

WHO SHOULD TEACH ESP, EFL TEACHERS OR PROFESSIONAL ESP TEACHERS?

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to study “who is more qualified to teach English for Specific Purposes (ESP), language teachers or language teachers teaching in English department of a specific faculty (professional ESP teachers) according to their students. The main question tended to investigate whether there was a significant difference between the two mentioned groups. A null hypothesis was developed which stated; ESP students find no difference between language teachers and professional ESP teachers in English department of specific faculty. To find the answer, a questionnaire was developed, with a high internal reliability and validity. The questionnaire was administered to 90 students in Islamic Azad University of Rasht and Lahidjan and University of Guilan. The results from t-test revealed that there was not any significant difference between the two groups.

Keywords: *ESP, EAP, Evaluation, Professional ESP Teacher, Language Teachers*

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English for Specific Purposes has generally been seen as a separate activity within English Language Teaching (ELT), and ESP research as an identifiable component of applied linguistic research. Dudley-Evans and St. John believe that for some of its teaching ESP has developed its own methodology, and its research clearly draws on research from various disciplines in addition to applied linguistics (Dudley and John, 1998). Good and qualified teachers are essential for efficient functioning of educational systems and for enhancing the quality of learning. Research supports this notion that a good teacher and actions to be taken on his part in the classroom play a vital role in provoking effective and efficient learning on the part of the students (Markley, 2004). Teachers also have a fundamental role in their learner’s academic achievement and their quality can highly influence student outcomes (Campbell *et al.*, 2004; Lasley *et al.*, 2006; Rockoff, 2004). English language teachers are by no means an exception and their key role in effective language learning cannot be overlooked. Special attention must be paid to this link between teachers and learners in countries like Iran where language learning happens mainly in formal classroom settings (Kariminia and Salehizadeh, 2007), and teachers as the main source of language input to students, affect their learning directly (Babai and Sadeghi, 2009).

In this study, researcher tries to discover which teacher is more efficient in ESP teaching according to their students, language teachers or professional ESP teachers.

Statement of the Problem

There are three types of ESP teachers in Iranian universities, EFL teachers, Content teachers, and Professional ESP teachers. There is an unresolved debate on which of the three types are the most effective one in this context. Many studies have already been conducted to compare EFL teachers and Content teachers, Maleki (2008), Rajabi *et al.*, (2011), but there are few studies which have compared EFL teachers and Professional ESP teachers, such as Sherkatolabbasi (2012). The present researcher has tried to discover which of the two teachers, EFL teachers or Professional ESP teachers are more qualified to teach ESP, according to their students.

Review of the Related Literature

A Definition of ESP:

Dudley-Evans defines ESP as follows:

1) Absolute Characteristics:

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a) ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learners;
b) ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves; ESP is centred on language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

2) Variable Characteristics:

a) ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
b) ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
c) ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be used for learners at secondary school level;
d) ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners (Dudley and John, 1998).

Related Researches

Rajabi et al (2011) intended to compare and contrast Iranian English major ESP instructors with their subject-matter counterparts in terms of their beliefs and classroom practices in ESP classes. The results revealed that theoretically a large and wide gap existed between English major and subject-matter ESP teachers while practically this difference was very slight (Rajabi *et al.*, 2011).

Maleki (2008) conducted an experiment to find out who was better qualified for the job: the EFL teacher or the specialist in the field? Forty out of sixty second-year medical students studying at an Iranian medical sciences university were randomly selected. Then they were divided into two equal classes of twenty members each. Later, the classes were assigned to two teachers: a TEFL teacher and a specialist in the field. Everything being equal, including the textbook, the course started. The two classes were taught for an entire semester. At the end of the course, two types of measures were used: an achievement test and a five-point Likert Scale. Analysis of the results showed that the EFL teacher's class scored higher in every aspect of the final achievement test, and that they expressed greater satisfaction with his class than the competing class on the Likert Scale. Therefore, Maleki strongly recommends that ESP courses be taught by EFL teachers rather than specialists in the field and those specialists interested in teaching English should attain the necessary qualifications (Maleki, 2008).

Ahmadi (2008) conducted a study about who should teach ESP. This research was conducted to study the views of the heads of language department (LDs) and the views of the heads of discipline-specific departments (DSDs) as well as those of students in some ESP classes in six medical universities during the academic year 2006-2007. Three questionnaires were used as the tool of data collecting. According to the data gathered, though most vice-deans and almost all heads of language departments (LDs) tended to assign ESP classes to the teachers of LDs, about 50% of the heads of discipline- specialist departments (DSDs) believed that these courses should be taught by subject-specialist teachers. The students of ESP classes, in all, believed that in teaching ESP courses, LD teachers are more qualified than discipline-specialist teachers. From the six questions posed to 176 students about the different capabilities of ESP teachers, LD teachers gained 1515 positive points while the points gained by discipline-specialist teachers was just 1331 (Ahmadi, 2008).

Ahmadi and Sajjadi (2009) conducted a survey research on “who should teach English for medical purpose (EMP)”. Three questionnaires were used as the tool of data collecting. They were filled by some vice-deans, some heads of LDs, and DSDs as well as the students of some EMP English classes in six medical universities during the academic year 2006-2007. According to the data gathered, though most vice-deans and almost all heads of language departments (LDs) tended to assign EMP classes to the teachers of LDs, the majority of the heads of discipline-specialist departments (DSDs) believed that these courses should be taught by subject-specialist teachers. The students of EMP classes, in all, believed that in teaching EMP courses, LD teachers were more qualified than discipline-specialist teachers. From the six questions posed to 176 students about the different capabilities of EMP teachers, LD teachers gained 1515 positive points(out of 1920 points) while the points gained by discipline –specialist teachers was just 1331. It was concluded that students and heads of language department preferred LD teachers while heads of DSDs preferred DS teachers for teaching EMP. LD teachers should enhance their knowledge of the discipline while DSD teacher should study language and language teaching (Ahmadi and Sajjadi, 2009).

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Sherkatolabbasi (2012) compared the three kinds of ESP teachers. She concluded that professional ESP teachers were the most effective ESP teachers and content teachers were the least effective ones, according to their students.

Research Question of the Study

According to ESP students, which group is more qualified to teach ESP, Language teachers or Professional ESP teachers?

Research Hypothesis

ESP students find no difference between language teachers and professional ESP teachers.

Significance and Purpose of the Study

Due to the significance of ESP especially in countries like Iran in which English is mainly used for academic purposes, the importance of evaluating contexts in which ESP is taught is completely obvious. Wong (2011) mentions, it is the effective teacher who produces students' learning, growth and achievement. Therefore an evaluation of ESP teachers in Iranian universities seems completely essential. The present research tries to find out which context is the most desirable one to teach ESP.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology

Research Design

The present research was descriptive in nature. It was a survey study and collected information in a quantitative manner.

Participants

The participants were 90 students of Azad Islamic University of Rasht, Lahidjan and university of Guilan. Forty seven students were attending at EFL teachers' classes and 43 students were attending at professional ESP teachers' classes. They were all undergraduate students and were studying English for Specific Purposes. The students were selected at random.

Material

A 40-item questionnaire was used as the data collection instruments. Its validity was confirmed by 3 experts in Applied Linguistics.

The internal reliability was calculated through Cronbach's Alpha Method.

The questionnaire consisted of 4 different parts: 1) English proficiency with 5 items. 2) Pedagogical knowledge including 17 items. 3) Organization and communication skills including 8 items. 4) Socio-affective skills including 10 items. The present researcher calculated the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for each 4 categories. The values of four categories were 87%, 74%, 80% and 89%.

Procedure

At first, a questionnaire was designed which was adopted from the Wichadee (2008), although the reliability had already been calculated by Wichadee, the present researcher calculated the Cronbach's Alpha for each 4 skills; (English proficiency: 87%; pedagogical knowledge: 74%; communication and class organization: 80%; socio-affective skills: 89%). Then this questionnaire was translated into Persian in order to get more accurate information from the students. The questionnaire was administered to the students attending at classes of the two groups of instructors. For the first group, Language teachers, the questionnaires were given to the students of several classes in Islamic Azad University of Rasht who were taught by EFL teachers and 47 questionnaires were received. And for the second group, who was Professional ESP teachers or Language Teachers teaching in English department of a specific faculty, the questionnaire was given to the students of Medicine in the University of Guilan and 43 questionnaires were received. Having received all the questionnaires, the next stage, data analysis process was started.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis

In order to analyze data, at first, Levene Statistic Test was used to make the data homogenous and then T-test was used to analyze the data.

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Results

After the data were analyzed by SPSS software, the following results were attained.

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of relation of English proficiency in general English teachers and professional ESP teachers

Proficiency	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
General English teachers	47	4.3968	.47781	.06970
Professional ESP teachers	43	4.4640	.46667	.07117

Table 2: Results of t-test and Levene statistic test

Proficiency	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.124	.726	-.673	88	.502	-.06714	.09972	-.26531	.13102
Equal variances not assumed			-.674	87.614	.502	-.06714	.09961	-.26511	.13082

$T_{(critical)} = 2.000, T_{(observed)} < T_{(critical)}$.

According to the T-test, it can be claimed with more than 95% of certainty that in the condition of equal variances, the degree of English proficiency is not significantly different in General English teachers and professional ESP teachers ($p > 0.05$, 2-tailed).

Table3: Descriptive analysis of relation of pedagogical knowledge in general English teachers and professional ESP teachers

Pedagogical knowledge	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
General Teachers	English 47	3.3627	.49229	.07181
Professional teachers	ESP 43	3.2350	.41699	.06359

Table 4: Results of t-test and Levene statistic test

Pedagogical knowledge	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.708	.195	1.321	88	.190	.12768	.09663	-.06434	.31971
Equal variances not assumed			1.331	87.500	.187	.12768	.09592	-.06294	.31831

$$T_{(critical)} = 2.000, T_{(observed)} < T_{(critical)}$$

According to T-test, it can be said with more than 95% of certainty that the degree of pedagogical knowledge is not significantly different comparing general English teachers with professional ESP teachers in both equal and unequal variances ($p > 0.05$, 2-tailed).

Table 5: Descriptive analysis of organization and communication skills in general English teachers and professional ESP teachers

Organization skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
General English teachers	47	4.1820	.55917	.08156
Professional ESP teachers	43	4.1416	.51142	.07799

Table 6: Results of t-test and Levene statistic test

Organization	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.090	.765	.356	88	.722	.04038	.11330	-.18479	.26554
Equal variances not assumed			.358	88.000	.721	.04038	.11285	-.18389	.26465

$$T_{(critical)} = 2.000, T_{(observed)} < T_{(critical)}$$

According to T-test, it can be claimed with more than 95% of certainty that in both equal and unequal variances, the degree of organization and communication skills is not significantly different, comparing the two groups ($p > 0.05$, 2-tailed).

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Table 7: Descriptive analysis of relation of socio-affective skills in general English teachers and professional ESP teachers

Socio-affective	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
General English teachers	47	3.9683	.70497	.10283
Professional ESP teachers	43	3.8163	.64325	.09810

Table 8: Results of t-test and Levene statistic test

Socio-affective skills	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.044	.834	1.065	88	.290	.15197	.14270	-	.43556
Equal variances not assumed			1.069	88.000	.288	.15197	.14212	-	.43440

$$T_{(critical)} = 2.000, T_{(observed)} < T_{(critical)}.$$

According to T-test, it can be claimed that in both equal and unequal variances, the degree of socio-affective skills is not significantly different, comparing the two groups ($p > 0.05$, 2-tailed).

Discussion

The research question was which group was more qualified to teach ESP, language teachers or professional ESP teachers. Consequently this hypothesis was proposed: ESP students found no difference between language teachers and professional ESP teachers.

According to t-test, it can be claimed with more than 95% of certainty that in the conditions of equal variances, the degree of English proficiency was not significantly different in language teachers and professional ESP teacher (tables 1, 2). T-test revealed that in both equal and unequal variances, there was no significant difference between language teachers and professional ESP teachers, in pedagogical knowledge (tables 3, 4).

Language teachers and professional ESP teachers were compared in organization and communication skills. Again, T-test revealed that there was no significant difference between language teachers and professional ESP teachers (tables 5, 6). Finally, the two groups were compared in socio-affective skills. T-test revealed that there was no significant difference between language teachers and professional ESP teachers, according to their students (table 7, 8). Therefore the hypothesis was confirmed. ESP students found no difference between language teachers and professional ESP teachers.

Conclusion

As the results revealed there was no significant difference between EFL teachers and professional ESP teachers according to their students. The researcher concluded that language teachers were as qualified as professional ESP teachers according to ESP students.

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