論 文

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The Evolution of ESP: An Overview and Prospects

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I. Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has developed more than a half century since 1945 due to some main economical and political reasons. They were the US economic and military power post war, the British colonial and imperial legacy, and the emergence of World English (Strevens, 1980), (Kachru, 1985). In fact, the English language has attained its unprecedented status as an international language (Graddol, 1997, 2006). As it has become more widespread, issues of ESP instruction have emerged. How language teachers should introduce ESP to the classes?, is it theoretically coherent?, and should it solely be based on CLT (Communicative Language Teaching)?

ESP, back in the 1950s and 60s, was not a coherent, planned, motivated movement theoretically. It was largely a response to post-war language learning needs, strongly market driven. A theoretical superstructure came later to support and legitimate the development of ESP.

What was the theoretically motivated movement in the development of ESP? How the teaching materials have been changing? What can we prospect in the future of ESP? They are the issues in this present study.

II. Background: The Political Economy

The emergence of ESP should be related to the sociolinguistic phenomenon of the unprecedented spread of English as an international language,

particularly since 1945 (Crystal, 1988).

The basic factors in the spread of English as a dominant international language can be considered as follows: (1) the US economic and military power post 1945, (2) the British colonial /imperial legacy, (3) the shear number of native speakers (ex. less number in Inner Circle countries than the number of non- native users. (see note 1), (4) isolation of potentially competing languages (e.g. Russia, China). At the same time, the following can be summarized as indices of English's hegemonic status as an international language:

(i) In Government /administration: an official language of government in 70 or more countries, sometimes solely official, and sometimes joint.

(ii) In Commerce /business: for example, in 1974, 33% of world's imports taken by 9 English speaking countries. During the period in 1948 - 1974, world trade increased by factor x 6 - so need for language learning enhanced. English sustained by 3rd party usage.

(iii) In Transport /Communication: English as an international language of air traffic control, international language of maritime communication (Sea speak was not withstanding), computer database information mostly in English. (perhaps as much as 90% e.g. ERIC)

(iv) In academic publication: particularly in science and technology, for example, Swales (1990) showed Schistosomiasis RA's 45% dominates

English, 15% Portuguese Tropical Agriculture 75% dominates English, 10% French, 7% Portuguese.

These facts indicated the difficulty of escaping English in any modernizing or international context. There was thus an increased need to read and write in English even in EFL countries.

There was a situation, then, of a mass of people wanting to learn English not for general or cultural and humanistic reasons as in classical human language learning, but for instrumental purposes. Such learners knew why they wanted English not for identifying with the culture of the U.K. or the U.S.A. They also preferred short cost-effective courses with high immediate surrender value, because they did not have the time or inclination to invest long periods in learning 'total' English.

Therefore, there existed a market for short, purpose-specific, cost effective intensive courses in English. Seeing the commercial and money making opportunities, the language teaching profession, for example the British Council, began to respond.

The oil crisis of 1973 and the resulting oil-based wealth of certain Middle East states provided a powerful stimulus to the expansion of the ESP industry in a sense that it provided these countries with the financial resources to undertake large-scale teaching and modernizing programs heavily dependent on the recruitment of expatriate ESP teachers. As a matter of fact, some of the best known ESP textbook emerged from the Middle East were the best-selling *Nucleus General Science* from Iran (Azerbaijan) and John Swales' (1985) *Writing Scientific English*' from Tripoli, Libya.

In the Middle East, Europe, North America, then, the emergence of ESP was largely a market phenomenon. So, in order to respond to the commercial opportunities available for the needs of adult students, they wanted to learn English for limited and defined purposes.

On the other hand, in much of the third world, ESP was very much a public sector enterprise. It was often the outcome of government decisions to restrict the role of English while retaining the language in academic life (e.g. Malaysia). Typically ESP in such cases was associated with 'language service', 'communication skills units affiliated to the universities and colleges', and had strong EAP (English for Academic Purposes) implications. ESP here, then, was the product of language planning decisions, for ESP was seen as an attempt to span the gap between inadequate secondary education in English and the demands of tertiary study. Here, we should also note contemporary ideological currents that are favorable to the development of ESP.

(i) In the 1960s, educational philosophy and psychology began to emphasize learner oriented approach (learner -centeredness) and relevance to the learner of course content. The learners' motivation was also seen to have an important influence on the effectiveness of learning.

(ii) A consequence was the emergence of Needs Analysis (originally outside of ELT). Needs analysis eventually became strongly associated with ESP because it seemed to offer a way of making courses cost-effective, of restricting content to be taught to that most useful to the particular learner. The most influential work of Needs Analysis technology was Munby's 'Communicative Needs Processor' (1978).

(ii) Munbyan needs analysis and ESP, in general, may have also been as reflecting a further set of beliefs and assumptions. They were associated with a belief in applied science to deliver precise solutions to social, human, and learning problems. Therefore, ESP was a manifestation of 'technical rationality' that was a belief in the technical capacity to deliver precise solutions to language learning problems.

In conclusion, ESP was not a coherent, planned,

theoretically motivated. It was largely a response to post-war language needs that was strongly market driven. A theoretical superstructure came later to support and legitimate the development of ESP. That was not to say that the existence of ESP did not stimulate interesting and significant theoretical problems. It did.

III. Theoretical development of ESP
Phase 1: The Register Analysis Phase

Concepts of register emerged from notions of variation in sociolinguistic, occupational, and stylistic aspects. In early days, register analysis was identified with quantitative studies of linguistic properties of functional varieties and registers associated with occupationally defined contexts. (e.g. Business English, Legal English, Medical English). In fact, because ESP in the 1960s was heavily identified with EST (English for Science and Technology), most research at that time was into 'Scientific English'.

Here, the aims of research were to identify distributional frequencies of formal features - partly to provide basis for selection of syllabus items. Teaching materials of the time was, for example, *A Course in Basic Scientific English* by Ewer and Latorre (1969) that tended to take formal features of register as their syllabus and gave priority to forms students would meet in their science studies in English (e.g. few continuous forms in the written texts and the passive without agent).

Weakness of the Approach:

(i) Very much sentence based and form focused (some useful discoveries were made in this field) This approach did not ask what uses forms were put to.

(ii) Early ESP teaching differed little from traditional ELT except that scientific texts were substituted for general interest texts (similar comprehension -type exercise)

Phase 2: The Discourse Analysis and Functional Phase

In the 1970s, view developed and found that students difficulties arose not only from their poor knowledge of language system but also from unfamiliarity with use of English to perform communicative acts. For example, Widdowson (1983) argued for program of research into discourse of scientific texts to identify organizational patterns in texts and how those patters were linguistically signaled. It was important for us to find out what value stretches of language had in communication. Widdowson (ibid) and others claimed that rhetorical and functional approach was particularly suitable in EST because scientific discourse could be seen as a series of rhetorical acts such as: definition, classification, exemplification, contrast etc. Scientific English could be thought of as a kind of discourse (realizing in English universal notions of scientific enquiry) not as a text type defined by its formal properties. Then there was an strong impact on teaching materials.

Impact on materials:

(i) People's concern with use of sentences in combination and with rhetorical functions led to *Focus Series*. The starting point was not inventory of grammatical items but rhetorical functions such as: classify, define, generalize etc) and their linguistic realization. Students were taught to recognize and use discourse markers, and recognize textual patterns.

Weakness of Approach:

(i) *Focus Series* was not a critical or commercial success (Swales, 1990)

(ii) Weakness in rigidity of format, in structuring of units and exercise

(iii) Dealing with static inventories rhetorical functions not grammatical structure

(iv) What was the status of a function? How many

were there? How did we map functions onto the stretches of language? There was an overemphasis on homogeneity of discourse and so insufficient attention was paid to discourses of, and within, particular disciplines.

Here we should note that there was the Longman's *Nucleus Series.* First volume *General Science* appeared two years after beginning of *Focus* in 1976. This was historically important in ESP because of its best-selling status. *Nucleus* was aimed at low level learners, a concept /notion driven syllabus design (not rhetorical) that was limited to language of observation and description. Topics were like properties and shapes, location, structure, and measurement etc. *Nucleus General Science,* the most successful ESP textbook had following merits and criticisms. Merits: teacher friendly, attractive lay-out, tight structural control, inventive visual prompts etc. Criticisms: insufficient reading material, neglects discourse, variable quality of different volumes etc.

Phase 3: Target Situation Analysis/skills & Strategies Phase

This phase was marked by greater variety and diversity within ESP (a fuller maturity of the field). The emphasis was placed on Needs analysis where course design should proceed by identifying linguistic features/ communication skills and tasks common to target situation which would then form syllabus of ESP course.

Need analysis reached its apotheosis with Munby's *Communicative Syllabus Design,* and went into decline. His *Communicative Needs Processors* (CNP) provided detailed profile of learner's needs in terms of communicative purposes, communicative setting, means of communication such as language skills, functions, and structures.

Important innovation, however, was to place learners explicitly at the center of ESP operation, not language or discourse. (learner-centered approach)

Skills:

For sociolinguistic reasons, ESP often prioritized skill of reading. Hence, historically important projects were: University of Andes project (Reading and Thinking in English), and University of Malaya project (Skill for Learning).

The series were quite different but certain common features were found:

(i) There were concentration on reading skills and strategies putative reasons and interpreting processes were underlying in language skills that were incorporated into design of language teaching materials.

(iii) So materials drew students attention quite explicitly to reading strategies in hope that this would improve their reading ability (ex. scanning, skimming, guessing word meaning, identifying text structure etc.)

RTE (Reading, Thinking in English) Features:

(i) Widdowson's influence (1983) were apparent in notional-functional discourse approach.

(ii) EAP oriented, non subject-specific, and interdisciplinary topics, they were quite sophisticated view of reading process

Phase 4: The Learning-Centered and Genre Analysis Phase

This phase started in around 1987 with greater maturity of ESP field that included increasing variety of approach within ESP. However, this phase also had a breakdown in theoretical consensus. "What is ESP? How should it progress?" Several issues emerged.

On the other hand, Hutchinson and Water's (1987) book ushered in what they thought would be a learning-centered approach to ESP. Essentially this amounted to a reinstatement of the psychological and educational bases of ESP - (the primacy of methodology, of learning process) rather than the linguistic. Previous approaches were

held to be flawed in that they were based on descriptions of language in use rather than considerations of how language was learnt. Hutchingson and Waters (ibid) also questioned the need for highly subject-specific materials that were implicitly casting doubt on one pillar of ESP. Widdowson (ibid) also probed the theoretical basis of ESP, casting a question that was ESP essentially a training rather than educational concept?

In one direction, then, there had been greater concern with classroom tasks /activities facilitating learning (emphasis on process was even more than materials). There was also a growing divergence between occupational ESP (EOP: English for Occupational purposes) and EAP (English for Academic Purposes).

On the other hand, under influence of Swales (1990), and Dudley-Evans (1984, 1985), Genre analysis increased in popularity. Genre Analysis involved study of the forms of discourse that particular discourse communities engaged in, their communicative conventions, their communicative purposes, the role texts play in particular environments, their genre products and crucially the differences between the discourses within and of different discourse communities. Hence, genre analysis is narrower and deeper than the discourse analysis of phase 2. It shows that terms like 'Legal English' gives a misleading image of homogeneity. Genre analysis can give rise to 'genre-driven' pedagogic activities. This should bear in mind for many Japanese ESP practitioners and researchers mainly because of the fact that they have put much emphasis on descriptions of language in use rather than considerations of how language is learnt. Quite a few of ESP textbooks published in Japan often show the evidence.

IV. Future prospects

Genre analysis and learning-centered approach have surely given us something to offer in ESP disciplines. However, there have been misleading among Japanese ESP practitioners and researchers due to their excessive reliance on highly subject-specific materials. As a matter of fact, previous approaches in ESP in Japan resulted in flaw in that they were, more often than not, based on descriptions of language use rather than how language was learnt. Communicative activities in ESP, should be more introduced otherwise we cannot facilitate learning for students. The emphasis should be placed more on learning process rather than materials. Therefore, for the future prospects in ESP, the balance of the text (materials) and the process of learning should be considered for the better instruction and understanding in ESP.

V. Conclusion

This present study has given an overview in the evolution of ESP since post war, trying to explain the overview in its history. ESP is still new to college English language instruction in Japan. Some misleadings can be found among ESP practitioners - excessive emphasis on language use, register, and sentence structure etc, rather than the process of learning and psychology. Tasks and activities facilitating learning have been ignored. This is the crux of the issue to be improved for the successful instruction and learning in ESP. "Is ESP essentially a training rather than educational concept?" (Widdowson, 1983) We should always bear in mind that "The teaching and learning process is a complex and dynamic process, with all the various factors influencing each other." (Hutchingson & Waters, 1987)

Notes

1. People around the world speak English within a different language and different cultural context. Kachru (1985) suggested three concentric circles where three different circles are combined together into a single concentric circle. The first central circle is called as "Inner Circle" where English

is spoken as a native language: U.S. U.K. Australia, Canada, New Zealand belong to this circle. The second central circle is called as "Outer Circle" where English is spoken as an official language : Singapore, India, Malaysia, etc., belong to this circle. The third circle is called as "Expanding Circle" where English is spoken as a foreign language: Japan, Korea, China, and many other countries belong to this circle.

According to Graddol (1997), the number of English speaking people in Asia went beyond the number in Inner Circle where English is spoken as a native language.

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