English for Specific Purpose and English as a Second Language - Scope with Meaning and Difference

Dr. Ritu A Benjamin

==

Meaning

Dudley-Evans has defined the meaning of English for specific purpose (ESP) taking Absolute and Variable characteristics into consideration.

Definition of ESP (Dudley-Evans, 1997)

Absolute Characteristics

1. ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners

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

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

Variable Characteristics

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

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

3. 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

4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students.

5. Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems

Development of the Notion of ESP

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) note the two key historical periods breathed life into ESP. First, the end of the Second World War brought with it an " ... age of enormous and unprecedented expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale ·

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 17:2 February 2017**
Dr. Ritu A Benjamin
English for Specific Purpose and English as a Second Language - Scope with Meaning and Difference   447

for various reasons, most notably the economic power of the United States in the post-war world, the role [of international language] fell to English" (p. 6). Second, the Oil Crisis of the early 1970s resulted in Western money and knowledge flowing into the oil-rich countries. The language of this knowledge became English.

The general effect of all this development was to exert pressure on the language teaching profession to deliver the required goods. Whereas English had previously decided its own destiny, it now became subject to the wishes, needs and demands of people other than language teachers (Hutchinson& Waters, 1987, p.7).

English as a second language (**ESL**) on the other hand is the use or study of English by speakers with different native languages. It is also known as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), English as an additional language (EAL), and English as a foreign language (EFL)

Difference

Now coming to see the difference between ESP & ESL, Hutchinson et al. (1987:53) answer this quite simply, "in theory nothing, in practice a great deal".

The most important difference depends on two aspects the first is the learner itself and the second is the purpose(s) of learner for learning English. Coming to ESP students they are usually adults who already have some association with English but are learning the language further to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular job-related functions. An ESP program is therefore built on an assessment of purposes & needs and the functions for which English is required.

ESP concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures. It covers subjects varying from accounting or computer science to tourism and business management. The ESP focal point is that English is not taught as a subject separated

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 17:2 February 2017**
Dr. Ritu A Benjamin
English for Specific Purpose and English as a Second Language - Scope with Meaning and Difference   448

from the students' real world (or wishes); instead, it is integrated into a subject matter area important to the learners.

However, ESL and ESP differ not only in the nature of the learner, but also in the aim of instruction. In fact, as a general rule, while in ESL all four language skills; listening, reading, speaking, and writing, are stressed equally, and in ESP it is a needs analysis that determines which language skills are most needed by the students, and the syllabus is designed accordingly. An ESP program, might, for example, emphasize the development of reading skills in students who are preparing for graduate work in business administration; or it might promote the development of spoken skills in students who are studying English in order to become tourist guides.

As a matter of fact, ESP combines subject matter and English language teaching. Such a combination is highly motivating because students are able to apply what they learn in their English classes to their main field of study and work, whether it be accounting, business management, economics, computer science or tourism. Being able to use the vocabulary and structures that they learn in a meaningful context strengthens what is taught and increases their motivation.

The students' abilities in their subject-matter fields, in turn, improve their ability to acquire English. Subject-matter knowledge gives them the context they need to understand the English of the classroom. In the ESP class, students are shown how the subject-matter content is expressed in English. The teacher can make the most of the students' knowledge of the subject matter, thus helping them learn English faster.

"Specific"

The term "specific" in ESP refers to the specific purpose for learning English. Students approach the study of English through a field that is already known and relevant to them. This means that they are able to use what they learn in the ESP classroom right away in their work and studies. The ESP approach enhances the relevance of what the students are learning and

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 17:2 February 2017**
Dr. Ritu A Benjamin
English for Specific Purpose and English as a Second Language - Scope with Meaning and Difference   449

enables them to use the English they know to learn even more English, since their interest in their field will motivate them to interact with speakers and texts.

ESP assesses needs and integrates motivation, subject matter and content for the teaching of relevant skills.

As for a broader definition of ESP, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) theorize, "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning" (p. 19). Anthony (1997) notes that, it is not clear where ESP courses end and general English courses begin; numerous non-specialist ESL instructors use an ESP approach in that their syllabi are based on analysis of learner needs and their own personal specialist knowledge of using English for real communication.

Interest for Learning English for Specific Purpose-ESP

People learn languages when they have opportunities to understand and work with language in a context that they comprehend and find interesting. In this view, ESP is a powerful means for such opportunities. Students will acquire English as they work with materials which they find interesting and relevant and which they can use in their professional work or further studies. The more learners pay attention to the meaning of the language they hear or read, the more they are successful; the more they have to focus on the linguistic input or isolated language structures, the less they are motivated to attend their classes.

The ESP student is particularly well disposed to focus on meaning in the subject-matter field. In ESP, English should be presented not as a subject to be learned in isolation from real use, nor as a mechanical skill or habit to be developed. On the contrary, English should be presented in authentic contexts to make the learners acquainted with the particular ways in which the language is used in functions that they will need to perform in their fields of specialty or jobs. In ESP, the student should be given the space to think on his own what, when, where… he wishes to study which can be said as self direction. Which Carter also speaks of- self-direction is

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 17:2 February 2017**
Dr. Ritu A Benjamin
English for Specific Purpose and English as a Second Language - Scope with Meaning and Difference 450

characteristic of ESP courses in that the " ... point of including self-direction ... is that ESP is concerned with turning learners into users" (Carter, 1983, p. 134).

English as a Second Language - ESL

Some students learn a new language more quickly and easily than others. This simple fact is known by all who have themselves learned a second language or taught those who are using their second language in school. Clearly, some language learners are successful by virtue of their sheer determination, hard work and persistence. However, there are other crucial factors influencing success that are largely beyond the control of the learner. These factors can be broadly categorized as internal and external. It is their complex relationship that determines the speed and facility with which the new language is learned.

Internal Factors

Internal factors are those that the individual language learner brings with him or her to the particular learning situation.

- **Age:** Second language acquisition is influenced by the age of the learner. Children, who already have solid literacy skills in their own language, seem to be in the best position to acquire a new language efficiently. Motivated, older learners can be very successful too, but usually struggle to achieve native-speaker-equivalent pronunciation and intonation as low learning and acquiring skills due old age.
- **Personality:** Introverted or anxious learners usually make slower progress, particularly in the development of oral skills. They are less likely to take advantage of opportunities to speak, or to seek out such opportunities due to shyness or fear. More outgoing students do not worry about the unavoidability of making mistakes. They take risks, and thus give themselves much more practice.
- **Motivation:** Intrinsic motivation has been found to correlate strongly with educational achievement. Clearly, students who enjoy language learning and take pride in their progress will do better than those who don't.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 17:2 February 2017**
Dr. Ritu A Benjamin
English for Specific Purpose and English as a Second Language - Scope with Meaning and Difference   451

Extrinsic motivation is also a significant factor. ESL students, for example, who need to learn English in order to take a place at an American university or to communicate with a new English boy/girlfriend, are likely to make greater efforts and thus greater progress.

- **Experiences:** Learners who have acquired general knowledge and experience are in a stronger position to develop a new language than those who haven't. The student, for example, who has already lived in 3 different countries and been exposed to various languages and cultures has a stronger base for learning a further language than the student who hasn't had such experiences.

- **Cognition:** In general, it seems that students with greater cognitive abilities will make the faster progress. Some linguists believe that there is a specific, innate language learning ability that is stronger in some students than in others.

- **Native language:** Students who are learning a second language which is from the same language family as their first language have, in general, a much easier task than those who aren't. So, for example, a Dutch child will learn English more quickly than a Japanese child.

External Factors

External factors are those that characterize the particular language learning situation.

- **Curriculum:** For ESL students, in particular, it is important that the totality of their educational experience is appropriate for their needs. Language learning is less likely to place if students are fully submersed into the mainstream program without any extra assistance or, conversely, not allowed to be part of the mainstream until they have reached a certain level of language proficiency.

- **Instruction:** Clearly, some language teachers are better than others at providing appropriate and effective learning experiences for the students in their classrooms. The students will make faster progress with such type o instructors.

The same applies to mainstream teachers in second language situations. The science teacher, for example, who is aware that she too is responsible for the students'

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 17:2 February 2017**
Dr. Ritu A Benjamin
English for Specific Purpose and English as a Second Language - Scope with Meaning and Difference   452

English language development, and makes certain accommodations, will contribute to their linguistic development.

- **Culture and Status:** There is some evidence that students in situations where their own culture has a lower status than that of the culture in which they are learning the language make slower progress.

- **Motivation:** Students who are given continuing, appropriate encouragement to learn by their teachers and parents will generally do better than those who aren't. For example, students from families that place little importance on language learning are likely to progress less quickly.

- **Access to Native Speakers:** The opportunity to interact with native speakers both within and outside of the classroom is a significant advantage. Native speakers are linguistic models and can provide appropriate feedback. Clearly, second-language learners who have no extensive access to native speakers are likely to make slower progress, particularly in the oral/aural aspects of language acquisition.

Concluding Words

Here we can say that the instructor or the teacher of ESP has to first analyze the meaning of both ESP and ESL and then should finding out the difference between both. After this, the teacher should frame the syllabus and way of teaching keeping in mind the requirement of the student. Only then the instructor will be able to fulfill his duty successfully.

===

Selected References

- Anthony, L. (1997). ESP: What does it mean? ON CUE. http://interserver.miyazaki-med.ac.jp/~cue/pc/anthony.htm Retrieved April 6, 2000, from the World Wide Web.

- Carver, D. (1983). Some propositions about ESP. **The ESP Journal, 2,** 131-137Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. (1998). **Developments in ESP: A multi-disciplinary approach**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 17:2 February 2017**
Dr. Ritu A Benjamin
English for Specific Purpose and English as a Second Language - Scope with Meaning and Difference   453

- Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). **English for Specific Purposes: A learning-centered approach**.

===

Dr. Ritu A Benjamin
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Disha College
Raipur 492003
Chhattisgarh
India
drrituabenjamin@gmail.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 17:2 February 2017**
Dr. Ritu A Benjamin
English for Specific Purpose and English as a Second Language - Scope with Meaning and Difference 454