

General Understanding of The ESP(English for Specific Purposes)Courses

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The great leader Comrade **Kim Jong Il** said:

“The higher education sector should improve the training of technicians and specialists to meet the demands of the developing reality.” (“Kim Jong Il Selected Works”, Vol.10, p.483)

At present, one of the essential questions in training the technicians and specialists is to improve the foreign language teaching further in higher education sector to meet the demands of the developing reality. To do so, it is very important and necessary to have a good grasp of the tendencies in the present-day foreign language teaching and apply them actively and creatively to suit our specific conditions.

Recently, more and more universities of science and technology, and vocational colleges are trying to raise the standard of the ESP(English for Specific Purposes) courses to suit the specific features of the technical education and vocational education in the universities and colleges, a higher stage of education, from the practical point of view that the EGP(English for General Purposes) courses should be given in the stages of general basic education or the preparatory stages for higher education.

The aim of the technical education or vocational education is to make the students fitted readily for the new jobs in their target situations related to their major fields of study or adjacent disciplines after graduating from the universities or colleges, and theoretically and practically skilled in doing their tasks efficiently.

In order to raise the standard of ESP courses, it is essential to know well the general concept of ESP course, the general characteristics and types of ESP courses, and the ways to develop the ESP courses.

The term “ESP course” or “ESP teaching”, within the ELT(English Language Teaching), has been coined and widely used by the applied linguists and language teachers since 1960s, for they have become increasingly aware that EGP courses couldn’t meet satisfactorily the needs of the students and English teachers in the universities and vocational colleges, regarding their major fields of study or professional fields, as time goes by.

Generally speaking, ESP course or ESP teaching is the approach to the specific English language teaching to enable the students to have a good command of English as a foreign language in the contexts of specific scientific and technical fields or professional fields after finishing the university and college courses.

As the higher education gradually becomes subdivided and specialized, and the level of its teaching gets higher worldwide, from the awareness of the importance of the role of language and a good command of English as a foreign language in social practice, more and more universities and colleges are trying to combine the English teaching with the teaching of the special subjects and coordinate their courses to suit the practical needs to enable the students to apply effectively their special or technical

knowledge and experiences to the new target situations related to their special fields or adjacent fields, and to be theoretically and practically fitted for doing their jobs or tasks skillfully after graduating from the universities or colleges.

ESP courses are being considered as more effective than EGP courses in stimulating the students' interests in their studies or increasing their learning motivation, for the ESP courses are intimately associated with their special subject matters and the ESP courses meet the needs with regard to their specific scientific and technical fields or profession after finishing the ESP courses.

As a result, there have been much interest in and researches on the ESP courses and teaching, and the ESP courses have become the mainstream of university and college English language teaching.

For the ESP courses, the practical goals or results are always considered more important and beneficial than the theoretical goals or results. Therefore, it is very important and necessary to analyse the practical needs for the ESP courses and get full understanding of the features of the target situation, the given professional fields and the process of putting the English knowledge and skills to practical use in the target situation.

The practical needs analysis for the ESP courses includes detailed and concrete prearranged analysis and grasp of the goals of the ESP courses or the aims of students' attending the ESP courses, what and how the students want to learn during the ESP courses, what their learning objectives are during the ESP courses, what are actually necessary to meet the students' ESP learning needs, their ages and mental state, their standard of learning and English proficiency, their English learning motivations and the ways of motivating and guiding them and developing their mental and language faculties, etc.

With this practical needs analysis for the ESP courses, it is necessary to consider or study the given ESP course design and planning, ESP teachers training and improvement of their qualifications, selection and writing of teaching materials, selection and use of teaching aids, types of teaching activities and teaching techniques adapted for the given ESP course, the criterion and methods for evaluating the ESP proficiency, the field experiences in the target situations, based on the detailed analysis of the features with regard to work and studies in the target situations or the given professional fields, and the needs for and ways of putting English knowledge and skills to practical use in the target situations, and the linguistic, cultural, psychological features of English language and the general approaches to language teaching.

Students usually try to learn English from their specific needs with regard to studies or work in their future target situations, so as to get a deep and broad knowledge associated with their major fields and adjacent fields of study or profession, and have a skillful work ability, and constantly raise their level of knowledge and develop their work ability by means of English. In other words, students try to go through the ESP courses, simply not from their interests in the mastery of English, but from their needs to do their duties or tasks efficiently in their target situation.

Students try to have a good command of English corresponding to the features of the given ESP course and achieve a greater success in the studies of their special subjects by means of English during the university or college course. As a result, the students can readily adjust themselves to the contexts of their special fields or profession after finishing the ESP courses at the university or college.

Unlike EGP, ESP generally can be divided into EAP(English for Academic Purposes) and

EOP(English for Occupational Purposes) according to the major fields of study or special subjects and professional fields.

EAP can be subdivided into EGAP(English for General Academic Purposes) and ESAP(English for Specific Academic Purposes), and can be further subdivided into EST(English for Science and Technology), EMP(English for Medical Purposes), ELP(English for Legal Purposes), EMFE(English for Management, Finance and Economics), Computer English, etc.

EOP can be subdivided into EPP(English for Professional Purposes) such as EMS(English for Medical Service) and EBP(English for Business Purposes), and EVP(English for Vocational Purposes) such as English for Secretary and English for Negotiation.

Traditionally, EST has been the mainstream of EAP course, but recently EMP and ELP have been the mainstream of EAP course. And as the academic or scholarly studies in business administration, finance, banking, accounting, economics etc. have become more important, ESP and EOP became further subclassified into different varieties of ESP and EOP.

As the fields of work become increasingly subdivided and specialized, and the linguistic features of the language specifically and frequently used only in the given special or professional fields of studies or work become substantialized, various kinds of EOP such as “English for Tourist Management”, “English for Hotel Service”, “Legal English”, “English for Medical Service”, “Netlish”, “English for International Finance”, “English for Accountants”, “English for Secretary” etc. came into being and the given ESP courses have been conducted accordingly.

In order to raise the standard of the ESP courses or teaching, the following should be taken into consideration and studied from the applied linguistic and pedagogic-psychological point of view, in combination with studies of the features of the given major fields of study;

- * ESP teachers’ qualifications; the proficiency in English, the levels of general and special knowledge, skillful English teaching faculties and classroom management skills.

- * Proper selection and training of ESP teachers.

- * Proper ESP course design, depending on the features of the given special or professional fields of studies and work, and teaching objectives.

- * Selection and use of the appropriate teaching materials (textbooks, dictionaries, reference books etc.) and teaching aids(computers, audiovisual aids, videocassettes, overhead projectors, etc.).

- * ESP teaching methods and techniques.

First of all, ESP teachers should be qualified and prepared politically, theoretically and morally so as to equip their students firmly with our Party’ s revolutionary idea to be reliable and competent personnel possessing the revolutionary world outlook and lofty morality.

And also they should have a good command of English and skillful teaching faculties, and should have a good grasp of the features of the given special or professional fields of studies and work, technical terms and jargons, and special or technical knowledge of the given target situations. ESP teachers should also have skillful teaching faculties and much practical experiences in keeping with the features and needs of English uses in the given target situations or fields.

For example, the EAP teachers should have a good grasp of the scientific and technical terms, and scientific and professional knowledge of the given fields of studies and work, and encourage their

students to improve their reading comprehension and translation skills of a variety of written texts such as textbooks, research papers, scientific and technical literature, science magazines and journals, abstracts and summaries, scientific bulletins, and also encourage them to improve the listening comprehension of the scientific and technical lectures, and their scientific debating skills.

And also EAP teachers should encourage their students to get a deep understanding of various writings such as research papers, scientific reports, laboratory reports, mini-research papers or scientific essays, scientific articles, and various kinds of forms and documents, business letters and personal letters, and to acquire the writing skills in writing them out better by means of various teaching activities and techniques.

The ELP teachers should encourage the students of law to develop the ability to put their knowledge of law and ELP to good use by means of the technical teaching and various practical teaching activities and techniques including role-playing and simulation for improving the reading comprehension of the legal terms, the legal articles and clauses and the legal texts, and for improving the writing skills in writing out various kinds of legal documents, and consultation skill or negotiation skill.

The EMP teachers should encourage their medical students to get a good command of written and spoken EMP, and to acquire the practical skills in the fields of medical science and medical service through the technical teaching and various practical teaching activities and techniques for improving the reading comprehension and translation skills of the English medical science books and magazines, and for improving the listening comprehension of the medical science lectures and seminars, and for improving their scientific debating skills, and the medical consultation and service skills.

The EBP teachers or Business English teachers should encourage the students of economics and business administration to improve the reading comprehension and translation skills of various business-related textbooks, newspapers, magazines, journals, books, and documents, and to improve the writing skills in writing out the various business-related documents, and also to improve the business negotiating skills, thus mastering how to use English skillfully as a means of communication among the people in business transaction practices after finishing the Business English courses.

ESP teachers should also pay special or close concern to the right ESP course design in keeping with the needs and features concerning the studies and work in the target situations – the given technical or professional fields. And then, on this basis, they should try to select and use the authentic written and spoken English teaching materials and listening materials suitable for the ESP courses, and they should try to study and creatively apply better teaching aids and techniques suited for the ESP courses, and the students' learning needs and level of knowledge.

We should make further scientific study of the tendencies, research findings and practical experiences in the present-day English language teaching, and, on this basis, should make clear the theoretical and practical issues in applying them actively and creatively to suit our specific conditions, thus thoroughly implementing our Party's high intention and plan of radically raising the standard of our foreign language teaching.

Keywords: ESP, EAP, EGP