TEACHING *ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES* (*ESP*) FOR ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is not a new idea in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). Unfortunately, in practice, many lecturers still teach English using the same methods and the same materials to different departments. They tend to teach general English to different departments. Of course, there are several possible reasons for their doing it. Yet, this practice should not be continued because different departments require different types of English materials. Therefore, English lecturers should use different materials for different departments even though the methods that will be used just the same. Moreover, different materials for different departments for teaching ESP in Islamic Higher Education students in my mind is still not enough. Integrating Islamic teachings as an additional value will be very important. This paper will discuss the way to teach ESP at the Islamic Higher Education Institutions.

Keywords: Teaching, ESP, Islamic Higher Education, student

A. Introduction

*S*ince the 1960s, ESP has, in general, become one of the most active branches of AppliedLinguistics, and of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in particular.Therefore, teaching English for ESP is not a new idea in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) even though it has been described differently. Some describe itas simply being the teaching of English forany purposes that could be specified, while others describe it as the teaching of English used in academic studies or theteaching of English for vocational or professional purposes. For Anthony (1997: 9-10), ESP is generally used to refer to "the teaching of English for a clearly utilitarianpurpose" (Mackay and Mountford, 1978: 2) because generally students study English not because of their in the EnglishLanguage or English culture as such, but because of their need of English for study or workpurposes (Robinson, 1991: 2). In ESP, "language is learnt not for its own sake or for thesake of gaining a general education, but to smooth the path to entry or greater linguisticefficiency in academic, professional or workplace environments" (Basturkmen, 2006: 18).

Whatever the description is, it is a fact that different field of study has its own specification, including the language it uses. Therefore, teaching general English should be different from teaching ESP. Using General English to teach different fields of study will not be effective. Unfortunately, in practice, many lecturers still use general English to teach English in different fields of study, using the same methods and the same materials to different departments. In other words, they tend to teach General English to different departments. Of course, there are several possible reasons for their doing it. Yet, this practice should not be continued because different departments require different types of English materials. Therefore, English lecturers should teach ESP in different ways from General English and they should be able to play several roles: as a teacher, as a course designer and material provider,as a researcher, as a collaborator, and as an evaluator. In teaching ESP for Islamic Higher Education, specifically, there is one more thing to be considered, i.e., Islamic values. The values should be inserted to the ESP as an additional value. Thus, this paper will discuss the way to teach ESP at the Islamic Higher Education Institutions.

B. English for Specific Purposes

1. Characteristics of ESP

Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998) propose two kinds of characteristics that outline ESP: some absolute and some variable. The absolute characteristics of ESP namely: (1) It is defined to meet specific needs of the learners; (2) It makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves; and (3) It is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genreappropriate to these activities. The variable characteristics of it include: (1) ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines; (2) In specific teaching situations, it may use a different methodology from that ofGeneral English; (3)It is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in aprofessional work situation, and is also possible for learners at secondary school level; and (4) It is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students, even though it can be used with beginners by assuming some basic knowledge of the language systems(Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998:4).

Carver (1983) states that there arethree characteristics common to ESP courses:authentic materials for an intermediate or advanced level of students, purpose-related orientation (the tasks are given based on the target situation), and self-direction, meaning that ESP is concerned with turning learners into users by encouraging the learners to have a certain degree ofautonomy: the freedom to decide when, what, and how they will study, and for high-abilitylearners, it is essential to learn how to access information in a new culture.

2. Objectives in Teaching ESP

There are five main objectives to be reached in the teaching and learning process of ESP according to Basturkmen (2006: 133). They are as follow:

a. To reveal subject-specific language use.

 This objective aims to demonstrate to the learnershow the language is used in the target setting.

b. To develop target performance competencies

c. To teach underlying knowledge.

d. To develop strategic competence, i.e., the link between context ofsituation and language

e. To foster critical awareness or what is called ascultural knowledge and affective objectives (Stern inBasturkmen, 2006: 143) and aims at making students conscious and culturally aware of the target situation.

3. ESP Teaching and Learning Processes

The basic teaching-learning process of ESP is just the same as any other form of language teaching, which includes several activities: shaping the input, encouraging the learners' intention to learn, managing the learning strategies, and promoting practice and use(Strevens, 1988: 44). Its difference from any other form of language teaching is "Learning ismore individualized than standardized and students are more open to new ideas. They takeresponsibility for their own actions and accept related consequences". (Kashani et al 2007:87).

4. Stages in the ESP Teaching Process

According to Dudley-Evans and Johns (1998:121),there are five key stages in ESP. They are:

a. Needsanalysis;

ESPis started by considering the needs of thelearners and what they have to do in the target situation"(Flook in Benyelles, 2009:21), and "…any course should be based on an analysis of learner need" (Hutchinson & Waters 1987:53), because it determines the reasons and procedures that should be used to achievesatisfactory communicative results. "The rationale for needs analysis is that by dentifyingelements of students' target English situations and using them as the basis ESPinstruction, teachers will be able to provide students with the specific language they need tosucceed in their courses and future careers" (Johns, 1991: 67).

Beside the students' needs, their goals and motivation are also the most important things to be considered in ESP teaching. Before teaching, an ESP English teacher should analyze all those things through a need analysis. According to Soriano (1995), needs analysis helps in collecting and analysingdata for determination of what learners' want' and 'need' to learn. Besides, the learners' attitudes and their learning strategies are also emphasized. The reasons for performing need analysis, according to Long (2005) are to determinethe relevance of the material to the learners situation, to justify the accountability of thematerial to all the constituents implicated in the situation, to describe and explain learners' differences in terms of needs and style and, finally to produce efficient materials that willfulfil learners" requirements and needs as wholly as possible.To the ESP teacher in the classroom is"…a knowledge provider and a facilitator ofstudents" learning and no more as a resourceful authority."(Kashani et al 2007:85).

b. Course (and syllabus) design

Designing course in ESP is really different from that of General English. For ESP, course design is often a substantial and important part of the workload"(Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 21).Therefore,to achieve the goalof theESP, including the materials of it, the course should be designed carefully based on the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learner (Mumby,1978: 2), and functional and practical

Englishlanguage requirements of the learner (Strevens 1977 :90).Before designing the course, there are four essential points that have to be studied and analysed as a pre-designprocess according to Miliani (1994), namely:

(1)Situation analysis: considering the general requirements of both learners and institutions,their profiles and attitudes, also the existing materials.

(2)Setting Aims and Objectives: stating what would be achieved at the end of thecourses.

(3)Generating Syllabus Content: "through the sequencing ofmaterials whose layout and presentation should form a continuum". (Benyelles, 2009:58).

(4)Assessment: gathering data regarding syllabus before or during the courseimplementationto readjust the content of the syllabus.

c. Materials selection (and production);

The materials of ESP should be selectively selected or produced. Based on the selected and/or produced materials,   the teacher might continue with the activities or tasks suitable with the materials that the students should perform. Concerning the ESP activities it is necessary to keep in mind that the context should be consistent with studying subject matter (Bracaj, 2014).

d. Teaching andlearning

In teaching ESP, Hutchinson& Waters (1987: 157) state that the ESP teacher's role is one of manyparts. The ESP teacher is "...a teacher of General English who has, unexpectedly, foundhim/herself required to teach students with special needs", (Strevens, 1988: 41). Therefore, flexibility is a key value needed by the ESPteacher, in order to change from being a general language teacher to being a specificpurpose teacher, to cope with different groups of learners, and to perform different tasks (Robinson, 1991).The ESP teacher, therefore, hasto adapt and adjust himself or herself in order to deal with a new situation and environment forwhich he or she is   not generally well trained and equipped. In other words, he or she should be flexible. According to Swales (1985)it is likely that the ESP teacher will have to dealwith needs analysis, syllabus design, materials writing or adaptation and evaluation. Hutchinson & Waters (1987: 163) state that the ESP teacher does not need to learn specialist knowledge. He or she is just required to have a positive attitude towards the ESP

content, knowledge of fundamental principles of thesubject area, and an awareness of how much they probably already know.

As mentioned previously, an ESP teacher should be flexible. The principle of flexibility implies an eclectic approach to the teaching methods. Inthis vein, Miliani (1994) states that "…eclecticism …leaves the door open for any stratagemor technique which could fit in a given situation. It all depends on the teachers' know-howand his approach to language teaching". In other words, the ESP teachers should implement different teaching methods,techniques and materials in order to reach the learners required competence (Chams, 2016).

C. Evaluation

Assessment and course evaluation are two important stages in ESP teaching process to make the ESP program successful (the program fulfils particularlearners' needs and enable them perform specific things with language). Like any other form of English language teaching, ESP is also a course which has specified objectives. To find out whether the course is successful or not, it has to be assessed andmeasured in terms of how well these objectives have been provided and served. Aiming athelping the ESP teachers or practitioners and achieving these stages, Hutchinson& Waters (1987)propose a complementary procedure based on two levels: learner assessment and course evaluation. Learner assessment is aimed at measuring the learners' performance and level ofproficiency (what they actually know in terms of language knowledge at thislevel of the course achievement) and elicitingtheir linguistic problems anddifficulties, and sets other views for pedagogical solutions in the next courses. Course Evaluation is evaluated to find out whether the sets of objectives designed wereachieved or not, to reach the course aims.Both learner assessment and course evaluation facilitate and help providing theteacher with feedback on the efficiency of the course, the teaching methods and materials,and the improvement of the necessary revisions in the ESP course design.

The ESP teacher is often involved in various typesof evaluation: testing of students, evaluation of courses and teaching materials. Tests which are conducted at the middle or at the end of the ESP course, are used: 1) to assess whether students have

the necessary language and skills to undertake aparticular academic course or career by using e.g. International English Language Test Service(IELTS), or Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and 2) to asses the level of theirachievement – how much learners have gained from a course.The evaluation of course design andteaching materials should be done while the course is being taught, at the end of the courseand after the course has finished, in order to assess whether the learners have been able tomake use of what they learned and to find out what they were not prepared for. Evaluationthrough discussion and on-going needs analysis can be used to adapt the syllabus.

D. How to Teach ESP for Islamic Higher Education Students?

In the Higher education context, the teaching of ESP, therefore, should be in line with the vision and mission of each study program or department. For Islamic Banking Department students, for instance, the ESP taught should be in line with the students' needs. What do the students needs? They need English vocabulary, language and communication skills usually used at Islamic Banks. Therefore, they need to master spoken English vocabulary, have strategic competence and language and communication skill to be used in the Islamic Bank contexts. They need some basic knowledge that they can seek through English reading texts about banks. They need to have some strategies to keep communicating with bank customers and watching their behaviors in order to be able to reflect Islamic values.

When teaching ESP for Islamic Higher Education students, all the processes will be just the same as any other form of teaching: starting with Pre-teaching activities, continued with Whilst-teaching activities and ended with closing. The big difference is that the students should be trained to be more independent and to be more responsible for their own successes. Therefore, the teacher as the practitioner should always remind the students to develop their English and communication skills at home, and have more practice the things that they really need for their jobs.

Based on all the above ideas, it can be stated that in the context of Islamic Higher Education, before teaching, the lecturer should analyze his or her students' needs, goals, and motivations and decides what will be the end target of the ESP course to be

reached by the students. For the Counseling Department students, for example, English to be mastered by the students should that of to be used in counseling activities, not General English. For Islamic Educational Management Department students, they need to be exposed English on management, not on General English.

The need analysis results will be used by the teacher of Islamic Higher Education to develop the syllabus which is appropriate to the students' needs as Islamic Higher Education students (like language components, language skills, communication skills and Islamic values needed for their jobs), not the teacher's need (ease). In the syllabus all the data of the students will be considered to set the objectives and activities and tasks to be performed by the students. The teacher, then, arranges and sequences the teaching materials to meet the students' needs. The source of the materials can be in the form of text because as a learning material, it can be used for learning and practicingwide range of skills. In ESP course it can be source for new vocabulary,communicative or reading skills. To make working with a text as mucheffective as possible it is necessary to involve all students´ skills. It ispreferred to combine working with printed text with listening to audiocassetteor video-cassette that means receptive with productive activities. Thus, the materials of ESP should be well selected and well designed. In other words, the materials are selected and designed in such a way in order that the teacher can use the materials as the sources of the students' tasks and activitieswith thehelp of the teacher. To perform the activities, the teacher should select or produce the materials that can support the activities the students have to carry out in a work or business situation. Thus, students' involvement in every stage of ESP course is unavoidable. Besides, the teacher also designs the kinds of assessment and evaluation to be applied in the course. However, allthese things should be well planned based on discussion with the students.

E. Conclusion

The teaching of General English should be different from that of ESP. With the help of the students, the teacher analyzes the students' needs. To plan and teach the ESP, there should be collaboration between the teacher and the students. It is the teacher, together with the students, who decides the ESP goals, materials, activities and

tasks, yet the students . The students' involvement in the teaching learning process is really imperative to ensure that the ESP course successful. Teaching methods in ESP are also different from those of General English. In the ESP, the students are trained to be more responsible for their own learning in line with their needs,   and more independent.   Besides, the Islamic values to be implanted to the students should also be discussed and agreed between the teacher and the students in order to make the ESP course of Islamic Higher Education successful.

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