PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

METHODOLOGY OF TEACHING OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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A GENERAL PERSPECTIVE ON DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GE TEACHING AND ESP TEACHING

With the accelerating rate of globalization, business exchanges are carried out cross the border, as a result there is a growing demand for talents professional both in English and Business. There are certain arguments that no differences can be defined between Business English (or English for Specific Purposes) teaching and General English teaching. However, many researchers come to the conclusion, that Business English is different from General English at least in such aspects as in the role of teacher, in course design, in teaching models, etc., thus different teaching methods should be applied in order to realize expected teaching goals.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is often underestimated because of teachers' attitudes which are often characterized either by condescension or reluctance. This underestimation may be due to the fact many language teachers are not aware of what it means to be an ESP teacher, and what it takes to be successful in this practice.

To start the discussion we need to have a clear idea about what ESP means. Dudley-Evans offered the following characteristics of ESP:

Absolute Characteristics

1. ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners

2. ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves

3. ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre.

Variable Characteristics

1. ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines

2. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English

3. 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

4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students.

5. Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems

If we agree with this definition, we begin to see how broad ESP really is. In fact, one may have a question – what is the difference between the ESP and General English approach? Hutchinson answers this quite simply, «in theory nothing, in practice a great deal». Teachers nowadays are much more aware of the importance of needs analysis, and certainly materials writers think very carefully about the goals of learners at all stages of materials production. Perhaps this demonstrates the influence that the ESP approach has had on English teaching in general. Clearly the line between where General English courses stop and ESP courses start has become very vague indeed. In line with the growing popularity of ESP, it is of great significance to study on the difference between GE teaching and ESP teaching.

So, to have the general idea about ESP classes and its comparison to EGP ones we should keep in mind that ESP learners are usually adults who already have some familiarity with English language and they are learning the language to get a set of professional skills and to perform particular-job-related functions. In EGP classes, age of learners varies from children to adults and learning English language is the subject of the classes.

English for Specific Purposes is that kind of English teaching that builds upon what has been acquired earlier in EGP with a more restricted focus. It aims at acquainting learners with the kind of language needed in a particular domain, vocation, or occupation. In other words, its main objective is to meet specific needs of the learners. Of course, this indicates that there is no fixed methodology of ESP that can be applicable in all situations, but rather each situation and particular needs of learners belonging to a particular domain impose a certain methodology of teaching.

Speaking about purposes of learning, in a EGP class, as a rule, four skills are stressed equally. But in ESP, it is needs analysis that determines which language skills are most needed by the students, and the syllabus is designed accordingly. For example, in order to train a tourist guide, the ESP class should promote the development of spoken skills. Another example, one who intends to work in a business administration should be trained in development of reading skills.

In a typical EGP class, there is concentration on teaching grammar and language structures (mostly in isolation). But in ESP, the focus is on context, to ESP, English is not taught as a subject separated from the students' real world.

Combination of subject-matter (which learners are familiar with) with English language creates a meaningful context which is highly motivating. It increases motivation that is a positive indication of a successful learning.

Regarding the term 'specific' in ESP, it should be noted that it doesn't only mean English for specific purposes (English at service of specific purposes), but also it implies specific purposes for learning English. In other words, the study of English through a field that is already known and relevant. So, learners are able to use what they learnt in ESP classes right away in their work and studies. This means that ESP enables them to use the English they know to learn even more English.

To sum it up, ESP assesses and analyzes needs and integrates motivation, subject-matter and content with the help of relevant language skills.

Speaking about differences in the role of GE teacher and ESP teacher, we must mention that they both should be able to identify the current language level of the learner and to select materials and set tasks that are appropriate in level as well as in context. They also need to be able to set course objectives and devise course program. In order to achieve this it is essential for the teacher to have an in-depth knowledge of the language system in terms of skills functions, structures and vocabulary. However, to be a qualified ESP teacher more is needed. An ESP teacher is typically one who has experience in teaching English as a second language. Sometimes we use the term 'ESP practitioner' or 'BE trainer' rather than 'ESP teacher' in order to reflect the difference for being an ESP teacher from being a GE teacher. Some BE trainers come from a business background, who have worked in companies themselves and have useful knowledge of the way in which companies are organized and run, and some may once be TEFL teachers, geologists or architects etc. Whatever the background, it is of great importance that the trainer should be seen as an expert in presenting and explaining the language, in diagnosing the learners' language problems, and in providing them with certain awareness of ESP.

The teacher needs to design a syllabus with realistic goals and arranging conditions for checking and evaluating students' achievements. After setting goals and objectives, these aims should be transformed into an instructional program with the timing of activities. Selecting, designing and organizing course materials as well as providing relevant language skills and elements are of great importance in this phase. Course design is the process by which the raw data about a learning need is interpreted in order to produce an integrated series of teaching-learning experience, whose ultimate aim is to lead the learners to a particular state of knowledge. In general, the course design for GE focuses on subjects related to culture, literature, and linguistics, while that of ESP focuses on courses related to the application of language in professional communication. According to Hutchinson and Waters, there are three main approaches to ESP course design, respectively called language-centered course design, skills-centered course design and learning-centered course design.

Language-centered course design, the simplest and most familiar one, aims to draw as direct connection as possible between the analyses of the target situation. It seems to be very logical, however, static and inflexible, only at the surface level.

Skills-centered course design has been widely used in a number of countries, especially in Latin America. This approach is founded on two fundamental principles, one theoretical, the other pragmatic. A skills-centered approach aims to get away from the surface performance data and look at the competence that underlies the performance. Comparatively speaking, this approach claims to take the learners more into account than the language-centered approach.

Learning-centered approach, different from the first approach – language-centered approach, in which the learner is discarded, and the skills-centered approach

which doesn't take the learner into full account, gives the most concern to the learners, thus to maximize learning.

Teaching skills also differ when we talk about teaching GE and teaching ESP. Traditionally, English is viewed as several components, called speaking, writing, listening, translation, and interpretation, and different teaching skills are applied in teaching each part. However, ESP cannot be treated in the same way, because ESP learners are supposed to gain a comprehensive mastering of English required by professional communications. It is hard to draw a line between the components, say, speaking, listening and writing, so traditional teaching skills may not be favorable in ESP teaching. For this part focus is mainly placed on ESP teaching skills, through which the difference between ESP and GE teaching skills can be easily drawn. We may distinguish two methods of planning the course in ESP teaching. The first is to take each of the main performance areas and break it down into constituent parts: skills components, language functions and the grammatical and lexical constituents. The second is to analyze the language used taken from real life situations, or from simulations of real life situations.

Breakdown method functions much similarly to the teaching method used in GE, as it stresses on language, and its grammatical components, but its skills components and the lexical components bear differences from GE. Due to the difference on lexical level, GE words are widely used in business with another meaning in ESP. ESP teacher should spend more time on this point to cultivate the basic skills for the learners and make the business meaning of the lexical components clear to the learners. For example, 'minute', in GE, means 'one sixth part of an hour, equal to 60 seconds' indicating the time, however, it means 'a brief summary or record of what is said and decided at a meeting' in BE, absolutely different from the GE meaning. ESP teachers are supposed to pick up these words which contain different meaning particularly used in ESP, and make the learners aware of that difference. Besides the teacher may further organize a discussion based on a certain topic. Thus, it is suggested that ESP teachers should spend more time on these differences between GE and ESP meanings in order to cultivate the basic skills for the learners and make the professional meaning of the lexical components clear to the learners. The method of planning the content of course, using the language used in samples taken from different real-life situations or simulations of them, is widely applied in ESP content planning. As we notice, many BE books are compiled in this way, covering areas such as financing, foreign trading, payment, negotiation and so on, to show the characteristics of language used in different business situations. Real-life situation planning undoubtedly is a preferable way in ESP teaching, because it gives the students the most direct impression on how ESP language is different from GE language. This method helps the student manage ESP usage better and faster.

Apart from differences characterizing teaching ESP and ESP teacher, we need to define the responsibilities of ESP learner. The learner comes in the ESP classroom with a broad spectrum of characteristics, among them – interest for learning, subject-content knowledge and well-built adult learning strategies. People learn a language when they have opportunities to work with language in context that they comprehend and find it

interesting. In this respect, ESP has powerful means for providing such opportunities. The more interesting materials, the more attention; the more learners pay attention to the meaning of the language they read or hear, the more they learn and are successful.

ESP learners are usually aware of the purposes for which they will need to use English. Knowledge of the subject area enables them to identify a real context for the vocabulary and structures of ESP classroom. As a result they take advantage of what they already know about the subject-matter to learn English.

Based on the analysis above, we know that the term ESP is used to cover the English taught to a wide range of professional people, and people still in full-time education preparing for a business career and due to the special quality of ESP, attention should not only be paid to language, but equally to the importance of skills-training in the teaching activity. This presents a tough challenge for ESP teachers, as they are required to not only be professional in language, but also to develop awareness of the needs and concerns of business people and to become flexible enough to respond to those needs. For the inexperienced teacher the materials and students of an ESP class can be challenging and you should give yourself extra time to prepare for a ESP course until you are familiar with the content.

There is no 'best' methodology – any teaching situation is an interaction between the learner, the trainer and the activity itself. As a general rule, methodologies which put the learner at the center of the learning process are likely to be the most effective. In ESP teaching activity, methodologies which combine language and real situation together discussed in this essay would be more favorable. Emphasis on the application of language in professional communication can assist in the teacher carrying out the course more successfully and help the learners learn more quickly and more effectively – that can be a win-win policy.

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