



## FACTORS SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH IN NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES

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### Abstract

This paragraph of the graduation paper is devoted to the issues of the factors supporting teaching in non-English speaking countries. The participation of learners in the design of an ESP course is essential in order for the course to be effective. Teachers may rely more often on intuition when making course planning than on informed assessment of learners needs.

**Keywords:** Support, ESP, supplementary material, textbook, provide, published material, principle, define, methodology, specific teaching.

### Introduction

ESP practitioners often have to plan the course that they teach and provide the materials for it. It is rarely possible to use a particular textbook without the need for supplementary material, and sometimes no really suitable published material exists for certain of the identified needs. The role of ESP teachers as providers of material thus involves choosing suitable published material, adapting material when published material is not suitable, or even writing material where nothing suitable exists.

English for Specific/Special Purposes (ESP) and General English (GE) are the two branches of English Language Teaching (ELT).

### Analysis

General English and English for Specific Purposes share the same principles of language teaching, having effective and efficient learning as a main objective. The main difference between ESP and GE lies in the *awareness of a need*. ESP learners are current or future specialists who need English for their specific area and who are aware of their need; they know what exactly they need English for, they know what the ESP course should offer them. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning.

Strevens defines the absolute characteristics of ESP as being:



- Designed to meet the needs of the learner;
- Related in content (i.e., in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities;
- Centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, etc., and analysis of the discourse;
- In contrast with general English later Dudley-Evans and St John (1998 as cited in Gatehouse 2001) modified Steverson's definition and offered a definition of the variable characteristics of ESP.
- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
- ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level;
- ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students;

### Discussion

As noted by Gatehouse (2001), Dudley-Evans and St. John have removed the absolute characteristic that 'ESP is in contrast with General English' and added more variable characteristics. They assert that ESP is not necessarily related to a specific discipline. Furthermore, ESP is likely to be used with adult learners although it could be used with young adults in a secondary school setting.

As for a broader definition of ESP, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) theorize, "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning". Anthony (1997) notes that, it is not clear where ESP courses end and general English courses begin; numerous non-specialist ESL instructors use an ESP approach in that their syllabi are based on analysis of learner needs and their own personal specialist knowledge of using English for real communication.

David Carter (1983 as cited in Gatehouse 2001) identifies three types of ESP:

- English as a restricted language
- English for Academic and Occupational Purposes
- English with specific topics.

In the 'Tree of ELT' (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), ESP is broken down into three branches: a) English for Science and Technology (EST), b) English for Business and Economics (EBE), and c) English for Social Studies (ESS). Each of these subject

areas is further divided into two branches: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). An example of EOP for the EST branch is 'English for Technicians' whereas an example of EAP for the EST branch is 'English for Medical Studies'.

The third and final type of ESP is English with specific topics. Carter notes that it is only here where emphasis shifts from purpose to topic. This type of ESP is uniquely concerned with anticipated future English needs of, for example, scientists requiring English for postgraduate reading studies, attending conferences or working in foreign institutions. However, Gatehouse (2001) argues that this is not a separate type of ESP. Rather it is an integral component of ESP courses or programs which focus on situational language. This situational language has been determined based on the interpretation of results from needs analysis of authentic language used in target workplace settings.

According to Carter (1983 as cited in Gatehouse 2001) are discussed here. He states that there are three features common to ESP courses:

- a) authentic material,
- b) purpose-related orientation, and
- c) self-direction.

Here are some definitions of authenticity of text or teaching materials:

An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort. (Morrow, 1977, p. 13)

Authentic texts (either written or spoken) are those which are designed for native speakers: they are real texts designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language in question. (Harmer, 1983, p. 146)

A rule of thumb for authentic here is any material which has not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching. (Nunan, 1989, p. 54)

A recent trend in language teaching and learning has been the growing concern with authentic texts (Lynch 1982). Authentic texts are widely used by all ESP course designers as they have proved to be effective teaching-learning materials. Purpose-related orientation refers to the simulation of communicative tasks required of the target setting. Carter (1983) cites student simulation of a conference, involving the preparation of papers, reading, notetaking, and writing. Finally, self-direction is characteristic of ESP courses in that the " ... point of including self-direction ... is that ESP is concerned with turning learners into users" (Carter, 1983, as cited in Gatehouse 2001). In order for self-direction to occur, the



learners must have a certain degree of freedom to decide when, what, and how they will study.

How does an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) practitioner react when the learners of an ESP course tell him/her that the prescribed textbook does not satisfy their needs, what their immediate and future language needs are, what and how they should be taught, how the supplementary ESP course should be designed, how they should be involved in the design of they course, what role the teacher should play and how they would like to learn. Should the ESP practitioner take the learners suggestions/demands as a challenge and plunge into action or ignore the suggestion of the learners as something impracticable and take refuge in a course book that already exists?

Dudley Evans and St. John (1998) state that the ESP practitioner should play five important roles: teacher, course designer and materials provider, collaborator, researcher and evaluator.

Though some ESP teachers have been effective course designers and materials providers, there is not much evidence to prove whether learners have been involved in the design of ESP courses by selecting course materials and suggesting tasks.

The researcher is of the view that his students are potential selectors and providers of appropriate reading and listening materials for the proposed supplementary course *English for Biotechnology* based on the proof that they could critically evaluate or review the *Technical English* course and the textbook. It was further strengthened by the fact that the learners are more knowledgeable in the field of biotechnology than many ESP teachers. Dudley Evans and St John (1998) state that teaching ESP is different from teaching EFL because learners have knowledge that they need to use, which we, the ESP teachers, generally do not have. The learners enthusiasm and cooperation made the researcher carry out the experiment of involving the learners in the design of the course.

The various stages of the design of the course are discussed in the following sections:

1. Needs analysis
2. Setting course objectives
3. Selection of course materials
4. Teaching Methodology

One of the hallmarks of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was that English Language Teaching (ELT) should be learner-centred, i.e., it should respond to the



language needs of the learner. In this view each language-learning situation is unique and should be thoroughly studied and delineated as a prerequisite for the design of language courses.

With the spread of communicative language teaching (CLT), much emphasis in second language (L2) methodology has been paid to the learner-oriented instruction. As a result, needs analysis has been given considerable attention in making a particular course serve a particular group's interests.

Needs analysis is a process of establishing the what and how of a course. The needs analysis as put forth by Dudley Evans and Maggie Jo (1998) encompasses a detailed description of learners needs: the tasks and activities the learners are/ will be using English for, personal information about learners, cultural information about the students, their current language skills, their perceived language needs, etc.

In order to collect information and data about the learners proficiency in the English language, their immediate and future target needs and to know the subject teachers expectations and to get their suggestions, the following steps were taken:

- Giving a pre-course assessment test to students
- Giving orientation to students on ESP
- Interviewing subject experts
- Assessing students needs

The main data collection methods for such needs assessment were questionnaires, structured interviews, discussions, analysis of spoken and written tests and observations.

The students need to have good writing skills in order to excel in such tests and exams. Most students cannot write on their own because their proficiency level in the target language is very low. They memorize answers and reproduce them in tests and exams because of the aforementioned problem.

Listening and speaking are two important skills for the students in order to follow lectures, to interact with the teachers and fellow students, to take part in group discussions and to give oral presentations. According to the teachers, almost 40 percent of the students lack competence in these skills.

In summary the following were the problems stated by the teachers:

Some students find it difficult to follow lectures in English.

They do not know how to take notes.

About 40 per cent of students have problems with speaking and writing in English.



Since they do not have good writing skills, they do not write assignments on their own.

Those students who cannot speak fluently do not take part in activities which require them to speak in the target language.

Most students lack technical writing skills.

The following suggestions were given:

Remedial coaching in English should be given to the disadvantaged students in order to enhance their level of motivation and participation.

The students should be exposed to reading texts related to water industry and they should be trained to analyze the texts critically though they are scientific in nature.

Technical writing should be given more importance.

The language teacher should correct students writing assignments and help the students attain grammatical accuracy.

More opportunities should be given to the students to speak in English in the class.

The students should be given practice in making oral presentations.

The subject teachers should be involved in selecting reading texts for the proposed supplementary course.

According to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), the key stages in ESP are needs analysis, course (and syllabus) design, materials selection (and production), teaching and learning, and evaluation.

Information and data concerning what and how the students want to learn, how they want to involve themselves in the course design, etc, were collected by administering needs assessment questionnaires.

The needs analysis questionnaire helped the researcher gain an insight into the students present and future language/communication needs, what language skills they need to develop, how the students want to involve themselves in the course design, what teaching methodology the ESP teacher should follow, how they would like to contribute to the success of the course, how they would like to be assessed at the end of the course, etc.

The learners had mentioned the following skills as their immediate language needs:

- attending seminars and listening to lectures (listening skills),
- reading texts related to biotechnology (reading skills),
- taking part in group discussions, giving seminars / presentations (speaking skills)



- defining technical terms, writing assignments based on the functions such as describing, defining, discussing, analyzing, comparing and contrasting, enumerating, evaluating, illustrating, summarizing (technical writing).

## Conclusion

The goal was to enable students to make the transition from *English for Engineers and Technologists* (common course) to *English for Water Industry and melioration* (more specific) environment by providing them with scientific English through content-cum-task based teaching-learning materials and through the integration of the four major language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Materials play an important role in the design of any language course. If students do not find the materials interesting and the teaching methodology creative, they lose their motivation. It is the role of the teacher to set the track right for the learners by creating an environment that is conducive for learning.

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