
NEED FOR SPECIALISTS' ORIENTATION TO DISPEL THE MYSTIQUE IN ESP

**Mr. D. Senthil Kumar,
M.A., M.Phil.,**

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Sri Hayagreeva Arts and Science

College

Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

English for Specific Purpose should properly be seen not as any particular language product but as an approach to language teaching directed by specific and apparent reasons for learning (Hutchinson, T and Waters, 1987: 19). ESP teaching is basically built on the assessment of purposes and the functions for which English is required. Developing courses for learners with specific academic or work-related language-needs require the essential knowledge of the subject matter, and therefore those without expertise may not be able to express the ideas that contribute to understanding the intended learning outcomes. So, an ESP instructor has to play various roles like teacher, course designer, materials provider, collaborator, researcher and evaluator. In the practical academic scenario, it is too demanding for an ELT specialist to do justice to his role as an ESP practitioner. This paper intends to propose a model where the subject expert's orientation is sought to dispel the mystique in ESP.

Keywords: *ESP, Mystique*

1.1 History of ESP

The ESP in ELT can be traced back to the end of the Second World War in 1945 when the importance of English language changed completely; which was to play a more practical role in the scientific and economic development occurring all over the world. This new situation created a new approach towards learning English to cope with the advancements in technology and commerce. Since the late 1980s, ESP has established itself not only as an important and distinctive branch of ELT, but has also incorporated most of the work on discourse and genre analysis, as well as the results of corpus linguistics.

1.2 Why ESP practitioners need subject Specialists' Orientation

ESP has become a dynamic entity in every engineering college. As part of ESP curriculum, the Technical Writing or Technical Communication students learn to write various reports such as Site Inspection Report, Accident Report, Product Identification Report, Product Specification Report, Mechanical Process Description Report (MPDR), etc. The teachers familiarize the students with the format of the report as all the technical reports are format driven. Students understand the paragraph scheme which enables them to include appropriate information as per the required format. The teacher reinforces them on *syntax* and *lexis*. Teacher, if need be, clarifies the technical process. Superficially, this may seem to be a pretty ordinary task. But, there are a number of stumbling blocks in selecting and developing the material for the task.

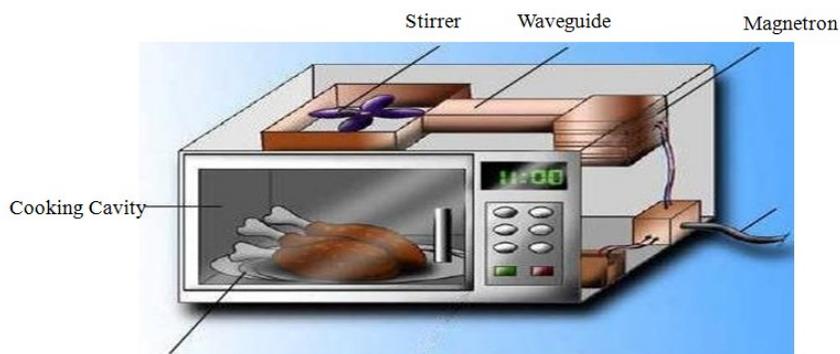
1.3 The Stumbling blocks on the way of ESP practitioners

At the first place, the teachers have neither adequate time nor resource materials at the physical library. Further to this, the available materials are voluminous engineering stuff which is not tailor-made for ESP teaching purpose. So, the teachers mainly depend on internet as a resource for materials. The information available on many sites is not reliable and extracting the required stuff depends on the technical domain of the teacher. Being a language teacher with little or no technical knowledge is a great handicap in comprehending the

NEED FOR SPECIALISTS' ORIENTATION TO DISPEL THE MYSTIQUE IN ESP

complicated technical process that involves various scientific theories. In spite of preparing an exercise, the teacher is not sure of the appropriateness of the technical jargons used and the accuracy of the information provided. In the classroom, it is sometimes possible that the students are better informed than the teacher about a particular process. The teacher's credibility is at stake if his exercise is proved wrong by the students. In the current formal set-up, there is no provision for the teacher to get his exercise checked and approved by a subject specialist.

Use the tabulated data below to write a **Mechanism Description Report** for the **Microwave Oven** you see in the figure.



Picture: 1 - Turntable

The following table shows how it works and how students can improve their skill by describing part-by-part and technical description. There are 3 columns viz., the first one gives general introduction, the second column gives description part-by-part description and the final column talks about technical description as follows:

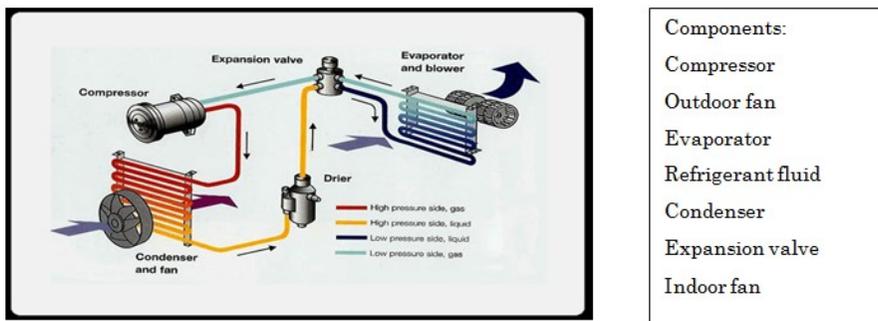
Table 1: Part-by-part description and Technical description

Introduction	Part-by-part description	Technical Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a microwave oven: kitchen appliance, cook, warm or thaw food popular for reheating previously cooked foods and cooking vegetables made of stainless steel to reflect microwave <p>Components</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Magnetron Waveguide Stirrer Cooking cavity Turntable 	<p>Magnetron</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> electronic tube, produces 2450 MHz of microwave energy attached tightly with waveguide to convert electrical energy into microwave. <p>Waveguide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hollow conductive pipe used to carry high frequency radio waves made of metal <p>Stirrer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four blades, like a fan, at top of oven, spreading waves throughout cavity <p>Cooking cavity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> interior metal walls temperature sensor in cavity to monitor temperature/time variation <p>Turntable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> small electrical motor mounted in bottom of oven rotate food during operation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> magnetron converts electrical power to microwave energy waveguide conveys microwaves from magnetron to stirrer stirrer distributes microwave energy evenly throughout oven stirrer rotates food inside oven food is heated or cooked inside cooking cavity

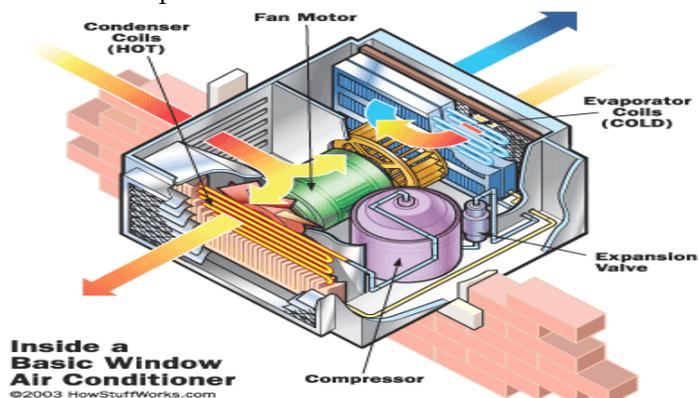
NEED FOR SPECIALISTS' ORIENTATION TO DISPEL THE MYSTIQUE IN ESP

Look at the sample exercise given above and prepare a similar exercise sheet to ask the students to write a Mechanical Process Description Report of an air conditioner using the resource material given below which was downloaded from the internet.

1.4 Main Components of an air conditioner are given below



The following picture shows the parts inside a basic air conditioner model



Picture: 3 - Inside a Basic Window Airconditioner

The ESP practitioners may find it difficult to source the appropriate websites and verify their reliability. Moreover, with the information available on the net, it is difficult for an ESP practitioner to identify the important components and to technically describe the functions of the component. Understanding the overall process is indeed a challenge for the ESP practitioners who are in fact “educated layman” (Strevens, 1988:42) who may be an expert to provide the language of the subject but does not possess adequate knowledge in the target subject area.

Selinker (1979) opines that in order to understand a technical process, it is necessary to know the concepts and presuppositions involved in the given field of study. Neglecting this and focusing on the lower-level features like grammar, syntax and lexis will defeat the very purpose of the report.

Researching the issue, Arnold (1986:2) made the subject experts to listen to the classroom recordings of a number of ESP practitioners. The results showed that some interpretations and

NEED FOR SPECIALISTS' ORIENTATION TO DISPEL THE MYSTIQUE IN ESP

explanations were technically inaccurate and usually based on layman's notions of the terms, or "half-remembered secondary school teaching".

Conclusion

The discussion on the need for specialists' orientation to dispel the mystique in ESP emphasizes the fact that the discipline-specific knowledge is required not only for classroom teaching but also for preparing the materials required for teaching. Limited content knowledge encourages many ESP practitioners to collaborate with subject specialists. However, this collaborative approach is often criticized as not practical due to institutional constraints and unwillingness on the part of the collaborating team.

References

1. Arnold, E. (1986). Some comments on the science content of ESP. *ESPMENA Bulletin* 21, 1-10.
2. Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987) *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-centred Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Selinker L. (1979). On the use of informants in discourse analysis and "Language for specialized purposes". *IRAL XVII* (3), 189-215.
4. Strevens, P. (1988). The learner and teacher of ESP. In: D. Chamberlain, R. Baumgardner (eds.) *ESP in the Classroom: Practice and Evaluation*. *ELT Document* 128. London: Modern English Publications in association with the British Council, 39-44.