Effective English Language Teaching in a Global Context

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This article proposes ESP (English for specific purposes) as a more effective approach in the teaching of English to meet the current demands of using English in various real world contexts. The core concept of an ESP curriculum should be designed with particular students in mind to teach them specialist language and content. Two most appropriate approaches for ESP in university settings are "content-based teaching" and "theme-based teaching." Some issues of content/theme-based teaching, effective ESP methodology, and materials are explored. Yet, if ESP with effective English language teaching approaches is to be successfully realized, careful planning and coordination of the entire course should be arranged according to the learners' needs. Based on the learner-needs analysis, further discussions of classroom implications are also included.

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Since English attracts widespread attention as a major worldwide *lingua franca* in the modern global setting, effective language teaching to speakers of other languages has become the most vital task. More and more people are required to use English as a means of communication in various contexts and situations. Learning English as a language provides advantages in educational advancement, work, or social status.

Traditionally, learning a foreign language was centered toward the mastery of language forms (i.e., grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary) by emphasizing linguistic accuracy. In today's global environment, however, the primary purpose of learning a foreign language is to foster successful communication among people of different cultures and languages by developing linguistic fluency.

In response to this recent shift in language learning focus, from "form" to "communication," communicative language teaching (CLT) has been practiced in such a way that the ultimate goal of teaching a foreign language is to satisfy the communicative needs of the learners. Communicative language teaching in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context is a greater challenge for both learners and teachers.

This communicative approach to language teaching also provides a theoretical basis for the development of one particular aspect of English language teaching, namely, English for specific purposes (ESP). As the need for English is increasing in a variety of contexts, many learners wish to learn English for more specific reasons usually connected with their studies or their jobs. These demands for functional communicative needs have developed the teaching of ESP as an effective language teaching approach in this age. Approaches appropriate to ESP can also be applicable to CLT in other English teaching contexts. English for specific purposes is a part of the recent trend toward a more communicative basis for foreign language teaching. In this paper, the key issues and approaches in ESP and their related classroom implications are discussed.

INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

As English for specific purposes has expanded for the past thirty years (starting from the early 1960s), it has been focusing on the fact that language teaching should be designed for the specific learning of specialized groups of learners. Since the early 1970s, it has become a major influence on the ESL (English as a second language) or the EFL (English as a foreign language) curriculum. Many teachers of ESL/EFL began to discuss the development of systematic analyses of students' needs in terms of their English language use in the real world.

It was also in the 1970s that ESP approaches were developed more vigorously from the influence of communicative language teaching, since the focus was on the communicative use of language rather than on the linguistic structure. Teachers who practice English for specific purposes also tried to use real world language materials to help the students accomplish authentic tasks. Until recently, ESP theories and practices have been developed continuously in line with some changes in approaching the language teaching principles.

The important findings of ESP were that ESP teachers are required to familiarize

with specialized content areas to meet the students' communicative needs in a specific occupation or academic field of study. Thus, one of the major contributions of ESP to language teaching can be found in ESP needs analysis for curriculum design. Teachers who practice English for specific purposes continuously search for the most effective approaches to needs assessment of language, tasks, and cultures of a target situation.¹

This ESP expansion brought a number of terms of the various types of ESP as well as an increasing number of textbooks and references. Thus, it became necessary to sub-categorize ESP in terms of its major types. It was Strevens (1977) who first provided the most famous model of ESP categories. These ESP categories are represented in Figure 1.²

FIGURE 1. TYPES OF ESP

As can be seen from above, there are two major distinctions in ESP: English for occupational purposes (EOP), involving work-related needs and training, and English for academic purposes (EAP), involving academic study needs. In other words, EOP is taught in a situation in which learners need to use English as part of their work or professions, while EAP is taught within academic institutions to students who need English for their studies.

English for specific purposes courses are designed with a particular focus on the learner in course design. There will be differences in such courses depending on whether the learners are novices in their fields of study or whether they are already experts. For example, an ESP course for students who plan to become secretaries would be different from those who have already become experienced secretaries (Kennedy, K. and R. Bolitho 1984).

Although this diagram only includes two major types of ESP, other types of ESP have also developed since then. One of the most developed areas of ESP is academic English for science and technology (EST). Many ESP students are scientists and engineers who need to learn English for a number of purposes connected with their specialties. Other areas of ESP are the vocational ESL movement (VESL) in the United States and

¹ For extended discussions on the history of ESP, see Celce-Murcia, *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, 2nd ed. (1991), pp.67-77 and pp. 216-32.

² Strevens (1977) offered a basic diagram of ESP types to distinguish EOP/EAP with its sub-divisions.

the English of business and economics (EBE), which has the longest history of ESP (Celce-Murcia 1991).

Then, what are some of the distinctive features of ESP? According to Robinson (1991), they are characterized as follows:

First, ESP is normally goal directed. That is students study English not because they are interested in the English language as such but because they need English for study or work purposes. Second, an ESP course is based on needs analysis, which aims to specify as closely as possible what exactly it is that students have to do through the medium of English. Third, the students on an ESP course are likely to be adults rather than children. Finally, ESP courses may be written about as though they consist of identical students, that is, that all the students in a class are involved in the same kind of work or specialist studies. Even when students have homogeneous job or study needs, they are still likely to be different in terms of the rate at which they learn English.

In addition to these characteristics, the ESP teacher should decide which approaches are most appropriate based on the needs of the students and the course design. In this paper, some of the key issues of ESP and the approaches of content-based and theme-based instruction in the university EFL setting are introduced as effective methods for ESP instruction.

KEY ISSUES IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES TEACHING APPROACH

Traditionally, the importance of using four skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing-in English language teaching was continuously emphasized. However, many EFL courses tend to focus on one or two of these four skills. Only recently, some approaches (content-based or theme-based teaching) have emphasized the integrated-skills approach. In particular, this content-based approach is in keeping with the ESP tradition where the vocational and occupational needs of the learner are identified and used as the basis for curriculum and material development. A theme-based approach is a type of content-based approach in which the selected topics or themes provide the content for the EFL learner.

First, the characteristics of content-based and theme-based teaching are briefly introduced followed by discussions on effective methodology and materials for ESP as well as some classroom implications.

Content-based Language Teaching

Snow, Met, and Genesee (1989) provided a framework for the integration of content and language teaching in that language learning objectives are derived from three sources:

(a) the foreign language curriculum; (b) the content-area curriculum; and (c) assessment of the learners' academic and communicative needs and on-going evaluation in terms of developing their language skills. These objectives are derived from two considerations: (a) content-obligatory language (language essential to the understanding of content material (e.g., vocabulary, functions, and structures); and (b) content-compatible language (language that can be taught naturally within the context of a particular subject matter). This conceptual framework is represented in Figure 2 (Snow, Met, and Genesee 1989).

FIGURE 2. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTEGRATING LANGUAGE AND CONTENT INSTRUCTION

As seen from the conceptual framework in Figure 2, effective language learning in content-based instruction requires collaboration between the language teacher and the subject specialist/subject matter teacher. Content-based language teaching integrates the learning of some specific subject-matter content with the learning of a second language. "Integration of content and language instruction implies the integration of higher order thinking skills into the language classroom," particularly, if the content is based on the academic curriculum. The use of higher order thinking is desirable to stimulate learners' interests in both content and language. It is also desirable as a means of promoting advanced levels of language proficiency.³

Because of this use of higher order thinking skills for more cognitively demanding tasks, content-based instruction is usually more appropriate to EFL students of intermediate or advanced proficiency levels. But, the primary purpose of a course is to instruct the subject matter by using language, and language becomes the medium to convey the

³ See the in-depth discussion by Snow, Met, and Genesee, "A Conceptual Framework for the Integration of Language and Content in Second/Foreign Language Instruction," *TESOL Quarterly* Vol. 23 No. 2 (1989), pp. 201-17.

informational content of interest and relevance to the learner.

Theme-based Teaching

According to Brown (1994), theme-based teaching is a type of content-based instruction in which the selected topics provide the content for EFL and is a weaker version of content-based teaching by emphasizing the equal value on content and language objectives. From these topics or themes, EFL teachers provide appropriate language activities in terms of teaching the content. For instance, in this theme-based language classroom, learners engage in a variety of activities by reading articles, discussing various issues/topics, and writing papers on a given theme. This approach also stresses content from various subjects and stimulates the use of four language skills very effectively. English for academic purposes (EAP) in the college or university setting is particularly suitable for theme-based teaching.⁴

Discussions for Content Instruction

As clearly seen from the conceptual framework for integrating language and content instruction, content-based instruction differs from the more traditional foreign language instruction. Since the core of curriculum design depends on the content, several new perspectives are made in terms of teaching foreign languages. The following are some discussions of the content-based and theme-based approaches.

First, content-based instruction is a learner-oriented approach. Content materials should be selected appropriately according to the learners' proficiency levels, interests, and needs. Effective content-based instruction requires a constructive cooperation between the two teachers (language and content) for development and design of the curriculum.

As an ideal approach, team teaching between the language and the content specialist is recommended and the two teachers should share some responsibilities for teaching the content or the language. Since the content specialist is not familiar with the teaching plans or curriculum designs of English as a language *per se*, the language teacher has to organize the course, especially the designing of new courses of content instruction. One of the most difficult tasks of content-based teaching is that the language teacher has to fully familiarize oneself with the content to be able to teach domain knowledge and use content materials accordingly, whereas the content specialist has to pay more attention to language use (Robinson 1991).

Second, since the topics and content are adjusted to the learners, intrinsic motivation and empowerment toward successful learning can be achieved. If the content lessons are linked to the interests and experiences of the learners, this would also promote to achieve the long-term goals of effective learning and use of language in the classroom.

Third, the roles of teachers should be expanded for theme-based instruction. The use of content in many specialized fields provides the language teacher with an opportunity

⁴ See the detailed discussion by H.D. Brown, *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (1994), pp. 221-24.

to enrich the language classroom and thus, motivates students to master more complex and in-depth knowledge on the language and content acquisition. However, the task of meeting learners' needs may become complex due to variation among the learners. It would not be easy to design an appropriate course to meet every learner's needs and it may sometimes be necessary to recourse appropriately.

EFFECTIVE METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

In this section, some of the effective methodology and materials for ESP are discussed. As for effective ESP methodology, the key issues of the relationship between the methods and the students' specialties and some of its practical suggestions for classroom activities (e.g., project, oral presentation, etc.) are discussed. In general, ESP shares a lot of common methodological approaches from general English teaching, especially from communicative language teaching. However, what is distinctive about ESP methodology is that it deals with more specific students by focusing more on the eventual use of English in a specific occupation or academic field of study.

In the communicative view of language teaching, language activities such as games, simulations, role plays, projects, and presentations that foster fluency, are recommended. The only controversial issue between the common methodology and ESP is found in ESP-based activities (whether they should include students' specialties relating to their target needs in the real world). According to Waters (1988), the consideration of basic learning factors such as learners' interests, enjoyment, creativity, and involvement should be included in the ESP methodology and materials.

Two of the most commonly used classroom activities bridging ESP and content approach are "project" and "presentation." Both of these activities can be valuable features in most types of ESP courses and encourage activation of the four language skills. Project work is especially widely used for EAP. Bloom and St. John (1988) distinguished three types of projects as (a) a "group project" involving the members of a group in "real research," (b) a "mini-research project" involving questionnaires, surveys, and interviews for individual students, and the "literature-based project" involving the individual student in extensive purposeful reading. They also argue that the processes engaged in during the project itself (both study and language activation processes) are as important as the product itself (Robinson 1991).

Oral presentation is also widely used for both EAP and EOP, as the importance of oral communication skills plays a vital role in today's business and everyday job context. Four most important elements in actual presentation were "content," "visual aids," "vocal quality," and "nonverbal language." According to Hwang (1998), a comparative analysis to consider presentation skills as an important barometer for actual school or business achievement was conducted and found positive correlation.⁵

⁵ For more information on oral presentation skills, see H.J. Hwang, "A Study for the Effective Presentation Skill," *Journal of Secretarial Sciences*, Vol.7 (1998), pp.325-42.

As for the materials for ESP, key issues of authenticity and problems with material selection are discussed. According to Robinson (1991), "authentic materials" refer to the use of print, audio, video, and pictorial material produced for a purpose other than the teaching of language. In other words, "authentic materials" can be referred to as any kind of materials taken from the real world and not specifically created for the purpose of language teaching. Thus, one of the most time-consuming tasks for ESP teachers is to prepare and select appropriate teaching materials. Since few textbooks cover ESP learners' needs, the use of authentic materials should be determined by the teacher in terms of his teaching strategies and objectives. Authentic materials are needed from work or study situations to be developed into classroom materials. Authenticity is thus also related to the learners' needs.

However, the selection of authentic materials alone does not guarantee its successful use within the classroom. The appropriate methodology and the proper use of materials should be carefully considered for classes.

CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

Class Profile: New Content-based Instruction for English for Specific Purposes Students

A new English course, "Introduction to International Conference Studies," was designed by using the content instruction made for the students in the International Office Management Department at Ewha Womans University. This new course was designed as a substitute for general English conversation courses. As the number of international conferences increased, it was thought to be an efficient way of learning English through the context of international conferences. In addition, demands for the meeting planners and organizers have increased accordingly to provide a new area of job opportunities for the students who want to become the meeting planners for international conferences and conventions.

The purpose of the course was to teach students how to understand and prepare for the comprehensive international conference procedures and topics by studying the conference concepts, terminology, and to develop English communicative competence.

Learner-Needs Analysis

a) Method

In order to provide a rationale for the new course planning, a survey was conducted to identify specific learning needs of the students. The subjects comprised of seventy-three students: thirty-eight International Office Management majors and thirty-five non-majors or minors. The questionnaire (see Appendix) was designed to elicit learners' needs by providing twelve questions (six questions for general English, six for ESP). The questions included the issues of learner feedback in terms of language learning perspectives, learner

goals/interests, methodology, materials, and instructor for ESP.

b) Results and Discussions

According to the data, about forty percent (39.7%) of the students have visited or lived in English-speaking countries and most of them (79.3%) have stayed less than a year. General English competence was devised by the grade average of general English courses as follows: superior (A^+/A : 19.7%), advanced (A^+/B^+ : 26.8%), intermediate (B/B^- : 32.4%), and novice (below B^- : 21.1%). As the data indicates, most of the students (78.9%) were above the intermediate level. In addition, most of them (86.3%) have already taken their specialized subject classes in English and understood more than seventy-five percent of the lecture. Thus, these students were appropriate candidates to take content instruction for the new ESP course.

As for the questions on general English language skills, the following results were obtained. First, students wanted to learn English by reading (38.4%), speaking (34.2%), listening (23.3%), and writing (4.1%). Although writing is a very important element for learning, it was the least preferred. Second, more than half of the students (53.4%) thought that speaking was the most difficult skill, followed by writing (35.6%), listening (9.6%), and reading (1.4%). Third, a majority of the students (69.9%) wanted to improve their speaking skills more than their writing (16.4%), listening (11%), and reading (2.7%) skills. In general, the productive skills of speaking and writing were considered the most difficult, while students strongly wanted to improve their speaking abilities.

As for the general English teaching method, a majority of the students liked to learn English by talking to the native English speakers (60.3%), followed by reading books (17.8%), watching TV (16.4%), and finally, by listening to cassettes (5.5%). In terms of general English learning methodologies, the communicative method (82.2%) was preferred to learning from books (17.8%).

Most students wanted to learn English from team teaching (58.9%), while about twenty-eight percent wanted to learn English from native speakers (27.4%). Only about fourteen percent wanted to learn from Korean language teachers (13.7%). Even in a general English class, most students preferred team teaching. The primary purpose of taking a general English course was to achieve self-improvement (39.7%), to communicate in an everyday context (35.6%), to get a job (19.2%), and to study other subjects (5.5%).

As for the questions on international conferences, the following results were obtained. For the course purpose, most students (46.6%) wanted to communicate in an international conference setting, while one-fifth of the students wanted to study diverse conference-related topics (21.9%). Only a small number of students (17.8%) wanted to take this course for English study or for job purposes (13.7%). As seen from these results, most students wanted to take this course for communicative needs in an international conference setting.

As expected, most students wanted to learn English from team teaching (72.6%), and then from an English language teacher (13.7%), or from a Conference specialist (13.7%). Interestingly, students strongly preferred team teaching for this new course.

For the effective ESP method, students preferred the following order: group projects

and presentations (38.4%), role-playing (24.7%), watching videos (24.7%), and lecture (12.3%). This result supported the communicative competence approach of learning a new language. Only a few students (12.3%) preferred the traditional approach.

As for classroom materials, students selected newspapers/magazines (67.1%), cassettes/videos (19.2%), authentic conference materials (9.6%), and textbooks (4.1%). Students have selected authentic materials, for they strongly preferred them over any other materials.

On interesting topics, a majority of students preferred culture (71.2%), followed by economics/business (26%). Students did not seem to be interested in the topics of politics (1.4%) or education (1.4%). Based on this data, topics for the class were decided. However, some essential topics for international conferences were also selected by the content specialist and the language teacher. Finally, most students found this course to be quite useful (57.5%) or very useful (35.6%) for their future careers.

Course Design

This course was designed with the help of a content specialist who has been working as an international meeting organizer for the past thirteen years at the Inter-Parliament Organization Division of the Korean National Assembly. The course materials and content were mostly prepared through discussions between the content-specialist and the language teacher.

The two teachers planned the course together and met frequently to decide upon the course "content" and "language use." Through intensive collaboration, the major part of the domain content (i.e., conference-related procedures, language, and topics) was selected. A comprehensive evaluation of content included the following: types and structures of international conferences, the meeting preparations and procedures, language used at the international conferences, major documents of international conferences, and the principles of "Rules of Order." As for the selection of conference topics, current issues and topics of the U.N. (i.e., environment, human rights, children, and women) were discussed. In addition, current topics of intercultural issues were included in accordance with the learners' needs.

In order to find some authentic materials, the U.N., the Inter-Parliament Union (IPU), and various authentic documents and papers of international conferences were selected. As for the supplementary materials, the video series "About the United Nations", "The Model United Nations," and an authentic video from the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum were used.

For effective classroom activities, instructions on "oral presentation techniques" and peer evaluation procedures were designed for the class group projects.

Classroom Activities

Most classroom activities activated the extensive use of the four interactive language skills. Students took some lectures on important concepts and domain knowledge regarding

the issues of international conferences and also watched videos to listen to several conference talks. Group projects were assigned and conducted for weekly oral presentations on current issues and topics of the U.N. and culture. Students also wrote summaries and essays for both group and individual projects.

A mock-conference was held as the final classroom project. All students took part in preparing for and organizing an entire conference procedure.

Problems

Since the classroom curriculum design was made from a constructive cooperation between the teachers of language and content, it took a lot of preparation and planning for the appropriate curriculum design. For the majority of core content, authentic content materials were selected and texts had to be written for the course.

Sometimes, students lost interest most notably during the content-based instruction on "Rules of Order" of international conference, simply by dismissing the core content unnecessary, although the content specialist emphasized its importance. It might be a difficult task for students to learn a new language and its new content at the same time.

It was also difficult for the language teacher to become fully familiarized with the domain knowledge in the early stages. At that time, team teaching was conducted to alleviate the possible drawbacks, and an active collaboration among the teachers was required.

Some Implications

Although this new course was designed to teach the subject matter the "introduction to international conference study," many practical uses of English in these contexts were also acquired. Students appeared to be highly motivated when delivering oral presentations, since they felt that this enhanced their English communicative skills. Furthermore, the course added in the acquisition of domain knowledge.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, some of the issues and approaches of ESP are addressed as effective English teaching methods for learners of English to study or work in specific fields in the age of globalization.

Certain positive developments have been made by introducing content instruction into ESP, in that constructive cooperation between teachers and learners leads to a successful completion of ESP course. In order to bring about successful completion of the course, a survey of learner-needs analysis was conducted to investigate its possible classroom implications.

For the prospective ESP language course design, some combinations of effective language teaching approaches should be developed to enhance in-depth learning of the content,

as well as to discover various communication needs among students. Although there may have been some controversy regarding the spread of ESP, and its proper choice of methodology/materials, it is evident that the necessity for English use in various fields and situations requires an ESP-based approach.

Clearly, more research is needed to develop a new English language teaching methodology to reflect upon the changing demands and requirements in a the global context.

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APPENDIX

Needs Analysis Survey for the International Conference Studies

Personal Data

1. Name: Major: Grade:
2. Have you visited and/or lived in English-speaking countries?
① yes ② no
3. If yes, how long did you stay?
① less than 6 months ② 6 months~1 year ③ 1~2 years ④ over 3 years
4. How would you evaluate your English competence?
① superior ② advanced ③ intermediate ④ novice

Survey Questions

1. Do you like to learn English by reading, writing, listening, and speaking?
(1) Which one do you like the most?
① reading ② writing ③ listening ④ speaking
(2) Which one is the most difficult?
① reading ② writing ③ listening ④ speaking
(3) Which one would you like to improve the most?
① reading ② writing ③ listening ④ speaking
2. Do you like to learn English by
① cassettes? ② games? ③ talking to native English speakers?
④ studying English books? ⑤ watching TV?
3. What is your primary purpose for studying English?
① to get a job
② to communicate in an everyday context
③ to achieve self-improvement
④ to study other subjects

4. What is the best way to learn English to improve your language competence levels?
 - ① from a Korean English language teacher
 - ② from a native English speaker
 - ③ team teaching between ① and ②
5. Have you ever taken your major courses in English?
 - ① yes
 - ② no
6. If yes, how much did you understand?
 - ① 25%
 - ② 50%
 - ③ 75%
 - ④ 100%
7. What is your purpose for taking the "international conference studies" course?
 - ① to study English
 - ② to communicate in an international conference setting
 - ③ to study diverse conference-related topics
 - ④ to gain job competence
8. What do you think is the best method to improve your English fluency in this course?
 - ① role-playing
 - ② lecture
 - ③ group projects and presentations
 - ④ watching videos
9. What is the most interesting topic to you?
 - ① politics
 - ② economics/business
 - ③ culture
 - ④ education
10. What is the most appropriate way to study the topics of your interest in classroom settings?
 - ① cassettes/videos
 - ② newspapers/magazines
 - ③ textbooks
 - ④ authentic conference materials
11. Who do you think is the most appropriate instructor for this course?
 - ① English language teacher
 - ② international conference specialist
 - ③ team teaching between ① and ②
12. How beneficial do you think this course will be for your career?
 - ① very useful
 - ② quite useful
 - ③ a little useful
 - ④ useless