

Trends in the Use of Foreign Languages for Professional Priority May 17, 2025
**CHALLENGES FACED BY ESP STUDENTS IN ACHIEVING ENGLISH
PROFICIENCY**

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Abstract: This article explores the specific challenges faced by students of Water Management in achieving English proficiency, particularly within the scope of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The author discusses issues such as limited technical vocabulary, lack of practice in professional contexts, and insufficient learning resources. The paper also suggests possible solutions to enhance language acquisition tailored to the field of water sciences. It emphasizes the importance of English for academic success and global communication in the technical domain.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Water management, Technical Vocabulary, Language Learning Challenges

Introduction

In today's global academic and professional world, English has become more than just a foreign language—it is a key tool for learning, communication, and career development. As a student specializing in Water Management, I have realized how important English proficiency is for understanding modern technology, global research, and international collaboration. However, for students like me studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP), achieving English proficiency is not always

easy. We face several unique challenges that make the learning process more difficult, especially when it comes to technical and professional language.

1. Lack of Field-Specific Vocabulary

One of the biggest challenges I face as a Water Management student is the limited vocabulary related to our field in standard English courses. Most general English classes focus on daily conversation or basic grammar, but they don't teach terms like "irrigation scheduling," "hydraulic conductivity," "evapotranspiration," or "soil salinity." These are essential for understanding technical books, academic articles, or even operating manuals for modern irrigation systems. Without this specialized vocabulary, it becomes hard to fully engage with the international literature or participate in global conferences.

2. Limited Practical Exposure

In our daily university life, most subjects are taught in our native language. Even though English is sometimes included in the curriculum, it is often treated as a separate subject rather than a tool for learning other topics. This limits our exposure to English in real, practical contexts. For example, we rarely write scientific reports or present project findings in English. As a result, even if we understand English passively, we struggle when we have to actively use it in professional or technical settings.

3. Lack of Motivation and Relevance

Another issue many ESP students face is a lack of motivation. Since general English lessons often do not seem relevant to our future careers, we may not take them seriously. When students do not see a direct connection between what they learn and what they need in the field, their interest naturally drops. I have personally experienced this in early semesters, when English classes seemed disconnected from the world of water engineering. But once I started reading international journals and watching technical documentaries, I realized how important English really is for my profession.

4. Insufficient Educational Resources

Educational materials tailored for Water Management in English are also scarce.

There are some online resources, but they are mostly made for native speakers or very advanced learners. For beginners or intermediate students like me, these materials are often too difficult or too specialized. We need bilingual textbooks, technical glossaries, and beginner-friendly videos that explain key concepts in both our native language and English. Without such support, learning becomes frustrating and time-consuming.

5. Fear of Making Mistakes

One more psychological barrier is the fear of making mistakes when speaking or writing in English. In technical subjects like ours, where precision is important, we often worry about using the wrong terms or expressing ideas incorrectly. This fear prevents many students from participating in discussions or asking questions in English, even when they have good ideas. Personally, I have missed several chances to interact with guest speakers or attend English-language seminars just because I lacked confidence.

6. Technical English is Different from General English

Another important point is that technical English used in Water Management differs significantly from general English. While general English focuses on greetings, shopping, or travel, technical English includes data interpretation, report writing, equipment descriptions, and environmental impact assessments. Understanding these complex forms of communication requires not only vocabulary, but also familiarity with sentence structure, tone, and presentation style—skills that are not usually taught in basic English courses.

Suggestions and Solutions

To help students like me overcome these challenges, some important steps should be taken. First, universities should offer specialized ESP courses that focus on the technical language of our field. These courses should include real-life tasks like writing irrigation reports, presenting case studies, and discussing climate change impacts on water resources. Secondly, more collaboration between language teachers

and field specialists is needed. When English instructors understand our professional needs, they can design better lessons.

Moreover, students should be encouraged to use online platforms such as ResearchGate, YouTube (e.g., channels like FAO, IWMI), and Google Scholar to read and listen to content in English. Watching documentaries, listening to podcasts, and reading technical blogs in English can also improve both comprehension and vocabulary.

Conclusion

In conclusion, English proficiency is vital for students in technical fields like Water Management. However, ESP students face several challenges, such as limited vocabulary, lack of practical exposure, and fear of making mistakes. By redesigning ESP programs and offering more field-specific resources, universities can help students gain the skills needed for global communication and career success. As a Water Management student, I believe that overcoming these challenges will not only improve our academic performance but also prepare us for a more connected and professional future.

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