

# English for Specific Purposes in Adult and Professional Learning Contexts: A Social and Intercultural Perspective

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## **Abstract**

This paper offers a bibliographic and conceptual discussion of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in adult and professional learning contexts, with particular emphasis on its social and intercultural dimensions. Within adult education, ESP is often approached primarily as an instrumental response to labour market demands, focusing on communicative efficiency and employability. However, such approaches tend to underplay the ways in which adult learners engage with English as a socially embedded practice shaped by cultural expectations, institutional norms, and unequal access to linguistic resources. Drawing on selected literature from adult education, applied linguistics, and intercultural education, the paper conceptualizes ESP as a site where language learning intersects with professional identity formation and intercultural negotiation. Attention is given to adult learners operating in fields such as business, tourism, and social sciences, where English frequently functions as a marker of professional legitimacy as well as a medium of cross-cultural interaction. From a social-theoretical perspective, language is discussed as a form of cultural and symbolic resource whose value is contingent upon specific educational and professional contexts. The paper reviews how dominant models of intercultural competence in ESP tend to prioritize adaptability and functional communication, while paying less attention to issues of power, recognition, and social positioning experienced by adult learners. By bringing together insights from adult education theory and social approaches to language, the paper aims to clarify the relevance of interculturality for understanding adult ESP learning beyond purely technical frameworks, in ways that are sensitive to learners' intercultural trajectories and social realities.

**Keywords:** Lifelong Learning; Cultural Capital; English for Social Sciences; Interculturality; Social Anthropology