

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ESP AND EGP

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) state that there is no difference between the two in theory; however, there is a great deal of difference in practice. ESP, like any other language teaching activity, stands on facts about language nature, learning, and teaching; it is, however, often contrasted with General English.

ESP teaching approach is known to be learner-centred where learners' needs and goals are of supreme value, whereas General English approach is language-centred, and focuses on learning language from a broad perception covering all the language skills and the cultural aspects of the English speaking community.

Robinson (1980: 6) explained that “the general with which we are contrasting the specific is that of General education for life, culture and literature oriented language course in which the language itself is the subject matter and the purpose of the course”. However, In ESP after the identification and the analysis of specific learning needs, students learn “English en route to the acquisition of some quite different body of knowledge and set of skills”.

Further distinction between General English courses and ESP is that, learners of the latter are mainly adult with a certain degree of awareness concerning their language needs (Hutchinson & Waters 1987). Whereas, General English courses are provided to pupils as compulsory module at schools, their unique purpose is to succeed in the examinations.

Basturkmen (2006) maintains that General English Language teaching tends to set out from a definite point to an indeterminate one, whereas ESP aims to speed learners and direct them through to a known destination in order to reach specific

objectives. “The emphasis in ESP on going from A to B in the most time- and energy-efficient manner can lead to the view that ESP is an essentially practical endeavour” (Basturkmen, 2006: 9)

Widdowson (1983) establishes distinctive features of ESP and EGP.

The most important EGP features are:

1. the focus is often on education;
2. as the learners’ future needs are impossible to predict, the course content is more difficult to select;
3. due to the above point it is important for the content in the syllabus to have a high surrender value.

The most relevant ESP features are:

1. the focus is on training;
2. as English is intended to be used in specific vocational contexts, the selection of the appropriate content is easier;
3. it is important for the content in the syllabus to have a high surrender value, most relevant to the vocational context;
4. the aim may be to create a restricted English competence.

To conclude, what is the difference between the ESP and General English approach? Hutchinson and Waters (1987:53) answer this quite simply, "in theory nothing, in practice a great deal".

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