

Exploring the Role of ESP Teachers in the Modern ELT Classroom

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Abstract: *Teaching and Learning is a process having a special purpose. ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is an approach to teaching English that meets the specific needs of learners in academic and workplace settings. This article explores the critical role of ESP teachers as course designers, material providers, researchers, evaluators, and practitioners. It highlights the importance of specialized course design and the challenges faced by ESP teachers in addressing diverse learner requirements.*

Keywords: Teaching, Learning, ESP, English Language Teaching, Specific Purposes, Course Design.

1. Introduction

The concept ESP plays a special role in today's ELT classroom. The object of ESP or Learning English for specific purpose is actually designed to meet specific needs of the specific profile within a time frame. This involves orientation to specific spoken and written English required to carry out specific academic and workplace assignments.

2. Background

Why ESP? ESP emerges out of the need to use English language as a tool in facilitating success in professional life. The impact of the Second World War in course of time resulted in a huge and extraordinary expansion of science, technology and economy. The oil crises caused the flow of western money and knowledge into oil-rich countries and, in both cases, the impact was seen on the changes in language.

In 1987, Hutchinson and Waters, began to focus on the ways in which language is used in real communication. Instead of concentrating on features of the language, they point out that due to the discovery that particular skills and language vary in different situations, we may find that adjusting the language to meet the needs of learners in specific contexts is very important. Hence ESP.

ESP requires teaching

- according to the specific need of the learner
- related in content to a particular discipline
- occupational activities
- appropriate terms and usages related to specific activities.

ESP may not be:

- restricted to language skills to be learned
- taught according to a predetermined methodology.

ESP should always:

- be designed to meet specific needs of the learners
- use the methodology and activities of the discipline it serves
- Focus on language, skills, discourse and genre appropriate for the activities.

ESP may:

- be related to specific discipline
- use different methodologies rather than those used for general English
- Be designed for adult learners, for intermediate and advanced level students
- Be suitable for those having some basic knowledge of English.

ESP may be categorized as:

- English for Academic or occupational purpose
- English as a restricted language
- English for social studies.

ESP courses are designed to have the following three features:

- Authentic materials
- Purpose related orientation
- Self-direction

There is no denying the fact that today ESP plays a major role in globalization. English is a multi-purpose language for communication. It acts as a lingua-franca with other people of the globe. Practically ESP in the field of business and Finance has been of major interest to the students.

Key Factors in ESP course Design:

There are three abilities necessary for successful communication in a professional target setting.

- The first is the ability to use the particular jargon characteristic of that specific occupational context.
- The second is the ability to use a more generalized set of academic skills, such as conducting research and responding to memoranda, and understand new culture.
- The third is the ability to use the language of everyday speech to communicate effectively regardless of occupational context, for example, an informal email message.

The task of the ESP developer is to ensure that all the above three abilities are integrated into and in the curriculum, yet it may be very difficult to strike a balance of these abilities with a certain group of learners. In reality, a large part of this responsibility is that of the instructors. It is the instructors

who are in the best position to identify the learners' needs and ensure that all students receive a balanced instruction.

Role of the ESP teacher:

An ESP teacher's work involves much more than teaching. An ESP teacher is also termed a practitioner. The ESP teacher's role can be classified as:

- Teacher
- Course designer and material provider
- Collaborator
- Researcher
- Evaluator
- Practitioner

The teaching methodology changes when the teaching becomes specific. In the case of specific courses, the students themselves are the primary learners as well as the carriers of the contents of the materials. The teacher's main role is, therefore, to generate real, authentic communication in the classroom with the students' pre-owned knowledge.

ESP Practitioner as course designer and material provider:

There is evidently a deficiency of adequate materials for teaching ESP. This alarmingly deters advancement in teaching ESP. But one can not deny the truth---- the more the availability of teaching materials, the greater the promotional scope for ESP. Hence the teachers in this field have a crucial role--- to plan specialized courses and provide adequate materials for ESP. Provision does not mean choosing materials and making a suitable number of copies for the class, the teacher's task also includes adapting material when published materials are unsuitable, or writing his/her own materials.

ESP Practitioner as a researcher:

An ESP teacher is not only a trainer but also a trainee, a researcher to fulfill the students' needs. Firstly, the teacher should decide on what he is going to achieve, what course he/she has to design, then what teaching materials he/she has to produce corresponding to the ESP students' particular interests.

ESP Practitioner as a collaborator:

An ESP Teacher should collaborate with the students to design the course, frame the syllabus and provide tasks to perform in their professional fields.

ESP Practitioner as an evaluator:

Acting as an evaluator an ESP teacher plays a very significant role. He/she has to get involved in several testing for evaluating the effectiveness of his teaching materials. As ESP courses are often tailor-made, reframing of them after every evaluation is crucial. Therefore, evaluation of such a course is a must.

Challenges in teaching ESP:

An ESP teacher faces various hindrances. He/she finds a severe dearth of:

- ESP tradition and guidelines
- specialist knowledge
- adequate materials in the field

3. Conclusion

This article underscores the multifaceted role of ESP practitioners in modern ELT settings. By tailoring courses to specific learner needs, ESP teachers bridge gaps between general English and specialized applications. Their roles as material providers, evaluators, and collaborators highlight their pivotal contribution to ensuring effective language learning for professional and academic success.

The role of an ESP practitioner is more complex and more responsible than general English teaching. An ESP practitioner, apart from teaching also provides materials, designs a syllabus, collaborates with subject specialists, conducts research and evaluates the course and the students. The teacher's role is also to organize the class, to be aware of class objectives, to have good understanding of the course content. He/she has to be flexible and willing to cooperate with the learners, so that teaching and learning become interesting.

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