

TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES TO STUDENT NURSES

By
Nurmainiati

University of Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh

ABSTRACT

This research is about Teaching English for Specific Purposes [ESP] to student nurses at an academy in Banda Aceh. It is an evaluative descriptive study that describes preparations by the lecturer, the teaching techniques used, the teaching activities, the teaching materials and resources, and the assessment of the students' achievements. The subjects of this research were the English lecturer and all the third semester students at the academy. The instruments used for collecting data were observations, interviews, and document analysis of the English lecturer's syllabus and lesson plan. The findings of this research are in three parts. The findings from the observation concerned on (a) the syllabus and lesson plan, (b) the materials and learning resources, and (c) the scheduling of the lessons. The findings from the interviews were on (a) the academic administrator who did not ask the English lecturer to prepare lesson plans before starting the lessons, and (b) the English lessons were focused only on speaking. Finally, the findings from the document analysis were on (a) the English syllabus that did not fully cover the subjects as set-out in the curriculum, and (b) the assessment of achievements of the students was well done by the English lecturer.

Key Words: *ESP, Teaching Process, Student Nurses*

BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

English has been accepted globally as an international language of communication for learners who need to learn English for Specific

Purposes (ESP), especially for student nurses. English is important for them since they should be able to understand reports in English, the lessons that are presented in English, and be able to read and write well in English. The students have to master all four English skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In the 1960s, English for Specific Purpose (ESP) courses were developed as part of English for Language Teaching (ELT). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) propose two main types of ESP namely English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) (where learners learn English for work) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (where learners learn English for study specialization). Both of these types have three main streams: English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics (EBE), and English for Social Sciences (ESS). Within these streams many specializations have been developed such as English for Medical Purposes i.e. English learnt by students of the medical professions.

Nowadays, ESP has grown to become one of the most prominent areas of English Foreign Language (EFL) teaching. This can be seen from the increasing numbers of English lecturers needed for teaching ESP. English lecturers are usually prepared for teaching English for General Purposes (GE) such as English for public and private schools, and universities. However, ESP is needed for specific purposes e.g. for student nurses.

Student nurses need highly specialized English as a background for their education. This study found that the English lecturer at the Tjoet Nya' Dhien Nursing Academy used ESP for teaching English to the student nurses. Accordingly, based on the Ministry of Health Department Curriculum in 2006, English teaching materials should be selected in order to use the communicative approach. The students are expected to use English to communicate in their nursing environment. The nursing students should be able to write nursing reports in English, understand and speak English for nursing and make presentations in English.

Furthermore, based on some preliminary research by the writer, it was found that the English lecturer at a nursing academy in Banda Aceh used ESP for teaching English to these students. This aroused the interest of the researcher to find out about the teaching-learning processes used in the ESP Medical classroom.

Problems of Research

The problems of this study were formulated as follows:

1. How is ESP approach used to teach English at Tjoet Nya' Dhien Nursing Academy in Banda Aceh?
2. How does the lecturer assess the achievements of the students?

Objectives of Research

The purposes of this research were to find out:

1. The ESP approach used to teach English to student nurses at the Tjoet Nya' Dhien Nursing Academy.
2. The assessment from the lecturer in assessing the achievements of the students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stevens (1988) as quoted by Bojović (2006:487) states that the definition of ESP makes a distinction between 1) absolute characteristics (i.e. language teaching that is designed to meet the specific needs of the learner, related in content to particular disciplines, occupations and activities, centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, text, discourse, semantics, etc., and analysis of the discourse, designed in contrast with General English (GE) and 2) variable characteristics (ESP may be restricted to language skills to be learned, e.g. reading and not taught according to any pre – ordained methodology). Therefore, ESP is teaching English that is designed to find out and meet the specific needs of learners and it is different from GE. ESP approach should be based on a needs analysis of the learners and their own specialist personal knowledge of English for real communications.

Bojovic (2006: 488–499) divided ESP into EAP and EOP as follows: 1) EAP i.e. English for (Specialist) Academic Purposes includes English for (Academic) Science and or Technology (EST), English for (Academic) Medical Purposes (EMP), English for (Academic) Legal Purposes (ELP), and English for Management, Finance and Economics (EEP), and, 2) EOP includes English for Professional Purposes (English for Medical Purposes (Pre-vocational English and Vocational English; in EAP, EST has always been the main area, but EMP and ELP have always had their place).

On the other hand, ESP combines subject matter and English language teaching. This means that the students are able to apply what

they learn in their English classes to their main field of study, whether it be nursing, midwifery, business management, economics or computer science. Being able to use the vocabulary and structures that they learn in a meaningful context reinforces what is taught and increases their motivation.

Harding (2007: 6) puts it as “in ESP, the purpose for learning the language is paramount and relates directly to what the learners needs to do in their vocation or job”. Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 19) further emphasize that ESP “is not a particular kind of language or methodology but an approach to language learning, which is based on learners’ needs”. Additionally, Ellis and Johnson (1994) in Vičič (2011) point out that pre-experience learner expectations of language learning are to a great extent based on their former educational experiences, while job-experienced learners will above all focus on “their own shortcomings in terms of fluency, getting the message across, and being able to understand the people from other countries that they have to deal with”. They further say that the choice of materials has a major impact on what happens in the course. This impact is demonstrated on the following three levels (in Vičič, 2011:111):

- 1) It determines what kind of language the learners will be exposed to and, as a consequence, the substance of what they will learn in terms of vocabulary, structures and functions.
- 2) It has implications for the methods and techniques by which the learners will learn.
- 3) The subject or content of the materials is an essential component of the package from the point of view of relevance and motivation.

Lewis and Hill (1993: 112) in Vičič (2011:111) also state that students’ considerations include the following:

- Will the materials be useful to the students?
- Do they stimulate students’ curiosity?
- Are the materials relevant to the students and their needs?
- Are they fun to do?
- Will the students find the tasks and activities worth doing?

Material evaluation is an important part of material selection as well as the materials development process. In both cases, evaluation is primarily “concerned with relative merit. There is no absolute good or bad – only degrees of fitness for the required purpose” (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 96).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987:107) assert that good materials contain “interesting texts, enjoyable activities which engage the learners’ thinking capacities; opportunities for learners to use their existing knowledge and skills; and content which both learners and teacher can cope with.” Shulman (1987: 15) goes on to describe the transformation phase of this process as consisting of:

- a. Preparation: critical interpretation and analysis of texts, structuring and segmentation, development of a curricular repertoire, and clarification of purposes.
- b. Representation: use of a representational repertoire that includes analogies, metaphors, examples, demonstrations, explanations, and so forth.
- c. Selection: choice from among an instructional repertoire that includes modes of teaching, organizing, managing, and arranging.
- d. Adapting and tailoring to students characteristics: consideration of conceptions, preconceptions, misconceptions, and difficulties; language, culture, and motivations; social class, gender, age, ability, aptitude, interests, self-concepts and attention.

In adapting the materials, Wallace (1998: 190) states it can be done in two ways:

- (1) Retain the materials basically as they are, but teach them in a different way (i.e. either different from the way you normally teach them, or from the way recommended in the Teacher’s Book.
- (2) Change the materials in some way, for example by devising new materials either instead of or in addition to some part of the existing materials.

Shameem (2009) further mentions that to adapt materials, the English teacher should consider five major factors:

- 1). Addition
- (2). Deletion or omission
- (3). Modification or changing
- (4). Simplification, and
- (5). Re-arrangement or re-ordering

The Role of the ESP Teacher

The ESP practitioner is as a teacher, course designer and material provider, researcher, collaborator and evaluator. Consequently, Antić (2008: 125), states that the student-centered approach to teaching ESP brings to the importance of needs analysis. In other words, the students’ needs are placed at the center of course design. An ESP course is

directly concerned with the purposes for which learners need English. It is based on a rigorous analysis of students' needs and should be tailor-made.

Needs analysis is an ongoing process and it is not confined to the beginning of the course. In this case, most students are at the intermediate level and they are motivated by the desire to learn English for professional and academic purposes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses an evaluative descriptive analysis method designed to obtain information about the present status of some phenomena. According to Ary (2002: 48), a qualitative study is designed to obtain information concerning the current status of phenomena. It tries to describe some important events that naturally occur in the classroom. Besides that, other authors, Seliger and Shohamy (1989: 40), said that descriptive research involves a collection of techniques used to specify, delineate, or describe naturally occurring phenomena without experimental manipulation.

Subject of Research

The subjects of research were the English lecturer and the third semester students at Tjoet Nya' Dhien Nursing Academy in Banda Aceh.

Data and Sources of Data

The data for this research were the results of observations, interviews, and document analysis. An observation sheet was used when observing the teaching-learning process conducted in the classroom. An interview guide was used when interviewing the English lecturer about her syllabus and lesson plans, teaching techniques, teaching activities, teaching materials and resources, and her assessment of the students' achievements. In addition, document analysis was used by the researcher for describing the lecturers' syllabus and lesson plans. The sources of data for this research were the English lecturer and the third semester students at the academy.

Research Instruments

The instruments used to collect the data for this research were the: (1) observation sheet,

- (2) interview guide, and
- (3) documents

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 153) affirm that analysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what we can tell others about the data. Subsequently, the researcher analyzed the data by using qualitative analysis. Moleong (2005: 289) states that data analysis is a procedure in which data collection, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions takes place interactively.

FINDINGS

From the collected data, the findings are presented in the following category: the teaching process carried out by the English lecturer, and assessment of the achievements of the students which are highlighted as follows.

The Teaching Processes Carried out by the English Lecturer

Syllabus

A syllabus is a sequential list of objectives, topics, situations, skills, and forms to be taught, which is often helpful to carry out a review of options in materials such as textbooks and other available resources and a communicative syllabus.

The topics listed in the syllabus prepared by the English lecturer for the teaching–learning process for one semester were; (1) Introduction, (2) Listening (Hospital English, i.e. diseases), (3) Listening to music (and I love you so), (4) Preparation for Drama and Script Preparation, (5) Drama presentation, (6) Simple Future and Tenses Review, (7) Reading (My life with Barli), (8) Debate (Should National Final Examination be Removed?), (9) Modals, (10) Midterm Test, (11) Modal II (Degree of Certainty: present time), (12) Watching the Movie (Beautiful Mind), (13) The students tell the class what they understand from the movie, (14) Vocabulary Presentations (part of speech), (15) Review (Reading Comprehension) and (16) Final Examination.

Teaching Materials and Resources

The lecturer explained that she used five English books in preparing the materials for the students. In addition, the lecturer said:

“I use the books by Betty Schramper Azar, entitled “Fundamental of English Grammar–2nd edition, Linda R. Baker with “Interactions I Integrated Skills”, Kasihani K.E. Suyanto, entitled “Progresss Contextual Approach to Learning English dalam Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran Bahasa”, Multi Media Metropolitan “Practical English Grammar”, and the last is Judith Tanka, et al., entitled “ Integrated Skills” edition. These five books are my references for teaching English to the nursing students and hopefully I can teach them well in the class and the materials are suitable to their needs”

Hence, the English lecturer did not only use the five books above as references in her teaching, she also used other media in the classroom such as the internet. She downloaded songs and movies to play to the students to get their attention in her English classroom.

Teaching Techniques

For every meeting, the lecturer applied different techniques in conducting her lessons in the classroom, such as putting her students in pairs, group work, preparing and presenting a mini-drama, watching a movie, and listening to songs. These activities helped motivate her students in the class and they seemed to participate and follow her instructions actively during the English classes.

Teaching Activities

The ESP English course focused on integrative skills combining the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, speaking skill was given more focus in this class. There were four activities that could be highlighted from the teaching–learning process observed in the class from the first until fifth meeting. The following re the sequence of activities used in every meeting.

First Meeting

Four activities were conducted by the English lecturer during the first meeting when the researcher observed the class. The activities conducted in the class were as follows: opening the class, giving instructions, pair work and performing and closing the class.

Second Meeting

In the second meeting, the researcher observed that there were six activities as follows: opening the class, giving instructions, group work, presenting scripts, creating and correcting the scripts and closing.

Third Meeting

For the third meeting, the researcher observed the lecturer to conduct four activities: opening the class, giving instructions, the students presenting a drama and closing.

Fourth Meeting

In the fourth meeting, the researcher observed the lecturer to conduct the sequence of activities as follows: opening the class, giving instructions, listening to the songs and closing.

Fifth Meeting

In the fifth meeting, the lecturer asked the students to go to the multimedia room to watch a movie.

Assessments Done by the Lecturer

Formative assessment was done to monitor and review the learning progress of students throughout the course and help future learning. It is useful to think of it as assessment for learning and contrasts with summative assessment, which can be considered as final assessment of learning. Meanwhile, summative or final assessment was used to measure students' learning at a given point in time and had the following characteristics: usually taken at the end of a course, unit or module, completed within a strict time frame, carried out under strict supervision or invigilation, undertaken with reference to all the objectives or outcomes of the course, often only available to be completed once, usually based only on formal methods of assessment,

Tests can have good effects and impacts on students' achievements. The lecturer said:

"I conduct formal tests once in every semester; oral and written tests and I did not do any itemized analysis".

This means that the English lecturer conducted formal assessment to the nursing students even though her class was only once in a

semester. She did not only give the students a written test but an oral test, too.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to observe the English lecturer at a nursing academy in Banda Aceh during the teaching–learning process for teaching ESP for the student nurses. The researcher observed the English lecturer conducting the teaching–learning process in the classroom. In the teaching–learning process, the lecturer’s preparation and syllabus were the most important items to be prepared by the lecturer before starting the teaching.

From the observations, the researcher found that the English lecturer prepared and organized the syllabus well at the beginning of each semester. She taught English in her class based on her syllabus design. The syllabus was a critical step in setting targets suitable for the students’ needs. Besides that, the goals of each lesson were clearly stated in the syllabus.

Despite the English lecturer prepared her syllabus, thus, she did not prepare detailed lesson plans. A lesson plan provides guidance in teaching and states the materials needed for the lesson to be taught to the students. Nova Scotia Teachers Union (2003:9) defines planning as “the act of uniting content, context, technique, timing, and sequencing. It is the what, the how and the why of instruction”. Therefore, lesson plans allow us to maintain high quality in teaching. The differences between a well–planned and an unplanned lesson are comparable to those between a movie with a script and one without it. If the actors do not know their lines, they may end up shooting the good guys instead of the bad ones. The consequences in the classroom are not so drastic, but they definitely have a negative impact on the quality of learning and teaching.

One part of the lecturer’s preparation is planning. The lecturer had chosen topics near to the students’ needs and interests. This is important because if she did not choose topics well, even though she tried to motivate the students, she could face difficulties in gaining students’ interests because their needs were not being met. A part of planning is connecting the teaching goals effectively. Besides that, lesson plans are needed to achieve a good quality of learning and teaching.

However, the lecturer did not wholly present materials related to the needs and interest of the student nurses. Materials and resources are a crucial part of the teaching–learning process. It cannot be run without materials and resources. According to Richards (2001: 263), good materials should arouse the learners' interest, remind them of earlier learning, tell them what they will be learning next, explain new learning content to them, relate these ideas to learners' previous learning, get learners to think about new content, help them get feedback on their learning, encourage them to practice, make sure they know what they are supposed to be doing, enable them to check their progress and help them to do better.

Nursalam (2009:4) further states that the nursing students should learn grammar and tenses, build up medical terminology; relate to nursing care sciences and terminology and add other sources related to the course, including the practice of listening, speaking, and dialogue between nurse and patient. Accordingly, the lecturer had taught English grammar necessary to communicate verbally and in writing, and to learn how culture plays a role in language, belief, and everyday situations.

The lecturer used both published and her own materials. In fact, the latter are the result of the fact that published materials are either very difficult to get or are irrelevant to the students' needs. In her class, students were also great sources of teaching materials. They were able to use authentic materials in real, everyday situations, which increased their motivation to learn.

The teaching techniques applied by the lecturer were also interesting. She created good condition in teaching English for the nursing academy students so that they enjoyed and felt comfortable learning in the class. A comfortable situation in learning is very important in motivating and increasing students' knowledge. The lecturer used various techniques and activities in every meeting so that the students did not feel bored from learning. In the English class, the students were seen to participate well, and were active. They tried to practice a lot in the class, while the lecturer led and monitored them whilst running the class.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the data collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis at the Tjoet Nya' Dhen Nursing Academy in Banda Aceh, the researcher makes the following conclusions.

First, the English lecturer used a variety of suitable procedures for the teaching–learning process. Second, she used different activities in conducting the teaching–learning process such as pair work, group work, drama preparation and drama presentation, listening to music and watching a movie. Third, she presented interesting material for the students. However, not all of the materials were appropriate to the nursing students' needs. It is suggested that she prepare teaching materials based on the requirements of the overall nursing syllabi and the English lecturer should conduct a needs analysis based on the overall curriculum. Moreover, she assessed the students once at the end of the semester using oral and written tests. Also, after ten meetings, she gave the students a midterm test to measure the students understanding about the topics given to them.

Since this was only a qualitative research project into ESP, other researchers may also want to conduct further research into the many variants of ESP.

REFERENCES

- Antić, Z. (2008). The new roles of teachers and students in EMP. *Medicine and Biology*, 15(3): 125-129.
- Ary, D. (2002). *Instruction to research in education (3rd ed)*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: an introduction to theories and methods (2nd ed)*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bojović, M. (2006). Teaching foreign language for specific purposes: Teacher development. *Proceedings of the 31st Annual ATEE Conference*, pp. 487-493. Portorož, Slovenia. Retrieved 9 July, 2015 from: <http://www.pef.uni-lj.si/atee/978-961-6637-06-0/487-493.pdf>
- Harding, K. (2007). *English for specific purposes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes: A learning – centered approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moleong, L. J. (2005). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Nova Scotia Teachers Union. (2003). *Teacher Self-reflection. A publication of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union*. Retrieved 9 July, 2015 from: http://people.stfx.ca/jconnors/educ%20432_files/selfrelectionguide.pdf
- Nursalam. (2009). *Buku ajar: English in nursing and technology (midwifery sciences) for Indonesian's nurse (midwifery students)*. Surabaya: Airlangga University. Retrieved 9 July, 2015 from: <http://ners.unair.ac.id/materikuliah/nursing%20and%20midwife%20english.pdf>
- Richards, J. C. (2001). *Curriculum development in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Seliger, H. W. and Shohamy, E. (1989). *Second language research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shameen, T. (2009). *Materials Adaptation*. Retrieved 9 July, 2015 from: <http://tanvirdhaka.blogspot.com/2009/10/materials-adaptation.html>
- Shulman.S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1): 1-22.
- Vičič, P. (2011). Preparing materials for ESP teaching. *Inter Alia*, 2, 107-120. Retrieved 20 December 2012 from: <http://www.sdutsj.edus.si/InterAlia/2011/Vicic.pdf>
- Wallace, J.M. (1998). *Action research for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.