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THE PROBLEMS IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Abstract: In teaching English for Specific Purpose (ESP), teaching materials are focused on the learners' needs and their specific fields of study so that the students develop basic language skills of general English. The purpose of this article is to analyze the problems that arise in teaching English for specific Purposes in higher education.

Key words: English for Specific Purpose (ESP), problems in teaching, higher education.

Language: English

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Introduction

Teaching English in higher education should be directed to the specific purpose in relation to students' specific fields of study and future career. The subject of the present article is an overview of main problems in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at university level. Today, it is actual topic to discuss what to teach and how to teach a foreign language taking into account the objective social and professional needs of future specialists in our country.

Materials and Methods.

By taking ESP courses at higher education, students are hoped to know the specialized vocabulary so that they are able to read and find information related to their field in English. ESP course is oriented towards mastering skills for professional communication. There are many subdivisions of ESP. For instance, English for Business Purposes, English for Medical Purposes, English for Occupational Purpose, English for Computer students, Business English, English for Agricultural students, English for Accounting, English for the students of Psychology. These subdivisions are based on the needs' analysis to meet the significance mentioned above. Since ESP is intended for specific disciplines, the methodology used in class should be designed in

such a way to fulfill the learners' need. First, let's define the ESP:

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

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

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

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

➤ ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation.

Stevens' identifies absolute and variable characteristics of ESP and makes distinction of the definition between four absolute and two variable characteristics of English language teaching. Absolute characteristics are:

➤ designed to meet the specific Techniques for ESP Students in Teaching English needs of the learner;

➤ related in content to particular disciplines, occupations and activities;

➤ centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, text, discourse, semantics, etc;

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➤ designed in contrast with General English (GE).

Variable characteristics are:

➤ restricted as to the language skills to be learned (e.g. reading only)

➤ taught according to any pre-ordained methodology.

According to Dudley-Evans and St. John, ESP has absolute characteristics include:

➤ ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learner;

➤ ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;

➤ ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

Variable characteristics of ESP are modified into:

➤ ESP maybe related to or designed for specific disciplines;

➤ ESP may use in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;

➤ 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;

➤ ESP is likely to be designed for intermediate or advanced students (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998, pp. 4-5).

Hence, the primary goal of the ESP course is to teach professional communicative competence that is the ability to communicate in English according to the situation, purpose and specific roles of the participants. The ESP course builds on and extends the foundations for accurate communication and extends the learner's grammatical, lexical and functional skills.

Results and Discussion

One of the challenges and problems in teaching ESP at university level is that the first-year students often have different language background. In this regard, we can introduce diagnostic tests followed by an introductory English course in order to know the needs of the students. The goal of the diagnostic test is to check students' knowledge in English and to

prepare the teaching materials if students are ready to take on a Basic Course of ESP. The objects of test are lexical, grammatical and reading skills. Usually the test is based on the 400 most frequent words of school vocabulary / lexis inherent in the Basic Learner's Course, about 15 school grammatical items and 2 texts. The results of the test will show whether a student entering the university is ready to take on the Basic Course of ESP or not. As the result, the diagnostic test shows if there is a need in an introductory course. The introductory course should be devised as a transition course from the general English school course to the university course in ESP. The goal of the course is to review key language features taught at school as well as to form and develop reading and speaking skills of the ESP course. So that is one more teaching problem in ESP at university level.

Another important aspect to be taken into consideration is that teaching methods must be learner oriented. In other words, ESP is concerned, first and foremost, with satisfying the real needs of the students and not with revealing the knowledge of the teacher. The intensive and efficient teaching of grammar, vocabulary, translation, etc. must be scientifically grounded and concentrate only on those items which students actually need for the purposes specified at the beginning of the university course. This is an important statement which in theory is universally accepted but in practice is hardly ever followed.

Another point to remember while teaching ESP nowadays is that it is necessary to consider the changes in the nature of students' need and the context in which they live, study and work. In any case the syllabus of ESP must improve the students' skills in all the aspects of language activities. The goal is the development of professional qualifications, for practical training abroad, for work in joint ventures, etc.

To make good progress, students have to practice various language activities, related to reception, production, interaction (or mediation, on particular interpreting or translating) and each of these types of activity being possible in oral or written forms.

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