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Difficulties in teaching English for Specific Purposes: Empirical study at Vietnam universities

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KEYWORDS

English for Specific Purposes Vietnam Teaching English ABSTRACT TAn article was written by Hoa and Mai entitled "Difficulties in teaching ESP (English for specific purposes): Empirical Studies at Vietnamese Universities" which provides information regarding difficulties experienced in teaching ESP; both difficulties related to students, teachers, environment and so on. This research is based on a literature review in teaching English in Vietnam. In this article, many suggestions are written to overcome some of the difficulties that can be applied by readers according to the difficulties faced, whether they are in Vietnam or other countries.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English for specific purposes (ESP) refers to the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language in a particular domain, it assists the students to achieve their purpose of field work. According to Alduais (2012) ESP refers to the teaching and learning English language focusing on certain skills levels, language components levels which are measured and settled by the needs, reasons and aware of learning the language. Thus, ESP in brief is the use of a particular variety of English in a specific context of use and justified by learners' needs.

The main purpose of ESP is providing the learning of target language which meets the specific needs of learners that is proper to their department. Stern as cited in Ahmed (2014) distinguished four types of ESP teaching objectives: proficiency, knowledge, affective, and transfer. Proficiency objectives concern mastery of skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Knowledge objectives concern the acquisition of linguistic and cultural information. Linguistic knowledge objectives include language analysis and awareness of the systematic aspects of language. Cultural knowledge objectives include control of socio-cultural rules (mastery of the norms of society, values, and orientations) and also the ability to recognize culturally significant facts, knowing what is acceptable and what is not. Affective objectives concern the development of positive feelings toward the subject of study. They include attitudes toward attaining second language competence, socio-cultural competence, and language learning.

Transfer objectives concern the ability to generalize from what has been learnt in one situation to other situations. In sum, ESP is essential for the students in achieving their goals of learning the target language to fulfill the qualification of future profession. In achieving the goals of ESP learning, there are some difficulties found by researchers.

Some of them related to students, teachers, environment and others.

2. REVIEW RELATED TO LITERATURE

There are some difficulties in learning English for specific purposes, the first difficulties are related to students. According to Suzani (2011), the students' demand for ESP is not met adequately, as follows: students are not ready for ESP courses; ESP classes are often too large; sometimes ESP classes are delayed or canceled for no obvious reason; in some universities, the learners' motivation decreases because students think that ESP do not important for their future job students find that ESP is too different from general English; and ESP teaching methods are still passive.

Secondly,the difficulties related to the teachers are stated by Thi To Hoa & Thi Tuyet Mai (2016) one of them is quality of lectures and textbooks: in ESP courses now, most materials are designed to develop skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, but some teachers believe that a good vocabulary is enough for students. Therefore, a number of textbooks developed by teachers do not bring students much interest because of focus on only reading skills and vocabulary exercises. Furthermore, according to Ho (2011), teachers also face problems related to course design, tasks, assignments and teaching methods. In classes, students have to participate in group activities, presentations, taking minutes, writing essays about the learned knowledge/topics. However, due to lack of time, teaching some lessons are sometimes not highly effective.

The last difficulties are related to environment and others lack of teaching materials. Maruyama (1996) stated that the ESP materials which are at too high level compared to students' proficiency made students feel bored to learn. In addition, students can not expand their understanding

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because of limited knowledge of the textbook. Many students admit that they learn ESP because they have to learn but they want to; and no longer remember learned knowledge after exams. Moreover, Maruyama (1996) also stated that the classes have too large students number, this has a significant impact on ESP teaching efficiency, especially when there is the difference in students' proficiency. Most students find it too difficult or too easy compared to their knowledge. Therefore, students do not have the motivation to study this subject.

3. METHOD

This study used content analysis as a research tool. Content analysis is determine the presence of certain concepts within sets of texts. The writer analyzes the presence, meanings and relationships of such words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages within the texts. According to Louis Cohen (2007) content analysis is a process of summarizing and reporting written data—the main contents of data and their messages. So, content analysis is used to interpret the texts to be understood by the other people.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In brief, Thi To Hoa & Thi Tuyet Mai (2016) in their article found some difficulties in teaching ESP, there are: (a)The worrying problem for teaching English at Vietnam universities concerns a large proportion of students lacking general English and ESP. (b) Lack of teaching materials and incomplete textbook content are a big issue for teaching ESP. (c) Teaching ESP is still ineffective because teachers are not trained specialized knowledge. Besides, learning efficiency assessment is not accurate because the majority of exams are designed by teachers. (d) Classes with too large student number and heavily focused examination have a negative impact on teaching ESP.

Thi To Hoa & Thi Tuyet Mai (2016) also provided some recomendations for those difficulties, there are:

4.1 Recommendations for Students

Students should aware of learning objectives by enhancing the learning responsibility such as regular class attendance and paying attention to the lectures explanations. Students also need to create the ESP learning motivation by remembering the benefits of learning ESP for their future jobs. Students should be more active in the class by participating in discussions, presentations and group activities. Beside, students can get English course outside the classroom or joint English clubs in the universites.

Students need to find more materials other than those obtained in classroom, they can find materials in the internet about specialized documents for improving reading comprehension skills. Students should spend more time practicing the English skills and sharing knowledge with friends. Practicing English will increase their fluency. They should find part-time jobs that need to use English, especially ESP for the opportunity to practice regularly the knowledge that they learned in the class. It will increase learning motivation and makes students more confident after graduation because they already get some experiences.

4.2 Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers must improve their knowledge of English for specific purposes by finding more ESP materials; increase lecture attraction by using media of teaching such as authentic materials, and the teachers also can learn from others' experience. This allows them to expand their understanding of teaching ESP. The teachers' professional experience should be improved by actively participating in domestic and overseas professional training courses; and sharing experience with other teachers. This way will help to expand the relationship and enhance professional experiences. Teachers should apply information technology for increasing lectures' attraction as well as saving time and effort. This increases teaching efficiency, and show the milenial teaching process that appropriate to 21st century era.

They need to establish closer relationships with students in the classroom, especially with students who have low ability to understand and share the difficulties that they encounter. In addition, teachers should divide the class into groups of students with different levels and also encourage students to participate in listening and speaking skill training classes. They should regularly update teaching methods by reducing grammar and focusing on the skills of students. Teachers can give more practical activities which help students better understand their major.

4.3 Recommendations for Vietnam Universities, Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam State and Authorities Universities

Universities should allocate time for practical classes and focusing more on ESP. The reason is that students can improve their English by participating in extra classes; meanwhile, they can learn ESP only at universities with appropriate curriculum and experienced teachers. Universities should adjust the student number of English classes (about 20 students in a class). This helps students have more opportunities to practice ESP, by decreasing the gap of students' proficiency difference raises learning motivation. Besides, universities need to invest more in teaching materials, especially textbooks by actively coordinating with domestic and overseas universities to develop ESP textbooks that suitable with Vietnam students' qualification and Vietnam actual situation. Universities should increase the cooperation among others universities (in Vietnam and other country) in order to increase the opportunities for learning and sharing experiences and knowledge among teachers.

Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training can organize seminars for enhancing teachers' qualification. Finally, Vietnam State, Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training and relevant authorities should reduce examination pressure for students by improving their real proficiency. Also, the validity of assessment is very important, the test must be made or checked by the expert.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In the article written by Thi To Hoa & Thi Tuyet Mai (2016) under the title Difficulties in Teaching English for Specific Purposes: Empirical Study at Vietnam Universities, the wtiter not only shown the results about the difficulties in teaching ESP but they gave some recomendations for the readers. Although the place of study in Vietnam, but the same difficulties may be found in the other countries.

There are some informations and recomendation that will be useful in teaching ESP, the readers can apply the suggestions depend on the situation of teaching ESP in different places.

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