

Implementation of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at the UG Common Classes in Higher Education in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

In the scenario of English language teaching, ESP cuts a distinct path for itself. By insisting on problem solving skills, it has highlighted the necessity for communication in the classroom. To make it Psycho linguistic, teachers have introduces various games in the classrooms. By this way, the strategies of Communicative Language teaching are found merged with ESP, of curse at the implementation level. This paper looks at the scope of ESP in the higher education scenario of Kerala.

Key words: English Language Teaching, English for Specific Purposes, activity oriented, Communicative Competence, Psycho linguistic

INTRODUCTION

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) define that ESP is an approach to language learning and it is based on learners 'needs. It shows that ESP does not involve a particular kind of language, teaching material or methodology", but they suggest that the foundation of ESP involves the learners, the language required and the learning contexts which are based on the primacy of need in English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

As found with many other professions, English language teaching has become a specialized job in the international scenario. English as a subject leading to means of communication is taught world wide as per the demand of students. It means, the language and its usage learned by a student from Science stream will be different from Arts or Commerce streams. They learn terminologies and other usages of language which is of use in their subject and professions connected to it. So, a student, by completing a particular program will be equipped with a language that can be used in his area of work. There comes the relevance and significance of the concept of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The curriculum and syllabus too will be designed keeping in mind the importance of ESP in the future of the students concerned. This kind of specialization in the field of learning English language since it enhances the professionalism demanded by the corporate sector in the twenty first century. Students will find themselves fit to face the novel challenges in the industry that they opted to work with.

It was in the middle of 1960s that ESP emerged. It was the result of awareness that there are groups of students who are in need of specialized capacities that can't be acquired from a normal EFL classroom. Precisely they were learners in connection with professional training, technicians or of any special professions. During its growth, ESP began to look at the communicative as well as linguistic competencies of the learners. The Association of Lecturers and Tutors for Overseas Students (SELMOUS), British Association of State Colleges in English language Teaching (BASCELT) are some of the leading ESP professional associations in UK evolved in due course. These two organizations though vary in its area of work, addresses the demands of the student community with respect to the acquisition of English language. By organizing periodical conferences and publishing journals, these organizations disseminate the idea of ESP round the globe.

The primary aim of ESP, which is an approach, is developing language skills required for specific professions or branches of knowledge, by relating the students from 'efficiency' to 'proficiency' in communicative competence. Acquisition of new skills is given prime importance in ESP. Hence the course design will be not of multiple hurdles for students, but a series of components that are of immediate significance. As part of this, it is mandatory to develop a notion that language is a social phenomenon. In ESP, instead of a readymade syllabus where the Classics of English literature are included, the objectives in the form of activities or mentioning a group of activities to attain the expected goal are made part of. So a syllabus in the traditional format is abandoned, the process becomes need based. It is framed considering whether it is appropriate to various situations.

Language learning in ESP considers the role of the learner in future and the required skills especially linguistic that needs to be imbibed for performing the future role in a better and meticulous way. It is learner centered as it assesses at the beginning of the program what all the linguistic proficiencies that the learner possesses and the activities that he can perform. This move helps the facilitator to detect the gaps and finalize the way by which syllabus can be framed so that the learner may get the benefit of the lessons and practices and acquire the required skills for a better performance in the career.

In the scenario of English language teaching, ESP cuts a distinct path for itself. By insisting on problem solving skills, it has highlighted the necessity for communication in the classroom. To make it Psycho linguistic, teachers have introduced various games in the classrooms. By this way, the strategies of Communicative Language teaching are found merged with ESP, of course at the implementation level. Stressing on the four language skills namely, Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, ESP looks at these skills as situation specific.

While designing a course under ESP, it has to be experiential. The basic skills of the learner are targeted. Moreover, the teaching becomes inter disciplinary as it considers English language as well as the specific subjects. Both the lower order and higher order skills are brought under this umbrella. Structure is secondary while task becomes primary. Learning by doing and effectively reflecting on the activity can leave a permanent result in the mind of the learner. Repeating the activity will, in fact, make the concept crystal clear too.

To Implement ESP in higher education scenario in Kerala, theories have to be brought into practice. Specific text books have to be prescribed for students of various branches. The present practice of earmarking the same text book irrespective of subjects may create a troublesome situation in materializing ESP in the Common English class rooms. The present Common English classrooms turned out to be highly boring for the students as the prescribed materials have not even any distant relation with the Core subject they learn. The conventional pattern of learning English literature never helps a student, for example, of Science or Commerce stream in any way in their future. Specific text books have to be prescribed for students of various streams so that each student may be benefited.

There are, even at present, such prescribed text books available that target the interest of specific groups. But, the role of the teacher has to be redefined. Teacher-student environment has to be rebuilt keeping in view the demands of the ESP classrooms. Integrating English language with subjects is the expected activity of a teacher in language classrooms. Since students of each subject will have their own prescribed text books, clubbing of Common English classes as followed these days won't be practically possible. This move will have a positive result as the number of Common English classes reduced to a manageable one; so that teachers can implement practice oriented student- centered method.

One major problem at present in the syllabus of UG Common Course is, it is not framed based on needs/analysis. As a result, students from all branches have to learn the same stuff though, sometimes, of no use at all. At this point, students of other streams like Commerce or Science find it difficult to adjust with the content and turn out to be unproductive. Here comes the relevance of implementing the concept of ESP. To identify the language skills that are necessary for the students of each stream, the University has to conduct a needs analysis, to make it goal oriented. Providing an opportunity to apply what they have learned in their branch of study will really help them to attain the declared objectives of each Course. The text books and other materials are to be framed so as to address the demands of each group.

Efficiency and speed of learning can be enhanced by ESP as the learners follow the native speakers' style of language acquisition. In class rooms, teachers have to provide chances or create situations where students use the language, of course specific words that come under the register of the subjects concerned. They learn language through situations that they find interesting by working with materials, presentations, engaging in group activities etc. The positive result is, the learners will be equipped with a ready to use language immediately after the completion their program. It is understood that the teachers should be trained to handle such classes by providing adequate in-service programs. The roles assigned to students and teachers are equally important in ESP. teachers can very well make use of ICT facilities to make the class room activities more effective and interesting.

ESP is an approach rather than a method that considers learning English language for specific aims or with a desired or pre determined goal. To prepare the learning materials or syllabus as well as curriculum of the UG Common Courses, a needs analysis study has to be conducted as a preliminary step. Prescribing the same conventional literature text for all the students, irrespective of their branch of knowledge has to be ended. The present methodology of lecturing or teacher centered should be replaced with activity oriented, learner-centered class rooms. So, once a student completes graduation, he has to find himself equipped with an English language which is congenial from him to use in an environment that fits to his profession or future goal. The present system has to identify the required language skills for students based on their majors for under graduation. So the text books have to be modified in this regard.

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