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English for Specific Purposes
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Week 2 – Answers

Dudley-Evans, T. and M. St. John. (1998). *Developments in English for specific purposes*. Cambridge: CUP.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1. What are some of the more important characteristics of ESP as an approach to teaching?

The actual view of ESP as a separate area within the larger field of ELT varies quite a bit. While the authors do mention that there seems to be a separate ESP research tradition, some people do not consider ESP to be a specific methodology unto itself. Some, however do claim that ESP is a methodology. In this class we are going to approach the subject of ESP with the view that it is a specific approach to language teaching, but not a methodology in that there are no strictly set procedures, or behaviors that teachers need to follow to claim to be doing ESP.

All the same there are some specific features which are necessary parts of all ESP-driven classes. In the book they cite two of these very early on (page 1). They are the texts that are used in ESP and the central role of needs analysis. The practice of ESP is created out of the friction in balancing these two forces. One must find texts and use texts in a way which support the needs-focused instruction of the ESP classroom. This is not always an easy thing to do all the time and there are no specific ways of doing this. For this reason much of the concern related to ESP among language teachers revolves around how this is to be done. In relation to this, a project-based approach (something we should all be aware of if not already familiar with) is often thought to work well under the auspices of ESP.

The ESP approach can be conducted with any age or any level of student although it is more often associated with older higher level students. All ESP classed need to revolve around the students themselves. All lessons are designed around the students needs. For older students it is often believed that the student themselves are the best source of information about their specific needs. They know this because they need to use English in the real world or are planning to do so. Often, however students, themselves, only have a vague idea of what they might need to use English for. In such cases, it is up to the teacher to try to determine as closely as she can what the students might need to do with English. This teacher-led determination of student needs is often necessary in ESP classroom with younger learners.

Language use can be characterized by genre. That is, different types of language use share different linguistic features. It is also been noticed that specific goals are often sheared by a particular subject area or field of endeavor. Put another way, people working in the same fields or towards the same major goals often have the same specific needs. Thus, the specific goals of the learners are better dealt with in specific

subject areas or fields. ESP, therefore, often resorts to specific areas. These maybe subject-based, theme-based, or even skills based.

In the text the authors also mention that ESP is a process and not product driven. This is an important distinction to make. In this way ESP is similar to Task-based approaches to language teaching (Nunan, 1989). ESP approaches acknowledge that students can produce different language at different levels but still meet the demands of a linguistic task. Thus, it is not always the product, the language the students produce which is pivotal. Rather, it is the process, what they do to produce that language which is pivotal. Learning processes is something that will take the students out of the classroom and successfully into the real world – which of course is the ultimate goal of all language learning.

So, the absolute characteristics of ESP are as follows:
> ESP is designed to meet the specific needs of the learner;
> ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;
> ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse, and genres appropriate to these activities.
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> (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998: 4-5)

From these requirements we can see that for ESP to work the way it is supposed to, it needs to be set to a certain frame of expected usage. Thus, ESP classes are generally divided into specific fields or areas. The major division of ESP is generally between that of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes). Each of these major divisions can be composed as many subdivisions as are necessary. It of course depends on the needs of the students.

EAP generally deals with students who are studying particular subjects in schools typically at the tertiary (university) level, but can also be developed for subject-based or content-based teaching at lower levels. EAP courses have often been though to share some common themes are academic skills would appear to be founded on a common skill set regardless of the specific content area being studied. The goals general goals of EAP is to provide the students with academic skills which allow them to study more efficiently and to provide content knowledge in the process of developing those skills. The linguistic skills most often focused on in EAP are reading and writing.

EOP generally focuses on speaking and listening as linguistic skills. EOP is often divided into English for Professional Purposes (EPP) and English for Vocational Purposes (EVP). The difference between these two is that the former is seen is being more complicated and involved than the latter. EPP may involve learning a large amount of specific content knowledge (reading) in addition to using that knowledge in the real world (speaking). EVP is seen as demanding more use and less specific content. Distinctions in EVP are also made between pre-service and in-service students on the basis of the level of specificity of the needs the students have and the knowledge of their own needs.

Since ESP revolves around specific content from specific content areas, the content itself is of pivotal importance. This leads us back to the central importance of texts to ESP as texts, both written and spoken, are the foundation of the content students re expected to work with and learn. In the approach an important distinction is made between different types of content, more specifically, carrier content and real content. Carrier content relates to the subject-related factual content in which the real content

is also embedded. Thus, in a text in which the students are reading about the foraging behavior of the armadillo the specific facts related to the armadillo's foraging behavior is the carrier content. The real content is the linguistic content, progressive tense usage patterns, for example, which is present in the same text on armadillo foraging behavior. The carrier content thus carries the real content and while we are happy when the students learn the carrier content our focus as language teachers is on the real content.

2. How is the role of the teacher envisioned in an ESP approach?
The role of the teacher in the ESP approach is multi-faceted as one would expect it to be when the students' use of/interaction with language is of great importance.

ESP teacher
Teachers help students learn. Is obviously role of the teacher should apply at all different types of teaching/learning situations. In an ESP classroom the same basic idea applies, but it is often noted that ESP classes are smaller and more students-centered so teachers need to be able to give individual feedback to students. And ESP teacher needs to be able to deal effectively with students' needs and wants. This entails treating students individually and not just as a giant group all the time.

Course designer and materials designer
This role of the ESP practitioner as course designer and materials designer is often seen as a being one of the particular challenges in the ESP approach as there are not so many commercial textbooks available for the teacher to use. The ESP teacher, therefore, may have to make all her own materials and find suitable authentic texts. In fact, the course itself may not be laid out in advance. Very often ESP courses or one-off type courses where the teacher will get a bunch of students with very specific needs without any kind of precedents. This means she has to develop the whole course by herself from top to bottom. I myself had an experience like this when I was in Singapore in trying to develop an ESP course for border patrol policemen from Vietnam. I can assure you that it was a rather demanding endeavor trying to find the right materials while at the same time I had no idea of what their level was going to be. The ESP teacher, and following an ESP scenario, needs to find authentic texts. I ended up going to different websites for equipment related to border patrol. I was forced to use materials from the Singapore government from their own border patrol division, and I went to a lot of government and intergovernmental sites including the UN to try to find statistics on things like smuggling and piracy and other areas challenging border patrol officers. Finding the materials was first a gigantic challenge. Creating language activities from these materials wasn't even greater challenge particularly as I didn't know what their level was going to be prior to meeting them in starting the class.

Collaborator
The subject-based nature of ESP means that the ESP teacher often needs to be able to collaborate well with subject specialists. Thus, someone conducting an ESP course for would-be doctors will probably need the help of a doctor to help him or her plan the content of the course. It is also true that ESB teachers are often required to use particular types of resources, as I was in Singapore, often one is giving these types of resources without any kind of explanation which means the teacher themselves needs try to find someone to help them understand the materials. In effect the carrier content

can be quite difficult for a person who is a trained language teacher. It is, therefore, always important in ESB teacher tries to find someone who can help them deal with the contents themselves so that they can better deal for it with the students.

Researcher
ESP as a discipline evolved out of the idea of genre analysis; the idea that different types of language use tend to use different patterns of language. In order for an ESP practitioner to be confident about the language that she will teach her students to use for specific purposes, she herself needs to know what patterns are commonly employed. In order to be able to plan her class the ESP practitioner needs to be able to find available research on these patterns. To be a good teacher in an ESP classroom one needs to have a good feel for the language that the students are trying to produce or need to produce. Research on actual language use is quite limited compared to research on an acquisition will turns but thankfully it is an area which is developing and a good ESP teacher needs to be familiar with the research in this area. Still, however, data on patterns of language use are not always available and the ESP practitioner may need to conduct her own research on the language that she should be teaching to be ensured of its authenticity.
Additionally, needs analysis forms the basis of all ESP teaching and an ESP practitioner will often have to personally design a needs analysis which fits her particular students. It is important to remember that needs analysis is not a one off. An ESP practitioner needs to make needs analysis a pivotal part of each of the classes, of course not by surveying the students each class but by paying attention to the students in each class and running needs analysis as a type of continuous assessment of the students. Anyone who's tried to do this realize is that this cannot be done by the seat of your pants and needs to be planned in advance. It is a type of ongoing research which occurs in every class session.

Evaluator
Like for all teachers, an ESP practitioner needs to know how successful her or his lessons have been. Thus, she needs to evaluate her students for their progress but also the course materials and all other aspects of the course. It is important as an evaluator that one has clear limitations or guidelines on her evaluation. The evaluation may pertain to the students, or to the teacher herself or the relationship between the class itself and the objectives set by the teacher. It is difficult to evaluate all things simultaneously. As with research (and evaluation release a type of research), evaluation needs to be planned out to be most effective.

Chapter 2 – A historical perspective on ESP

3. What kind of role did discourse and register analysis have on the development of ESP and why is this important?
There are several different theoretical foundations upon which ESP was developed from. They are:

Register analysis
Register analysis deals with the types of linguistic forms that people use within specific situations. Within this theory register analysis people are identified as speaking or writing in different registers. When different registers are often identified based on the amount or degree of formality versus informality and it is such issues

which have become an important aspect of register analysis. Below are a few links which further explain some basic aspects of register analysis.
 http://accurapid.com/journal/25register.htm
http://www.usd.ac.id/06/publ_dosen/phenomena/91/harris.pdf
http://neptune.spaceports.com/~words/register.html
http://www.press.umich.edu/pdf/9780472032068-sample3.pdf

Rhetorical and discourse analysis
Similar to discourse analysis, rhetorical and discourse analysis also focused on how the linguistic forms one produces need to match specific situations. They do, however, take the idea further by trying to identify generalities in the specific types of forms which are produced. In a general sense we can say that rhetorical analysis focuses on writing. Rhetorical analysis is often interested in how different arguments are formed as one writes within different content areas and within different genres. Below are a few links which give some general descriptions on rhetorical analysis.
http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Pedagogy/Rhetorical%20Analysis%20heuristic.htm
http://rhetoric.byu.edu/pedagogy/Rhetorical%20Analysis.htm
http://english.ecu.edu/~wpbanks/rhetoric/rhetanalysis.html
http://www.drw.utexas.edu/roberts-miller/handouts/rhetorical-analysis
http://grammar.about.com/od/rhetorictoolkit/Tool_Kit_for_Rhetorical_Analysis.htm

Discourse analysis focuses to a large extent on spoken language, although there will be some particular elements of discourse analysis which do focus on written forms. Again, the crux of discourse analysis is to identify patterns in the forms that people use as they produce language. Below are a few sites which explain some of the basic aspects of discourse analysis.
http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~palmquis/courses/discourse.htm
http://bank.rug.ac.be/da/da.htm
http://www.eamonfulcher.com/discourse_analysis.html

It is important to realize what each of these different kinds of analyses have in common. All of them employed the same basic idea, which is that language use is context dependent. There is no generalized form of language which we tend to use all the time. The type of language we produce is always dependent on the context and the subject area. This generalization was brought in to ESP under the idea that people do use language for specific purposes. It is not only true that language use is linked to specific contexts but people themselves seem to exist within a limited range of contexts as well. That is, when very few people actually use the full range of contexts which might be available to them. For language learners, this is even more true. Most language users use their second or foreign language for limited purposes. It therefore seems that it's much more efficient for us to simply teach them the language for the purposes which they need it for. That's the underlying idea of ESP which developed out of him with these different types of linguistic analyses.

Study skills
A somewhat different tradition which plays an important role in the EAP in particular is the idea of study skills. When in general we can say that there are two different types of study skills. These are general study skills and subject specific study skills. It does seem, on the basis of research, but there is such a thing as generalized study skills which will help people no matter what they are studying. At the same time each

subject area also requires specific study skills which help learners with that specific subject area. Within EAP it should be obvious that these generalized study skills would be done with younger learners in less directed types of courses, maybe ones such as you would find in public school from the elementary up to high school. Subject specific study skills would be more important once one becomes much more deeply involved in a specific study area which they need to master not just linguistically but also in respect to content. It is therefore important that ESP practitioners when are aware of study skills and of course the distinction between generalized study skills and subject specific types of study skills.

4. In what ways does the leaner take the central role in ESP approaches?
The development of the learner centered approach to ESP came as a result of studies analyzing real language use across different areas. The basic idea that different types of occasions called for different uses of language led logically to the belief that the only way to develop the most appropriate language patterns in learners was to find out what situations or for what purposes the learners used or intended to use the target language. Thus was born the central concept of learner needs. In ESP learner needs act as a guide for specifically what material (real content) the teacher will teach. Of course the basis of this is the ongoing research in the different areas related to linguistic analyses.
 The basic idea in ESP is that the teacher can not teach if they do not know exactly how the students plan to use the language or in fact need to use the language right now. As mentioned above this is the idea of efficiency. This efficiency is extremely important particularly in EFL situations where students have very limited time, but of course applies to all adult learners in any case who always have limited time resources for learning of their language no matter how important it is that they do so. Within ESP and there is no beating around the bush or waiting for things to take hold. ESP practitioners go directly to the source, the students themselves, to determine what should and needs to be taught. The students then become the epicenter of everything which occurs in the classroom. All planning revolves around the students and what is known about them when from the onset and certainly every single class session needs to revolve around what the students need to do. Furthermore, a valuation relates as well to students and, as mentioned above, is often handled in a kind of continuous assessment scenario where the teacher needs to keep close tabs on how each student is developing.

5. What kind of texts has ESP generally used over the years and why is this an
     important issue?
Authenticity!!!!! This is the battle cry of ESP practitioners.

 Following the ideas of linguistic analysis mentioned above it is big knowledge to within ESP circles that the only useful materials for the development of language would be authentic materials. There are basically to different aspects of authentic materials. The first of these are the texts themselves that the teacher is using to carry the content. The second aspect of authenticity is that of what actually is done with the texts. Both of these ideas revolve around the central requirement that authentic materials whether texts or activities/tasks are things which are not created for language learning as such but are created for real-world use by proficient writer/designers. In short I think he materials have to have a real-world focus after been created for the real world and not necessarily the language classroom.

Note this might be a rather simple thing to do for reading texts, but it might not be so easy to get authentic listening texts for a particular subject area. The use of authentic listening takes may involve actually going and recording people as they go about their business in the real world and then bringing those recordings to class.

On the other hand, when we start thinking about activities/tasks it becomes apparent that we need to somehow been our rules on authenticity. While an ESP class may not and probably does not include only authentic types of tasks the goal of the ESP practitioner is to always try to include as many authentic tasks as possible, and certainly to move from possibly more pedagogical tasks to more real world/authentic types of tasks within the classroom. Everything needs to lean towards and move towards authenticity that is the ultimate goal.

 It is correctly acknowledged within ESP as well that one cannot move towards authentic output while using contrived input. If our goal is to move students into authenticity than we need to use authentic materials in that process.

References

Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.