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## Enhancing Specific Vocabulary and Trial Advocacy Skills through ESP for Law Students

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### **Abstract**

*English for Specific Purpose has had a strong research tradition since 1960s. It discusses absolute and variable characteristics of ESP. In this present scenario, students of law need a specific set of language skills for their success in the field of education and in the working places (courts to be specific). Students are unable to make use of the perfect words for their specific tasks due to lack of training and practice. The objectives of the present study are to rectify this defect, enable the students to pick and choose apt words and phrases, and learn some sort of specific vocabulary. The main purpose of this paper is to deal with enhancement of Specific Vocabulary and Trial Advocacy Skills for Law students through ESP with the help of texts like The Merchant of Venice, The Benefits of the Doubt and Barn Burning. The researcher will attempt to find out whether students can enhance a specific set of language skills and argumentation skills through reading of these texts. This paper aims at making the law students aware of the need for improving their vocabulary and advocacy skills through English for Specific Purpose.*

**KEY WORDS** : Specific Set of Words, Attorney, Rug, and Argumentation Skills, etc.

## **Introduction**

'English for Specific Purpose' first emerged in the 1960s. After World War II, the United States became the center of world trade and began to pay attention to the rush of immigrants from around the world so that the newcomers needed to learn English skills to further their higher studies or to communicate at their unknown places of work. In the late 1960s, there were lots of attempts to explain English for Science and Technology (EST) to meet the needs of the learners. Gradually, the developments in linguistics and psychology have mostly contributed to strengthen and enrich ESP studies. The first issue of *ESP Journal* was published in 1980 and it made ESP a globally accepted field of research. The fact that "learners know specifically why they are learning a language" (Hutchinson and Waters, 1992, p. 6) is a great advantage in the process. This paper discusses absolute and variable characteristics of ESP. In the present scenario, students of law need a specific set of language skills for their success in the field of education and in the working places (courts) in order to enhance their Specific Vocabulary and Trial advocacy skills. Further, this paper will attempt to point out that the students of law, with the help of texts like *Billy Budd*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Benefits of the Doubt* and *Barn Burning*, can improve their specific vocabulary and study skills.

## **What is ESP?**

ESP means English for Specific Purpose; it involves teaching and learning the specific skills and language required by a particular learner for a particular purpose. The P in ESP always stands for professional purpose – a set of skills that learners currently require in their working place or in their professional careers. "English for Specific Purposes is a term that refers to teaching or studying English for a particular career (like law, medicine) or for business in general" (International Teacher Training Organization, 2005). Pauline C. Robinson (1989) describes ESP as a type of ELT (English Language Teaching) and defines it as: "Goal oriented language learning" (Robinson, Pauline C. ed. Hywel Coleman, 1989, p. 398). It means that student has a specific goal that is going to be attained.

## **Characteristics Features of ESP**

Hutchinson and Waters (1992) describe ESP as "language description". The "language description" involves questions, e.g. What topic areas will need to be covered? What does the student need to learn? What aspects of language will be needed and how will they be described? (Hutchinson and Waters, 1992, p. 19, 22). The following are considered to be the characteristic features of ESP.

1. ESP meets only specific needs of the learners.
2. ESP makes use of methodology and activities of the discipline it serves.
3. ESP is designed only for adult learners, either at a higher education level institution or in a professional work situation.
4. ESP may use those specific teaching situations and a different methodology from that of General English.
5. Most ESP courses assume some essential knowledge of the language

### **Research Questions**

1. Do the selected works enhance legal skills?
2. What is the difference in the completeness of technical word meaning acquired from selected works?
3. Do the students acquire the Critical, Analytical and Logical Analytical skills from the selected works?

### **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were the first year undergraduate students at the Law School in the Chennai campus of the VIT University. In order to achieve the objectives framed for this study, 60 students were chosen as the sample by adopting purposive sampling method.

### **Materials**

The materials in the study used were a set of literary works which could help the sample to attain Specific Words (here, Legal Words) and Legal Skills.

1. *The Benefit of the Doubt* by Jack London
2. *Billy Budd* by Herman Melville
3. The Trial Scene from *The Merchant of Venice* [Act IV, Scene I] by William Shakespeare
4. *Barn Burning* by William Faulkner

### **Procedure**

The study consisted of a pre-test and a post-test. The participants were tested individually. At the beginning, the participants were told that the study focused on specific words and legal skills. It was

also explained to them that they would practise the court scene contained in the content portion of the literary texts.

The participants first completed a pre-test which assessed their knowledge of the target skills through a questionnaire. It consisted of thirty close-ended questions and two open-ended questions. In this session, the participants were given vocabulary tests to find out or match the meanings of a few words and phrases related to legal terminology and also to explain a few more terms of art. They were also asked to give their opinion about the court room situations related to these items.

<b>Target Words</b>	<b>Meaning of the Words</b>
1. The benefit of the doubt	No proper witness in this case
2. Verdict	Judgment
3. Testify	To give oral evidence under oath in answer to the questions posed by attorney at the trail
4. Drumhead court-martial	Military Court
5. Writ	Brief notes, usually written by the court clerk, stating what action was taken on a specific day in the court.
6. Homicide	The act of killing a human being
7. Mutiny	Revolt

In order to test the comprehension of the specific vocabulary items pertaining to legal glossary, the following items formed part of the questionnaire:

**Choose the correct meaning of the given words: (10 items)**

- 1) Incarcerate
  - a) Release    b) Confine    c) Bail    d) Dismiss
- 2) Alleged
  - a) Illegal but not yet proved    b) Proved by proper evidence
  - c) Arrested    d) Punish brutally

**Match the following: (10 items)**

- 1) Docket    - Argue angrily with someone
- 2) Assault    - Do something illegal or wrong
- 3) .....    - .....

**Give the meanings of the following terms briefly:**

**(10 items)**

- 1) Justifiable homicide.....
- 2) Adjournment.....

As an example of testing the analytical and logical skills, the following item was included in the questionnaire.

**COURT SCENE**

**(2 items)**

As a Law Student, read the following court scene and write your own judgment according to the situation:

Kumar goes to a pub in a small town. There the bar owner, out of mistaken identity, started a duel with Kumar. Finally, Kumar was thrashed by the pub owner along with his friends. The case goes to court where the judge sets both the accused and the guilt free as there was no evidence that proved and drew the first blood. So, on the basis of the benefit of doubt, the judge sets both the parties free.

As an audience you know Kumar is innocent. As such, show how you will give justice to Kumar. And also indicate how you will conclude this story. Give you own ending as how Kumar will take revenge against the pub owner who beat him and the judge who dismissed the case without proper inquiry.

**Post-test**

The post-test was conducted after teaching the literary works to the students. Then the questionnaire was provided to the participants. The data from both the pre- and post-test are then presented together and interpreted.

**Instructional Sequence**

The researcher taught the literary texts in three weeks. The texts were taught in such a manner as to lay emphasis on the legal glossary contained in the literary texts so that the participants learnt specific words and legal skills properly.

**In the first week:**

1. *The Benefit of the Doubt* – Jack London

In this essay, the participants learnt some specific words like *verdict*, *testify*, *the Benefit of the Doubt*, *assault*, *cross-examination*, etc.

2. *Billy Budd* – Herman Melville

Billy Budd was the hero of this work. He was affected by a wrong judgment and finally he was dead. In this novella, the students of law should know about logical and analytical skills which they can attain at their level.

**In the second week:**

3. The Trial Scene from *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare

In this drama Shakespeare used the court scene very clearly. When the researcher taught this scene, the law students learnt the critical analytical skill and the researcher gave role play activity to the participants.

**In the third week:**

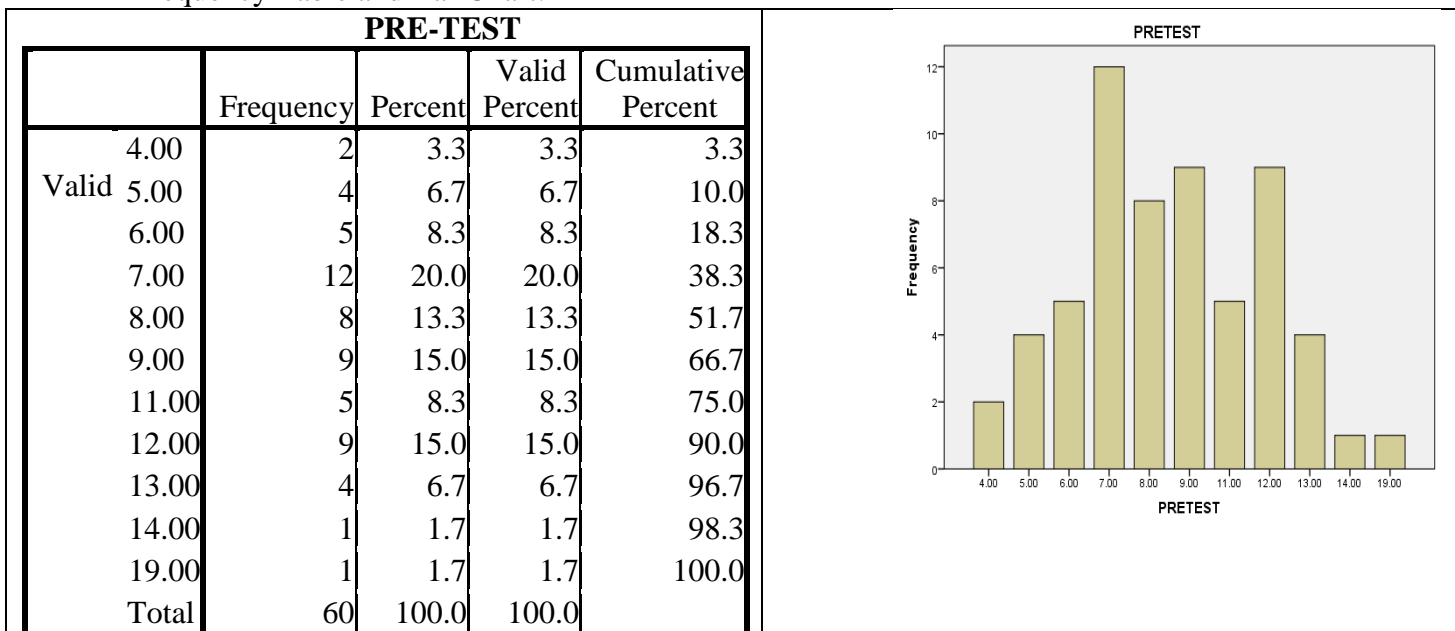
4. *Barn Burning* – William Faulkner

In this essay, the participants learnt some specific words like *Execution*, *Writ*, *Trial*, *Wrangle*, etc.

**Data Analysis**

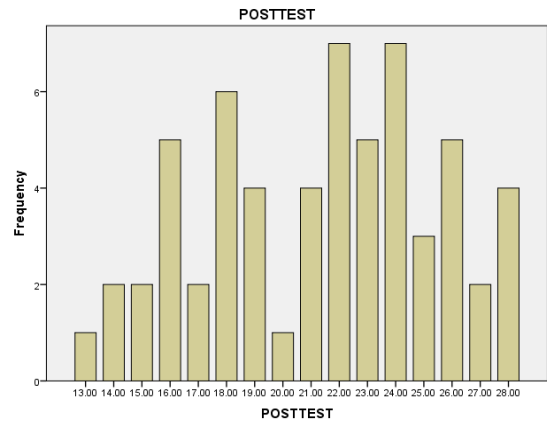
	PRE-TEST	POST- TEST
N	60	60

Frequency Table and Bar Chart:



**POST-TEST**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	1.7	1.7	1.7
	2	3.3	3.3	5.0
	2	3.3	3.3	8.3
	5	8.3	8.3	16.7
	2	3.3	3.3	20.0
	6	10.0	10.0	30.0
	4	6.7	6.7	36.7
	1	1.7	1.7	38.3





	4	6.7	6.7	45.0
	7	11.7	11.7	56.7
	5	8.3	8.3	65.0
	7	11.7	11.7	76.7
	3	5.0	5.0	81.7
	5	8.3	8.3	90.0
	2	3.3	3.3	93.3
	4	6.7	6.7	100.0
	60	100.0	100.0	

## **Discussion and Result**

### **Open-ended Questions**

In this paper, a total number of 60 participants attended the Pre-test and the Post-test. It consisted of 30 close-ended questions and 2 open-ended questions. The data from both parts of the test were presented together. In the close-ended questions, Pre-test minimum mark was 4 and maximum mark was 19. In the Post-test, minimum mark was 13 and maximum mark was 28. In the close-ended questions, the participants were able to enhance their understanding of specific words.

### **Open-ended Questions**

In the open-ended questions, a court room task was provided to the students and they have to write their own judgment with reference to that task. Prior to the Post-test, the researcher taught the participants the literary texts. He then provided some court room situations based on which the students wrote their views very clearly. With the help of these texts, the participants were supposed to enhance their critical, analytical and logical skills properly.

### **Results**

A paired samples test comparing the pre-test with the post-test was administered. In the post-test, all the participants scored marks which were higher than the pre-test. So this literary works were perceived to be very helpful for law students to enhance their skills.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of the study is to enhance the specific words and the advocacy skills for lawyers. The afore-mentioned texts are essential for the students to enhance their skills and also they attained some knowledge for their specific field. It is learnt from the analysis of the data that the process would help the English learners to enhance the repertoire of specific words pertaining to legal use in particular and improve their advocacy skills in general.

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