

Attaining linguistic proficiency in the EFL/ESL adult classroom through English for Specific Purposes: The Nigeria example

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Abstract

The international status of English, among the languages of the world, makes it imperative for those whose mother tongue is not English, but need it for one reason or the other, to attain a certain level of proficiency that will make them perform optimally in a globalised world. To many people and countries, outside Britain and United States of America, English is either a Foreign Language (EFL) or a Second Language (ESL). Whatever the case, English is needed as a tool to function effectively in the world that is fast becoming a global village, with almost a global economy. Many attempts to make learners proficient in English in the EFL or ESL adult classroom have not been very successful as the learners, who are taught mainly in General Purpose English (GPE), still continue to falter, making their use of English as a tool in a globalised world an impediment to total functionality. This paper, with its theoretical framework situated in the Indian-American scholar Braj Kachru's Concentric Inner, Outer and Expanded Circles, is out to harness the potentials of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as a course and an approach, to communicative language teaching to achieve the needed level of proficiency to perform competitively in a globalised world. This is bearing in mind the fact that those adult learners of English as EFL/ESL can attain a commendable level of required proficiency, if the age factor is not over-emphasized to the detriment of other factors such as personal motivation and time commitment. Recommendations are made that will help achieve linguistic proficiency in the EFL/ESL adult classroom.

Keywords: Proficiency, GPE, EFL, ESL, ESP, Adult classroom.

Introduction

The English language has taken the wind off the sail of other international languages of the world to the extent that it is not only spoken in virtually all the major countries of the world, but it is now the second language of many. Apart from Chinese, English has the largest number of speakers but beats Chinese in the spread of the language across the globe in countries where it is not a native. Numm's (2005) observation that were all English speakers to be located on one continent or in only one geographical area, the importance of the figures would be reduced. This further attests to the importance of English over the language that has the largest population of speakers in the world. The desire for English by many countries of the world is on the increase because the language enjoys relative universality in diplomatic, scientific, and commercial circles. In fact, Jarvis (2005) has affirmed that there are, now, more non-native users than native users of English as well as

diversity of context in terms of the age of learners, nationality, learning background, etc for the first time in history, and that this has become a defining characteristic of ELT today.

In countries where the language is not indigenous; it either has the status of a foreign language (EFL) or a second language (ESL). In countries where it is still a foreign language it enjoys a less priority of use, and in most cases, it is studied just as a school subject and it has few domains of use. On the other hand, in countries where English is adopted as a second language, it enjoys a higher priority of use as it is, in such cases, acquired almost as a matter of course in the process of developing with the mother tongue. For example, in Nigeria, where the language is a second language, there are children who acquire the English language along with the mother tongue because their parents have had the benefit of western education (Ayodele, 2004). In an on-going research by the author, 96.33% of the respondents aged between 13 and 19 years were introduced to English between 1 and 6 years of age. Jarvis (op. cit.) has clarified the EFL/ESL distinction, further, when he says English is foreign when it is used by non-native speakers in a non-native English-speaking nation that is yet to adopt it as the official language, or when used by a non-native speaker on temporary visit to a native English-speaking country. This is the situation in many Asian nations such as Japan, China, Korea, etc. On the other hand, English is a second language to speakers whose nations have adopted it as the official language or by non-speakers who use it on migrating to a native English-speaking country.

Although in ESL cases, English is acquired alongside the mother tongue, the contact between the two languages has some natural effects on both languages. The predominant language of the immediate environment puts serious strain on the effectiveness of the use of the English language.

The English Language in Nigeria

Bamgbose (1971) has rightly stated the status of English in Nigeria when he says English is the most enduring legacy left behind by Nigeria's British colonial masters. English, as the official language in Nigeria, was introduced formally to Nigeria long before the nation's independence in 1960, as it had been a means of communication in general administration, law, mass media and education. In essence, before the nation's attainment of independence in 1960, the English language was fully on ground. Several factors contributed to the strength of English in Nigeria, most especially, the educational ordinances of 1882, 1896, 1918 and 1926, which were put in place deliberately to enhance the status of English in Nigeria, making it a pre-requisite for so many privileges in the country.

Nigeria is the second largest ESL user in the world, next to India. In Nigeria, there are about 500 indigenous languages supported by no less than 250 ethnic cultures and nationalities. It is among this Babel situation that the English language has to contend, especially as it plays the role of a linguistic mediator, among other roles, in the Nigeria's linguistic conundrum. Apart from official quarters and the education sector, where English is spoken and by no more than 20% of the population (Bondima, 2002; Bamisaye & Bankole, 2009), the indigenous languages are wide spread in use, even in official quarters and in the education sector, although informally. This puts the English language at a serious disadvantage in an ESL environment, thus lowering efficiency.

Apart from being a subject studied in Nigerian schools, from the primary up to the university level, English is the prescribed language for education, from the upper primary school up to the university level by virtue of the provisions of the National Policy on Education (1981). Part of the provisions is for Junior Secondary students to study two Nigerian languages made up of:

- (a) the language of their own area and
- (b) any one of the three major Nigerian languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, subject to availability of teachers.

Although the policy is not being fully implemented, it nonetheless exerts a lot of pressure on the English language as it competes with these indigenous languages in their natural surroundings. Ordinarily, the younger generations who are exposed to English early enough ought to display some level of proficiency in the language, evidence abounds that the reverse is the case. The lack of proficiency at the lower levels of most EFL/ESL countries affects the use of the language at the upper level of the educational system where the English language is a vehicle of instruction, particularly in ESL countries such as Nigeria, where adult learners in the medium of English still continue to stutter, thus making learning in the medium of English tedious.

Theoretical framework

Although English does not have the largest number of speakers in the world, that having been conceded to Chinese, Svartvik & Leech (2006) have affirmed the fact that “what gives English its special status is its unrivalled position as a means of international communication” (p.1). They say it has become the working tongue of the ‘village’ which the Canadian writer Marshall McLuhan predicted that the electronically connected media would eventually transform the present world into. Today the language is the most sought after in the world, spreading its tentacles here and there. This paper examines the problem of proficiency by EFL/ESL users from the framework of Braj Kachru’s Concentric Inner, Outer and Expanding Circles. The Inner Circle consists of English as Native Language (ENL) to those who have English as a Mother Tongue and are known to have native speaker competence because they acquire the language in a natural setting. The Outer Circle comprises users of the language in a non-native environment, but far from English as Foreign Language (EFL). It is found in use in very many domains and has institutional support, in most cases, as a Second Language (ESL), but still without native speaker competence. In almost all Outer Circle countries, English is not only taught in schools, it is also the medium of communication in all official matters. This is the case in Nigeria, one of the major countries in the Outer Circle. The Expanding Circle covers users in other countries who now see the importance of English as a global language and want to avail themselves of the privileges the English language offers in the world that is fast becoming a global village in the areas of science, education and economy. In the Expanding Circle, proficiency in English is an individual affair and not an established or institutional policy. As a non-native tongue, therefore outside the Inner Circle, users in Outer and Expanding Circles lack the competence of users in the Inner Circle since they are exposed to the language in a non-native milieu.

The Problem

Those who belong to the Inner Circle are privileged, in that they learn the language under less pressure, unlike those in the Outer and Expanding Circles “who have to put years of time and effort into attaining some mastery of the language” (Svartik & Leech, 2006:4). For example, majority of second language English users in Nigeria, despite their age of exposure to English, almost at the same time they are introduced to their indigenous language (Ayodele, 2000) show no evidence of proficiency in the language. Although one may not expect the same level of competence with native speakers of the language, a level of proficiency which is expected of second language English users appears to be lacking in Nigeria, which is regarded as the second largest ESL country in the world, next only to India, with about 50 million speakers of English as second language (Jowitt, 2009). Performance in the examinations conducted by public examination bodies in the country continues to point to poor mastery of the English language. The poor performance at the lower levels of Nigeria’s educational system continues to impinge negatively on their performance in other school subjects and at the tertiary level. The case becomes most pathetic when there is evidence that undergraduates in some Nigerian universities with English as a second language cannot write simple applications or fill a simple form in English (Mary: 2009).

In some EFL situations, especially in classrooms where the learners share the same language, which may be either L1 or national language, the tendency is high for tasks that should normally be done in L2 to be done in L1 because of convenience and also the fact that it is natural to use L1. This is in addition to the fact that an EFL user may feel embarrassed by his incompetence in the use of L2 (Nation, 2003). With all these factors necessitating the use of L1 instead of L2, attaining the needed level of proficiency in the EFL classroom is difficult. There is therefore the need to discover a way of attaining proficiency in the EFL adult classroom. Although Nation advocates the use of L1 in foreign language learning, other methods may have to be adopted, especially in the adult EFL classroom.

In many tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the English language curriculum is still not significantly different from General English. Learners are still taken through the rituals of learning the basic rudiments which some of them have mastered, although at times poorly. The situation is more worrisome in specialized institutions such as universities of technology and polytechnics, where English is not regarded as a core course, but which nonetheless is essential for success, not only in their chosen career but also in the larger society. Ewuzie (2009) has condemned obsolete teaching methods that have maintained a firm grip on Nigeria’s tertiary institutions which merely produce certificate carriers with little or no industry experience. He cited a university don who has also expressed sadness at the fact that the curriculum for higher education in Nigeria focuses too much on learning without leaving any room for application and condemned any knowledge acquired in the course of studying for any degree if it is not applied.

The international status of English with its spread globally demands that if the language has to be taught and learnt, it must be taught and learnt well, if the full benefit proficiency in the language guarantees in the global economy is to be fully harnessed. English is the major language of science and technology and a major tool in international diplomacy and the internet. While it may not be expected that foreign or second language English users should match native speakers’ competence, Nunn’s (2005) observation ought to be the

guiding principle in his position that “...international communication seems to require the ability to adjust to almost infinitely diverse intercultural communication situations” (p. 1). This should apply not only to foreign language situation, but also to second language environment, based on the notion of communicative competence which is predicated on appropriateness. Attaining linguistic proficiency cannot be divorced from communicative competence, which is learning to communicate appropriately with the implication that learning should fit into a particular way of communicating in a target community (Nunn, 2005). A target community can be redefined as the audience or professional colleagues to whom a communicative activity is directed. ESP is a method of English language use that has a specific target audience for which English is customized.

Significance of the Paper

Although second and foreign English language learners may not attain native speaker competence, the purpose of this paper is to establish their capability to attain a level of proficiency required to function properly, in their various chosen fields, using the English language medium in a world that is daily shrinking into one big indivisible village. This is especially for adult learners who have been known for the inability to learn another language after initially acquiring a native language that is now competing with a new target language. This paper shows how this category of learners can attain this feat by adopting alternative pedagogic approach, which ESP provides, to second/foreign language English teaching and learning in EFL/ESL adult classroom.

Methodologies in the ESL classroom

Common Methodologies in General English in Nigeria ESL Classroom

General English is the curriculum that exposes second language English learners to a broad spectrum of issues in English with the hope that learners will pick and choose what is relevant to them (Malgwi, 2000). While this method may not be out of place for second language English learners at the lower levels of the educational system, the same may not be said about second language English adult learners who may need English for specific purposes, especially to further a career or a vocation. Second language English learners at tertiary level need more than a mere pick and choose curriculum, but a definite kind of English that will enable them achieve optimally in their chosen field of study that requires English as a medium.

In many General English curriculums, emphasis is on grammar, most often taught in isolation, which, as described by Professor Eric Hawkins in Griffiths (1992), is “like learning to swim by doing movements by the side of the pool but never having a chance to get into the water” (p.63) . The teacher teaches based on the perceived needs of the learners. The learners are left to forage in the labyrinth of the teacher’s ideas, some of which may not be relevant to the direct or immediate needs of the learners. In this kind of scenario, the learner is left at the mercy of the teacher, and he ends up with little benefits.

Methodologies in the English for Specific Purpose Classroom

English for Specific Purposes, as distinguished from General English, is English tailored towards specific needs. Hutchinson & Waters (1991) have observed that the

awareness of a target situation—a definable need to communicate in English is what distinguishes the ESP learner from the learner of General English. The popular slogan by Hutchinson and Waters: “tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need” (p.8) encapsulates the ESP mantra. The incursion of ESP into English language teaching underlies its importance. It was a response to the dwindling performance in English needed for a definite purpose. It debuted after World War III to satisfy the global linguistic needs in commerce, science, technology and international diplomacy. These are needs English has come to meet since then, thus making it the most sought after language globally after its advent on the global scene.

ESP methodology differs from General Purpose English in that its curriculum is purpose-specific based on the analyzed needs of the learners. According to (Coffey, 1985), it involves “a principle of selection from the language to meet the purposes defined” (p.79). Customized curriculum is then designed to meet the identified needs of learners. This is followed by directing the teaching and learning materials to meet specific needs. This kind of curriculum involves developing new kinds of literacy equipping learners with the communicative competence to partake in particular academic and professional cultural contexts (Hyland, 2002). The principle of restriction (Carter, 1983) is usually at work in ESP methodology as an aftermath of needs analysis, which tries to match the actual needs of beneficiaries of second language with appropriate teaching materials and technique. Courses are subsequently designed based on the relative importance and they are carefully arranged to suit the needs of target learners. One major pattern of ESP is the way it ignores areas that are not considered relevant to a specific field. This can be ascertained by the instructor through various means. For example, Sullivan and Girginer (2002) used the interaction and observation method to identify the actual needs of future pilots and air traffic controllers in Turkey to enable them teach them the English they required. This is, in fact, the major focus of ESP approach to teaching English in a non-indigenous setting, focusing learners’ special area of need (Dao-zhi and Chiang-hua, 1987).

For an efficient and effective ESP program in an ESL/EFL classroom, an inquiry based learning method is recommended and this can be based on the following suggestions. The first thing for the ESP teacher to do is to identify the actual as against the perceived needs of learners, which is actually a new approach in communicative language teaching. According to Atkinson (1992), “the current emphasis on communication in the teaching of modern languages involves a move towards encouraging more pupils and less teacher input” (p.6). The learner’s input comes in when he is allowed to identify his shortcomings which will help identify his needs. This is the entry point that has to be ascertained. The entry point can be ascertained through a test of ability conducted early enough, by giving a quiz on what the ESP teacher thinks the learners ought to know. If the learners show no knowledge of what they are expected to know, the ESP teacher then notes the deficiencies as possible areas of concentration in his course design. This is one aspect that appears to be lacking in many ESL/EFL classrooms at present where learners are treated at par. The outcome of the test of ability may necessitate separating the students into different grades based on the learners’ varied abilities. This may be more practicable in the ESL than EFL classroom as learners in ESL classroom have had a longer period of exposure to English than EFL learners.

ESP methodology, as inquiry based learning, highlights specific objectives (Nucifora, 1996). It involves finding out the actual needs of learners as against their perceived needs. This should be done by finding out their entry point thus identifying what they are bringing

in to a new learning environment. This should naturally lead to designing a specific curriculum that will suit the identified needs of learners rather than the instructor's perceived needs. In some cases, some students are again taught already acquired skills, while some needed ones are not attended to. Learners may then be grouped on the basis of their needs and not necessarily based on their courses as it is often suggested, because those on the same program may have different linguistic skills at the entry point. That is, in the first year of entry, the teaching of English, by whatever name, should be based on their immediate needs, while in subsequent years, the teaching of English should be developmental, and may be based on the course of study, with purpose-specific and should be progressive over a period of time. It should be borne in mind that a language is best learnt through constant interactions in various forms. At this point on, it is advised that an ESP program should be taught in small groups with discussion sessions. There should also be seminars with learners presenting papers with the type of English that suits specific disciplines. This is necessary because language is regulated by professional requirement, and as the requirements change, a change in the use of language should not be unexpected (Widdowson, 1998). It has been suggested by Nation (2003) for EFL learners to bring in their L1 knowledge to bear, as a useful tool, on their learning of L2, although without overusing it. This may not be necessary in the case of ESL since the learners have had longer periods of exposure to English in various domains. Some ways of using L2, as suggested by Nation, are, however, useful in attaining proficiency in the ESL/EFL classroom through the use of ESP. Some of them, as applied to adult learners adopting the ESP approach towards the attainment of proficiency in English either as a foreign or second language include the following as adopted for the ESP methodology:

- i. choosing manageable tasks within the learners' proficiency and in this case within the learners' profession or field of interest for which they are learning English with purpose-specific;
- ii. using staged and graded tasks that bring learners up to the required level;
- iii. adopting vocabularies that are common to the beneficiaries' profession; and making such vocabularies as unavoidable part of their teaching/learning and the tasks given;
- iv. making learners aware of the learning goals of each task so that they will see how using the vocabularies of respective professions will enhance achieving a clear short term learning goal and
- v. discussing with learners the value of using the vocabularies and the nuances of respective professions to encourage the use of English with purpose-specific.

An effective ESP instructional approach will include teacher-student interaction with specially prepared materials with purpose-specific and discipline related to help learners accomplish their learning objectives with the aid of classroom interactions through in-class and out-of-class methods. There should be clear objectives of what learners are expected to do with English at the end of the ESP program of instruction. This should be reflected in the type of assignments and tests that will most appropriately reflect the course objectives. This may include activity based assignments/tests with focus on English use in specific disciplines sequentially and frequently. Special writing projects should be introduced to make learners acquire the needed skills that will make them successful in an ESP program and later translate such skills to help them succeed in their chosen career after school. It is assumed that such students already have sufficient exposure to General Purpose English

for communication at the lower levels of education as a necessary foundation that will enable them acquire the new skills in the ESP classroom.

It is necessary to point out that the resources for an ESP program will be specially prepared with reference to the specific needs of learners. A situation where learners are taught using the same materials and expecting that learners will forage and select what is relevant to their needs may not work for adult learners in either EFL or ESL environment. This kind of practice leaves learners more confused at the end of the day. But an ESP approach to the teaching of English at tertiary level sources only for the relevant materials that are of immediate advantage to learners who had earlier been exposed to General English and now only need English for a specific purpose. The instructor should also be involved in the production of relevant materials where they are not immediately available.

Still on learning resources, the ESP instructor should be resourceful enough to make available what the learners need to make them successful, not only in ESP as a program, but as a tool to be optimally useful in careers where English is essential. The responsibility will often rest on the ESP instructor to provide study guides, lecture notes which may be placed on reserve in the library for easy accessibility to all. It may also be required of the ESP instructor to invite guest lecturers from time to time and in different fields who will give lectures that will reflect the use of English in their chosen fields. Learning resources can also include study groups that will inculcate as well as develop writing culture. In the area of syllabus design, the ESP instructor will determine the details: its depth and explicitness, and also decide the kind of flexibility that will be built into the syllabus, and more particularly, how to word the syllabus to make it more user-friendly.

All this might appear grandiose, but a desperate situation such as the state of English in many foreign and second language environments that need English for developmental purposes in the millennium, equally needs some bold steps. This is also important because research evidence abounds to the effect that late learners may also attain proficiency in second language learning comparable to early learners especially if such factors as personal motivation, anxiety, input and output skills, settings and time commitment (Zhao & Morgan, 2004) are explored. Adult learners, according to Ausubel, cited by Zhao and Morgan, have some advantages which they can bring to the learning of a second language. These advantages include:

- i. bigger L1 vocabulary making it unnecessary for them to acquire thousands of new concepts in the target language as children do, and all they need are verbal symbols that represent these concepts;
- ii. adults' capability of making conscious grammatical generalizations which are applied to suitable examples and
- iii. cognitive maturity of adults and their experience place them on a higher pedestal in some aspects of L2 performance (p.5).

ESP as a Course in Second/Foreign Language English Environment

Apart from some countries where English is a native language (ENL) many countries in the world now adopt it as second or foreign language to help them meet the needs of the millennium, because of the position of English as an international language and the fact that the language enjoys wide spread acceptance in science and research, commerce and in diplomatic circles. To these non-native speakers of English, especially at tertiary levels,

English should be properly deployed to meet their specific needs knowing full well that they cannot match the native speakers' competence, no matter how hard they may try.

ESP, like Language for Specific Purpose (LSP), is language as a means to an end and not an end in itself. Graduates in English are prepared for employment in media houses, both print and electronics, advertisement companies, public relations outfits, administrative set ups, etc. but the curriculum in tertiary institutions in many second language English countries such as Nigeria, can hardly prepare their graduates for such employments. Courses in phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics interspersed with a lot of literature courses can hardly put the graduates in good stead for employments outside the classroom. This kind of curriculum will not likely guarantee efficiency in areas the graduates are being prepared to pursue a career later in life, since "acquiring a body of linguistic knowledge for use is an essential part of any language learning" (Nunn, 2005: p.3). Second or foreign language English learners' linguistic proficiency should ensure effectiveness in their future potential employment, and this is possible by making English language teaching purpose-specific for a utilitarian end, rather than teaching it as an end in itself. This is because while ENL learners can carry over their native competence to their future job careers, the same may not be said of ESL/EFL learners. This is particularly so at the tertiary level where learners have chosen a career and they only need English as a tool to fully realize their dreams of being fully effective and optimally useful in their profession. Nigeria, as the second largest ESL country in the world, next only to India sees the importance of the English language beyond the General English taught at the lower levels of primary and secondary education, and so makes the teaching of English compulsory at the tertiary level. At this level, it is taught as Use of English (USE), a supposedly developmental course to help the students grasp the nitty-gritty of the language that will be the medium of expression in their tertiary education. Unfortunately, this USE program is taught in the first year of tertiary education in Nigeria on the belief that incoming students have had a measure of knowledge in English and that what is needed for them is a developmental program. This has been found to be grossly untrue and the assumptions very wrong as the one year USE program has been discovered inadequate considering the level of proficiency of Nigerian undergraduates even at the eve of graduation. This confirms the parlous state of the language in recent times as also attested to by the dismal performance of students in public examinations.

Although ESP is usually canvassed for a USE program at the tertiary level, it is also suggested that full-fledged English departments in universities in ESL/EFL countries should mount ESP programs in addition to the present curriculum, and even encourage students to specialize in ESP so as to go out to impart the needed knowledge in ESP as a new thinking in English language teaching and learning in EFL/ESL setting. This is not common, at present, in many ESL/EFL countries around the world. Using the ESP, as an approach to English language teaching could be part of Jowitt's (2009) idea of eclectic approach to English Language Teaching Across the World (ELTAW) in the present century. This confirms Sarigoz's (2008) observation that "today dedication to a single method is often approached with skepticism" (p.52).

ESP in ESL/EFL environment

ESP Course Description in ESL/EFL Environment

As part of the bold steps needed to achieve effective use of English by both ESL and EFL users in a world that is fast becoming a global village and the English language being a major means of communication, thus making it a global language, the following course description will form a starting point for further curriculum development. It is to act as a guide to teachers and instructors who may not be familiar with ESP course and so may be unable to know where to start from.

While preparing a description of an ESP curriculum for the ESL/EFL classroom, some basic questions are required to be answered. The first of such questions is the content the course will address and how it fits in with the discipline. The value of the course to the students is also very vital a question that has to be answered. The way the course is structured is also very significant in the course description. It is advised that in an ESP program for the ESL/EFL classroom there should be small groups having discussion sessions. Seminars as well as lectures with presentation of papers adopting the kind of English that suits specific disciplines should form part of the course description.

ESP Course Objectives in ESL/EFL Environment

In an ESP program designed for ESL/EFL environment, there should be clearly stated objectives which should include what learners will know and be able to do as a result of having gone through an ESP in an ESL/EFL environment. Part of the objectives should also be the learning skills learners will develop in an ESP program of instruction. In fact, the goal of the ESP teacher is similar to Jarvis's (2005) concept, which is "to promote a pedagogy which reflects what users are actually doing with language, rather than prescribing items to be taught" (p. 4). This prescriptive method, common in General English, cannot guarantee the needed proficiency for adult learners in an ESL/EFL setting. As a guide, the objectives of ESP course in an ESL/EFL environment could include the following among others depending on the specific environment and situation:

- i. to identify learners specific needs;
- ii. to make learners learn the specific English required for their use in specific professions without compromising standard;
- iii. to learn the vocabulary peculiar to a specific profession and
- iv. to assist learners attain the needed level of confidence in the use of English that will enable them perform optimally in their respective professions.

Instructional Approaches in ESP Class

A well structured course description and objectives should be followed by an appropriate instructional approach, if the objectives have to be fully achieved. The following instructional approaches are recommended in an ESP program for ESL/EFL classroom environment to attain linguistic competence:

- i. the teacher should be familiar with the actual needs of students and so have materials specially prepared with purpose-specific and discipline-related, and

- adopting an instructional approach most suitable and conducive to help learners accomplish set objectives; Hutchinson & Waters (1991), for example, favors the choice of texts from learners' discipline and
- ii. classroom interaction should be facilitated through in-class and out-of-class methods or any other method the teacher may find useful and usable for individual group of learners.

The approach adopted by a teacher has a lot of implications for the attainment of linguistic competence through the ESP methodology in an ESL/EFL environment. If the approach is appropriate, learners are bound to improve their proficiency that will be more beneficial in their use of English as it affects their specific professions.

Course Requirements/Assignments

Course requirements in an ESP program for ESL/EFL learners that will enable learners attain linguistic competence should centre on issues such as:

- i. what the students are expected to do in the course;
- ii. the kinds of assignments, tests that most appropriately reflect the course objectives, which may include activity based assignments/tests with focus on English use in specific disciplines sequentially and frequently, and special projects that will showcase the specific use of English in some disciplines and
- iii. the kinds of skills students need to have in order to be successful in an ESP program to help learners achieve linguistic competence, and these will include adequate exposure to General-purpose English at a lower level as well as adequate communication skills in the English language.

Course Policies

Clearly defined policies are needed for an effective ESP program for the attainment of linguistic competence in an ESL/EFL classroom and this must centre primarily on what is expected of learners. Other policy issues include evaluation of learners' works, and this will bother on the number of tests to be given and whether in-class or take-home. The issue of how students will receive feedback on their performance is also very vital as timely receipt of evaluation either through the instructor, self-assessment or peer review will help learners adjust timely and appropriately to the learning tasks. The frequency of the tests/assignments with appropriate feedback will be a good motivation needed for the attainment of linguistic proficiency. If tests/assignments are sparingly given the language may fall into disuse and this will not augur well for the attainment of linguistic proficiency in an ESL/EFL classroom adopting the ESP approach.

Texts/Resources/Readings

The issue of texts/resources for use should be addressed by the instructor who should not only be a teacher, but also a provider of texts and reading material. This he can provide personally or sourced from other places. One thing is that the material must be capable of meeting the needs of learners. When prepared personally by the instructor, it must be properly prepared with reference to the specific needs already identified and for which

objectives have been set out at the inception. The following issues bothering on learning resources should be addressed:

- i. the way learners will be most successful in the course, and this should be addressed by the resourcefulness of the instructor;
- ii. the resources that are available which learners can benefit from; in this case the ESP instructor should provide study guides, and lecture notes may be placed on reserve in the library;
- iii. guest speakers who are conversant with the use of vocabulary in specific disciplines may be invited to give lectures where the use of English in such disciplines will be showcased;
- iv. study groups may be organized and given assignments related to the use of English in specific disciplines and
- v. the culture of writing should be encouraged among learners who should be given writing assignments from time to time to perfect their use of English.

Syllabus Design

A course of instruction in ESP to help attain linguistic competence in an ESL/EFL classroom requires a well designed syllabus that will meet the needs of beneficiaries. Such a syllabus should take cognizance of the following:

- i. details of the syllabus to see its depth and explicitness;
- ii. whether or not some flexibility will be built into the syllabus to accommodate learners' identified and new needs as they manifest and
- iii. framing the syllabus to make it user-friendly.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Although ESP may not be a new phenomenon in the teaching and learning of the English language in some parts of the world, it is substantially still a novel idea in Nigeria, the second largest ESL country in the world. This status notwithstanding, proficiency in the use of the language continues to wane. This paper has traced the origin of ESP and considered its methodology and other issues such as objectives, instructional approaches, requirements/assignments, policies, learning resources and syllabus design as panacea to the dwindling proficiency in English in an ESL/EFL environment.

It is the opinion of this writer that attaining the expected proficiency in the use of English by ESL/EFL users requires the following:

- i. teachers in ESL/EFL countries should be made to undergo training in ESP to enable them adopt it in teaching learners, especially adult learners the kind of English that will make them perform optimally in their chosen profession;
- ii. existing departments of English or General Studies that teach English, by whatever name, should start considering the adoption of ESP as a method in the teaching of English, especially in specialized tertiary institutions where English is not considered a major, but which nonetheless is essential to successfully accomplish and actualize learners' goals in their respective professions;

- iii. English should be taught at all levels especially in ESL countries where it is taught as Use of English and contact restricted to only one or two semesters;
- iv. it is recommended, where English is taught only as Use of English to non-English majors, that the teaching should be faculty or departmental based with each faculty or even department having a dedicated instructor, where the personnel and resources are available, so that the instructor will be devoted to the specific needs of the faculty or department (Ghani, 1989);
- v. where the above is achievable, there should be specialized syllabus that is discipline-specific and
- vi. full-fledged departments of English in conventional universities should commence curriculum in ESP, as a necessity, to improve and equip graduates in English to impact positively on others and also make them fit into different employments in a world that is fast becoming a global village with a global economy and of which English is the medium of exchange.

There are no disputes on the idea of “earlier is better” but to predicate successful proficiency in second language on age alone is to diminish the importance of other critical factors such as personal motivation and time commitment. With different approaches, adult learners of foreign or second language English can also benefit significantly. This is the gap this paper is out to fill with the adoption of ESP as an approach to adult learners in EFL/ESL classroom.

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