

THE NEEDS OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES TEACHERS WITH AND WITHOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION BACKGROUNDS

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Abstract

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is intended for special people who need special language skills and genres, the main issues in the developing ESP teaching are how to identify learner needs (needs analysis), the nature of the genres that the learners need to be able to produce as well as participate in, and how teachers can know that the learners have been able to do this successfully, and if not, what the teachers can do to help them do this. There are two types of ESP teachers, teachers who have English education background and those who do not own degrees in English education. These two types of teachers experience their own strengths and weaknesses in teaching ESP subject. This research aims at finding out the needs of ESP teachers with and without English education backgrounds. Questionnaire and observation, as well as discussions were the techniques employed to gather the data. Referring to Brown's characteristics of a good language teacher, the result of this study shows that ESP teachers with degrees in English language education were well-informed of the technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills, and personal skills; whereas the opponents should be trained on the four categories, particularly skills in pedagogy.

Keywords: ESP, ESP teachers, good language-teaching characteristics

INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) arose as a term in the 1960's as it became increasingly aware that general English courses frequently did not meet learner or employers needs. As English has become the important language for disseminating academic knowledge, the need of mastering English, EAP especially, is becoming more and more important. The demand for ESP is growing rapidly, particularly in EFL (English as a foreign language) countries where English is mainly used for instrumental purposes.

People in these countries learn English in order to fulfill the school curriculum requirement, to pass standardized English proficiency tests (TOEFL, IELTS), or to obtain promotion or professional development at work. In the higher education, however, the ESP terminology is used overlapping with English for Academic Purposes (EAP). EAP refers to the language and associated practices that people need in order to undertake study or work in English medium higher education. Therefore, the objective of an EAP course is to help these people learn some of the linguistic and cultural – mainly institutional and disciplinary - practices involved in studying or working through the medium of English (Gillet, 2011). Moreover Gillet argues that “EAP is often considered to be a branch of ELT (English Language Teaching), although not all EAP teachers have come through the ELT route”. It is a type of ESP in that the teaching content is explicitly matched to the language, practices and study needs of the learners. The central role of the EAP lecturer or course designer is to find out what the learners need, what they have to do in their academic work or courses, and help them to do this better in the time available.

ELT experts have already realized that not all ESP teachers have ELT background. Therefore it brings about some problems in the instructional process and the achievement of the students, as well. What is usually happening in almost every department in the higher education is assigning EAP lecturers who are good at English (usually those who have finished their studies in the English speaking countries). This type of lecturers, in one hand, does not have background knowledge in the pedagogical aspect of teaching. Thus, they are lack of knowledge when they come to selecting teaching approach even though they master the content of the lecture. On the other hand, the other type of lecturers, those who graduated from the English Language Teaching Program, is lack of knowledge in the content area where English is needed to help them do better in the academic achievement.

Many factors are required in order to increase the English skills of higher education students, such as the motivation of the students, the competences of the teachers, the facilities, and the learning environments. Of the factors mentioned, teachers are considered as the most important one since they are the agent of change in the classrooms. Creative teachers, who can manage the class and find suitable instructional methods and materials and who can be sensitive in adapting to the changing in the world, are highly probably successful in improving the English skills needed for computer science students. Such teachers are assumed to understand the pedagogical and andragogical aspects of the higher education learners. Thus teachers should also experience themselves of the pedagogical and andragogical learning to improve their competences. Once they experience what will be faced by the students, it is highly expected that the teachers will have better understanding in guiding the students to reach the maximum expected outputs.

Even though initial findings of a study, through distributing questionnaire, conducted by Widiatmoko & Winardi (2017) reveals that ESP teachers do not really need to possess competence on classroom action research and to master pedagogic competence, the author believes that these two components are two of the core skills ESP teachers need to apply on their instructional activities. This belief is based on the empirical, as well as research, experience conducted by the author when she, in collaboration with two other ESP teachers, did action research in 2016. She found out that doing classroom action research, with regular discussion, did help the teachers to increase their skills in finding and solving the problems faced during the instructional activities. Pedagogical skills, as some of the characteristics of a good language teacher according to Brown (2007), were also improved during the action research.

Referring to the above rationale this study aims at finding out the needs of ESP teachers with and without English language teaching backgrounds. This needs analysis is highly needed in order to increase the skills of the ESP teachers for the sake of better instructional processes.

METHODS

This study involved two ESP teachers as the participants. They were teachers of a higher education located in Yogyakarta. Questionnaire and observation, as well as discussions, were the techniques employed to gather the data. The participants were the teachers who taught English for Computer Science whose backgrounds were from ELT and non-ELT. Their English proficiency was quite equal proven by their TOEFL score (above 600

of paper-based TOEFL). They filled out questionnaire before the semester began. Observation was done during the instructional process (in the class) and during the discussions; while discussions were conducted every two weeks in the semester.

As parts of the discussions, the author and the teachers talked about some problems they found in the class, the assumptions the teachers thought about the problems, actions the teachers planned to do in the class, the executions of the plans, the findings based on the assumptions and the plans, and the next plans based on the findings. As a matter of fact, the teachers were doing classroom action research; while the author was conducting participatory action research.

FINDINGS

Brown (2007) lists 30 characteristics of a good English language teacher, which is divided into 4 categories, technical knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, interpersonal knowledge, and personal qualities. Among them, the characteristics of pedagogical skills outnumber the other skills; there are 12 characteristics, which is 40% of all the characteristics of a good language teacher. Besides, the pedagogical skills outweigh the others because they have multiple effects in which the students will to some extent imitate what have been done by the teachers. Table 1 explains more about those characteristics of good language teachers.

Among the characteristics, the author focuses only on some characteristics of each skill due to the limitation of time and the deepness of the observation since the paper was written in the mid-time of conducting the research. They were chosen based on two assumptions, i.e. non-ELT background teacher was lack of pedagogical skills and personal qualities; while ELT background teacher was supposed to know all the characteristics. Explicitly the selected characteristics were points 2 and 6 of technical knowledge; points 8, 9, 13, 16 of pedagogical knowledge; points 20 and 25 of interpersonal skills; and points 26 and 27 of personal qualities. The followings are the 10 characteristics observed:

comprehensively grasps basic principles of language learning and teaching
keeps up with the field through regular reading and conference/workshop attendance
understands and uses a wide variety of techniques
efficiently designs and execute lesson plans
stimulates interaction, cooperation, and teamwork in the classroom
creatively adapts textbook materials and other audio, visual, and mechanical aids
enjoys people; shows enthusiasm, warmth, rapport, and appropriate humor
seeks opportunities to share thoughts, ideas, and techniques with colleagues
is well-organized, conscientious in meeting commitment, and dependable
is flexible when things go awry

Good Language-Teaching Characteristics
<p>Technical Knowledge</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understands the linguistic systems of English phonology, grammar, and discourse. 2. Comprehensively grasps basic principles of language learning and teaching. 3. Has fluent competence in speaking, writing, listening to, and reading English. 4. Knows through experience what it is like to learn a foreign language. 5. Understands the close connection between language and culture. 6. Keeps up with the field through regular reading and conference/workshop attendance.
<p>Pedagogical Skills</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Has a well-thought-out, informed approach to language teaching. 8. Understands and uses a wide variety of techniques. 9. Efficiently designs and executes lesson plans. 10. Monitors lessons as they unfold and makes effective mid-lesson alterations. 11. Effectively perceives students' linguistic needs. 12. Gives optimal feedback to students. 13. Stimulates interaction, cooperation, and teamwork in the classroom. 14. Uses appropriate principles of classroom management. 15. Uses effective, clear presentation skills. 16. Creatively adapts textbook material and other audio, visual, and mechanical aids. 17. Innovatively creates brand-new materials when needed. 18. Uses interactive, intrinsically motivating techniques to create effective tests.
<p>Interpersonal Skills</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. Is aware of cross-cultural differences and is sensitive to students' cultural traditions. 20. Enjoys people; shows enthusiasm, warmth, rapport, and appropriate humor. 21. Values the opinions and abilities of students. 22. Is patient in working with students of lesser ability. 23. Offers challenges to students of exceptionally high ability. 24. Cooperates harmoniously and candidly with colleagues (fellow teachers). 25. Seeks opportunities to share thoughts, ideas, and techniques with colleagues.
<p>Personal Qualities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 26. Is well organized, conscientious in meeting commitments, and dependable. 27. Is flexible when things go awry. 28. Maintains an inquisitive mind in trying out new ways of teaching. 29. Sets short-term and long-term goals for continued professional growth. 30. Maintains and exemplifies high ethical and moral standards.

Table 1. Characteristics of Good Language Teachers (Brown, 2007)

Even though the paper was written before the semester of teaching English for Computer Science students ends, findings have been obviously seen during mid-study. The result of the questionnaire reveals that both teachers need to know and to be able to apply English language teaching methodology, classroom management, teaching techniques, time management, and assessment. The mastery of computer science is for sure becoming the need of non-computer science teacher (teacher A). In fact this teacher admitted that compared to their knowledge of language teaching methods, substance in computer science turned out to be her biggest obstacle in teaching computer science students; whereas the teacher with background on computer science (teacher B) did not see it as a necessity. He even did not perceive teaching methods as his impediment.

Differences also appeared in answering the question about their impression on teaching ESP. In one hand, teacher A acknowledged that it was a challenging-but-fun activity because she could gain more knowledge from teaching ESP for computer science students. What she meant by knowledge was the more information she could expand about substances in

computer science, such as IT (information technology) vocabulary (terminologies) and some concepts on it. Teacher B, on the other hand, found out that teaching ESP was easy and fun even though he admitted that his knowledge on various teaching techniques was not sufficient enough.

During the observation and discussion, some interesting facts were revealed. Changes did happen after having regular discussions between the author and the teachers. The following table depicts the alteration.

Characteristics	Before discussion #3		After discussion #3	
	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher A	Teacher B
comprehensively grasps basic principles of language learning and teaching			√	
keeps up with the field through regular reading and conference/workshop attendance	√		√	√
understands and uses a wide variety of techniques			√	
efficiently designs and execute lesson plans	√		√	√
stimulates interaction, cooperation, and teamwork in the classroom	√		√	√
creatively adapts textbook materials and other audio, visual, and mechanical aids	√	√	√	√
enjoys people; shows enthusiasm, warmth, rapport, and appropriate humor	√		√	√
seeks opportunities to share thoughts, ideas, and techniques with colleagues	√	√	√	√
is well-organized, conscientious in meeting commitment, and dependable	√		√	√
is flexible when things go awry	√		√	

Note: Teacher A (non-computer science teacher, ELT background)

Teacher B (computer science teacher, non-ELT background)

√ (done by the teacher)

The table shows that after the third discussion, improvement occurred. The teacher with ELT background fulfilled all the characteristics as a good language teacher; whereas the non-ELT teacher did make progress by performing almost all the characteristics, excluded points number 1, 3, and 10. In fact he did obtain some basic principles of language learning and teaching, however, due to the limitation of time (the discussion was conducted every 2 weeks), the mastery was not optimal. He started to use some techniques in teaching language, but it was not quite varied. When things went not as expected, he could not be able to find ways to solve it on the spot, meaning that he would stick to the plan he already made.

CONCLUSION

Referring to Brown's characteristics of a good language teacher, the result of this study shows that ESP teachers with degrees in ELT were well-informed of the technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills, and personal skills; whereas the opponents should be trained on the four categories, particularly skills in pedagogy.

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