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ESP TEACHER'S ROLE: FROM A TEACHER TO A MASTER OF BUILDING AUTONOMY

Petrushkova Anastasiia Mykolayivna,
ESP practitioner at the Department of Language for Specific Purposes of
Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University
anastasiapetruskova44@gmail.com
orcid.org/0000-0003-4972-9954

The role of the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) teacher has evolved in response to societal and educational shifts. Despite the extensive exploration of teacher roles in general ELT, the evolving nature and specific challenges of the ESP teacher's responsibilities have remained underexplored. This article aims to bridge this gap by presenting a comprehensive framework of the ESP teacher's multifaceted roles, emphasizing their significance in contemporary educational contexts. This article explores the changing nature of the ESP teacher's role, conducting a retrospective analysis based on existing scholarly work, and identifies key aspects of the teacher's multifaceted responsibilities. Initially, the role of the teacher in general education was often teacher-centered, with the educator seen as the authority and primary decision-maker. Over time, this shifted towards a learner-centered model where the teacher acts as a facilitator, encouraging autonomy and student involvement.

The article categorizes these roles into eight key functions: course designer, facilitator, subject-matter researcher, methodology researcher, collaborator, autonomy-builder, evaluator, and project manager. These roles are essential for addressing the specific needs of learners in various professional fields. The research highlights the need for specialized knowledge in both language and the specific discipline being taught, along with a comprehensive understanding of teaching methodologies. The ongoing transformation in the role of the ESP teacher reflects broader changes in the educational landscape, where personalized, context-driven instruction is increasingly prioritized. As ESP education continues to adapt to the demands of a globalized and digital world, teachers must develop new skills, embrace learner autonomy, and foster effective collaboration to remain relevant in the evolving educational environment.

Key words: ESP methodology, teacher role, learner-centered approach, learner autonomy, globalization.

РОЛЬ ВИКЛАДАЧА ESP: ВІД УЧИТЕЛЯ ДО МАЙСТРА ПОБУДОВИ АВТОНОМІЇ

Петрушкова Анастасія Миколаївна,
викладач кафедри іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням
Луганський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка
anastasiapetruskova44@gmail.com
orcid.org/0000-0003-4972-9954

Роль викладача ESP (англійської мови для спеціальних цілей) змінюється у відповідь на суспільні та освітні зміни. Попри широке вивчення ролей викладачів у загальному викладанні англійської мови (ELT) еволюція та специфічні виклики, пов'язані з обов'язками викладача ESP, залишаються недостатньо дослідженими. Ця стаття має на меті заповнити цю прогалину, представляючи всебічну структуру багатогранних ролей викладача ESP, підкреслюючи їх важливість у сучасному освітньому контексті. У статті досліджується еволюція ролі викладача ESP шляхом ретроспективного аналізу на основі наявних наукових праць. Також окреслюються основні аспекти різноманітних обов'язків викладача. Спочатку роль викладача в системі загальної освіти часто була зосереджена на самому викладачеві (teacher-centered): педагог виступав як авторитет і головний приймач рішень. Із часом ця модель еволюціонувала до орієнтованої на учня (learner-centered), де викладач виконує роль фасилітатора, сприяючи автономії та залученню студентів. Авторка класифікує ці ролі на вісім ключових функцій: розробник курсу, фасилітатор, дослідник предметної галузі, дослідник методології, колаборатор, формувач автономності, оцінювач і керівник проєктів. Ці ролі є важливими для задоволення специфічних потреб учнів у різних професійних сферах. Дослідження підкреслює потребу у спеціалізованих знаннях як з іноземної мови, так і з конкретної спеціальності, у рамках якої викладається іноземна, а також у ґрунтовному розумінні методології викладання. Триваюча трансформація ролі викладача ESP відображає ширші зміни в освітньому середовищі, де все більше уваги приділяється персоналізованому та контекстно орієнтованому навчанню. Оскільки освіта ESP продовжує адаптуватися до викликів глобалізованого та цифрового світу, викладачі повинні розвивати нові навички,



підтримувати автономію тих, хто навчається, і сприяти ефективній співпраці, щоб залишатися актуальними в умовах змін освітнього середовища.

Ключові слова: методологія ESP, роль учителя, орієнтований на учня підхід, автономія учня, глобалізація.

Problem statement. A teacher, like any other profession, is evolving in accordance with the needs and demands of society. Developments in technology, globalization, wars, and artificial intelligence are significantly shifting the roles of teachers. Many scholars, such as Douglas H. Brown, Wright T., Byrne O., and J. Harmer, have researched the topic of teachers' roles. However, the development of the roles of ESP teachers has not been extensively explored so far.

ESP is not just a matter of Science words and grammar for Scientists, Hotel words and grammar for Hotel staff and so on (Hutchinson, Waters, 1987:19). It is an approach to language learning, which is based on learner need. ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning. ELT and ESP have in common is that they are all primarily concerned with communication and learning. ESP should properly be seen not as any particular language product but as an approach to language teaching which is directed by specific and apparent reasons for learning (Hutchinson, Waters, 1987).

Aim of the article. The aim of this article is to conduct a retrospective analysis of the role of the ESP teacher. To achieve this, we will define the teacher's role, review classifications of teachers' roles, and trace their evolution in the field of ESP.

Methods. *Retrospective Analysis:* investigation of the historical evolution of teacher roles, transitioning from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches; evaluation of pedagogical models and their application in ESP teaching over time. *Qualitative Analysis:* identification and categorization of the diverse roles of ESP teachers based on a synthesis of literature and observed teaching practices. *Comparative Analysis:* comparison between roles of ESP teachers and General English teachers to highlight the unique aspects of ESP teaching; analysis of methodologies and their impact on ESP course design and delivery. *Conceptual Framework Development:* proposing an eight-role framework for ESP teachers, incorporating roles like course designer, facilitator, collaborator, evaluator, and autonomy builder; grounding the framework in theoretical insights and practical applications.

The statement of basic materials. According to the British Council *the role of a teacher* is the relationship between the teacher and learner, particularly in terms of the autonomy the learner has over their learning (Teacher role). Based on this definition there are two main approaches to teaching: teacher-centered and learner –

centered. Prior to 1998 most of Europe adhered to a teacher-centered approach, where the teacher was seen as the figure of authority, the sole source of knowledge, and the primary decision-maker, responsible for the learning process. In this model, the teacher acts as both 'controller' and 'assessor' (Harmer, 1983:205). After 1998, there has been a shift towards a learner-centered approach, in which the teacher is viewed as a partner in the learning process. In this role, the teacher becomes a guide, facilitator, negotiator, and encourages learner independence.

Sheerin S. (2018) has outlined that learner-centered approach has aspects in common with other approaches:

- Learner Independence / Learner Autonomy
- Self-access or Resource-based Learning
- Learner Training / Learning Strategies
- Task-based Learning

Learner-centered approach creates new roles for Learners and Teachers and changes the relationships between them (Sheerin).

Teacher's roles

There are two conceptually different roles based on the approach that is used – *teacher-controller* (who is compared to a puppet-master standing at the front of the class and controlling everything) and *teacher-facilitator* (who maintains students' freedom) depending on the organization of the classroom either in teacher-dominated or learner-centred framework (Anisimova, 2010).

Douglas H. Brown identifies teacher as a:

- Controller: a teacher always in charge of every moment in the classroom.
- Director: "a teacher is like a conductor of an orchestra or a director of a drama" (Douglas Brown, 2000: 167) Students engage in either rehearsed or spontaneous language performance, it is teacher's job to keep the process flowing smoothly and efficiently.

- Manager: a teacher plans, lessons, module and courses and who structures the larger, longer segments of classroom time, but who then allows each individual player to be creative within those parameters.

- Facilitator: a teacher step away from the managerial or directive role and allow students, with your guidance and gentle prodding, to find their own pathways to success. A facilitator capitalizes on the principle of intrinsic motivation by allowing students to discover language through using it pragmatically, rather than by telling them about language.

Recourse: role is that the student takes the initiative to come to a teacher. A teacher is



available for advice and counsel when the student seeks it (Douglas Brown, 2000).

Wright T. categorizes teacher roles into the following:

- **Instructor:** Responsible for direct teaching, providing structured knowledge, and guiding students toward achieving learning objectives.

- **Facilitator:** Helps students engage with the material by providing tools and strategies to explore concepts independently.

- **Manager:** Organizes the learning environment, manages time and resources effectively, and ensures smooth classroom operation.

- **Counselor:** Supports learners emotionally and socially, fostering a positive environment and addressing individual needs.

- **Co-communicator:** Collaborates with students in discussions and tasks, promoting a shared learning experience (Wright, 1987).

Byrne O. emphasizes several key roles for teachers in the context of oral English instruction:

- **Presenter:** Teachers introduce new language structures and vocabulary, providing clear, engaging explanations. They ensure that the material is appropriate for the learners' level and needs.

- **Facilitator:** As facilitators, teachers encourage students to actively engage in speaking activities. This involves creating opportunities for communication and helping students build confidence in using the language.

- **Motivator:** Teachers play a crucial role in sustaining students' interest and motivation by selecting or adapting stimulating materials and activities. Byrne highlights the importance of the teacher's energy and sensitivity in maintaining student engagement.

- **Controller:** During practice phases, teachers monitor student activities to ensure they are focused and productive. They provide guidance and feedback while maintaining the flow of the lesson.

- **Evaluator:** Teachers assess students' progress, identifying their strengths and areas for improvement. This role involves setting clear objectives and aligning instruction with students' developmental needs (Byrne Donn, 1987).

J. Harmer (2007) outlines out the following roles:

- **Controller:** teachers are in charge of the class and of the activity taking place and are often 'leading from the front.'

- **Prompter:** a teacher occasionally offers words or phrases, suggest that the students say something (e.g. Well, ask him why he says that) or suggest what could come next in a paragraph a student is writing, for example.

- **Participant:** teachers during student discussions, role-plays or group decision-making activities, is of people who 'stand back' from

the activity, letting the learners get on with it and only intervening later to offer feedback and/or correct mistakes. "There are also times when we might want to join in an activity not (only) as a teacher, but also as a participant in our own right" (Harmer, 2007: 109).

- **Resource:** acts as a source of additional information and guidance when needed (dictionary, website etc.).

- **Tutor:** a combination of the roles of prompter and resource (e.g. when students are working on longer projects, such as process writing or preparation for a talk or a debate, a teacher can work with individuals or small groups pointing them in directions they have not yet thought of taking (Harmer, 2007).

As far as the ESP teacher is concerned, it is important to distinguish between the roles of teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and those teaching General English (GE) in secondary or higher education. For this reason, we should clarify the difference between an ELT teacher and an ESP teacher.

According to T. Hutchinson and A. Waters, the role of the ESP teacher differs significantly from that of the General English teacher in several ways:

An ESP practitioner, in addition to the typical classroom teaching duties, must also handle tasks such as needs analysis, syllabus design, materials writing or adaptation, and evaluation (Hutchinson, Waters, 1987).

The majority of ESP teachers have not received specialized training in this field (Hutchinson, Waters, 1987).

These two differences, emphasized in 1987, are still relevant to the current situation in Ukraine. There are very few universities in Ukraine that include ESP methodology as part of their teacher training programs.

A good ESP teacher has his/her competence built on *four pillars*: solid English language competence, adequate knowledge of the related HEI disciplines, awareness of specific needs of stakeholders in question (university, students, government, job market requirements, etc.), as well as experience with cultural issues of the current international environment (Chmelikova, Hurajova, 2019: 447).

Dudley-Evans and St. John proposed five roles for the: teacher, course designer and materials provider, researcher, collaborator, and an evaluator (Dudley-Evans, John, 1998). We agree with their identification of these roles. However, we believe some of these roles should be further specified, and additional factors should be considered. The teacher's role is not only shaped by the approach to teaching but also by other influences, such as:

1) internationalization of higher education (Bologna Process, European Higher Education



Area (EHEA), Erasmus+ Programme, Horizon Europe Office (2023), Twinning Initiative (2023))

2) conferences on ESP (IATEFL international conference, ESPSIG Online Open Forum, TESOL international conference, all-ukrainian conferences etc.);

3) ESP projects – English for Universities project (2014-2017);

4) digitalization of education – the rapid adoption of online learning platforms and digital tools, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, based on the literature review and qualitative analysis we can identify such 8 ESP roles as:

1) *course designer* – any ESP teacher should design its course to meet the needs of particular learners. Major factor affecting ESP course design are language description, learning theories and needs analysis (Hutchinson, Waters, 1987: 22).

2) *facilitator* – an ESP teacher encourages students to actively engage in speaking activities, prioritizing fluency over accuracy. As a facilitator, he or she also works with mixed-ability students and adapts both the delivery of material and the material itself to accommodate varying levels.

3) *subject-matter researcher* – it is impossible to teach ESP effectively without researching the specific field of study. The teacher must bridge the gap between general language skills and the specialized needs of the learners.

4) *methodology researcher* – to equip learners with the language skills and communicative competence required to perform specific tasks or succeed in particular professional contexts. Teachers need investigate the approach and methods that are used as this information isn't given in teacher training program of the majority of Ukrainian universities.

5) *collaborator* – he or she should cooperate with subject matter lecturers, university administrators, students, job market requirements etc. Collaboration and support are key components of success. A teacher can be at the forefront of ESP education, proficient in English and culturally aware. However, without effective collaboration with all stakeholders, their efforts are likely to fail.

6) *autonomy-builder* – he ESP teacher fosters English learning communities, creating private groups on social media or messengers, using asynchronous teaching methods, and applying task-based learning to promote learner autonomy.

7) *evaluator* – one should evaluate not only course but learner as well. This includes assessing learner progress and course effectiveness.

8) *project managers* – ESP teachers can take the lead in interdisciplinary cooperation

at their higher education institutions by submitting projects that foster collaboration between disciplines.

Conclusions and perspectives of further research. In conclusion, the role of the ESP teacher has evolved significantly from the traditional teacher-centered approach to a more learner-centered, autonomy-building model. This shift is influenced by various factors such as globalization, digitalization, and interdisciplinary needs. ESP teachers now assume a diverse range of roles, including course designers, facilitators, subject-matter researchers, and collaborators, all aimed at addressing the specific needs of learners in professional contexts. As educational approaches continue to change, ESP teachers must adapt to new methodologies, conduct ongoing research, and foster learner independence. Ultimately, the evolving ESP teacher's role reflects the broader changes in education and the increasing demand for specialized, learner-driven language instruction. Further research into the evolving role of the ESP teacher can explore teacher training and professional development in the Slovak and Czech Republic.

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