

THE DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES(ESP) AND ENGLISH FOR GENERAL PURPOSES(EGP) TEACHERS

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Abstract: This theoretical study aims to explore the differences and similarities between the roles of English for Special Purposes (ESP) and English for General Purposes (EGP) teachers. It also highlights the impact of these differences and similarities on English language teaching (ELT), course materials, and classroom practice. A review of previous research shows that EGP focuses on students' general English skills, while ESP focuses on specific skills. Besides the role of a language teacher, ESP professionals have some specific roles such as course designer, material provider, collaborator, researcher, evaluator, and cultural translator. Therefore, the study recommends specific education and training for ESP teachers so that they acquire the skills to meet the challenges of their work.

Keywords: English Language Teaching (ELT); English for Special Purposes (ESP); English for General Purposes (EGP); English Academic Objectives (EAP); Analysis of needs; Material design.

Literature Review

A working definition of ESP might be that it is a broad term referring to the teaching of English to students who are learning the language for a specific work or study-related reason. ESP has always focused on needs analysis, text analysis, and training learners to communicate effectively in the tasks their academic or professional situation imposes on them (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). ESP can be roughly divided into two main types: English for Professional/Professional/Professional Purposes (EOP/EVP/EPP) ... and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Jordan, 1997, p.4). English for General Purposes (EGP) is called TENOR - teaching English for no apparent reason (Abbott, 1981 in Jordan, 1997, p.4).

Similarities and Differences between ESP and EGP

ESP can be viewed as a special and specific edition of EGP that includes practical language skills to enable students to perform professional tasks successfully (Potocar, 2002). However, EGP provides basic knowledge and skills of the English language at the school level, where students' professional/professional and academic orientations are not well defined. The main goal of introducing ESP in different non-native/international settings is to equip learners with the necessary English skills to

meet the challenges of practical communication in their future careers. As Holme (1996 cited in Potocar, 2002) suggests, ESP should help students acquire the language skills necessary to apply their knowledge and combine work-related skills with personal development and socio-cultural knowledge

The specifics of ESP courses require a teacher to adopt a different role and teaching strategy to impart knowledge to their students. First of all, he/she has to identify the needs of the learners, which determine the method, material, and level of language teaching (Robinson, 1991). What distinguishes ESP from general English is the sense of necessity (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p. 53). From this, it can be concluded that an ESP teacher is almost a general English teacher unless they understand and focus on the special needs of their students (Robinson, 1991). However, certain language knowledge and skills will likely be relevant and useful for more than one subject or profession (Holme, 1996). For example, the communication skills required for different jobs may be similar (Potocar, 2002).

Comparative roles of an ESP

It is not easy to identify a teacher's role in a general or specific context because it is not static. It is constantly changing due to differences in curricula, courses, and teaching contexts (Jordan, 1997). It is precisely this fact that leads us to understand the different roles of EGP and ESP teachers. If an ESP and an EGP teacher are not identical, the question arises as to the differences between them. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) answer this question very briefly, referring to ESP and EGP that theoretically there is no difference; In practice, however, there are many differences. There is no single, ideal role description (Robinson, 1991, p. 79) for an ESP teacher, as there is a wide variety of ESP courses and contexts. However, Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) have identified some specific roles of an ESP practitioner as a teacher, course designer and material provider, collaborator, researcher, and evaluator. These particular roles make an ESP teacher less like a general English teacher. Flexibility is considered the secret of success for an ESP teacher. It is a personal trait that transforms an EGP teacher into an ESP practitioner and helps them successfully teach diverse groups of students, even in the short term (Robinson, 1991, p. 80).

Role as a Teacher

The ESP practitioner is first and foremost a teacher, so he must possess the qualities of a good general language teacher along with the specific qualities desired for his subject (Robinson, 1991). The methodology of ESP teaching must not differ radically from that of General English (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p. 13). However, considering the specifics of ESP in a narrower sense, it is understood that the role and methodology of a practitioner differ from that of an EGP teacher. An ESP instructor is not the primary connoisseur of material vehicle contents (ibid.). The reason is obvious since ESP contains specific knowledge about the target situation, the field

of knowledge, or the profession, but a teacher is usually only trained in language. Because of this, learners may know more about lesson material or content than the teacher. An experienced teacher can channel students' knowledge to develop effective communication strategies in the classroom. In these situations, the teacher becomes the advisor (Robinson, 1991) who, with the help of the students, develops a teaching strategy to achieve the intended learning goals.

As a Course designer and materials Provider

ESP practitioners are expected to develop courses and provide materials to their students. These courses and materials should suit the different needs and contexts of learners. It is usually very difficult to find appropriate textbooks that address most of the language and communicative needs of students in a given context (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Therefore, ESP teacher must create their teaching material. He/she either gathers material from various sources or writes his own when what is desired is not available (Kennedy & Bolitho, 1984). But an ESP teaching assignment doesn't end here; he/she must assess the effectiveness of these materials during and after the course. In comparison, an EGP teacher follows the prescribed curriculum and teaches published textbooks recommended by school boards for various levels. He/she even adheres to the teaching methodology recommended in the book or recommended by the authorities.

As a Collaborator

Because ESP practitioners work in diverse academic and professional genres, they need to know their students' specialties to plan courses and teaching materials. In practice, a teacher cannot master the specific requirements of all the subjects he has to teach. In such a situation, cooperation with subject matter experts in the respective disciplines is recommended (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). This type of collaboration can be of different types; simple cooperation, specific cooperation, and the most comprehensive cooperation (ibid.). Working with subject specialists, an ESP teacher knows the subject curriculum and professional responsibilities of their students. The specific collaboration involves an extended collaboration between the ESP teacher and the subject specialist. The latter offers the former access to the actual content of the specialist course, which can be used in the classroom. A subject librarian can assess the teaching materials created by the ESP teacher in certain situations (ibid.). The specialist lecturer and the ESP practitioner teach the class together in full cooperation. It is known as team teaching (Robinson, 1991, p. 88). This type of collaboration is not required in an EGP context.

As a Researcher

An ESP practitioner should also have an interest in research methodologies that can aid in the performance of various tasks such as needs analysis, course design, and material selection. This role is urgently needed in the field of EAP, where volumes of

research have already been published (Swales, 1990, cited in Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). To benefit from this research, a teacher should have research aptitude and skills. When assessing needs, teachers need to go beyond the superficial analysis of the skills students want. They should provide a comprehensive overview of the skills identified by learners and the relevant texts (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). In the field of EGP, there is no such research as the same traditional grammatical structures are taught up until now.

As an Evaluator

An ESP practitioner not only assesses students' language knowledge and skills, but also the courses and materials they have developed themselves (ibid.). Discussions with the students and their ongoing needs analysis can be very helpful in determining the compatibility between the course and the materials taught and the learning priorities identified by the students. An EGP teacher also fulfills this role to a certain extent as they are also involved in the assessment of their students.

Cultural Understanding as a Role of ESP Teacher

An ESP practitioner, much like an EGP teacher, must understand and respect the cultural sensitivities of their students, especially when teaching in a non-native setting. In addition, an ESP teacher should also be aware of the differences between different academic or professional cultures in which he/she works (ibid.). He/she must take this type of cultural awareness into account when designing courses, preparing materials, and delivering classes.

Implications for the materials, classroom practices, and ELT

In general, the spread of ESP has also influenced the teaching of English. Currently, many ELT teachers analyze the needs of their students to make their programs more effective (Kennedy & Bolitho, 1984). Therefore, educational leaders and policymakers can be recommended to create conditions to promote research culture among ELT teachers. In this regard, teachers should conduct action research to help them analyze the effectiveness of their specific language courses and the methodology used (Kennedy, 1985, cited in Robinson, 1991). Given the above literature, it appears that an ESP practitioner has more roles to play compared to an EGP teacher. Therefore, special training courses must be agreed upon and defined as a prerequisite for entry into ESP teaching. The preparatory, in-service, and refresher courses can be fruitful for the specific training of ESP teachers. As there is a wide variety of ESP contexts and courses, it is not possible to train one teacher for all. McDonough (1988 quoted in Robinson, 1991, p.94) makes sense to divide the training route into wide-angle and narrow-angle areas. Typically, newcomers to ESP teaching do not know which specific ESP situation they will select to teach. For this reason, we recommend broad-based courses with general language teaching and broad ESP knowledge for professional preparation and more specific, closely interlinked, subject-

specific courses for extra-occupational training. In addition, Ewer (1983 in Robinson, p. 94) also recommends training for ESP teachers to address attitudinal, conceptual, linguistic, methodological, and organizational problems they may encounter when performing different roles.

The impact on the material design was also far-reaching. The immense work related to the languages of various disciplines and professions has enlightened people about the various functions of the English language. It has inspired many people to initiate projects to write materials in all areas of ELT (Kennedy & Bolitho, 1984). Due to developments in material design, ESP has shown how a communicative language curriculum can be transformed into either a functional fictional or a task-based curriculum (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p. 19). This can help teachers engage students by allowing them to use language to convey their intentions and meanings. Since ESP ensures student autonomy, it would be a good idea to ask students to choose materials themselves. This freedom of choice can increase their creativity and motivation (Ajideh, 2009).

Conclusion

The comparative roles of ESP and EGP teachers highlighted in the above literature make it clear that while there are some commonalities for both teachers in their respective classes, ESP teachers have several responsibilities that are unique to them, which makes the work more challenging. The ESP teacher or practitioner who fulfills the traditional role of an EGP teacher must simultaneously become a material designer, an organizer, a consultant, a facilitator, and a researcher. The diversity of their roles must be largely reflected in their teaching practice to achieve their teaching goals. Compared to EGP teachers, ESP practitioners need to show more flexibility in their approaches due to constantly changing classroom situations and autonomous students in ESP contexts. Both EGP and ESP teachers should be qualified and trained to achieve fruitful results in their fields. However, it can be assumed that ESP teachers need specific training in the necessary skills such as needs analysis and material design to meet the specific needs and high expectations of their students.

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