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Challenges in teaching ESP for the students of foreign philology faculty

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt to discuss the issues, tasks and challenges of the ESP teaching for linguistics students. The main target is to investigate the most common challenges that the teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) face while developing an ESP course or during the teaching process. It was found out that the most common challenges an ESP teacher encounters are; selecting the teaching materials, designing a course, lack of collaboration with the subject teachers and learners' low general English level which have been discussed in detail in this paper.

Key Words: ESP, challenges, course design, carrier content, real content, needs analysis, special field knowledge, Effectiveness of ESP,

Introduction

English for specific purposes (ESP) represents the effect of the worldwide interest in the study of English. Among the factors paving the way for the creation of this academic subject, Kennedy and Bolitho (1984:1) include:

- the introduction of governmental mass education programs "with English as the first, and sometimes only, foreign language;
- the need of English as a common medium of communication as a consequence of the growth of business and increased occupational mobility;
- the facilitation of access to scientific and technical literature.

English for specific purposes (ESP) refers to the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language where the goal of the learners is to use English in a particular domain. The teaching of English for specific purposes, in its early days, was largely motivated by the need to communicate across languages in areas such as commerce and technology. This has now expanded to include other areas such as English for academic purposes (EAP), English for occupational purposes (EOP), English for vocational purposes (EVP), and English for medical purposes (EMP), English for business purposes (EBP), English for legal purposes (ELP), and English for sociocultural purposes (ESCP) (Belcher 2009).

Main Part

In fact, the term ESP has been in use for a quarter of a century now, and its definition can be found in many issues on the subject that followed the first, classic, edition by T. Hutchinson and A. Waters (1987). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) attempt to define ESP not by showing what ESP is, but rather showing what ESP is not:

✓ ESP is not a matter of teaching 'specialized varieties' of English. The fact that language is used for a specific purpose does not imply that it is a special form of the language, different in kind from other forms. Certainly, there are some features which can be identified as 'typical' of a particular context of use and which, therefore, the learner is more likely to meet in the target situation. But these differences should not be allowed to obscure the far larger area of common ground that underlies all English use, and indeed, all language use.

✓ ESP is not just a matter of Science words and grammar for Scientists, Hotel words and grammar for Hotel staff and so on. When we look at a tree, we see the leaves and branches, but there is much more to the tree than just these- much of it hidden from view inside and beneath the tree. The leaves do not just hang in the air: they are supported by a complex underlying structure. In the same way there is much more to communication than just the surface features that we read and hear.

✓ ESP is not different in kind from any other form of language teaching, in that it should be based in the first instance on principles of effective and efficient learning. Though the content of learning may vary there is no reason to suppose that the processes of learning should be any different for the ESP learner than for the General English learner. There is, in other words, no such thing as an ESP methodology, merely methodologies that have been applied in ESP classrooms, but could just as well have been used in the learning of any kind of English.

The Role of the ESP Teacher

ESP has a lot in common with teaching of general foreign language. However, in both cases it is necessary to consider linguistic development and methodology; to have insights in contemporary ideas regarding the position and role of foreign language teachers as well as the position and the role of foreign language learners; to face new technologies offered as a means improving the process of teaching and learning Foreign Language for Specific Purposes. In this context, the ESP teacher must fill many roles and acquire certain knowledge. Dudley Evans [3] describes the true ESP teacher as the one who performs five different roles; they are:

1) *teacher*; 2) *collaborator*; 3) *course designer and materials provider*; 4) *researcher*; 5) *evaluator*.

Thus, he or she is responsible for organizing courses, setting learning objectives, establishing a positive learning environment in the classroom, and evaluating student progress. In the light of our problem, organizing courses means setting learning goals, transforming them into an instructional program with the timing of activities. This is, in actual flow, selecting, designing and organizing course materials, supporting the students in their efforts, and providing them with feedback on their progress. Setting goals and objectives means the arrangement of the conditions for learning in the classroom and setting long-term goals and short-term objectives for student's achievements. Creating a learning environment means creating the atmosphere in the classroom for acquiring language proficiency by means of using the language in interaction with other speakers. Here the teacher should create an atmosphere in the language classroom, which encourages the students.

Possible challenges in teaching ESP

1. Lack of learners' needs analysis
2. Lack of suitable materials
3. Lack of specialist knowledge
4. Lack of collaboration with the subject lecturer

5. Learners' low General English level

Conclusion

Since an ESP course is very demanding one, teachers of ESP may face a lot of challenges not only generated by the lack of specific field knowledge, insufficient needs analysis in developing a course or finding suitable materials for the course but also by unsupportive administrations as well. Even though an ESP teacher may not be an expert, he/she can overcome most of the challenges by reading some literature about the professional field of the learners that will develop their competence and also by collaborating with the subject teacher which will in turn make the teachers more familiar with the content knowledge. The teacher should be the classroom organizer and he should understand the carrier content of the teaching materials as well. ESP teachers need to be flexible so they should respond quickly to the issues which might come up in the lesson. Moreover, they need to take learners' suggestions about the lessons into consideration and they should encourage the students to create their own materials as well. In addition to all of the issues mentioned above, an ESP practitioner should closely follow the latest researches in the field i.e. read related publications, attend conferences and visit relevant institutions in search of expert observations and opinions.

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