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ESP TEACHER'S ROLE: FROM TEACHER TO AUTONOMY BUILDER

Abstract

The role of the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) teacher has evolved in response to societal and educational shifts. This article explores the changing nature of the ESP teacher's role, conducting a retrospective analysis based on existing scholarly work, and identifies key aspects of the teacher's multifaceted responsibilities. Initially, the role of the teacher in general education was often teacher-centered, with the educator seen as the authority and primary decision-maker. Over time, this shifted towards a learner-centered model where the teacher acts as a facilitator, encouraging autonomy and student involvement.

The article categorizes these roles into eight key functions: course designer, facilitator, subject-matter researcher, methodology researcher, collaborator, autonomy-builder, evaluator, and project manager. These roles are essential for addressing the specific needs of learners in various professional fields. The research highlights the need for specialized knowledge in both language and the specific discipline being taught, along with a comprehensive understanding of teaching methodologies. The ongoing transformation in the role of the ESP teacher reflects broader changes in the educational landscape, where personalized, context-driven instruction is increasingly prioritized. As ESP education continues to adapt to the demands of a globalized and digital world, teachers must develop new skills, embrace learner autonomy, and foster effective collaboration to remain relevant in the evolving educational environment.

Key words: ESP, teacher role, learner-centered approach, autonomy builder

Problem statement. A teacher, like any other profession, is evolving in accordance with the needs and demands of society. Developments in technology, globalization, wars, and artificial intelligence are significantly shifting the roles of teachers. Many scholars, such as Douglas H. Brown, Wright T., Byrne O., and J. Harmer, have researched the topic of teachers' roles. However, the development of the roles of ESP teachers has not been extensively explored so far.

ESP is not just a matter of Science words and grammar for Scientists, Hotel words and grammar for Hotel staff and so on.[1, p. 19]. It is an approach to language learning,

which is based on learner need. ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning. ELT and ESP have in common is that they are all primarily concerned with communication and learning. ESP should properly be seen not as any particular language product but as an approach to language teaching which is directed by specific and apparent reasons for learning [1].

Aim of the article. The aim of this article is to conduct a retrospective analysis of the role of the ESP teacher. To achieve this, we will define the teacher's role, review classifications of teachers' roles, and trace their evolution in the field of ESP.

The statement of basic materials. According to the British Council the role of a teacher is the relationship between the teacher and learner, particularly in terms of the autonomy the learner has over their learning [2]. Based on this definition there are two main approaches to teaching: teacher-centered and learner – centered. Prior to 1998 most of Europe adhered to a teacher-centered approach, where the teacher was seen as the figure of authority, the sole source of knowledge, and the primary decision-maker, responsible for the learning process. In this model, the teacher acts as both 'controller' and 'assessor' [3, p. 205]. After 1998, there has been a shift towards a learner-centered approach, in which the teacher is viewed as a partner in the learning process. In this role, the teacher becomes a guide, facilitator, negotiator, and encourages learner independence.

Sheerin S. has outlined that learner-centered approach has aspects in common with other approaches:

- Learner Independence / Learner Autonomy
- Self-access or Resource-based Learning
- Learner Training / Learning Strategies
- Task-based Learning

Learner-centered approach creates new roles for Learners and Teachers and changes the relationships between them [4].

Teacher's roles

There are two conceptually different roles based on the approach that is used – teacher-controller (who is compared to a puppet-master standing at the front of the class and controlling everything) and teacher-facilitator (who maintains students' freedom) depending on the organization of the classroom either in teacher-dominated or learner-centred framework[5].

Douglas H. Brown identifies teacher as a:

- Controller: a teacher always in charge of every moment in the classroom.
- Director: “a teacher is like a conductor of an orchestra or a director of a drama” [167]. Students engage in either rehearsed or spontaneous language performance, it is teacher's job to keep the process flowing smoothly and efficiently.
- Manager: a teacher plans, lessons, module and courses and who structures the larger, longer segments of classroom time, but who then allows each individual player to be creative within those parameters.

- **Facilitator:** a teacher step away from the managerial or directive role and allow students, with your guidance and gentle prodding, to find their own pathways to success. A facilitator capitalizes on the principle of intrinsic motivation by allowing students to discover language through using it pragmatically, rather than by telling them about language.

Recourse: role is that the student takes the initiative to come to a teacher. A teacher is available for advice and counsel when the student seeks it [6].

Wright T. categorizes teacher roles into the following:

- **Instructor:** Responsible for direct teaching, providing structured knowledge, and guiding students toward achieving learning objectives.
- **Facilitator:** Helps students engage with the material by providing tools and strategies to explore concepts independently.
- **Manager:** Organizes the learning environment, manages time and resources effectively, and ensures smooth classroom operation.
- **Counselor:** Supports learners emotionally and socially, fostering a positive environment and addressing individual needs.
- **Co-communicator:** Collaborates with students in discussions and tasks, promoting a shared learning experience [7].

Byrne O. emphasizes several key roles for teachers in the context of oral English instruction:

- **Presenter:** Teachers introduce new language structures and vocabulary, providing clear, engaging explanations. They ensure that the material is appropriate for the learners' level and needs.
- **Facilitator:** As facilitators, teachers encourage students to actively engage in speaking activities. This involves creating opportunities for communication and helping students build confidence in using the language.
- **Motivator:** Teachers play a crucial role in sustaining students' interest and motivation by selecting or adapting stimulating materials and activities. Byrne highlights the importance of the teacher's energy and sensitivity in maintaining student engagement.
- **Controller:** During practice phases, teachers monitor student activities to ensure they are focused and productive. They provide guidance and feedback while maintaining the flow of the lesson.
- **Evaluator:** Teachers assess students' progress, identifying their strengths and areas for improvement. This role involves setting clear objectives and aligning instruction with students' developmental needs [8].

J. Harmer outlines out the following roles:

- **Controller:** teachers are in charge of the class and of the activity taking place and are often 'leading from the front.
- **Prompter:** a teacher occasionally offers words or phrases, suggest that the students say something (e.g. Well, ask him why he says that) or suggest what could come next in a paragraph a student is writing, for example.

- Participant: teachers during student discussions, role-plays or group decision-making activities, is of people who ‘stand back’ from the activity, letting the learners get on with it and only intervening later to offer feedback and/or correct mistakes. “There are also times when we might want to join in an activity not (only) as a teacher, but also as a participant in our own right” [9, p. 109].

- Resource: Acts as a source of additional information and guidance when needed (dictionary, website etc.).

- Tutor: a combination of the roles of prompter and resource (e.g. when students are working on longer projects, such as process writing or preparation for a talk or a debate, a teacher can work with individuals or small groups pointing them in directions they have not yet thought of taking [9].

As far as the ESP teacher is concerned, it is important to distinguish between the roles of teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and those teaching General English (GE) in secondary or higher education. For this reason, we should clarify the difference between an ELT teacher and an ESP teacher.

According to Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters, the role of the ESP teacher differs significantly from that of the General English teacher in several ways:

An ESP practitioner, in addition to the typical classroom teaching duties, must also handle tasks such as needs analysis, syllabus design, materials writing or adaptation, and evaluation [1].

The majority of ESP teachers have not received specialized training in this field (Hutchinson).

These two differences, emphasized in 1987, are still relevant to the current situation in Ukraine. There are very few universities in Ukraine that include ESP methodology as part of their teacher training programs.

A good ESP teacher has his/her competence built on four pillars: solid English language competence, adequate knowledge of the related HEI disciplines, awareness of specific needs of stakeholders in question (university, students, government, job market requirements, etc.), as well as experience with cultural issues of the current international environment [10, p. 447].

Dudley-Evans and ST John proposed five roles for the: teacher, course designer and materials provider, researcher, collaborator, and an evaluator [11]. We agree with with their identification of these roles. However, we believe some of these roles should be further specified, and additional factors should be considered. The teacher's role is not only shaped by the approach to teaching but also by other influences, such as:

- 1) internationalization of higher education (Balona process);
- 2) conferences on ESP;
- 3) ESP projects – English for Universities project (2014–2017);
- 4) digitalization of education.

Therefore, based on the literature review and qualitative analysis we can identify such 8 ESP roles as

1. course designer – any ESP teacher should design its course to meet the needs of particular learners. Major factor affecting ESP course design are language description, learning theories and needs analysis [1, p. 22].

2. facilitator – an ESP teacher encourages students to actively engage in speaking activities, prioritizing fluency over accuracy. As a facilitator, he or she also works with mixed-ability students and adapts both the delivery of material and the material itself to accommodate varying levels.

3. subject-matter researcher – it is impossible to teach ESP effectively without researching the specific field of study. The teacher must bridge the gap between general language skills and the specialized needs of the learners.

4. methodology researcher – to equip learners with the language skills and communicative competence required to perform specific tasks or succeed in particular professional contexts. Teachers need investigate the approach and methods that are used as this information isn't given in teacher training programmes of the majority of Ukrainian universities.

5. collaborator with subject matter lecturers, university administrators, students, job market requirements etc. Collaboration and support are key components of success. A teacher can be at the forefront of ESP education, proficient in English and culturally aware. However, without effective collaboration with all stakeholders, their efforts are likely to fail.

6. autonomy – builder – he ESP teacher fosters English learning communities, creating private groups on social media or messengers, using asynchronous teaching methods, and applying task-based learning to promote learner autonomy.

7. evaluator – one should evaluate not only course but learner as well. This includes assessing learner progress and course effectiveness.

8. project managers – ESP teachers can take the lead in interdisciplinary cooperation at their higher education institutions by submitting projects that foster collaboration between disciplines.

Conclusions and perspectives of further research. In conclusion, the role of the ESP teacher has evolved significantly from the traditional teacher-centered approach to a more learner-centered, autonomy-building model. This shift is influenced by various factors such as globalization, digitalization, and interdisciplinary needs. ESP teachers now assume a diverse range of roles, including course designers, facilitators, subject-matter researchers, and collaborators, all aimed at addressing the specific needs of learners in professional contexts. As educational approaches continue to change, ESP teachers must adapt to new methodologies, conduct ongoing research, and foster learner independence. Ultimately, the evolving ESP teacher's role reflects the broader changes in education and the increasing demand for specialized, learner-driven language instruction. Further research into the evolving role of the ESP teacher can explore teacher training and professional development in the Slovak and Czech Republic.

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INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO TEACHING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The effectiveness of a specialist's professional activity in the modern labor market largely depends on the culture of his interaction with service users, colleagues, and partners. Naturally, this communication takes place both in the native language and in a foreign language. The practice of communicating with speakers of a foreign language has shown that deep knowledge of a foreign language does not yet guarantee full understanding and the absence of conflicts with native speakers. University graduates lack professionalism in the process of intercultural communication, which is manifested in the insufficient level of formation of their intercultural competence (understanding the specifics of intercultural relations, communications, and interaction; mastering modern strategies of foreign language communication; the ability to respond tolerantly and openly to cultural peculiarities, settle intercultural conflicts, etc.).

Today there is an increasing search for new approaches that will make intercultural learning exciting for students. Many materials and digital manuals appeared in various manuals published that are part of the productions funded by the European Union within the framework of the Erasmus+ – Key Action 2 for the strategic partnership in higher education. For example, MICEP (Mainstreaming Intercultural Competences in Education Project) presented Methodological Manual Compendium Innovative Practices in Intercultural Education, where case studies and various innovative practices from non-formal education are collected [2]. The purpose of such