

INTEGRATING SKILLS IN ESP

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Traditional ESP teaching and learning processes focus on the differences between ESP and EFL/ESL. ESP has been considered a special kind of English in which grammar, reading and translation practice have been presented for ESP students. Following this conception, nowadays, ESP teachers at university level present students with texts from which grammar, translation and reading exercises are developed.

Although this has been the traditional ESP teaching process, it is possible to see how in the early years of ESP history some authors argued, in some way, in favour of developing ESP through general English. Herbert (1965) viewed ESP as a general English structural syllabus. Some linguistic and scientific notions, he said, can be found in different structural forms with the same kind of structures happening in EFL prepared texts. By 1979-1980 functions were identified in ESP materials. The series "Reading and Thinking in English" (1980) and "Skills for Learning" (1980) are based on an analysis of functions that ESP learners need and also the communicative skills to be included in ESP courses. Although it is possible to infer from the series the need for reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, only reading skills are presented in different exercises in the series.

Although the distinction between ESP and General English is well known, it does not have any linguistic basis or explanation. This distinction has been mainly based on the assumptions teachers have about the

kind of language ESP students are faced with. ESP teachers see the specific technical vocabulary and the structures in which these words appear as needing a special kind of teaching so that students can memorize them and understand the texts in which they appear. But as Kennedy and Bolitho (1991) establish, it is necessary to take into account that those aspects teachers see as directly and only related to ESP are also related to and form a part of General English. They say "there may be a tendency for more passives and more complex nominal groups to occur, while there are few occurrences of question-tag forms" (p. 19). Though the occurrence is more frequent in ESP, these tag and passive forms are a part of general English too. It is also important to consider that in ESP, the teacher should present not only the grammatical structure but also the functions a sentence is made for. This process of directing language teaching to functions of language in communication and therefore to the four language skills is also being applied in general English teaching and learning methodologies. The learner in ESP classes should be taught how to recognize functions such as defining, drawing conclusions, generalizing, classifying, etc. as they occur in authentic scientific and technical English contexts. Nevertheless, students not only need to recognize the functions mentioned above, they could also need to know how to produce the grammatical English forms to express these functions, for instance, when they wish to participate in international seminars in their technical fields in which the international language of communi-

cation is English. Students also need to learn how the functions presented above come together to form a complete and meaningful text as they will approach the development of reading skills in their own field of expertise. Different students from ESP courses in the University of Nariño at Pasto argue that they need to understand spoken English as well as to communicate in this foreign language for future use, not only in their studies, but also in their work. Students recognize the "high status" of knowing English in their professional life and the possibility of access to higher positions in their jobs. They also recognize the most important skill for their studies as being reading comprehension. Some see the need to understand English texts in order to do research in their subject areas and also for the research paper they have to do as a requirement for graduation. Students understand that the latest information on scientific and technical topics is easier to find in English.

Taking into account the need students perceive for the kind of English that is necessary for their career, a change in the methodology for ESP teaching and learning should be addressed at the institutions of higher education as is the case of different universities around the world. These changes are taking place in the design of ESP materials as well as in techniques and methods. This is the case at the University of Nariño where different materials for ESP are designed. The aim of these materials is to provide activities that facilitate the integration of the four skills for ESP teaching and learning with an emphasis on reading comprehension.

The following is a description of a sample lesson included in the material that is used with psychology ESP students. In the

following lesson, the integration of skills is the main aim and to some extent this goal is achieved.

The lesson starts with the presentation of a movie as an input. The title of the movie is "a cry for help". This title is presented to the students at the beginning of the class for a brainstorming activity on what they think the movie is about. After this activity, students are asked to observe ten minutes of the film without listening to the speech in the film. Here, students are asked to imagine the dialogue. Students construct some English sentences that are possibly produced in this part of the film. The next activity is carried out while viewing; students watch the movie and the teacher stops it from time to time to allow students to answer to some English questions handed out to the students in advance. For instance, what is the main character doing? , what is he wearing?, where are the man and the woman going?, etc. Students are also asked to pay attention to some expressions and underline the ones they can clearly hear in the movie. The main characteristic of the kind of language presented in this part of the lesson is that they relate to the present continuous structure. This structure cannot only be heard but also be practiced in reading and writing. For a complete understanding of the main facts occurring in the film, the teacher presents a paragraph in the form of a cloze exercise. This paragraph contains a summary of the topic of the film. The topic is related to a desperate man who cannot accept divorce and becomes psychologically sick, therefore, the film is of interest to psychology students and motivates them a lot. In this cloze exercise students have the opportunity to practice writing skills in a meaningful situation.

To complete the lesson students are presented with a reading titled "When the bomb drops" taken from the magazine "Psychology Today". This reading explains the situations students saw in the movie and makes it possible to expand students' vocabulary on the topic as well as comprehension of topics from their subject matter in English authentic texts. The first exercise to develop with this reading is the selection of a title since the text is presented to the students without one. To complement and highlight psychology related vocabulary students are asked to identify some words in a chain of letters. To help comprehension, students are trained in guessing vocabulary from context clues. For this training, students are asked to select from a series of meanings the one that corresponds to a word in the specific context of the reading. Finally, students are asked to establish the relation between the film and the reading. For this task, students are asked to comment on the relation in English by means of some short sentences and write them to show the relation. It is important to mention that the grammar point on the present continuous tense is also observed in the reading provided here.

This kind of activities has given good results in ESP classes and has motivated students in the English learning process. It is also possible to observe how the comprehension skills in reading exercises are helped by the acquisition of writing, speaking and listening skills. The advantage of integrating skills is undeniable

when the learning process of a foreign language is sought.

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