



THE ROLES OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP) AND ENGLISH FOR GENERAL PURPOSES (EGP) TEACHERS

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Abstract

This article deals with the fundamental principles in ESP and EGP classes the extent of similarity and relatedness between which is very high to elicit the major distinctive features. Teaching EGP courses is mostly based on general language focusing their attention on interactional and social contexts facilitating the students to acquire and improve language competence in the production and reception of information. Teaching ESP courses on the contrary are intended at learning the language for a certain practical reason.

Keywords: producing information, receiving information, EGP (English for General Purposes), ESP (English for Specific Purposes), communicative ability, interactional context, social context, thinking skills, academic genre, professional

Introduction

This theoretical study 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. This distinction has important implications for ESP teachers. In addition to the role of a language teacher, an ESP practitioner has to assume certain special roles, for example, as a course designer, material provider, collaborator, researcher, evaluator and cultural interpreter. Therefore, the study recommends that special pre- and in-service training/refresher courses should be arranged for ESP teachers so that they may become equipped to perform challenging tasks related to their job.

Using a language in everyday life proceeds automatically when people communicate for different purposes in the process of producing and receiving information.

Moreover, the language can serve as a tool for various purposes, mainly in education and job affairs. The most specific feature of natural interaction takes place between native speakers of a certain language. They communicate freely without any efforts





to express what they want to say or write. What is for non-native speakers, they come across with some challenges in communicating or dealing with some matters requiring the mastery of foreign language knowledge, mainly an international one. In this regard, we consider it necessary to mention in our article two types of teaching and learning English as the language of lingua franca. They are EGP (English for General Purposes) and ESP (English for Specific Purposes). Both of them deal with English language matters in terms of vocabulary, grammar, spelling, pronunciation, style, etc. However, there are some distinctive features that make them differ from each other and not all teachers are aware of them.

As its name indicates, EGP relates to the mastery of English without any specific use being prioritized. The target to be reached in EGP is students' proficiency, and the focus lies on the development of their general communicative ability [1]. The following stakeholders are responsible for accomplishing the goals for EGP delivery in the educational process:

- Government (develop curricular guidelines)
- Language institutions (identify content to be evaluated)
- Teaching Materials (focused on the language study)
- Teachers (decide what to teach)
- Others

Whenever students come to the classroom, they are not usually informed about the reason for their English language learning as well as what they actually want to study. In EGP courses the most essential priority tends to deal with general language based on interactional and social contexts (e.g., face-to-face conversations between two friends, phone exchanges to book a hotel), and they generally focus on the skills of speaking and listening (Hamp-Lyons, 2001). Whereas ESP courses are aimed at learning the language for a certain reason. Once the reasons are identified, we are to help students to achieve these goals.

The gold standard in ESP is to allow students to use English to fulfill their needs (e.g., read a manual, write a dissertation, listen to a lecture, present a sales pitch). For example, there is little point in teaching writing to bus drivers in an ESP course. For these professionals, the skills of listening and speaking are probably the most important ones since they will have to interact with passengers (e.g., charge the fare), colleagues (e.g., negotiate their schedule), and police officers (e.g., ask for directions if they come across road diversions) [1].

According to the above-mentioned statement, one may conclude that the teaching materials are developed on the basis of the situational tasks the representatives of any specialty come across in their daily life. Therefore, the curriculum of one and the same





course (e.g. Speaking) is prepared differently due to various contextual factors. For instance, doctors might need to study the ways of giving descriptions and explanations of causes, symptoms to foreign patients, pilots will need to learn how to negotiate new business or overseas travel contracts for the company, vets would demonstrate comprehension of basic principles of science participating in the international scientific webinars or conferences, journalists would be expected to participate in formal and informal debates, professional telephone conversations, teleconferences, videoconferences, etc. All in all, no matter what purposes they are intending at, the use of an appropriate academic and professional genre and discourse of the field is required.

Now, let us start to negotiate the difference between the teachers' and students' roles in EGP and ESP.

In EGP teachers concentrate and direct all their efforts to develop the educational knowledge of their students. The teachers in the EGP course perform their responsibilities in designing the educational syllabus on the basis of everyday English use providing fundamental knowledge and skills of the English language at secondary educational establishments. Another teachers' responsibility does not only concern training language skills but also, promotes students' thinking skills such as understanding, memorizing, synthesizing, and creating.

In ESP, teachers' and students' roles differ but complement each other. Teachers can combine specific features of the professionals both in language teaching and having pedagogical skills. Students, on the contrary, are aware of the content knowledge of their specialty in their L1. Consequently, they are frequently motivated to learn the language, for instance, talking to the boss, introducing news, etc.

EGP concentrates on teaching English in general. The primary aim is to give the learners a course that may face their urge to know and understand certain languages in general, but when it comes to ESP, teachers focus their attention on the diagnostic analysis of students' needs. English for general purposes normally facilitates the learner to acquire a good knowledge of the four language skills: listening, speaking reading, and writing to improve their level.

Teaching resources in EGP and ESP courses

One of the main distinctive features between EGP and ESP published teaching resources is that the former is commonly a constituent part of a textbook series while the latter could generally be collected in a single textbook. The duration of EGP courses is longer than the length of ESP courses is. This might be because of getting a





job or the course that might be paid by the employer, who is not intending to spend much money on that.

Table 1 presents just one example of an ESP book. There is no recipe for what ESP materials should contain and how they should be organized.

Their contents and structure are informed by the results of needs analysis, an important step in ESP design [1]:

Table 1.

	EGP	ESP
Topics	General life (e.g., identity)	Specific to the occupation (e.g., financial industry)
Skills	Focus on all four skills	Selective emphasis (e.g., writing is not dealt with in the first two units)
Text	Interactive, social, and informal (e.g., discussions, telephone conversations, introductions, arguments)	Informative (e.g., financial industry development), transactional (e.g., arrangements), and formal (e.g., professional and customer)
Language content	General knowledge of English (e.g., adverbials, order of adjectives)	Key aspects needed for the target professionals (e.g., words related to banking products/services)
Activities	Games, anecdotes, songs	Role-plays

Summary of differences between an EGP textbook and an ESP textbook

Muntaha Samardaly (2012) identifies the following priorities for ESP learners:

a) Interest and motivation for learning. According to ESP, learners is the most important element in the language teaching process, so it is very important to increase their motivation for English learning and to help students prepare for the demands of English in their future careers.

b) Subject – content knowledge. The target situation itself determines the knowledge. As a result, the learner can use the previous knowledge and apply it in a real context.

c) Focus on learning strategies. Learning strategies are those skills learners need in learning (ESP). The situation in ESP is different from that in GLT. In teaching English for general purposes ignoring varying the strategies as necessary techniques is a common feature. These strategies will make learning easier. They permit students to learn faster and more efficiently [3].



In conclusion, one may confirm that learning in EGP and ESP contexts can be more meaningful and fruitful if the students are interested and motivated to accomplish the tasks by combining theoretical and practical experience in a target situation. Therefore, some pedagogical strategies should be developed and included in the syllabus for a furthermore efficient improvement of teachers' and students' academic competence and making the teaching and learning process much easier. [3]

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