastery of it remains relatively low among many ESP students, partly due to the complex rules that this entails and partly because of the specialized language requirements unique to each field of expertise.

Thus, unlike General English instruction, ESP grammar teaching is closely tied to learners' professional or academic needs. Grammar is not taught in isolation but is embedded within subject-specific content, authentic texts, and communication tasks relevant to the learners' field (e.g., business, medicine, engineering).

Key features include:

- **Needs-based selection:** Only the grammatical structures necessary for the learners' target communicative tasks are prioritized.
- **Contextualization:** Grammar is taught through real-world materials like emails, reports, or manuals, reflecting the discourse of the specific profession.
- **Focus on accuracy and fluency:** While accuracy is important, especially in professional writing, fluency and appropriateness in context are emphasized.
- **Task-based learning:** Activities such as role-plays, case studies, or simulations help practice grammar in meaningful ways [5].

Overall, ESP grammar teaching aims to enhance communicative competence in specific domains rather than achieve native-like mastery of all grammatical forms.

Our aim within this research is to thoroughly analyse and introduce the main characteristics of developing ESP learners' Business Grammar skills in the light of theoretical foundations, developmental patterns and pedagogical implications.

As it has already been mentioned, the development of ESP learners' grammar skills is targeted, contextualized, and need based. Thus, teaching Grammar in ESP must be strategically aligned with disciplinary discourse and genre conventions, as each discipline has its own conventional grammar patterns. Success depends on the ability of both the ESP teacher and learners to integrate grammar as a communicative functional tool, not just as a set of rules in overall instruction.

In the scope of this research the first challenge was to make a list of common business situations that can arise in professional settings. These scenarios are especially useful for teaching Business English, role-playing activities, or preparing for workplace interactions:

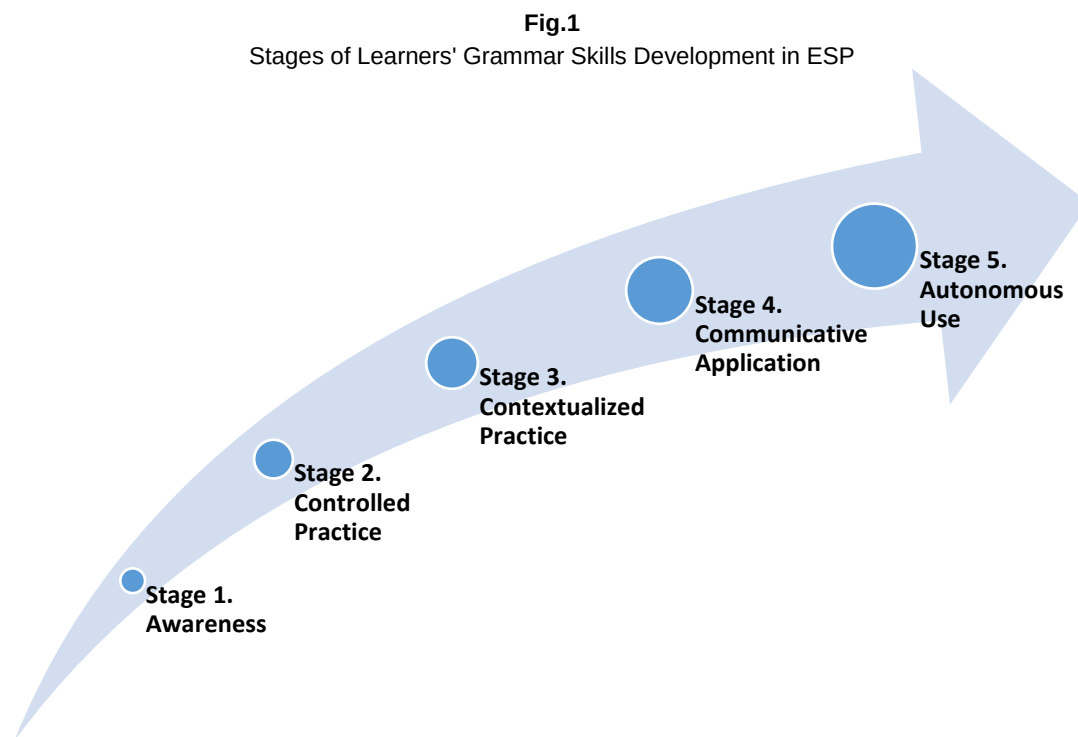
- ✓ Communication and Correspondence
- ✓ Meetings and Presentations
- ✓ Interpersonal Relations
- ✓ Negotiation and Decision-Making
- ✓ Finance and Sales
- ✓ Administrative Tasks
- ✓ International and Cross-Cultural Business

Next, we have elaborated several Business communicative situations with corresponding common grammar forms and introduce them in the following chart [1]:

Grammar Topic	Business Situations
Question Forms and Words	Making conversation Talking about experiences at work Making suggestions and giving advice
Indirect Questions	Being interviewed and networking Making conversation Managing People
Reported Speech	Reporting what people say
Comparatives / Superlatives	Making comparatives Being tactful Approving or rejecting a proposal
Conditionals	Talking about plans Making and responding to complaints
Modal Verbs	Being tactful Talking about ability Talking about possibilities Giving and receiving feedback Asking questions Making and responding to requests Expressing obligation and need
Present Simple	Managing people Making small talk in a professional setting Being interviewed and networking Making business decisions Participating in a staff meeting Giving a formal presentation Presenting a sales pitch Leading a project update Discussing project progress or delays Taking meeting minutes Clarifying and giving reasons
Present Continuous	Introducing yourself and your company Networking at a business event Participating in a job interview Talking about progress and change Clarifying and giving reasons Being interviewed and networking Making a business phone call Leaving or taking a message Writing a formal email Participating in a video conference Negotiating via email Conducting a follow-up call or message
Present Perfect	Talking about progress and change Making conversation Talking about experiences at work Being interviewed and networking Discussing project progress or delays Taking meeting minutes Approving or rejecting a proposal

	Managing a conflict or disagreement
Present Perfect Continuous	Talking about experiences at work
Past Simple	Making conversation Talking about experiences at work
Future forms (will / going to / present continuous)	Talking about plans Forecasting and predicting Scheduling and planning a meeting Participating in a staff meeting
State Verbs	Welcoming a new colleague or client Giving and receiving feedback Agreeing and disagreeing Negotiating a contract Discussing pricing with clients Handling a complaint

In the ESP context, **learners' grammar skills development** typically follows a progression from basic structural awareness to contextualized and task-based use aligned with professional needs. The stages are introduced below:



1. **Awareness Stage:** Learners are introduced key grammatical structures relevant to their field (e.g., passives in scientific writing, modals in business communication). The focus is on understanding form and meaning.
2. **Controlled Practice Stage:** Learners engage in structured exercises to reinforce accuracy. These may include gap-fills, sentence transformations, or drills tailored to specific ESP domains.
3. **Contextualized Practice Stage:** Grammar is practiced within realistic tasks, such as writing reports, emails, or participating in role-plays. This stage emphasizes appropriate usage in professional settings.
4. **Communicative Application Stage:** Learners use grammar spontaneously in simulations, discussions, and authentic writing tasks. Fluency, appropriateness, and professional tone are prioritized.
5. **Autonomous Use Stage:** Learners apply grammar independently in real-world ESP contexts, demonstrating control, flexibility, and accuracy in workplace communication [2].

The staged development helps ensure that grammar is not only learned but practically applied, making it a functional tool for successful professional interaction. To bridge the gap between grammar instruction

and real-world business communication the ESP teacher should provide learners with meaningful, context-rich practice.

We are certain that, unlike traditional grammar exercises, a worksheet-style handout built around business scenarios will allow the ESP learners to apply grammatical structures directly to authentic tasks they may encounter in professional settings.

Key objectives include:

- **Contextualized Grammar Practice:** The handout situates grammar points, such as conditionals, passive voice, and modal verbs, within realistic Business situations (e.g., writing emails, participating in meetings). This helps learners understand not just how the grammar works, but why and when to use it.
- **Development of Communicative Competence:** By working with realistic scenarios, learners enhance both grammatical accuracy and professional fluency. They practice producing language that is grammatically correct and pragmatically appropriate in a Business context.
- **Task-Based Learning:** The worksheet encourages active use of grammar through role-plays, email writing, and collaborative decision-making tasks. These activities mimic actual workplace communication and foster engagement and critical thinking.
- **Learner-Centred Approach:** Learners are engaged in problem-solving or decision-making roles, which promotes their autonomy and relevance. They see how grammar supports their ability to communicate effectively in their specific professional domain.
- **Transferability of Skills:** Practicing grammar in business-specific contexts enables learners to transfer classroom knowledge to real-life professional situations, improving confidence and performance in the workplace.

To address the current issue in a practical way, we propose worksheets built around sample **Business Situations**. Each worksheet embraces:

- a brief scenario
- a targeted grammar point
- essential vocabulary and expressions and
- a short role-play or discussion activity.

BUSINESS SITUATIONS	
Worksheet 1	
Scenario: SCHEDULING A MEETING You and your colleague need to schedule a meeting with a client for next week. You must find a suitable date and time. Grammar Focus: Future forms (will / going to / present continuous): “I’m meeting the client on Monday.” “We’re going to finalize the date tomorrow.” Useful Phrases: “Are you available on...?” “Does [Tuesday morning] work for you?” “Let’s pencil it in for...” “Can we reschedule for...?” Role-Play Task: Partner A is the client, Partner B is the company representative. Set a time and date for a product demo meeting. Discuss availability and preferences.	
Worksheet 2	
Scenario: HANDLING A COMPLAINT A customer is unhappy because their order arrived late. You are the customer service representative. Grammar Focus: Modal verbs for politeness: “Could you explain what happened?” “We would be happy to offer a refund.” Useful Phrases: “We apologize for the inconvenience.”	

"Let me look into that for you." "I understand your frustration." "We'll make sure it doesn't happen again." Role-Play Task: Partner A is the unhappy customer. Partner B is the support agent. Resolve the issue professionally.	
Worksheet 3	
Scenario: GIVING A PRESENTATION You are presenting your team's results at a monthly meeting. Grammar Focus: Linking and signposting language: "Firstly, we looked at..." "Moving on to the next point..." "Finally, let's summarize the key findings." Useful Phrases: "Let me start by giving you an overview." "As you can see from this chart..." "I'd be happy to take questions at the end." "In conclusion, we achieved..." Discussion Task: Prepare a short 3-minute presentation (real or imagined) on a team success, challenge, or recent development.	

These types of handouts serve as an effective tool for integrating grammar instruction into ESP curricula, making grammar learning practical, purposeful, interesting, enjoyable and directly aligned with learners' career needs.

Consequently, following a comprehensive analysis and systematic development, the principal characteristics of effective grammar instruction within the framework of Business English have been identified and are presented in the next chart. Key features include a focus on real-world business tasks, pragmatic usage for clarity and politeness, genre-based instruction, and register awareness. It also highlights the integration of grammar with business-specific vocabulary and collocations, the use of authentic and task-based input, and cultural appropriateness. Furthermore, it stresses grammatical accuracy for professional credibility and the importance of customizing instruction to align with industry-specific communication needs.

Characteristic Feature	Description
Functionality: Purpose-Driven and Contextualized Grammar	Grammar Used to Perform Real-World Business Tasks
Business grammar is not taught for its own sake but as a communication tool to fulfil specific business functions (e.g., negotiating, reporting, emailing, presenting). Grammar is introduced through real-life business scenarios, such as writing proposals, drafting reports, or participating in meetings. Example: Teaching conditional sentences for discussing hypothetical business strategies ("If sales increase, we will expand to Asia"). ESP learners need to perform business functions, so grammar is tied to communicative acts like: • Making recommendations: "I suggest that we invest in..." • Describing trends: "Sales have increased steadily since Quarter 1." • Expressing cause and effect: "Due to the rise in costs, profits fell." • Negotiating: "If you agree to our terms, we can offer a discount."	
Pragmatic Focus: Focus on Politeness, Clarity, and Diplomacy	Emphasis on Politeness, Diplomacy, and Tone
A major characteristic is the pragmatic use of grammar to express ideas diplomatically. This includes: • Modal verbs for polite requests and suggestions (could, would, might) • Passive voice for impersonal tone (It has been decided that...) • Indirect language to mitigate assertiveness (We were wondering if...) Example: "We might want to revisit our pricing strategy" is preferred over "We should change the prices."	
Genre Sensitivity: Genre-Based Instruction	Grammar Linked to Specific Business Text Types
Grammar is taught in connection with business genres: • Emails • Memos • Reports • Business proposals • Presentations	

Learners are shown how grammar choices differ by genre and audience. Example: The level of formality in grammar use changes between a report for the board and a casual email to a colleague.	
Register and Tone Awareness	Training in Formal vs. Informal Grammar
Learners are trained to use appropriate register and tone, which are essential in international business: • Formal vs. informal grammar • Use of hedging to sound less direct (e.g., It appears that..., It seems likely...) • Avoidance of overly direct or confrontational forms	
Lexico - Grammatical Patterns	Emphasis on Frequent Business Collocations
Integration with Business Vocabulary and Collocations Business grammar teaching is closely tied to collocations and lexico-grammatical patterns common in business discourse: • Take responsibility for, reach a decision, make a deal • Grammar instruction highlights typical phrase structures used in business communication.	
Authentic & Task-Based Input	Realistic Simulations and Materials
Business grammar is often taught using task-based learning and authentic materials such as: • Real or simulated business emails • Company reports • Business news articles • Meeting transcripts This supports learning by doing, enhancing contextual understanding and retention.	
Cultural Appropriateness:	Grammar Choices Linked to Intercultural Effectiveness
Cultural Sensitivity in Grammar Use • In international business, grammar is a vehicle for expressing cross-cultural politeness and professionalism. • Instruction includes training in softening language and avoiding language that could be culturally inappropriate. Example: In some cultures, using the imperative ("Send me the report") may be seen as rude; learners are taught to use modals ("Could you send me the report?").	
Accuracy & Professionalism	Emphasis on Clarity and Correctness
Business learners are often professionals or pre-professionals, so there is a high demand for grammatical accuracy to maintain credibility and avoid miscommunication. Teaching includes: • error correction for professional clarity • grammar-checking strategies • self-editing skills for business documents.	
Customization Based on Industry Needs	Tailored to Learners' Industry and Communication Goals
Grammar instruction is tailored to the specific sub-field: • Finance: conditionals, quantifiers, comparisons • Marketing: persuasive structures, modals for prediction • Human resources: reporting verbs, indirect speech • Materials are adapted to reflect the discourse practices of the learners' business sectors.	

Teaching grammar in the ESP (Business) context is no longer confined to abstract rules or mechanical drills but is increasingly understood as a **functional, context-sensitive, and communicative tool** that supports learners in achieving real-life professional goals. As it has emerged in the current research, effective ESP grammar instruction must be **needs-driven, task-based, and discipline-specific**, ensuring that learners gain the language competence necessary to operate confidently and accurately in business environments [4].

Through our detailed exploration of characteristic features, such as contextualization, pragmatic focus, genre awareness, and cultural sensitivity, it becomes clear that **grammar in Business English serves as a means to communicate with precision, professionalism, and appropriateness**. The use of authentic tasks, role-plays, and business scenarios reinforces the integration of grammar with workplace communication, making learning process more engaging and relevant [3].

Additionally, the staged development of learners' grammar skills, from awareness to autonomous use, illustrates how ESP learners can progress toward greater independence and accuracy, ultimately becoming effective communicators in their respective fields. The inclusion of structured worksheets with realistic business situations further supports this trajectory by helping learners apply grammar meaningfully and appropriately in tasks such as handling complaints, giving presentations, or scheduling meetings.

So, teaching grammar in the ESP context requires a strategic balance between form and function. It demands that educators not only master the grammatical structures themselves but also their

role within professional discourse communities. By embedding grammar into the authentic practices of business communication, we prepare learners not just to use English correctly, but to use it competently, confidently, and appropriately in the global workplace.

CONCLUSION

Teaching Business grammar in the ESP context supposes a dynamic and pragmatic shift from traditional grammar instruction to a more targeted, context-driven approach. In the modern globalized workplace, professionals are expected not only to possess general language competence but also to communicate effectively using the specific language of Business. Therefore, grammar teaching must reflect the real communicative needs of learners, focusing on the structures, vocabulary, and discourse patterns most commonly used in professional settings. By embedding grammar instruction within authentic Business contexts, such as writing business emails, delivering presentations, preparing reports, or participating in negotiations, educators can ensure that learners develop both grammatical accuracy and communicative appropriacy. This contextualized approach helps construct bridges between language knowledge and professional application, making grammar more relevant, engaging, and immediately useful for learners.

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- 1. Topic: Language for Specific Purposes**
- 2. Abstract based on experience**