

DEMANDS ON THE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH: ESP CONTEXT

Vijayasri

Research Scholar, Ph.D (ELE)
EFLU, Hyderabad

Abstract

Most of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers are primarily teachers of General English. These teachers may be trained in teaching General English teaching or teaching English literature. An ESP teacher has to deal with subjects like Banking, Insurance, Science and Technology etc which are unfamiliar to him/her. They find these subjects dull, boring, complicated and incomprehensible because they are not trained in these aspects. Thus this change from general to specific highlights new demands on the ESP teacher. The job of an ESP teacher is very challenging because of the different roles the ESP teachers need to adopt.

In this context, this paper discusses the demands made on the teachers of English in an ESP context with the help of the roles proposed by Dudley Evans and St. John (1998:13).

Challenging roles of an ESP teacher

Hutchinson & Waters (1987:157) say describing the roles of an ESP teacher is a controversial issue because of the challenging tasks the teachers will have to face. They further identified two main differences between General English teachers and ESP teachers. First they state that “*in addition to the normal functions of a classroom teacher, the ESP teacher will have to deal with needs analysis, syllabus design, materials writing or adaptation and evaluation*”. Second they state that “*the majority of ESP teachers have not been trained as such*”.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998:13) prefer to address ESP teacher as “practitioner” rather than teacher considering the challenges the teachers face which are in fact, more than teaching.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998:13) have identified the following five key roles for ESP practitioners.

1. Teacher
2. Course Designer and Material Provider
3. Collaborator
4. Researcher
5. Evaluator

Firstly, the role of a teacher in terms of an ESP practitioner is almost similar to that of a general English teacher i.e. controlling ongoing classroom activities, providing information about skills and language, organising pair or group work. The major difference lies in the other four roles. One important point to note here is that ESP practitioners will encounter a strange situation where their students are expected to know the content much more than the teacher. The teacher

has to draw from the students' knowledge of the content to generate communication in the class and facilitate learning.

Secondly, Let us look at the role of an ESP practitioner as a Course Designer and Material provider. He /she has to perform the role of a course designer and material provider in order to meet the specific needs of the learners and adopt a suitable methodology and activities based on the objectives of the course. This role involves the following steps. First, the ESP practitioner has to get acquainted with the specialist subject (Commerce...etc) of the target group. Next he/she has to carry out needs analysis for the target group he intends to teach. On the basis of the analysis, he has to design a syllabus for the learners. Third he has to select and adapt learning materials for the learners from various books and published materials. Sometimes he might not find materials suitable or adaptable to the needs of a particular group of learners then he has to write suitable exercises. Many ESP practitioners are therefore left with no alternative than to develop original materials. It is here that the ESP practitioner's role as a 'researcher' comes into picture.

One of the distinctive features of ESP is that it deals with domains of knowledge with which the teachers may not be familiar. Teachers may face a problem when they have to teach content in an area of study about which they have little or no prior knowledge. The solution proposed by Johns and Dudley-Evans (1980) is team-teaching, in which the ESP teacher collaborates with a subject specialist to enrich both content and medium in the classroom. The subject specialist provides the content (Commerce, Science and Technology) and the English language expert provides the medium (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing skills). The role of the subject specialist would be to advise on the organisation of the subject matter of the teaching materials and to indicate sources of information and reference, to provide relevant samples of specialised language in use, to check the authenticity of the specialised content of the teaching text.

Finally, the ESP practitioner is an evaluator because he not only tests the learner's performance but also evaluates the course design, the teaching materials, teaching methods, learning styles, learning outcomes, relevance and efficiency of courses.

To conclude, the role of an ESP practitioner is very demanding as they have to be researchers of their own practice, materials producers, evaluators, experimenters of new approaches, explorers of reality, syllabus builders, teachers of not only language but also of strategies, builders of social contexts inside and outside the classroom, open to change, adaptable, always ready to review their own practice.

Bibliography

- Hutchinson, Tom and Alan Waters. *English for Specific Purposes; A Learning Centred Approach*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Tony Dudley-Evans, Tony and Maggie Jo St John. *Developments in ESP; A Multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Widdowson, H.G. *Learning Purpose and Language Use*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Kennedy, Chris. and Bolitho, Rod. *English for Specific Purposes*. London: Macmillan Publications, 1984.