



DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ESP AND EGP

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Abstract

This article aims to explore the differences and similarities in the roles of English for specific purposes (ESP) and English for general purposes (EGP) teachers. It also highlights the implications of these differences and similarities for English language teaching (ELT), course materials and classroom practices. The review of previous studies reveals that EGP focuses on general English language abilities of students whereas ESP focuses on specific skills and needs of learners based on a detailed analysis of learners' professional/academic needs.

Keywords: English Language Teaching (ELT); English for Specific Purposes (ESP); English for General Purposes (EGP); English for Academic Purposes (EAP); Needs Analysis; Material Designing.

Introduction

ELT can broadly be divided into ESP and EGP (Hutchinson & Waters, 2007). ESP is assumed to be more focused, practical and object-oriented (Dudly-Evans & St John, 200) as compared to EGP. It is interested in investigating the needs of the learners, preparing teaching materials, and devising appropriate teaching methodologies. Owing to these special roles, an ESP teacher is termed as 'practitioner' (ibid) and holds a different position than an EGP teacher. The differences of context and purposes of instruction assign distinctive roles to ESP and EGP teachers. The ESP teachers perform a variety of roles like that of collaborator, researcher, course designer and material developer along with conventional role as a teacher. That's why an ESP teacher has to be well-trained in professional skills and flexible in approach in order to cope with the specific needs of his/her students. In an ESP context, the target situation demands a teacher to tailor his/her instruction to specific rather than general purposes.

The study will discuss the topic as following. First, it will present the review of the literature about some theoretical and practical similarities and differences between





ESP and EGP. Secondly, it will highlight the specific roles of an ESP teacher/practitioner in comparison with those of an EGP teacher. Finally, it will present the implications of the comparison of these roles.

Materials and Methods

A working definition of ESP can be that it is a comprehensive term which refers to the teaching of English to those students who learn the language for a particular work or study-related reason. ESP has always focussed on needs analysis, text analysis and the training of learners to communicate effectively in the tasks prescribed by their academic or professional situation (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 2000). ESP can broadly be divided into two main kinds: 'English for Occupational/Vocational/Professional Purposes (EOP/EVP/EPP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP)' (Jordan, 2007, p.4).

English for General Purposes (EGP) is called 'TENOR- the teaching of English for No Obvious Reason' (Abbot, 2011 in Jordan, 2007, p.4). The title applies to those English language learning contexts where learners have no easily recognizable reason to learn the language. EGP generally refers to the English language education at school levels where the students are made familiar with the structural/grammatical elements of English language to pass the exams (Hutchinson & Waters, 2007).

Results and Discussion

ESP can be viewed as a special and specific edition of EGP that incorporates practical linguistic skills to enable students for the successful performance of professional tasks (Potocar, 2012). However, EGP provides basic knowledge and skills of English language at a school level where the occupational/professional and higher educational orientations of the students are not defined properly. The main goal of introducing ESP in various non-native /international settings is to equip learners with necessary English language skills to face their practical situation communication challenges in their future careers. As Holme (1996 cited in Potocar, 2012) suggests that ESP should help students to acquire necessary language skills to utilise their knowledge by combining work-related skills with personality development and socio- cultural knowledge.

According to Widdowson (1983 cited in Ajideh, 2009), the distinction between ESP and EGP lies in the way we define and implement the learning purpose. While ESP is objective-oriented learning where the specification of objective corresponds to the aim – the training operation – which deals with the development of restricted competence, EGP, on the other hand, is aim-oriented which does not equate the





specification of objective to aim – an educational operation – dealing with the development of general capacity (ibid). While the primary role of an ESP teacher is to design a syllabus based on realistic goals and evaluating students` performance through the evaluation of relevant language skills, the EGP teacher does not necessarily set the goals and objectives of the programme. Therefore, an ESP teacher is basically involved in a `training operation` equipping the learners with a `restricted competence` to cope with defined tasks, an EGP teacher, on the contrary, is involved in an `educational operation` equipping learners with a general capacity `to cope with undefined eventualities in future` (ibid,p.163).

It is not easy to ascertain a teacher`s role in a general or particular context because it is not static. It keeps on changing owing to the differences in syllabi, courses and teaching contexts (Jordan, 2007). This very fact guides us to understand various roles of EGP and ESP teachers. If an ESP and an EGP teacher are not the same, then the question is what are the differences between them. Hutchinson and Waters (2007), while referring to ESP and EGP, answer this question very briefly that theoretically speaking there is no distinction; however, there are many differences in practice. `There is no single, ideal role description` (Robinson, 1991, p.79) for an ESP teacher because there is a huge variety of ESP courses and contexts. However, Dudley-Evans & St. John (2008) have identified some specific roles of an ESP practitioner as a teacher, course designer and material provider, collaborator, researcher and evaluator. These special roles make an ESP practitioner less similar to the teacher of General English. Flexibility is assumed to be a secret of success for an ESP teacher.

Conclusion

The comparative roles of an ESP and EGP teachers highlighted through the above literature makes it amply clear that though there are some common grounds for both the teachers in their respective classes, still the ESP teachers have a number of responsibilities which make their job more demanding. The ESP teacher or practitioner while performing the traditional role like an EGP teacher has to become a material designer, an organiser, a councillor, a facilitator and researcher at the same time. The diversity of their roles needs to be highly reflected in the practices carried out in their classes for the attainment of their teaching objectives. As compared to EGP teachers, ESP practitioners have to show more flexibility in their approaches because of ever-changing teaching situations and autonomous students in ESP contexts. Both EGP and ESP teachers should be skilful and trained to produce fruitful results in their fields. But it can safely be assumed that ESP teachers must be given





special training in the required skills like need analysis and material designing to enable them to meet the specific needs and high expectations of their students.

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