Pivotal Roles of ESP Teachers: A Study at Arni University

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Abstract

In the process of globalization demand for learner-centered language courses resulted into the emergence of courses that were designed according to the specific needs of the learners and this resulted into a great demand of teachers who could teach English as per the needs of learners. Ten male and ten female ESP practitioners from various background (Punjab, H.P. and J&K states) were given the task of teaching ESP to technical students. I have designed a questionnaire to explore their responses. The questionnaire seeks to draw out the need of the ESP classroom. The present study discusses the pivotal roles of ESP practitioners in an ESP classroom. The study also suggests that how the practitioners can sustain and retain the interests of learners in language in an ESP classroom. The major finding of the survey of ESP practitioners practicing ESP certainly reflects that teaching English to learners need special and extra effort. The practitioners have to be creative, enthusiastic and positively motivated to apply new techniques and methods to teach English for Specific Purposes.

Introduction

“The ubiquitous liberalization is resulting in the emergence of a borderless world for business. The last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed sweeping political and economic changes.” (1) In the process of globalization, English Language Teaching is being substituted for English for Specific Purposes on the international horizon in technical courses in the university. ESP derives from the need to use language as a tool in facilitating success in professional life, not a hobby, or intellectual coup do’s. Gatehouse (2001) enumerates three factors as the origins of the ESP which speeded up the development of ESP and resulted in courses which could not meet ESP learners’ needs and expectations. ‘These are:

1. Demands of Brave New World- It concerned the two events which had a major impact on the world economy: the end of World War 2 and the Oil crisis. The former resulted in a huge and extraordinary expansion in science, technology and economy, the latter caused the flow of Western money and knowledge into oil-rich countries, and in both cases English was the language of those changes.

2. The Revolution in Linguistics, Hutchinson and Waters (1987), started when some linguistics began to focus on the ways in which language is used in real communication instead of concentrating on features of the language. They also point out that due to the discovery that particular skills and language vary in different situations, we may conclude that adjusting the language to meet the needs of the learners in a specific context is also possible.

3. Focus on the Learner, According to Hutchinson and Waters(1987), is not on the method of language delivery; it also designs specific courses to the different needs and interests more closely and has significantly contributed to the emergence of ESP. (2)

As such “the professionals and technical students need language courses to satiate some of the specific needs in order to perform well in their respective fields. This demand for learner-centered language courses resulted into the courses that were designed according to the specific needs of the learners and this resulted into a great demand of the teachers who teach English as per the needs of the learners. These learners wanted to learn language specifically for utilitarian purposes. The new study shifted the attention away from defining grammar rules to the real, practical communicative features of the language.” (3)

English for Specific Purposes is a strange land, (4) and to cope with the unpredictability of this area, the practitioners of ESP have to look beyond the traditional courses like language through literature courses. An ELT practitioner in L2 class-room concentrates on the teaching of language through literature just emphasizing semantics of the text by unveiling the lexical, syntactical and stylistic patterns to the learners. He is mainly concerned with the theme of the text to drive home to his pupils. But the ESP practitioner has different pivotal roles to play in the ESP class-room. “Five pivotal roles have been identified for the ESP practitioner:

A) Teacher
B) Course designer and material developer
C) Collaborator
D) Researcher
E) Evaluator” (5)

ESP Practitioner as Teacher

The methodology changes as the teacher enters into a specific region. In case of ESP classes, a teacher
is no more a primary knower. The teacher’s role is to generate real, authentic communication in the classroom on the grounds of student’s knowledge. The teacher is more specific in his contributions. He is supposed to know better lexical items in the specified area, whether t be computer science, basic science or arts or commerce.

**ESP Practitioner as Course Designer**

Due to the lack of materials for ESP courses, the ESP practitioner is expected to plan his course well as per his need and accordingly provide the materials to his pupils. The teacher’s task also includes adapting materials when published materials are unsuitable, or his/her own materials lack the proper authenticity. With reference to a particular class room experience, the Design of the course shall be prepared. The levels of attainment are described for each of the skills areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing) as follows:

1. **Survival Level** – The person can use language for basic purposes in extremely limited way.
2. **The way stage level** – The person can communicate very simply in limited range of topics.
3. **The Threshold level** - The person can use the language for most everyday situations and topics at simple level.
4. **The Adequacy Level**-The person can use the language for range of situations and topics and can show awareness of appropriate style and variety.
5. **Proficiency Level**- The person can respond flexibly to complex ideas and expressions.
6. **The mastery Level**- The person has no problem in using the language.
7. **The Ambi-lingual Level**- The person’s use of language is indistinguishable from that of any educated native speaker.

**ESP Practitioner as Collaborator**

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) also see ESP Practitioner as collaborator. It means cooperating with subject specialists. As such through this process, he gains information about the subject syllabus, or the tasks the learners have to carry out in their professional environment or as a collaborator when there is integration between specialist studies or the activities and the language.

**ESP Practitioner as Researcher**

Here the teacher assumes the role of a researcher also to fulfill the needs of students, First of all, he should research their aims; and how he can find out the needs of his pupils. The research is necessary to find out the specific need of ESP learners, so as to design the course, to write teaching materials and cater the needs of particular interest of ESP pupils.

**ESP Practitioner as Evaluator**

As ESP courses are tailor made, their evaluation is crucial. General English courses have been well studied and improved by a group of methodology experts. On the other hand ESP courses are unique, as it is not possible to create one ESP course that would satisfy all ESP pupils. As such, the evaluation of ESP assignments requires proper attention on the part of teacher. Here I agree with Dudley Evans statement that evaluation should be going on: while the course is being taught, at the end of the course, and after the course has been finished. Hence constant evaluation is an important factor to create a successful ESP course.

In addition, the ESP practitioner has other roles to play- to maintain interest of the pupils throughout his teaching by creating lively situation, to develop harmonious relations with the pupils to understand their psychological problems, to reprimand the pupils on corrective lines to make them useful citizens of the state, to motivate his pupils in hour of need and to understand the social, economic and cultural background of the pupils. Since the demand for ESP is increasing at a great speed all over the world and to meet the changing and challenging situations, a teacher is expected to be fully equipped with the developments in the subject-matter. The ESP teacher has to adopt the technique relevant to his class-room. Moreover the teacher has to upgrade himself in the application of the innovating technique to cast his proper impact and make the teaching effective in ESP class-room. ESP is being practiced with students of various courses to develop language skills, professional communicative skills and enhance their sociolinguistic competence to meet their professional needs. The teachers for the said courses need to be fully armed to tackle their classes successfully and their effective teaching is a requirement for such pupils. To analyze how seriously the ESP practitioners are involved in teaching-learning process, how committed and devoted they are and what else facility and resources they can be provided so that teaching can be made more effective, a survey was conducted for the Need Analysis of the various students at Arni Class.

**Findings of the survey**

In the survey report of about 20 teachers from various backgrounds, it is found that the ESP teachers have the following major roles to play:  
A. Teacher as a course designer for the specific branch  
B. Teaching Methodology adopted by the ESP Teacher
C. Deficiency Analysis  
D. Faculty Development Programs (FDP) focusing on  
(a) Testing language  
(b) Upgrading the methodology  
(c) Sharing experiences of successful teachers  
E. Pooling Teachers’ Expertise of different Institutions

The above factors shall be taken into consideration for framing the objectives and course contents which is tabulated as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Streams</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Computer science</td>
<td>Communicative language and computer related themes</td>
<td>Communicative language and Teaching computer terminology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Basic Sciences</td>
<td>Communicative language and Scientific themes for developing better vocabulary</td>
<td>Communicative language Teaching and Scientific vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Arts and Commerce</td>
<td>Themes related to Academic English, Communicative language and Cultural aspect for personality development</td>
<td>Communicative language Teacher cum psycho analyst</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teachers agree that the students desperately need a language course which must be a combination of remedial English to bring them required level of proficiency; language enrichment to enrich their vocabulary and academic English to teach study skills. All the teachers are curious to welcome an opportunity to discuss their course design with the subject experts.

A. Teaching Methodology adopted by the ESP Teacher

This part tries to investigate the concept of methods in ESP teaching, does any factor of psychopedagogy affects the methodology of the teacher; are the teachers motivated enough to learn scientific technological knowledge? Are the teachers interested in conducting classes with a subject lecturer? If it stands as a valid approach, would they like to discuss it with the subject lecturer? In response to these questions, the teachers have made very positive replies. When they were asked about general English teaching, they came to a point that teaching general English into ESP can affect his method of teaching language. Even some teachers have a favour that remedial teaching grammar can affect his methodology because the majority of students are weak in syntactical structures and this may create problem in successful implementation and running of the ESP courses design.

Some teachers prefer that they should be sincere and committed in their effort. Sincerity and interest is the best methodology in every sphere and here too, it works well. The teachers require the creative approach and innovative methodology to convince their pupils. For example illustration through visual impact carries the desired result. Some teachers prefer that the individual personality of the teacher is more effective in his methodology.

There is a voice that teaching ESP requires a special methodology. ESP is an approach to language teaching and for the success of the course, the teacher must know the needs and the requirements of the learners. All teachers have unanimous opinion that teachers must understand the social, cultural and regional background of the students and accordingly deal with them, train them and grooms them as per the need of their subject. The majority of teachers show an interest in learning better scientific and technical terminology to pass it on to their learners.

The teachers are willingly ready to adopt the methods through which they can help their pupils in solving their problems in the acquisition of requisite language applied in their field. Even the teachers motivate their pupils to come forward with their problems to be solved. The teachers vociferously say that the ESP classroom is more inviting as the teachers get better platform to show their skills as teachers. There is no method in teaching English for Specific Purpose than to understand the pulse the pupils and their curiosity to learn. If the teacher is able to have this method, he is a success in his effort.

B. Deficiency Analysis

What Hutchinson and Waters (1987) define lacks can be matched with deficiency analysis. Also according to Allwright (1982, quoted in West, 1994), the approaches to needs analysis that have been developed to consider learners’ present needs. It is obvious that deficiency analysis is the route to cover from point A (present situation) to point B (target situation), always keeping the learning needs in mind. Therefore, deficiency analysis can
form the very basis of the language syllabus because it should provide data about both the gap between present and target extra linguistic knowledge, mastery of general English, language skills, and learning strategies.

Keeping in view, the deficiency analysis, the ESP teachers will also find out the gap in providing the professional competence to the learners. It includes the professional competence of teachers, attitude of teachers to ESP, teachers’ knowledge of and attitude to subject content, materials, aids and opportunities for out-of-class activities. There are certain questions about the teachers after going deeper into the matter with respect to deficiency analysis:

Are the ESP teachers fully competent to conduct such classes?
Is the attitude of teachers to ESP class-room positive?
Does a teacher need extra knowledge to conduct such classes?
Does the teacher have proper materials with him to teach his pupils?
Does the teacher need some training in the required field?
Where are such opportunities available to improve for the conducting of such classes effectively?
The level of deficiency must be covered through the courses designed for such a purpose. The ESP practitioners are to update themselves, groom themselves and seek out effective ways of teaching in the ESP classroom. It is certain that the teachers will find themselves in a better situation after self-analysis as ESP practitioners. This will create an urge for the betterment on the part of teachers to equip them with better methodology, materials and developments in their fields.

C. Faculty Development Programs (FDP)/Orientation Courses focusing on:
   a) Testing language
   b) Upgrading the methodology
   c) Sharing experiences of successful teachers

Keeping in view the deficiency level, the teachers must undergo courses designed for such purposes. The Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad (India), now known as English and Foreign Languages Class runs such courses of one-month, or three-month duration to facilitate the teachers for the upcoming changes in the language teaching at a higher level. The faculty development programmes are also run by certain universities to meet the deficiency among teachers.

It is an important issue to design the testing language and literature. The young teachers need to learn the very art of designing question papers as per structures and learning the evaluation system. For example, there can be even open-book mode to curve the use of unfair means in the examination. The students can be given a new method of open-book-mode for the examination. The learners are allowed to carry books and notes during examination. But the books and notes are of no use to them in such a system. The teachers can be benefitted through such courses in testing language and literature.

They can learn better methodology in the current use through the faculty development programmes, since in the age of technological advancement there is always a new trend to be learnt to pass onto their pupils in the turn. The faculty development programmes always impart better knowledge.

The faculty development programmes provide opportunity to share experiences of the successful teachers. Mostly the universities and certain institutes invite seasoned professors who profess their experiences, knowledge and ideas to the young teachers. All the experimenting teachers need to undergo such courses for the magnanimous success in their career. The company of experienced professors in such programmes will help the young teachers in upgrading their knowledge.

D. Pooling teachers expertise of different Institutions

Organizational climate of institutions differs as different institutions employ ESP teachers and other course faculty having differing backgrounds and students also are from variety of socio-economic and socio-political groups. Therefore there is a need to have a fresh look on innovative ideas and concepts generated in one institution by pooling the teachers’ expertise of different institutions. It gives a balanced view of after constructive criticism.

Teachers share their ideas and offer amendments, modifications or insertions or deletion of specific methodology to be used in context with students at large. It involves in deciding the topics of the course, number of classes in a week, level of difficulty to be set in a graded manner and terms of evaluation of written and the oral test structure.

Majority of ESP teachers feel that the present number of faculty is not enough for handling the needs and desires and course content of ESP teaching. So the number of staff should be increased. They support the idea that number of classes per week should be increased as it can be helpful to learners. For this purpose guest faculty is to be selected so as to provide broader concept of science and technology in their own language.

The teachers also envisage the reducing the number of students in a class to 20 so that teacher student...
interaction is strong, effective and purposeful. It also aims at each teacher can give proper time and adequate attention to each student in the class room. This technique provides better exposure to ESP Practitioners from various institutions.

The ESP practitioners play significant roles in imparting knowledge of English for Specific Purposes by passing through various roles as designer of the course, analyzing problems in the teaching, practicing various methods, undergoing faculty development programmes to remove their lacking points and pooling teachers’ expertise from various institutes. To avoid inescapability of English in the growing business world, it is an indispensable exercise that the learners should be helped to meet the challenges in the changing world. Here starts the journey of the ESP practitioners to show their skills and proficiency to teach effectively in the ESP classroom with vigor and enthusiasm.

Conclusion:
The role of ESP teacher is more complex and more responsible than teaching general English. His role is to organize the class: to be aware of the class objectives, to have good understanding of the course content, as well as to be flexible and willing to cooperate with learning and have at least some interest in the disciplines of teaching English for specific purposes.

Appendix

Needs Analysis (Deficiency) Questionnaire for ESP Teachers

Section One
Socio-Cultural

1. Do your students get instruction in English medium within the class?
2. Do you use regional language/languages other than English while instructing your pupils?
3. Do you feel your pupils feel comfortable in the use of English language?
4. Do you see eagerness in the eyes of your pupils while you use English as the medium of teaching?
5. Are you fully equipped to create interest in the ESP class-room?
6. Do you think the syllabus designed for the class is adequate?
7. Are you free to bring about desirable changes in your ESP syllabus?
8. Have you ever motivated your pupils with new techniques in the teaching of English?
9. Do you plan to equip yourself with the latest trends in the teaching of English for specific Purposes?
10. Are you fully devoted to the ESP teaching?

Section Two
Infra-structural

1. Do you have teaching equipments- visual aids, multi-media, tape-recorders, language laboratory, etc.?
2. Do you have sufficient resources to develop innovative ideas? (sponsorship from the class/institute)
3. Do you have the access to up-to-date information on the largest developments in the area of ESP?
4. How will you remove the deficiency in the teaching of ESP class-room?
5. How do you plan to support your family when you go in for the updating of your knowledge?

Section Three
Pedagogical

1. What is the main target in ESP teaching?
2. Do you give importance to spoken English by practicing more in their daily Communicative process?
3. Do you think grammar teaching/remedial grammar teaching is necessary to make your pupils competent for the preparatory courses?
4. Do you feel your pupils need some general course of English in ESP course?
5. Do you agree your pupils can grow better if they are given practical task in learning of language?
6. Do you fully incline to attend you pupils while they feel depressed in the course of their learning?
7. Are your pupils able to distinguish between the British or American accent or they are familiar only with the local accent of English?
8. Do you motivate your learners to acquire the British accent in their speech?
9. Do you agree that there is a variety of learners in the class-room and their needs are specifically various?
10. Do you expect your pupils to use authentic subject texts as materials for the acquisition of language for specific purpose?

Section Four
Methodology and Materials

1. Do you think the teaching of ESP requires a special methodology?
2. Would you consider team teaching with a subject teacher a valid methodological way to ESP?
3. Would you like a chance to discuss your approaches to ESP with the subject expert and find your levels of deficiency?
4. Would you like to prepare your own course design to meet the needs of your pupils after getting due training in the field from a reputed institute?

5. Do you think your pupils need materials of learning specifically made for them?

6. Are you competent to provide them the workable syllabus meant for the ESP class room?

7. How will you design their syllabus, keeping in view the morphological and lexical items, and the syntactical patterns to make use of such lexis?

8. Will you make use of glossary of the specific field- business management, technology or science?

9. How would you test and evaluate the performance of your pupils?

10. Do you think mere M.A. or B. Ed or M. Phil or Ph.D. in English be sufficient to manage such ESP classroom where lexis, syntax, semantics and stylistics vary as per need of the pupils?

11. How will you plan to teach ESP classroom without knowledge of applied linguistics?

Give your proposal in five lines how you will update your knowledge of applied linguistics for the teaching of ESP classes.

Teacher’s Name:

Signature:

References


[6] The notes of CIEFL, Hyderabad are used for elaboration.