

Imbalances in the Professional Growth of ESP Practitioners in Pakistan

Prof. Muhammad Yousaf Malik

Abstract

ESP teaching is already in vogue in technical and professional institutions established in major cities of Pakistan. Majority of ESP practitioners working at present used to teach courses of General English to their respective classes previously. They had to confront numerous problems and challenges when they had to make a shift to ESP teaching. In order to conduct research about their issues, the researcher collected data from various sources by means of questionnaires, surveys and interviews. It was to glean requisite information regarding need analysis, syllabus designing, teaching methodology etc, which were being used by the ESP practitioners in various professional and technical institutions in Lahore. The motive behind the process was to get cognizance of various issues and challenges of the ESP teachers and recommend steps to tackle them properly so as to enhance the quality of new genre teaching in Pakistan.

Introduction

ESP considers teaching of English as a foreign language because of its concern with specific profession, subject or purpose. It has been seen as a separate activity within ELT. Its salient features lie in developing its own methodology and its research drawn from various disciplines in addition to applied linguistics. ESP is a specific type of approach applied for teaching English to the learners of technical and professional institutions. It is based on the student's particular needs which motivate them to acquire the specific genre. Learners get satisfaction from the practical / actual experience of learning. Prior to ESP teaching English was taught for general purpose. It was to teach literature and grammar. Major stress was laid on writing rather than on listening and

speaking. Nevertheless, the old realm of EGP could not retain its supremacy in the 20th century and its bounds began to erode with the emergence of professional education like the studies of engineering, law, medicine, commerce and business etc.

Hutchinson & Waters (1987) define ESP as an approach rather than a product. The basic question of ESP is : Why does this particular learner need to learn a foreign language? The purpose of learning English is the decisive factor in ESP. Stevens (1988) holds the view that ESP stands out for its two types of characteristics:-

- (1) Two variable characteristics
- (2) Absolute characteristics

Characteristics

1. Two Variable Characteristics

These may be confined to the language skills to be learned, and not taught according to any Pre-ordained methodology. However, ESP may use a methodology different from that of general English. Furthermore, it may be designed for adult learner at graduate/postgraduate level.

2. Absolute Characteristics

These pertain to meeting specific needs of the learner. It is linked in its content to certain particular disciplines or activities. It focuses on the language activities regarding text, syntax, discourse, semantics, registers etc.

According to Robinson (1991) ESP follows two norms:

- i. It is goal-oriented
- ii. It develops from a need analysis.

ESP courses are generally restricted by a limited time period in which their aims and purposes are to be obtained and delivered to the adults in homogeneous classes or specialist classes of the teacher.

ESP courses are conspicuous because of certain salient features. Some of these features are stated as follows:-

i. Authenticity and Recency of Materials

ESP uses authentic learning materials. It is important, especially in self-directed studies or research work. The students of ESP are motivated to apply different resources for their research work.

ii. Purpose-Centred

The teacher can assign a variety of tasks to students ----- for example to involve them in preparation of presentation, reading, note-taking, report writing etc.

iii. Self-direction

Here ESP is concerned with turning learners into users. It is significant for a teacher to encourage the learners to have a certain degree of autonomy. They should be free enough to decide when, what and how to study.

iv. Specific role of the ESP Practitioner

ESP practitioner has to work more than teaching. That is why Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) prefer the term practitioner to teacher. In ESP, the approach is learner-oriented. The practitioner is not the primary knower of the contents of the course. Students who are practically involved may know more about the content than the teacher. The relationship of learners and students is much more of partnership.

The practitioner is also a researcher, a course designer, a content provider and a collaborator. The best of collaboration is the situation when a practitioner

and a subject expert team teach classes. The teacher also stages the role of evaluator. He assesses teaching materials and tests of students. The practitioner evaluates the tests of his learners at the end of the course to know how much they have achieved from the projected course.

It is essential for the practitioners to be equipped with professional competence or as Noam Chomsky says, Competence and performance. They should possess thorough mastery of language and command of course design.

Research Questions

- Are teachers of ESP in Pakistan satisfied with their art of teaching?
- Are there any specific differences between a teacher of EGP and that of ESP?
- What type of problem do they encounter while teaching their ESP classes?
- How can these grave issues be properly and effectively dealt with?

Delimitation

As it was extremely hard to collect data country wide, the research was restricted to the institutions of Lahore where ESP is being taught in different technical and professional institutions.

Literature Review

It remained a debatable topic amongst the researchers for a long time. According to Brumfield (2009) some of the features are common between the two. EG and ESP both include need analysis; both depend on syllabus designing, specific curricula, on evaluation and outcomes etc.¹

Differences between EGP and ESP are conspicuous. EG is old and classical in approach, whereas ESP is modern in its emergence. Text book and

¹ Brumfield (2009). *English for Specific Purpose: An Account of ESP*.

traditions are already set in EGP, whereas the practitioners have to construct and design his/her own syllabus and reading material. There are no prepared and set textual material easily available to ESP practitioners. EGP aims at teaching syntactical structures and texts. Teachers do not care to set a premium on need analysis of the learners. On the contrary, ESP teaching is inconceivable without a specific need analysis. EGP is to focus on general English taught as a subject in the class. ESP teaching keeps in view the particularly required information which would assist the students to succeed in their projected studies. Thus EGP caters for general education, but ESP gives priority to the provision of skills and techniques to the trainee. More than any factor else, the role of EGP teacher is quite different from that of ESP practitioner. EGP teacher is a single actor in his / her class. His tone is almost dictatorial. Students are just passive audience, feeling no motivation to ask the teacher any question or to discuss certain points in the class. ESP teacher takes a step back and allows the students to interrogate / discuss as they like.

EGP teacher, according to William (2010) takes care of lessons and evaluation. His task is simple as compared to that of ESP practitioner. His role is multi-pronged. He has to expend a lot of time in preparing for various roles enjoined upon to perform. He has to spare chunk of his time in syllabus designing, need analysis, designing his / her teaching material.² According to Savignon (2001), EGP teacher lays stress on linguistic features. He / She does not give

² William (2010). *In What Ways, If Any, does the Role of the ESP Teacher from that of a Teacher of GE?* in: <http://www.studymode.com/essays.html>. Access on. 30-08-2014

much value to communicative competence which is of utmost significance for ESP practitioners who is concerned with both linguistic and sociolinguistic rules.³

Cardinal role of ESP practitioner

ESP teacher remains under pressure and stress because of various roles he / she has to perform. That is why, many teachers fail to accommodate them to the new demands and thus prefer either to change their profession or continue teaching in the old style as in the past. According to Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, a role is “the Part” taken by a participant in any act of communication. Thus, the role of a language teacher decides the status of the teacher as well as the learner. It undergoes change because of the type of activity which is to be pursued in the classroom.

Slerocka (2008) asserts that the ESP practitioner has to play many roles. To Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), an ESP teacher has to perform five roles --- as a practitioner, as a material provider, as a researcher, as a collaborator and an evaluator.

His role as a practitioner demands a lot from him. His variance from EGP is because of the motive behind teaching. He is not merely a language teacher, but also a need-analyst. He should be well aware of the career content, so that his teaching is in consonance with his / her student specular needs. He / She has to provide relevant information through his specific material to his group of learners in class.⁴

His duty as a material supplier is sufficiently nerve shattering. This material helps the students to make use of English aptly in an academic /

³ Savignon, S. J. (2001). *Communicative Language Teaching for the 21st Century*. USA: Heinle and Heinle.

⁴Bojovic (2006): “Teaching Foreign Language for Specific Purposes: Teacher Development”.

professional environs. Hence it is necessary for him to analyze the learners' needs⁵. He / She should have to decide the kind of texts to be used by the students in the class room. Here the crux of problem lies. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), a teacher often adopts this step only when there is no way out. Most of the teachers of ESP find themselves in the grave situation because of their inability. Therefore, the ESP teacher should make efforts to design textual material or make a wise selection from the available materials. Without the provision of textual materials, the students as well as the teachers grope in darkness yielding no outcomes in the long run. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), it is better for a teacher to work in a team; pay full attention to the shape and design of their materials and he / she should not overlook the big span of time required for the designing of materials. Without properly prepared materials, students are likely to lose their interest in the class room teaching, which many result in drop-outs.⁶

The teacher's role as a researcher is of no less value. ESP teaching mostly draws from language theories supported by research work. To Slerocka (2008), the teacher has to research his / her own projected goal first. He / She has to inquire into the genres of texts and typical skills needed for the particular domain of study.⁷ According to John and Price-Machado (2001), an ESP practitioner has to attend classes several times, discuss with the concerned administrative staff and to dig out the peculiar strategies which guide and assist him / her in teaching.⁸

⁵Basturkmen, H (2006): "Ideas and Options in English for Specific Purposes. New Jersey".

⁶Hutchinson and Waters (1987): English for Specific Purposes: "*a Learning-Centred Approach*", Cambridge: CUP.

⁷Slerocka, H. (2008) "The Role of the ESP Teacher" in <http://www.teacher.PI>. Retrieved in April, 2013.

⁸John, A.M & Price-Machads, D. (2001) "English for Specific Purposes: Tailoring Courses to Student Needs and to the Outside World", U.S.A.

An ESP practitioner is a collaborator. He / She has to coordinate with other ESP practitioners and experts / subject specialist. It would facilitate his / her task of syllabus designing and acquisition of particular subject skills. It is strange to find majority of teachers thinking it insulting to discuss about their materials with their colleagues and subject specialist.

Another difficult task assigned to an ESP practitioner is that of evaluation. Evaluation judges the competence and achievement of the learners. According to Dickins and Germaine (1992), evaluator is mostly related to the class room atmosphere. Nonetheless, it is better that evaluation should be done by the teacher and not by the outsiders, since the teacher concerned is aware of his students' Specialty. Evaluation carried out by the experts may not be relevant. Evaluation can be done in a variety of ways⁹. Bojovic (2006) holds the view that evaluation can take two shapes. First is learners' evaluation, which aims to find out whether the students have acquired necessary linguistic competence / skills. The second type is the evaluation of the course and the teaching materials so as to know how much these suit the students' needs.

ESP, in its historical perspective, took its origin from General English (GE). In case of GE, description of English depends on the traditional use of grammars of the classical languages ----- Latin and Greek. Course design of GE is not so complicated. It is the upshot of tradition, choice of books or the government decree. The course is teacher-oriented since the learners are passive agents and the teacher is the main actor. The class room atmosphere is more relaxed than that of ESP. There are vivid similarities as well as dissimilarities

⁹ Dickins, R.R & Germanine, K. (1992), "*Evaluation*". UK: OUP

between EGP and ESP. It remained a serious issue amongst the linguists for a long time.

ESP teaching took birth in the second half of 20th century. It is based on designing courses in keeping with the learners' need. Course designing is applicable in syllabus designing, methodology, material evaluation and material designing. Its main emphasis is on what the students learn rather than how they learn. It is learning-centred as well as language centred in its typical approach.

ESP is sub-divided into two major areas:-

- i. English for academic purpose (EAP). It entails pre-service, in-service & post-experience courses.
- ii. English for occupational purposes (EOP). It concerns study in a particular discipline. Pre-experience course will overlook any typical work linked to the actual discipline. The opportunity for specific work would be available during in-service course.

EOP refers to English for occupational and professional purposes in law, medicine, administration, business and vocational purposes for non-professionals in work.

The classification of ESP courses generates various uses because of overlapping of common core of EAP & EBP & General English. For example, Business English is intermediary between English for Specific Purpose and English for General Purpose. However, it is only the overall context of the specific program that indicates whether a particular course is classified as ESP or not.

The first reason for the birth of ESP is the Post World War II period, which brought forth a tremendous development in scientific and technological field especially in the U.S.A. It gave birth to the dire need of a language that

could serve as “Lingua Franca” (a sort of contact language). Consequently, English in its various professional aspects got a wide currency because of the influence of the U.S.A. which had emerged as one of superpowers after the Second World War. Hence the adult learners had to acquire English not for the sake of mental luxury or social status but for certain commercial and technological ends. As a result, cult for ESP grew for the learners’ theoretical and practical motives. The brand new genre began to be purposefully employed by the whole range of students desirous of becoming mechanics, lawyers, doctors, pilots, business men etc.

Another logical ground for the birth of ESP was the oil crises of the early 1970s. It was a flux of money and scientific knowledge that rushed into the oil-producing countries. It exerted a lot of pressure on the language practitioners, stake holders and course designers to design such kind of courses that could deliver the required goals to the adult learners keeping in view their aspirations, needs and demands. It was to be learner-centred rather than teacher-centred. The new shape of English was meant to counter the hard-boiled relentless realities of the brave new world. It implied an immediate shift from the formal features of languages use to the technical and communicative requirement.¹⁰ Various researchers, linguists and stake holders set themselves to developing courses for the specific groups of language learners.¹¹

Following message became the guiding principle of ESP: “Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need.”

¹⁰ Widdowson (1978), “*Teaching Language as Communication*” Oxford University Press.

¹¹ Selinker & Trimble (1976), Scientific and Technical Writing: the Choice of Tense in “*The ESP Specialist*”.

The third reason was the new development in psychology. It largely contributed to the use of English for specific purpose. Theories of mentalism gave prime importance to the learners varying needs. It was to focus on the clear relevance of the English courses to what the learners wanted to acquire.

The teachers in Pakistan making a shift from general English to ESP had to face a large number of challenges that appeared to them too complicated to be easily overcome. Prior to it, English in school education was only a subject within a school curriculum. The instructor would make efforts to familiarize his students with “lexical, grammatical and rhetorical components of written and spoken texts. Conversely, ESP gives primary significance to the provision of skill and technique to the trainees.¹²

Furthermore, general English curriculum is regarded as “Hidden Curriculum” including instruction in the teaching of moral and cultural values, social taboos etc. These are barely a part of an ESP course.

Keeping these facts in view, the chairman, HEC wrote a letter to all the Vice Chancellors of the universities in Pakistan with clear-cut instructions to prepare plans for their respective institutions to enhance the learners’ communication skills, not only for academic but also for professional objectives.¹³

ESP practitioners had to confront two types of impediments in their way of communicating their ideas to their learners. No doubt, a teacher gets confused when he finds his students sitting absent-minded in the class room. First impediment is external and the second one is internal.

First impediment is external and the second one is internal. External impediments may be learners themselves, who do not respond positively to the

¹²Breen, M. (1984), “*General English Syllabus Design*, ELT Documents, Pergamon.

¹³Mansoor, Sabiha (2005), *Language Planning in Higher Education*.

teacher's questions, lack of proper class room setting, lack of patience on the part of the teacher, lack of collaboration with the colleagues, non-seriousness in taking exams, want of motivating materials to engage the learners' attention, lack of relevant tasks being carried out by the students, lack of the practitioner's competencies and confidence etc.

Internal impediments in the way of an ESP practitioner cannot be side-tracked in any way. These hurdles, as Daubney (2008) maintains, are more difficult to tackle than the external ones. Internal impediments are directly linked to the teacher himself / herself. These are not so easy to be rooted out. The first one is the personality of the practitioner himself / herself. Some teachers wrongly believe that ESP students need to practice the language orally. It affects the type of activities that the ESP teacher performs in the class room.

ESP had to pass through five phases accountable for its making. It is pertinent to point out what is Tom Hutchinson and Alan Water (1987) comment, "ESP is not a monolithic universal phenomenon. It has developed at different paces in different countries".

The first phase is indicative of the use of special language, that is, register analysis. It took place in the 1960s. It was to be operative on basic principle that the English of one profession is different from that of the other one. It was important to highlight the grammatical & lexical aspects of these specific registers. However, it did not show any forms that were not found in General English. The major objective behind the register analysis was to find out the learners' needs. The significant factor was to evolve such kind of syllabus that would meet the needs of the students in their technological and scientific studies. Ewer and Hughes Davies (1971) comparatively analyzed the texts of its science

students and the general texts already being used in schools. They discerned that the school texts overlooked certain linguistic forms.¹⁴

The second phase of the growth of ESP showed a shift from the sentence level to beyond the sentence level. ESP began to take keen interest in discourse / rhetorical analysis. Register analysis attached value to sentence grammar, but in discourse analysis, it was to comprehend how sentences were combined to generate meaning. Such patterns were meant to be applied in designing the syllabus of ESP. Rhetorical textual structures of various courses differed from each other. In the light of the rhetorical approaches students were required to be aware of the textual patterns and discourse markers through text-diagramming exercises.

Third phase of the development of ESP shows, “Target Situation Analysis”. The course designer was to find out the target situation and then to analyze the linguistic features of that situation. This is often called “Need Analysis”. Target situation analysis was explained in detail by John Munby in his well-known book “Communicative Syllabus Design (1978)”. The Munby model shed a considerable light on the learners’ needs by means of certain factors like communication setting, means of communication, language skills and functions etc.¹⁵

The fourth phase of ESP growth shows the use of skills and strategies. Here the motive of ESP is to look below the surface and to consider the thinking processes that lie beneath the language use. The major nation behind the skill-centred approach is to bring it out that there are common reasoning and

¹⁴ Ewer & Hughes Davies (1971), “Further notes on Developing an English Programme for Students of Science and Technology.

¹⁵ Munby (1978), “*Communicative Syllabus Design*”, Cambridge University, Press.

interpreting processes which assist in deriving meaning from the rhetoric. The surface forms help the students in conjecturing the meaning of the words with the help of context. Emphasis is placed mainly on reading or learning strategies. The learners are regarded as thinking beings who are considered to be visualizing the underlying interpretative techniques.

The fifth phase of the development of ESP is the emergence of learning-centred approach. This approach is directed by certain particular reasons for learning. It is incorrect to say that ESP is a matter of teaching numerous varieties of English. It does not imply in any way that ESP is a special form of the language. It is not different in kind from any other form of language teaching. It is not right to think ESP as a specific type of language or methodology. It is an approach to language learning teaching, which is based on learner need.

Data Collection

The researcher distributed the questionnaire pertaining to skills necessary for ESP teaching and necessary measures for the training of the ESP teachers to the 20 practitioners of ESP serving in various institutions in Lahore. It was to identify the skills essential for ESP teacher. ESP teacher responded amicably and answered the questionnaire to facilitate the researcher's work.

Research Methodology

It is a sort of mixed method research. It has used both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis.¹⁶

It entailed survey studies along with focus group interviews.¹⁷

It involved comparative analysis of ESP & EGP teaching.

¹⁶Cohen, L. , Marion & Morrison, K. (2007), "*Research Methods in Education*".

¹⁷Marezyk, G. , De Matteo & Festinger, D. (2005), "*Essential of Research Design and Methodology*".

Instruments of Data Collection were survey questionnaires, MCQs and open-ended questions to collect the data from EGP instructors, ESP practitioners and stake holders.

Data from the learners of EGP and ESP were collected through focus-group interviews.

Population

Data have been collected from the sample size of 10 ESP practitioners and 10 EGP teachers. Moreover, 60 students from EGP and ESP classes were conveniently chosen for the projected survey. The population was randomly selected.

Data Analysis

The result of the questionnaire provided the required information. Majority of the participants considered the general skills very necessary. To them, most required skills is the vocabulary (100%). The students have to make effort to acquire mastery of vocabulary.90% of participants agree that the teachers should have the ability to teach the correct use of grammar like static verbs, passivisation, modals, conditionals etc.40% agree that the skills of rhetorical functions of ESP English and ability of conducting short-term course in ESP are significant.53% teachers think that the ESP teacher should be expert enough in designing ESP curricula.100% of the participants hold the view that the ESP teacher should be able to make the students identify the topic of the lecture and how it is developed.60% teachers are of view that the learners should be taught to derive the meaning of words from the context. 85% of the teachers believe that ESP teacher should hold discussions in groups. 60% of the participants think that students should be taught how to extract information correctly from the ESP text.

80% of the participants believe that the skill of paragraph writing is necessary for the ESP learners.

85% of the ESP teachers subscribe to view that the ESP practitioners should teach the students report writing. 15% of the ESP practitioners state that they have received ESP training. 45% of the ESP practitioners have the view that ESP teaching in Pakistan is going the right way. 100% of teachers say that they are never assisted by the stake holders.

Collected data were analyzed through analytical induction, topological analysis and constant comparison. Following major problems of ESP practitioners were dug out in the light of data analysis:-

Firstly, an ESP practitioners is a teacher, a course designer, a researcher etc. In Pakistan, ESP teachers previously taught general English. They were not provided any formal workshop training. They had to meet a session challenge while performing the role of ESP practitioner.

Secondly, the process of need analysis is not that simple, keeping it in view that the language needs are often unpredictable.

Thirdly, finding and finalizing the right sort of needs is one of the serious challenges for a Pakistani ESP teacher. It arises when the teacher is unable to foresee specific needs of his taught.

Fourthly, stake holders and course designers may not come up to the required norms for developing an appropriate syllabus in consonance with the learner's interest / want.

Fifthly, course contents, of ESP cannot be easily comprehended, managed and taught without receiving formal training. Such ESP practitioners find themselves in "Confusion worse Confounded".

Sixthly, unlike general English teachers, there exists no long tradition of ESP teaching. There are no agreed maps to lead them to the new realm. There are still no authentic texts that may assist them in their process of teaching.

Seventhly, due significance is not given to the publication of newsletters and other forms of publication that would prove beneficial in exchanging views about ESP teaching in Pakistan.

Conclusion

These findings of research bear an index to the grave concerns, reservations and challenges confronting ESP practitioners in Pakistan. These broad hints of this research would assist the stakeholders, course designers and Heads of institutions in grappling with these issues at the ripe hour. It is quite evident from the findings that ESP teaching in Pakistan is still in its infancy.¹⁸

Recommendations

Enough is not enough. More and more researches need to be conducted to unveil the hidden barriers of the ESP teachers. Apt remedial measures to the prevailing challenges be sought for the effective performance of the ESP teaching community. Otherwise attainment of requisite norms of quality education in professional and technological genre would remain a far cry.

Discussion & Suggestion

It is easy to infer from the answers to questionnaire and discussions with the ESP teachers that they are confronting certain challenges and barriers that detract from successful deliverance of their goods. Following are the problems and their remedial measures:-

¹⁸ Ahmed, N. (2005). "*Legal English: A Case for ESP*"

- a. In Pakistan, most of the ESP teachers are those who taught EGP for a chain of years. They had to face barriers in their approach of teachers. They were not provided sufficient ESP training. They were not equal to the laborious task of ESP teaching. They were to perform not only as classroom teachers but also to design courses, conduct researches and analyse their learners' needs. The teachers should be imparted regular workshop training on ESP teaching. In addition, they should have efficiency and ability of performance.
- b. Most of the ESP teachers in Pakistan do not care to change their mind regarding the improvement of the class room skills. They are not sensitive enough to accept the new challenges. These barriers can be easily overcome by the ESP teachers.
- c. Stake holders, expert course designers and the authorities concerned are least pushed. They do not condescend to rescue the ESP teachers from the carking issue of non-existence of tradition regarding authentic ESP text. Hence the stake holders, course designers and skilled ESP practitioners should hold conferences / seminars / discussions with the ESP teachers.
- d. Majority of ESP teachers in Pakistan do not prefer to change their traditional style of teaching. They should be skilful in applying modern ways of teaching, especially to make proper use of computer in the teaching process. Once again the remedy lies in the teacher himself / herself so that he / she should come up to the required norms of quality teaching.
- e. The ESP teachers in Pakistan do not display patience, flexibility and interest in listening to the problems of the students. He / She should bear it

in mind that the teacher in the classroom is a role model. He / She should give proper attention to the learner's needs and preferences.

- f. Majority of ESP teachers in Pakistan do not attach due significance to the research work. Without conducting research, the knowledge of the practitioner remains limited. The practitioners of ESP should be led to conducting research and it is the duty of the Heads of the institutions to inspire and assist them financially in their research work.
- g. At present, steps for the dissemination of knowledge and information about ESP teaching have not been properly taken as yet. Teachers do not like to exchange their views about ESP teaching with each other. There is scant publication of newsletters by the institutions. Hence institutions should bring out newsletters and ESP materials for the improvement and enlightenment of ESP teachers.