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Identification of Common Cores in EGP and ESP

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Abstract

Learning English is now equated with learning life skills. In this age of specialization, the English language is being learnt according to the needs of a specific field. This type of learning is called English for Specific Purposes or ESP. The teaching of ESP is ridden with issues and problems, ranging from inappropriate courses and methodology to teachers training and needs assessments. The present study focuses on identifying the 'common cores' between ESP and EGP. The research aims at analyzing the similarities between ESP and EGP at macro level; material, syllabus, method and at micro level; grammar, lexis and syntax. The main objective behind finding similarities is to provide the course designer and practitioners with a sound foundation. As the study covers both ESP and EGP, the data was collected from the teachers of both the areas. For this purpose, opinions of both EGP and ESP teachers were gathered through a questionnaire and a corpus of EGP and ESP books was developed. The present study is wide in its scope and significance in the sense that it will help ESP practitioners and EGP teachers to design, develop and teach respective courses in a better way.

Keywords: ESP: English for Specific Purposes EGP: English for General Purposes

Introduction

Status of Teaching EGP and ESP in Pakistan

The British introduced English language in the sub-continent. At the beginning, Muslims were reluctant to learn the language but now it has gain the status of second official language of the country. Though in the country there are two types of education, one at public institutions and other at private institutions. But in both the types, English is being taught as compulsory subject from class one to bachelor classes. English language taught at school and college level is called EGP, and when it is offered to professionals like engineers and doctors and to the students like engineering students, medical students, it is tagged as ESP (Hutchinson, 1987).

The purpose of learning English language in an EFL conditions is different from that of learning it in an ESL situation. While in an ESL situation, the purpose for learning English is to be able to take part in national as well as international interactions when English is commonly used.

In spite of EGP, need for learning ESP has increased due to the emergence of new fields and new professions. But in Pakistan, EGP courses are suddenly changed into ESP courses, which pose difficulty for the students. Now there is a need to use the knowledge of EGP while designing ESP courses so that learners can cope well with the recognizable patterns. There are many common areas in EGP and ESP. They have similar lexical items, lessons, exercise, teaching methodologies and assessment criterion. In spite of all these commonalities, ESP courses do not incorporate all these common cores. Absence of these common areas in the ESP courses poses problem to the learners because they have to learn new patterns which have no relation with their previous knowledge.

In the present study, an attempt has been made to identify these common cores so that in future, a course can be designed on these recognizable patterns, which will be easy for the learners to cope with it.

Research Questions

This study seeks to address the main question: Are there any common cores in ESP and EGP courses. In connection, the research answers the following specific questions:

- In what respect ESP and EGP courses are similar to each other.
- Are they similar at grammatical level?
- Are they similar to each other at lexical level?
- On the basis of these similarities, can it be determine that both ESP and EGP share some common cores?
- Can these common cores be utilized for a common EGP and ESP course.

Research aims and Objectives

The main aim of this research is to investigate the common cores in ESP and EGP to establish whether they have some similarities or not. The study tried to achieve the three key objectives:

- To investigate to what extant ESP and EGP courses share lexical items
- To identify common core in other areas in ESP and EGP
- To analyze these common cores to explore how much impact EGP has on ESP or vice versa.
- To know whether the similar common core can be utilized for designing a common syllabus for ESP and EGP.

Research Methodology

Sampling

The samples were selected on the base of convenience. As the researchers are working at GC University Pakistan so the questionnaire was get filled by the ESP and EGP teachers of the university and also other institutions in the city of Faisalabad.

1.11. Sample Size

For document analysis, four EGP books which are being taught at intermediate level in the province of Punjab, Pakistan and two ESP (Business Communication) books will be selected for the study.

Table 1: Intermediate Books Published by Punjab Text Book Board

Sr. No	Book No.	Title of the Book	Publisher
1	Book I	Short Stories	PTBB
2	Book II	Modern Prose & Essay	PTBB
3	Book III	Plays and Poems	PTBB
4	Book IV	Novel 'Goodbye Mr. Chips'	PTBB

The other part of the document consists of two business communication books. These books are being taught to the Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com) students and engineers at various universities of Pakistan. Description of these books is given in the following:

Table 2: Business Communication Books

Sr. No	Book No.	Title of the Book	Publishing Date	Publisher
1	Book I	What Every Engineer should know about Business Communication	2008	CRC Press: Taylor and Francis Group
2	Book II	Business Communication	2007	Routledge

Data Collection

Data was collected through the questionnaires. Two questionnaires were designed for data collection, one for EGP teachers and other for ESP practitioners. To identify the common lexical

Discussions

The second research tool for the present study was two questionnaires. Questions were based on fourteen dimensions in order to get comprehensive information about the situation. Results of these questionnaires were represented through graphs in section 4.2. Purpose of the study is to identify the commonalities in ESP and EGP course. Interestingly it has been observed that both ESP and EGP teachers were agreed on the same points. Almost all the responded selected 'agree' option from the five grade rating scales. Out of these fourteen dimensions, both classes of teachers disagreed on one dimension. They disagreed that they had ever used grammar translation method in the class. Over all, they agreed that there were many common areas and ground in EGP and ESP. A comprehensive study is given in the following lines:

Dimension: 1

EGP books are divided into lessons while ESP books usually have unit numbers. Teachers were asked to give their opinions about the types, themes and concentration of topics. All of them agreed that a variety of topics are included in EGP and ESP books. The lesson in EGP and units in ESP are of different themes and they are taken from various areas.

The results show that the contents of ESP textbooks are context specific. This is an ideal situation in ESP. But the thing of concern is that the approach of ESP learners become too narrow and that of EGP too broad. The most idealized situation can be to bring them to a meeting ground. Similarly, gross discrepancies are found in the activities part of the textbooks. ESP is based on communicative approach while EGP is directed towards approaches that are more traditional. But mechanical exercises are given in both textbooks and the teachers are still unaware of their uselessness. There are serious concerns by the experts of the field over the mechanistic approaches in English language textbooks especially the activities that deal with grammar teaching. The activities in both types of teaching can be made similar by making them more functional and communicative. Themes for the activities can be selected on the basis of social and professional needs and activities can be harmonized on the basis of communicative and functional needs.

Dimension: 2

Both ESP and EGP teachers are of the view that reading comprehension is a major part of exercises. ESP teachers disagree that there are mechanical exercises in ESP books while EGP teachers agree that it is an important part of the book. It was also found that exercises in EGP books are based on grammar and syntax while ESP teachers disagree on that, yet both the teachers agree that there are meaningful exercises in ESP and EGP books. It is found that though there are meaningful exercises in EGP books but these are not enough as compared to ESP books. Meaningful exercises are easy to solve and they motivate and attract learners.

As both the teachers agree that reading, comprehension is important for learning language so, such exercises can be developed easily, which reflect and incorporate common grammatical, syntactical and thematic cores. This type of efforts would not only minimize the cost of production but would also reduce human efforts involved in teaching and learning English. It would bring both the streams together to a maximum level and ultimately would reduce the labour of EGP teachers.

Dimension: 3

There are many activities in the exercises of ESP and EGP books and the learners are required to do and perform these activities in class. These activities are of various kinds. EGP and ESP teachers agree that all these activities are meaningful and substitutional and these are given in group work. This is another common area between ESP and EGP books. ESP teachers encourage learners to perform these activities in groups unlike EGP teachers. But still there is a need to include more colorful pictures and to motivate EGP teachers to bring and use realia in the class to make the exercises more meaningful. Instead of cramming, EGP learners will take more interest in solving these exercises and they will be more at ease when they will join ESP classes in future.

This dimension already shows common grounds. Efforts can be made to bring them closer to each other and minimize the gap.

Dimension: 4

Duration of a lecture is an important aspect a language class. More than one hour class proves to be monotonous and learners are de-motivating. ESP and EGP teachers are of the view that they have one hour class. ESP and EGP teachers agree that sometimes they start the lesson by giving the summary and sometimes by recapping the previous lesson. Although the teachers are not confined to just one style, yet it is found that EGP teachers are slightly rigid in changing their style. It is necessary for EGP teachers to mould their style according to the needs of the learners.

Both ESP and EGP teachers give equal duration to lecture. So, it means both share a similar depth of topic and these topics can easily be handled in one hour class. There are also no discrepancies in the approach of both EGP and esp teachers when they start their teaching. This commonality shows the common nature of teaching English in both EGP and ESP ways.

Dimension: 5

Lesson planning is the first step for delivering a lecture. Most of the teachers agree that they have their own lesson plans and they plan the lesson before entering into the class. Some of the institutions also provide lesson plans to their teachers. But both EGP and ESP teachers disagree that their institutions have ever provided any lesson plan to them. It has been noted that ESP teachers are more concerned about having a lesson plan. Usually, they write down the lesson plan and try to follow it. On the other hand, EGP teachers are not serious in following a lesson plan in the class.

Some institutions in Pakistan provide an idealized level of English Language teaching to their learners. For example, Beacon House School System, City School etc. have hired the services of expert teachers' trainers. They train their teachers in lesson planning and other required skills. They have also properly developed their lesson plans for each level. But most public sector universities and other

commercial organizations who are involved in EGP and ESP teaching leave the job of lesson planning to their teachers. As a result, many differences are noticed even among single type of language teaching. Better considerations among teachers and also between teachers and administration can lead to common lesson plans for a specific level.

Dimension: 6

Every one has his /her own teaching styles that are different in their attitudes and behaviors in a language class. EGP teachers are of the view that they hold high authority in the class. They ensure full control over the whole class. While ESP teachers say that, they are not very authoritative in the class. But both of them agree that they act as a guide to the language in the class.

Teaching as a profession has accommodated many remarkable changes for its improvement. Teaching has shifted from teacher centered approach to learner's centered approach. A teacher is no more considered as an authoritative figure but as a facilitator and a mentor. Looking at the data, it is evident that an EGP teacher is still following the old traditional trodden path while an ESP teacher has updated himself/herself to a great extent. The point of consideration is that if an EGP teacher considers himself/herself as an authoritative figure than it is neither the requirement of EGP teaching nor any other type of language teaching. Adopting humanistic approach in language teaching would not only update EGP teaching according to the requirements of post modern world but would also bring it closer to ESP teaching. In that case, a similarity and commonality can easily be created and it would be a big step towards creating common cores.

Dimension: 7

Teachers imply different teaching methodologies in order to make things easy and clear to their learners. EGP teachers say that they use Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in the class. While ESP practitioners disagree with it. But both of them agree that they change their methodology according to the needs of the learners.

The data reveals that EGP teachers are mostly traditionalists in their teaching methodologies and try to avoid innovations in their teaching. The reasons behind these approaches are many and the most common ones include out dated examination system, no learners' autonomy, disinterestedness of the administration and the interest of the students only in passing examinations rather than acquiring skill. The ESP learners are like customers and they demand proper outcomes from English Language class. As a result, the teachers have to update themselves according to the demands of the learners. With the passage of time, EGP teachers would adapt modern techniques and methods of teaching and would ultimately come closer to ESP teachers.

Dimension: 8

Audio Visual aids have become part and parcel of a language class. ESP and EGP teachers agree that their learners are at ease when they use A/V aids in the class and they take more interest and are enormously motivated. Though both the teachers agree that audio visual aids are essential and motivating yet it is an undeniable reality that even ESP classes are devoid of such facilities. One can only dream that one day our schools, colleges and universities would be provided with such facilities. Today or tomorrow, every ESP class would be furnished with such aids because most ESP teaching is commercial in the country and their owners have to cater to the demands of their respective customers.

Dimension: 9

At the end of a lecture, a teacher needs feedback from the learners. Both ESP and EGP teachers agree that sometimes they ask students to give two or three points as feedback and sometimes they require as many points as the need of the situation. And this feedback is given both in written as well as in oral form.

This dimension is another point of agreement, which further supports our point of view of common cores. The teachers not only agree that feedback is essential but also agree that they are already practicing it.

Dimension: 10

After taking feedback from the learners, teachers give some comments as follow up. This follow up can be in any form. Both ESP and EGP teachers are of the view that they give just two or three points as follow up to the learner's feedback but sometimes they give as many points as the need according to the situation. This follow up is in written as well as in oral form. On the other hand all the teachers disagree that they have ever criticized the learners.

This dimension is not only astonishingly revealing but also hopefully furthering the cause of common cores. The teachers both from ESP and from EGP give follow up comments and try to avoid criticizing learners on their errors. This is very much normal with ESP teachers but something new and against the traditional approaches in EGP teaching.

Dimension: 11

Language learners are assigned to write some assignments. ESP and EGP teachers agree that they give written and oral assignments to the students. Oral assignments include presentations while written assignments are in the form essays and sometimes they are required to write reports.

The results of this dimension have already established common cores between ESP and EGP. Both teachers from ESP and EGP claim that they give written as well as oral assignments. This shows that both are moving towards a common direction.

Dimension: 12

At the end of a language course, sometimes learners are required to arrange their work in the form of portfolios. Both ESP and EGP teachers are of the view that they encourage their students to make portfolio. These portfolios are formative or summative.

It is a fact that in some institutions in Pakistan portfolios are used for assessment. These institutions are high profiled like Agha Khan University, LUMS and International Islamic University, Islamabad. The rest of the country is far from such methods of assessment. Teachers training in this regard can prove helpful and in initial stages creating awareness can be the first objective of every English teaching institution.

Dimension: 13 &14

At the end of the language course all the students are required to take the examination. Both ESP and EGP teachers agree that sometimes they rely on formative assessment and sometimes on summative one.

Both ESP and EGP teachers agree that they take formative assessment in the form of observation, worksheets and pop quizzes while summative assessment in the form of final examination.

Agreement on these dimensions is encouraging and can lead to establishing a solid common core between ESP and EGP. As the nature of both types of teaching is almost the same, so using the same types of techniques for both types of English are advised and practiced.

From the above findings, it is observed that there are many common areas in ESP and EGP courses. They do not only share a common ground at lexical level but also in their contents, exercises, activities, lesson planning, teaching methodologies, use of A/V aids, feedback, follow up and assessment criteria. These common grounds must be explored, and incorporated in designing language courses of ESP and EGP.

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