



PROS OF TEACHING PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN ESP LESSONS

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This article examines the pedagogical advantages of integrating phraseological units into the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classroom to enhance professional communicative competence. Grounded in the lexicogrammar approach, the study explores how the mastery of idioms, collocations, and fixed expressions serves as a cognitive shortcut, reducing the linguistic burden on learners in high-pressure environments. The article concludes that prioritizing phraseological competence allows ESP students to achieve a level of pragmatic precision and naturalness that technical vocabulary alone cannot provide and offers methodological recommendations for adopting corpus-based strategies to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world professional discourse.

In the specialized world of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), the leap from *functional* to *fluent* often hinges on a student's mastery of phraseological units. While traditional ESP curricula frequently prioritize technical terminology and rigid grammatical structures, the modern professional landscape demands more. Whether it is a pilot navigating "*heavy traffic*", a lawyer arguing "*in good faith*", a journalist explaining "*pop up*", or a surgeon performing a "*dry run*" language is rarely just a collection of literal definitions. Phraseological units includes idioms, collocations, phrasal verbs, and fixed expressions that serve as the *connective tissue* of professional discourse. Teaching these units does more than just expand a student's vocabulary; it bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world communicative competence. By integrating these expressions into ESP lessons, educators empower learners to decode the nuances of corporate culture, enhance their cognitive processing speed, and achieve a level of naturalness that builds immediate rapport with native and non-native peers alike. This article explores the multi-faceted advantages of prioritizing phraseological units in the ESP classroom, highlighting how they function as essential tools for professional precision and cultural integration.

The teaching of phraseological units in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is grounded in the *lexicogrammar* approach, which posits that language is not merely a collection of isolated words and grammar rules, but a system of formulaic sequences [1: 5-23]. Linguistics defines these units as stable, reproducible word combinations with a high degree of "mutual expectancy" between their components [2: 11].

In the ESP context, experts argue that phraseological units are not "*decorative*" additions but highly informative units essential for professional communication. Because about 21% of academic corpora consist of these units, they are viewed as "text building blocks" that give authenticity to scientific and professional discourse [3: 68]. Furthermore, the linguodidactic approach suggests that mastering these units fulfills five key functions: developmental, educational, upbringing, cognitive, and professional. There are some pros of teaching phraseological units in ESP:



1. *Enhanced professional authenticity and credibility*: Teaching phraseological units allows learners to use the habitual expressions expected within their specific discipline. This use of formulaic language provides immediate authenticity to professional texts, such as scientific articles or business reports. Research indicates that phraseological units reproduce frequent and expected expressions in various disciplines, and using them correctly signals to experts that the speaker or writer belongs to that professional community [4: 66]

2. *Cognitive efficiency and fluency*: Learning language in "chunks" or prefabricated patterns reduces the cognitive load on the brain during real-time communication. Studies have shown that both native and non-native speakers process formulaic phrases significantly faster and with much fewer errors than non-formulaic sequences [5] This allows ESP students to avoid hesitation and achieve higher levels of "oral fluency" [6].

3. *Precision in meaning and contextual accuracy*: In specialized fields, single words often change meaning based on the words they are paired with. Learning phraseological units ensures that learners understand these lexicalized meanings that cannot be guessed through literal translation. Many phraseological units have semantics specialization and idiomaticity unique to a register; without knowing the specific phrase, a learner may cause misunderstanding among the speakers.

4. *Cultural and pragmatic competence*: Phraseological units act as "linguistic fossils" that express the social norms and professional values of the target culture. These units are highly culture-bound entities that serve as a linguistic lens through which a culture's worldview can be viewed. For ESP learners, this provides the pragmatic awareness necessary to interact appropriately in international professional environments.

To bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, the methodology for teaching phraseological units in ESP follows a corpus-driven, communicative approach. Rather than rote memorization of idiom lists, the instruction is integrated into the "data-driven learning" (DDL) framework. Students utilize specialized corpora (e.g., the British National Corpus or discipline-specific databases) to observe how PUs function in authentic contexts. This allows learners to identify the "collocational environment" of a term [7: 14]. Learners engage in simulations, such as mock negotiations or case study analyses, where the use of specific phraseological units is required to achieve professional objectives. Students compare phraseological units in their L1 (native language) with the target English units to identify equivalents and avoid literal translation errors that can lead to professional misunderstanding.

An analysis of the integration of phraseological units reveals that their value lies in semantic density, the ability to convey complex professional concepts with minimal linguistic effort. In ESP, the *economy of language* is a vital asset. Analysis shows that while phraseological units are stable in their semantic structure, they exhibit functional flexibility in specialized discourse. For instance, in legal ESP, the unit "without prejudice" carries a rigid, non-negotiable legal weight that a literal interpretation of the words cannot provide. The data suggests that ESP learners often struggle not with technical nouns, but with the relational phraseology surrounding them. Analysis of student performance indicates that those trained in phraseological units show a marked improvement in pragmatic competence. Instead of constructing sentences from scratch which increases the cognitive load that students use phraseological units as "eye-catching and effective language units" This shift allows the speaker



to focus on the content of their professional argument rather than the mechanics of the language.

Furthermore, the use of phraseological units acts as a social marker within professional communities. An analysis of workplace interactions reveals that the correct use of professional idioms functions as a key into the inner circle of a discipline. It moves the learner from the status of an "outsider" (foreign learner) to an "insider" (peer), as they demonstrate a mastery of the "professional code".

The integration of phraseological units into ESP curricula marks a shift from teaching English as a system to English as a professional tool. As analyzed, these units provide the structural stability and cognitive shortcuts necessary for high-stakes communication. By moving beyond a narrow focus on terminology, ESP practitioners can facilitate a more holistic mastery of language that encompasses the social, pragmatic, and cognitive demands of the modern workplace.

To effectively implement these findings, the following recommendations are suggested for ESP educators, for example: use frequency lists derived from professional corpora to ensure students learn the most relevant phraseological units for their specific field. Focus on the connotative and pragmatic power of phrases (e.g., how a phrase might sound polite in a board meeting but overly formal in a lab). Train students to identify phraseological patterns in authentic reading and listening materials rather than ignoring them in favor of technical nouns.

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