



Teaching Approaches Based on Three Principles of ESP in TESP

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Abstract: Teaching English for Specific Purposes refers to teaching English as a second language which bases the course contents and objectives on the specific needs of target students, related to a particular subject or professional. The students should be able to apply English freely in their future occupational area after they are conducted ESP with their acquisition. So how to select appropriate teaching approaches is such a significant process to achieve this aim. During the process, the three core principles of ESP is the key basis and guidance, which are needs-driven, specificity and relevance. In this paper, some specific teaching approaches are discussed when they are applied in TESP based on the three principles, which can help make TESP more effective, as to make students more proficient in their ESP learning.

Keywords: teaching English for specific purposes, principle, teaching approach

1. Introduction

Teaching English for specific purpose refers to the teaching English as a second or foreign language where the goal of the learners is to use English in a particular domain. For ESP, it not only lets students learn English knowledge, but lets students know the career they will take. The key point is to develop students' ability to achieve application of English language associated with certain professional in terms of knowledge and skills. Therefore, it is selecting appropriate teaching approaches that is so significant to achieve this aim. before designing appropriate teaching approaches, teachers should actually investigate and analyze the specific needs of learners, and meet the social and occupational requirement for English.

That is just in accordance with the three core principles of ESP, which are needs-driven, specificity and relevance. That is to say, in the process of teaching, it is essential to meet the needs of students' learning ESP, be oriented to the specific fields or subjects, and teach all the knowledge and skills related to this subject or field. Based on that, there are various approaches which can be applied in different teaching activities for diverse purposes, such as grammar-translation approach, direct approach, reading approach, audiolingualism approach, oral-situational approach, cognitive approach, affective-humanistic approach, comprehension-based approach, communicative approach, content-based approach and task-based approach. However, the most effective and pragmatic approaches in ESP teaching are oral-situational approach, communicative approach, content-based approach and task-based approach, in terms of the guidance of the three principles.

2. Teaching Approaches Based on Needs-driven Principle

Teaching ESP should always be motivated and conducted by the need of students to communicate across languages in different situations and areas. Students learn a foreign language for different purposes and need it to do different things. So the content and method of teaching should be based on the learner's reason for learning. To design an effective teaching activity, it is critical to know why students need to study ESP, what their attitude towards the course, what they should learn and master for this subject, what kind of competence they should acquire and under what circumstances they are going to use it. The preparation and design of teaching should be based on an analysis of needs, which aims to specify as closely as possible exactly what it is that the learners have to do through the medium of English. It should meet the needs of students who need to learn a foreign language for use in their specific fields in the future. So the analysis of target situation needs is concerned with the important area of language use. We can do a variety of data collecting in needs analysis such as questionnaires, interviews, and observations, etc. After figuring out the needs from the students and situation, we can prepare and conduct teaching based on it.

Communication purpose is always the most important goal in teaching ESP. So oral-situational approach and communicative approach are working well and effective for this objectives. Oral-situational approach is a practical command of the speaking skill of a language, which request the accuracy in both pronunciation and grammar and the ability to respond quickly and accurately in speech situations. In the process of applying this approach, language teaching begins with the spoken language. All language materials are practiced orally before being presented in written form. Only the target language should be used in the classroom[1].

New language points are introduced and practiced situationally. For example, when I teach students in ESP, I always set a situation related to their future occupation. And then I present a dialogue correspondent to the situation in a written form, and lead them to read and learn the conversation first, and then divide them into several groups to practise in English, at last, some groups are asked to perform their conversation in front of the class. This approach can work well because it brings the reality situation in the classroom, and we use a real-life context to help students grasp the complexities of the language.

Communicative approach is almost similar to the oral-situational approach, which is also focused on communication skills. It sets the goal of language teaching for learning ability to communicate in the target language. Students regularly work in groups or pairs to transfer meaning in situations and they are engaged in role play or an interview. Materials and activities are often authentic to reflect real-life situations and demands. And we teachers' role is primarily to facilitate communication and secondarily to correct errors[2]. I often use this approach to practice students communication skills. It is found that it is not a good idea to correct their mistakes simultaneously. They will become less confident and be afraid of open mouths to speak. So I just monitor them to practice and take notes of their mistakes, and give them suggestions after their communication. They can create what they want to communicate, which can arouse their potential to use English to the largest extent.

3. Teaching Approaches Based on Specificity Principle

Specificity is another principle we should pay much attention in teaching ESP, which contains special language and specialized aim of the course. A key feature of an ESP course is that the content and aims of the course are oriented to the specific fields or subjects. It specifies the focus on certain features of the language that are immediately associated with the restricted use of the target language which is required by the learner in order to achieve a particular purpose. ESP has a wide range of fields. So teaching ESP varies much from different kinds of professional subjects. And each subject has their special objectives for students to achieve. The most important ability required in order to successfully communicate in an occupational setting is the ability to use the particular jargon that is characteristic of the specific occupational context[3]. Because it is hard to think of a professional expression in a specific field and specificity by themselves, students should learn a large number of jargon to use in their future occupation.

On account of a large quantity of professional terminology and expressions in ESP subjects, ESP concentrates more on language in their major than on teaching grammar and language structures. Thus, task-based approach is very effective in teaching ESP. Due to the practical and applicatory nature of ESP, we can arrange lots of relevant learning tasks for students to complete. It can train and develop every specific knowledge students should master. It focuses on the use of authentic language, and asks students to meaningful tasks using the target language. The main idea of the task should be completing a problem-solving aspect. Task can provide opportunities for students to train and develop their specific functional skills. Tasks should be varied and able to attract and sustain the attention of students, should be challenging, motivating and reinforcing prior learning and be differentiated to suit the pace of learning. In the process of preparing how to accomplish the task, students should use what they have learned in the ESP courses right away in their studies combining their independent thinking with cooperation with others.

4. Teaching Approaches Based on Relevance Principle

All the content and teaching activities should be implemented around a specific topic or subject. That is the biggest distinction from ESL, which can cover all kinds of content. However, ESP teaching is just for one particular discipline or occupation. We should teach all the knowledge and skills related to this subject or field. For example, when I teach aviation English, I will present students how to communicate with customers when they want to reserve a ticket, check in, pass the security inspection, board the flight, stow their cabin baggage, etc. And I also induct them how to broadcast an announcement on the flight, how to help the passengers when they need any help, etc. So all the content and activities are all closely relevant to their major.

Therefore, content-based approach can be applied in TESP, because ESP courses cater to students' interests and needs, they are more likely to engender high levels of motivation. It can be assumed that students will be more interested in topics and texts related to their work or study areas. If students are more motivated, then learning is more likely to occur. It can also be argued that ESP courses are more efficient because they have more limited aims than general ESL courses. Knowledge of the subject area enables the students to identify a real context for the vocabulary and structures of the ESP classroom. In such way, the learners can take advantage of what they already know about the subject matter to learn English.

5. Conclusion

Teaching English for specific purposes is that English should be taught to achieve specific language skills using real situations, in a manner that enables them to use English in their future profession, or to comprehend English discourse related to their area of specialty. Just as Albert Einstein said, “I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.” That is right a good saying for the teaching approaches for ESP. ESP teaching makes additional demands on teachers and course developers in terms of investigating students’ needs and designing courses that should closely correspond to a specific subject. It is precisely crucial because meeting the needs of students and specific subject is the prerequisite in selecting teaching approaches of ESP.

As a consequence, oral-situational approach and communicative approach is the effective ones based on the principles of needs-driven. And the proper approaches should make sense in training students’ ability to use English in real situation, in developing students’ comprehensive competence of English and in guiding them to conduct English well in occupational situation. So task-based approach is the effective one based on the principles of specialty. Moreover, English should be presented in authentic contexts and situation to make the learners acquainted with the particular ways in which the language is used in functions that they will need to perform in their relevant fields of occupation, so content-based approach is the effective ones based on the principles of relevance. Consequently, if the three principles of needs-driven, specificity and relevance are taken in account when we select, design and conduct teaching ESP, it will make sense and be more effective in TESP, as to make students more proficient in their ESP learning.

References

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