**Lesson 2 The Role of ESP Teacher**

**1-Lesson Description**

A big part of the present lesson takes the form of a comparative study which exposes the distinctive specific roles of an ESP practitioner by referring to the major features that make him less similar to the General English language teacher. It is an attempt to provide ESP teachers with some personal qualities to reveal the secret of success for their jobs.

**2-Lesson Objectives**

The fundamental aim of this lesson is to explain the various roles played by ESP teachers who are not only supposed to have the qualities of good general language teachers but have to accomplish a number of responsibilities and duties which make their job more demanding.

**3-Lesson Content**

**3.1-Introduction**

It is generally known that the role of a language teacher is changing over time due to wide range of reasons such as: the differences in syllabi, courses and teaching contexts (Jordan, 1997). This affects the field of ESP and makes the role of an ESP teacher quite different from that of a general language teacher. Accordingly, Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) have identified some specific roles of an ESP practitioner who does not only own the qualities of a good language teacher but also performs other duties and responsibilities such as: designing courses and providing materials, collaborating with other subject specialists, conducting continuous research, evaluating students’ achievements and courses’ objectives, and finally understanding students’ cultural differences..

**3.2-The ESP Teacher’s Role**

**3.2.1- Possessing the same Qualities of a Good General Language Teacher**

According to Robinson (1991) an ESP practitioner plays the same role as an EGP teacher for they share the same teaching qualities. In the same context, Dudley-Evans & St. John, (1998) point out that even the ESP teaching methodology may not be different radically from that of General English. However, the specificity of ESP in the strict sense imposes a variation of roles of an ESP teacher that he is required to play: the classroom organizer, the consulter, and the negotiator. In most cases, he needs to be flexible. Dudley-Evans et al (1998) state that: “The willingness to be flexible and to take risks is one of the keys to success in ESP teaching”.

Unlike an EGP teacher, an ESP practitioner is not ‘the primary knower’ of the carrier content of the material (ibid). He is mainly trained in language skills and may have no specific knowledge of the target situation; that is to say, the field of knowledge or profession. Therefore, learners may know more about teaching material or content than teacher. A skilled teacher can channelize students’ knowledge to bring forth effective communication strategies in the class. For Robinson (1991) an ESP teacher plays the role of a ‘consultant’; the one who involves his learners when designing his ESP course so as to meet their language and learning needs. Another role of the ESP practitioner as a teacher is that of a’ mentor’. He offers one-to-one advice to his students and helps them achieve communication skills and ‘linguistic accuracy’ (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

**3.2.2- Designing Courses and Providing Materials**

Unlike EGP teachers who are strictly guided when preparing their courses, ESP teachers are required to design their own courses and look for the appropriate materials that serve the expected goals and satisfy the students learning needs. This is not an easy task for it demands enough time and much efforts to find appropriate textbooks that respond to most of linguistic and communicative needs of students in a certain context (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). An ESP teacher can either collects his materials from different sources through selection or adaptation, or writes his own ones when the desirable are not available. (Kennedy& Bolitho, 1984). However, this is not the end of the story because an ESP teacher is also asked to evaluate those materials during and after the ESP course. According to Dudley-Evans & St. John(1998), this process constitutes of: First, choosing suitable material which has been published. Then, adopting this material if it is not suitable. At a last step, ESP practitioners are invited to write their own materials when it is not possible for them to find something suitable. In contrast, the General English language teachers are required to follow a ready-made syllabus and use students’ textbooks as materials recommended by the curriculum developers and the educational authorities.

**3.2.3- Collaborating with Subject specialists**

One of the ESP teacher’s responsibilities is to have certain knowledge of his learners’ subject specialism to design effective ESP courses. In practice, an ESP teacher cannot master specific requirements of all disciplines he may be asked to teach. (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Consequently, he is advised to work in collaboration with the subject specialists of the disciplines he is supposed to teach. For Dudley-Evans & St. John, (1998) collaboration in ESP can take different forms; simple cooperation, specific collaboration and the fullest collaboration (ibid). With regard to the simple cooperation, ESP teachers resort to subject specialists to help them know about the subject syllabus and the professional responsibilities of their students. Dudley-Evans et al (1998) refer to the term cooperation:

When the ESP teacher finds out about the subject syllabus in an academic context or the tasks, the students have to carry out in a work or business situation.

In the specific collaboration, subject specialists provide ESP teachers with an access to the actual content of the subject course which can be used in classroom activities, and evaluate the teaching materials designed by ESP teachers.(ibid). In the last form of collaboration; the fullest collaboration, ESP teachers and subject specialists can teach together and form what is called ‘team-teaching.(Robinson, 1991).In the same line of thought, Kennedy et al (1984) relate the success of team-teaching to cooperation from both sides; that of the subject teachers and ESP specialists along side with mutual trust. Cooperation and trust are considered to be the most essential ingredients for the success of such process.

**3.2.4- Conducting a Research**

Teaching ESP requires updating knowledge of the teaching methodology, techniques and strategies on how to conduct a needs analysis design a course or select appropriate materials. Here, the role of an ESP practitioner is to conduct continuous research to identify his learners’ needs, find relevant texts and materials, and improve their own knowledge related to the field they are teaching. According to Dudley Evans et al (1998:15):

An ESP practitioner has to go beyond the first stage of Needs Analysis –Target Situation Analysis (TSA) which identifies key target events, skills and texts- to observe as far as possible the situation in which students use the identified skills, and analyze samples of the identified texts.

**3.2.5- Evaluating Courses and Assessing Students**

Unlike the EGP teacher whose only concern is to assess his students’ linguistic knowledge and learning achievements, an ESP practitioner plays the role of evaluating the designed course and the selected materials. The interaction with his students and the identification of their language and learning needs can be very helpful to improve the teaching style and reform the course deficiencies, and thus achieve successful teaching process. In this vein, Dudley Evans et al (1998:17) write:

It is important to follow up with students some time after the course in order to assess whether the learners have been able to make use of what they learned and to find out what they were not prepared for.

They, even, go further to state that “Evaluation through discussion and on-going needs analysis can thus be used to adapt the syllabus.”

**3.2.6 – Cultural Understanding as a Role of ESP Teacher**

An ESP teacher is supposed to teach different learners with various academic or professional cultures, the reason why he needs to take into consideration the cultural sensitivities of his students who may come from non-native setting.(ibid). Cultural awareness should be accounted during the different stages of the course design; while identifying students’ needs, selecting course materials and instructing the class. In the same context, William (1981) argues that an ESP teacher should have suggests that an ESP teacher should have the ‘knowledge of students’ world’. The latter may refer to students’ culture and personal concerns as well as their specialism (Robinson (1991).

**3.3- Conclusion**

Unlike EGP teachers, ESP practitioners are required to play a number of roles and bear some responsibilities which make their job more demanding. While performing his traditional role like an EGP teacher, an ESP practitioner has to become a material designer, an organizer, a councilor, a facilitator and researcher at the same time. The diversity of his roles needs to be highly reflected in the practices carried out in his classes for the attainment of his teaching objectives. As compared to EGP teachers, ESP practitioners have to be more flexible in their approaches because of ever-changing teaching situations and autonomous students in ESP contexts. Both EGP and ESP teachers should be skilful and trained to produce fruitful results in their fields. But it can safely be assumed that ESP teachers must be given special training in the required skills like need analysis and material designing to enable them to meet the specific needs and high expectations of their students.

**References**

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