

# TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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Since the fall of the Tower of Babel – when God decided to confound all languages and scatter mankind throughout the world, the dream of a united humanity, speaking a single universal language, has continuously haunted people all over the world, driving them into a perpetual search for unity, in terms of language, and if possible, culture, society, economics and politics.

The issue of finding and imposing a common language was partially solved by the first colonizers and conquerors who spread the English language all over the world.

The improvement of the commercial relations between countries, along with the increasing number of inventions and discoveries, that reached their climax during the industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, have made people realize that real life meant far more than everyday conversation and language. Thus, the first elements of specialized English language started to show up, supported and enriched later, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by the specialization of the different fields and branches of science and the creation of numerous universities and specialized laboratories.

The awareness of the difference between general English and specialized English has generated a new branch in English teaching in the early 1960s – **English for Specific Purposes (ESP)**, that is, courses especially conceived and taught for various fields of activity, such as: commerce, law, engineering, science, medicine, politics, etc.

Although this new branch is purely practical, as it deals with reality bites and situations taken from real world and communication, “*more attention was given to the ways in which learners acquire language*”<sup>1</sup>, as well as learner needs, motivations and skills, learning methods and strategies.

Part of the large “Tree of ESP”, **English for Science and Technology (EST)** has been determined by the rapid development and evolution of scientific research, which needed appropriate language to present and disseminate its revolutionary ideas and inventions.

It is not an easy task to prepare and organize EST courses. This is, on the contrary, a highly challenging and stimulating job, which can be very rewarding, but it can also raise many questions and hide numerous unknowns.

EST courses considerably reduce the study area to something very particular and specialized. Vocabulary and meaning should be the keywords in this field, both for teachers and learners. Teachers should offer learners specialized language through authentic situations and contexts, and not in isolation from reality and real communication. The successful formula in EST is always to combine subject matter and English language teaching.

Just like a living body, EST continues to change and evolve, raising new questions and turning teachers into perpetual learners.

Facilitated by the explosion of scientific breakthroughs and technological development, **English for Science and Technology (EST)** has been spread throughout the world by globalization, and has developed due to an increase in vocational training around the world, and a growing number of occupational contexts.

<sup>1</sup>Gatehouse, Kristen, *Key Issues in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Curriculum Development*, p.2