I. Introduction

As an approach to English as a second and foreign language (ESL/EFL) teaching, content-based instruction (CBI) is a relative newcomer to the field. Growing out of its origins in immersion education, the language-across-the-curriculum movement, and English for specific purposes (ESP), it first appeared on the general language teaching scene in the mid-to late 1980s. In spite of its short history in the pedagogical arena, ESP had assumed global dimensions by the mid-1990s—as attested to by its place of dominance at professional conferences such as that of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and by its strong impact on the ESL/EFL publishing field. As TESOL enters its second quarter century, the demand for ESP continues to increase and expand throughout the world.

This paper introduces the modern history of ESP. I will start by presenting a standard definition of ESP, and continue by discussing the distinguishing characteristics of the movement, needs analysis and discourse analysis, that have set it apart from "general purpose English." I will also present some practical and essential issues in designing ESP courses in the latter half of this paper.

II. Theory

1. A Definition of English for Specific Purposes

ESP requires the careful research and design of pedagogical materials and activities for an identifiable group of adult learners within a specific learning context. Categories of ESP include various forms of academic English, such as English for medicine, English for science and technology, English for humanity studies, and "general" English for academic purposes, in addition to a number of forms of occupational English such as English for business and English for hotel clerks.

According to Strevens (1988), a definition of ESP needs to distinguish between four absolute and two variable characteristics:

a. Absolute characteristics:
   - ESP consists of English language teaching which is:
     - designed to meet specific needs of the learner
     - related in content (i.e., in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities.

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—centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse semantics, etc., and analysis of this discourse
— in contrast with "General English"

b. Variable characteristics:
   ESP may be, but is not necessarily:
   — restricted as to the language skills to be learned (e.g., reading only)
   — not taught according to any pre-ordained methodology

Claims: the claims for ESP are:
— being focused on the learner’s need, wastes no time
— is relevant to the learner
— is successful in imparting learning
— is more cost-effective than "General English"

Strevens’ widely accepted definition will be employed here to discuss two absolute components of ESP: needs analysis and discourse analysis.

2. Needs Analysis

Throughout its history, ESP practitioners have been preoccupied with learner needs, and with identifying learner wants and purposes as integral and obligatory elements in materials design. In early years, needs analyses were fairly simple precourse procedures. Recent needs analyses have grown increasingly sophisticated, however, as materials developers have become aware of the problematic nature of their task. One attempt to capture some of the complexity of the means by which individuals acquire and employ language was made by Jacobson (1986), who observed international students in the process of collecting data for a laboratory report, in order to determine at which points there was communication breakdown. Though the problems involved in analyzing learner needs and understanding the situation in which they will be using English are daunting, ESP materials designers and practitioners continue in their efforts to improve and expand their collection and analysis techniques. They argue that all students are enrolled in ESL or EFL classes for particular reasons and that the students’ target English situations have identifiable elements: thus, it is the responsibility of teachers to discover these factors and to deliver courses that are suitable for their student populations.

3. Discourse Analysis

A second, closely related element is discourse analysis, which in ESP refers to the examination of written or oral language, generally for the purpose of designing curricular materials. Throughout its recent history, ESP specialists have been concerned with identifying and weighing the important features of the authentic, or genuine language of the situations in which students will be using English. In many parts of the world, the focus of this analysis is upon word or item counts, or lexicostatistics. These counts have become increasingly sophisticated over the years. Three promising approaches to modern item counts are the tense/aspect/mood function approaches, communicative notions, and concordancing. For the first approach, recent researchers have focused on the passive. They have explored the incidence and functions of this feature acknowledged as typical of English for science and technology, within journal articles in a single, well-defined discourse community, astrophysics. In addition to destroying assumptions about the scientific passive in general, the researchers turned to an expert
within the astrophysics discourse community to validate their assumptions. The use of experts to suggest and confirm needs and discourse analysis hypotheses has continued since that time. A second approach, based upon communicative notions, has been inspired by communicative syllabus design. A communicative approach was taken by Kennedy (1987), for example, who employed three different methods to identify nearly 200 different linguistic devices to signal temporal frequency in academic texts.

A third approach in text feature analysis is concordancing. In a typical concordancing program by Stevens (1991), for example, most of the reading texts assigned to students in their classes in science and technology are on the computer. Students and materials designers use the concordancing system to discover how often and in what contexts words or phrases appear.

Thus far, we have discussed two approaches to analyzing genuine discourse serving real purposes in specified contexts for the development of ESP materials. However, this external view cannot satisfy the many adherents of the general process, learner-centered philosophies. Thus, there have begun a number of studies focusing upon learner interaction with discourse.

III. Approach

1. Choosing Appropriate Subject Content

In any ESL/EFL class, there is a tension between teaching language skills and teaching academic subject content. Having rejected the grammatical syllabus and the study of language as form, the profession has gone on, through a series of needs analysis, to teach the use of language in the communicative settings that students are most likely to encounter. As a result, academically oriented ESL/EFL classes now outwardly resemble other subject classrooms in the types of language activity the students are asked to perform.

Yet the ESL/EFL syllabus is still primarily a language syllabus. As language teachers, we are generally less concerned that our students master specific subject content than we are that they attain a certain level of language proficiency. The content is interesting only insofar as it can be used for the performance of communicative tasks. At this point we need to raise a general question in course design: Is the choice of content for language courses really of little consequence as long as the learners are involved in language practice that is appropriate to their skill level?

2. Models for Combining Language and Content

Courses in which primary emphasis is given to the development of one or more language skills are known as skills-based courses. When the sequence of lessons in the syllabus is not determined by the language skills to be learned, but rather by the content itself, we call the course content-based.

Many skills-based ESL/EFL are nonspecialized in content in that selections used for reading and listening passages range across several disciplines. In ESL/EFL courses such as Advanced Composition or Advanced Reading, the language skill is at the core, and the content of the course is chosen more or less arbitrarily to provide practice in that skill. Reading Assignments within the span of one term may include social history, philosophy, biology, psychology, and fiction.

One advantage of this plan is that eventually everyone's special interest is more likely to be met,
and students are provided with an excellent introduction to the thought processes required for a liberal arts education. Because the skills-based ESL course is organized around the content of many disciplines, it can serve an important function in orienting students to their study of the academic subjects.

While a general ESL/EFL course can provide a glimpse into various disciplines, it can not provide the depth of information and types of analysis in one field which are necessary to develop the cognitive skills required for a specific academic course. A typical college course builds on itself as the semester progresses, presenting a set of principles and ideas and technical terminology. Learning is cumulative; students are asked throughout the term to remember and to use information which shows deep and complex relationships. Students asked to become socialized into the culture of the discipline, to use its tools of analysis, and to think like a specialist. To be proficient in an academic discipline is to have a sense of the discipline as it unfolds through time.

3. Balancing Language and Content

No matter how we design courses, the tension between content and language skills does not disappear. Students sense the importance of content in the academic lectures and text. Accordingly, they may be much more interested in using the ESL/EFL study skills hour to review academic content than engage in skill-building activities which do not seem to offer an immediate reward.

The ESL/EFL instructors must resist pressure to dwell only on content. They may plan a lesson on understanding vocabulary from context and find instead they are repeating some academic lectures, in simplified form. Digressions like this endanger the authenticity of the course, as a nonspecialists' simplifications of the lectures often distort course content. The ultimate sources of authority are the text and the professor, and the ESL/EFL teacher's role is to teach students to get the information they need from these sources.

4. Language Skill Goals

The syllabus for the ESP course claims that "at the end of the course, students will have better skills for academic work and will be able to use these skills in all their academic subjects." The following language improvement goals for each skill are given.

Listening Comprehension—Listening exercises focus on the ability to follow the main ideas of a lecture, to understand supporting examples and nonverbal information, to take useful notes, to determine what has not been understood, and to identify a way to clarify that information.

Reading—Reading exercises develop the ability to follow the main idea of passage, to read selectively for information which answers specific questions, to read different types of prose, such as novels or newspaper articles, and to increase the rate of reading to a speed which permits efficient academic performance.

Composition—Composition tasks work on the ability to summarize and paraphrase information, to synthesize information from a variety of sources, to apply previously learned concepts to new situations, and to write short answers to essay test items under time pressure.

Speaking—Speaking exercise enables students to ask questions for clarification of information, to contribute actively to class discussions and problem solving activities, to use interview
techniques to obtain information from native speakers of English, and to present oral reports based on reading or research.

IV. Conclusion

Linking content and language is one solution for offering English instruction that moves beyond remediation in response to the linguistic, social, cultural, and intellectual demands made by college courses on students. Perhaps the most important message of this paper is that improving English education means improving the communication among all members of the academic community—students, content faculty, language faculty and administrators.

References


[和文要約]

専門学習と連動した英語教育：理論編

第二言語および外国語としての英語教育における新たな教授方法として、専門分野の学習内容と連関した言語指導が注目されている。この教授法は1980年代以降、専門学習カリキュラムと一貫した言語教育や、特定の目的達成を目指した英語教育などを根拠としている。そこで本論文では、専門分野の学習内容と連動した英語教育を行うための理論的背景として、教授法の定義、近年の傾向と特徴、分析方法について論じるとともに、実践的な教授法のためのヒントを紹介する。