

**English for Specific Purposes General English: Parallels and Diversities
of Non-native- English-Speaking Teachers**

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Abstract

With the internationalization of English there is a growing demand for high quality English language education around the globe, particularly in non-English speaking countries. Consequently, there is an increasing demand worldwide for competent non - native English-speaking teachers and more effective approaches to teaching and teacher professional development. In India, in a context of educational reform where communicative language teaching approaches have been adopted as a way to improve teaching, this study explores how teachers perceive and respond to this call for change in instructional practices with qualitative and quantitative action research on 30 non-native English-speaking teachers. It examines the professional development experiences of a group of English for Specific purpose and General English teachers working in the private and public basic educational sectors in India. The research questions focus on teachers' perceptions of change and improvement occurring in their teaching practices, their beliefs on the sources of change available to them, and the perspectives of school principals and professional development providers on teachers' change prospects.

Key words: Non -native English-speaking teachers, Parallels, Diversities, Practices.

Introduction on Learning in one's home language

To begin with, let us be clear that there is absolutely nothing wrong in teaching English in schools. There is no research that says it should not be done. Many view English as a means of social mobility and economic progress. It is seen as the language of power. English is also seen as the language of good institutions of higher education, making its knowledge necessary for the pursuit of such institutions. Learning more languages, apart

from being a good in itself, is also known to aid cognitive development in children. Therefore, it certainly may be desirable for all children to learn English.

However, matters get problematic when one starts equating learning a language like English, to teaching in that language – that is, as a medium of instruction in schools. Research supports learning in one's home language. Sound pedagogical principles call for enabling children to construct their own knowledge based on their earlier knowledge and experience, in other words, building from known to unknown. A child who enters school already has a basic grasp of their first language (home language), a reasonable vocabulary and its grammatical structure. Teaching in the mother tongue or home language enables this child to build on their existing knowledge base in a language familiar to them. It facilitates richer classroom interactions, leads to greater participation of learners, and yields better learning outcomes. The school's acknowledgement and acceptance of the child's language and culture leads to a positive identity of self and thereby better educational achievement.

On the other hand, teaching a young child in a language that is unfamiliar to them can make them sink into deeper incomprehension with each passing day. Studies also point out the psychological trauma faced by young children when confronted with an alien language in school, which could also contribute to lower attendance in many situations. Therefore, the language deficit soon becomes a learning deficit.

Globally, several countries have their local languages as the medium of instruction in schools. For instance, countries like China and Finland, which have good results in international tests, do not have English as the medium of instruction. In Finland, Finnish and Swedish are both used as mediums of instruction. Similarly, China recognised that the most effective school education for rich and poor alike is conducted in the mother tongue. However, acknowledging that English skills are also critical, English is taught as a second language in Chinese schools and also at the post-secondary education level.

To compound the problem of teaching young children in a language that may be alien to most of them, there is the issue of teachers themselves lacking the necessary language competency to teach in English. The quality of teaching in English in several private and government schools is questionable. Teachers with poor English language skills have no clue how to teach in the language to children who come from poor, lower- and middle-class backgrounds, where they have never heard this language before. The lack of teachers who can teach competently in English has posed the biggest roadblock in other attempts in the country to convert schools where local languages are the medium of instruction to those that

teach in English. In such a situation, converting the whole educational experience for children into English is only going to worsen their learning experience.

Even on the individual level, a good command of the English language has a major role in elevating individuals' socio-economic status and thus is key to success and prosperity. In non-English speaking countries particularly, this situation necessitates a reconsideration of teachers' competencies and the introduction of professional development opportunities as a way of increasing the effectiveness of English language teaching and learning. Egypt is one such country where the improvement of English language teaching is undertaken as an integral part of its reform and development plans.

The teacher – among other actors involved in any educational improvement efforts – is a central agent. When a change in teaching is introduced, teachers consider its intended scope and reach “interpreting its aims and strategies in relation to their own values, beliefs and practices and circumstances” (Little, 2001, p. 286), and respond according to their assessment of that. While we are increasingly coming to conceptualize that change and teaching improvements are, to a great extent, in the hands of teachers – “it is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do at the level of the classroom that ultimately shape the kind of learning that young people get”, policy makers continue to ignore and override teachers' perspectives and desires, relying instead on principles of compulsion to get teachers to adopt change. This study examines one such case. It focuses on teacher learning, stance, and perspectives on implementing change in a context of reform and innovations in English language education.

This study gives a practical and reasonable sense of the process of change as teachers experience it. The central aim of this study is to describe the experiences of local and non-native speaking English teachers. This study examines the phenomenon of change in English language teaching approaches and it focuses on teachers' perspectives on their professional development experiences and change prospects during their careers in education. It explores how a group of English for Specific Purpose teachers and General English teachers, working in the public and private sectors, cope with the contextual constraints they encounter in their work as they address the new educational demands brought by the profound currents of change in English language teaching and content-based language instruction.

Employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the present work is based on data from teacher surveys, semi-structured, in-depth interviews, and notes from observation and documents. While the primary aim of this study is to elucidate the process of change of

practice through the eyes of teachers, it invites the perspectives of others who work closely with teachers, namely school principals and professional development providers, so as to contextualize the topics addressed.

The main questions addressed are:

- How do Non-native English -speaking teachers perceive their teaching as having changed over the period of their careers in education in ESP.
- How do teachers develop opportunities and use innovative methods to teach General English?

According to D.H. Scott in teaching General English is; "The clever youngster thrives on the direct method by defeating it". Second, this method lays emphasis on aural-oral appeal; but the spoken sounds of it may be profitable for some pupils but not for all. There are many pupils who benefit more by visual appeal. Visual presentation is more fruitful for them than merely vocal. This method is not productive for such students because it ignores reading and writing work. The students may suffer from defects in reading and writing if this problem is not cured by employing other methods. Third, grammar that is essential is not taught in a systematic manner. According to this method grammar should be taught inductively and indirectly, but such text-books in which grammar and reading material are closely related are not in the syllabus. Fourth, this method demands an environment of English and that environment is almost impossible to create in such rural and remote schools and colleges.

The nature of the teaching profession is cognitively, emotionally and physically demanding. Despite both a full work day and after-hours work, it is a job that is never really done. Teachers are often in a race with time to fulfil their daily teaching responsibilities. Therefore, they may not be receptive to adding another dimension to their already full agenda unless they perceive a need for such an endeavour.

Methodology

The purpose of this research study is to know about the perceptions and show on measures the actual level of non-native English-speaking teachers while teaching English for specific purpose and General English for the learners. The methods included for the study were:

- Interview
- Questionnaire
- Group Discussion

About 30 English teachers from a particular institution were interviewed on the parallels and diversities of teaching English for a Specific Purpose and General English. The face to face

interview was a structured interview with various content on the pedagogy, evaluation, assessment and materials used for teaching English. A questionnaire was prepared to understand the perceptions and opinions of the non-native English-speaking teachers and the data collected was formulated into pie charts. A group discussion was also conducted to recognise the issues and situations faced by the teaching faculty members while teaching in a classroom.

Data Analysis

The qualitative survey that was conducted in the present research aims to find out the various perception's and experiences of the non-native English-speaking teachers. The survey has been conducted on 30 non-native English-speaking teachers from a particular private organisation with age group of 30-40. The survey was planned with the preparation of questions in a sheet of survey paper, wherein the questions were prepared to find out the different knowledge of the non-native English-speaking teachers towards the parallels and diversities faced in teaching English for Specific Purpose and General English. The sheet of questions was given to the students following with instructions to be very forthright in answering. Five set of options were given to them as following: always, usually, occasionally, rarely and never, the non-native English-speaking teachers are guided to pick one of the given rubrics as their answer.

During the survey there are many things that are being noticed as many of them were really confused in what to leave the answer as. There was no time frame set for the during the survey there are many things that are being noticed as many of them were really confused in what to leave the answer as. There was no time frame set for the non-native English-speaking teachers to answer and give back the sheets, as this had helped them to think of each question very politely in their ways of understanding. After a certain time, the sheets were collected and the researcher had gone through the analysis, where it is found that there are students who also had written the remarks, which meant that they had never been to such survey and they felt free to answer out of their experiences.

Later the sheets were examined and analysed on the basis of hypothesis of non-native English-speaking teachers that they go through every day in English language class. The analysed results are shown in the format of pie chart with the percentage of answers/views that are given by non-native English-speaking teachers, as this helps in a way better understanding of the non-native English-speaking teachers' perspectives towards the parallels and diversities faced in teaching English for Specific Purpose and General English in

different ways. This research helps in to check on the various difficulties that are being faced by the parallels and diversities faced in teaching English for Specific Purpose and General English towards learning and had helped them to think of each question very politely in their ways of understanding.

1. I do my homework before teaching my students in an ESP class

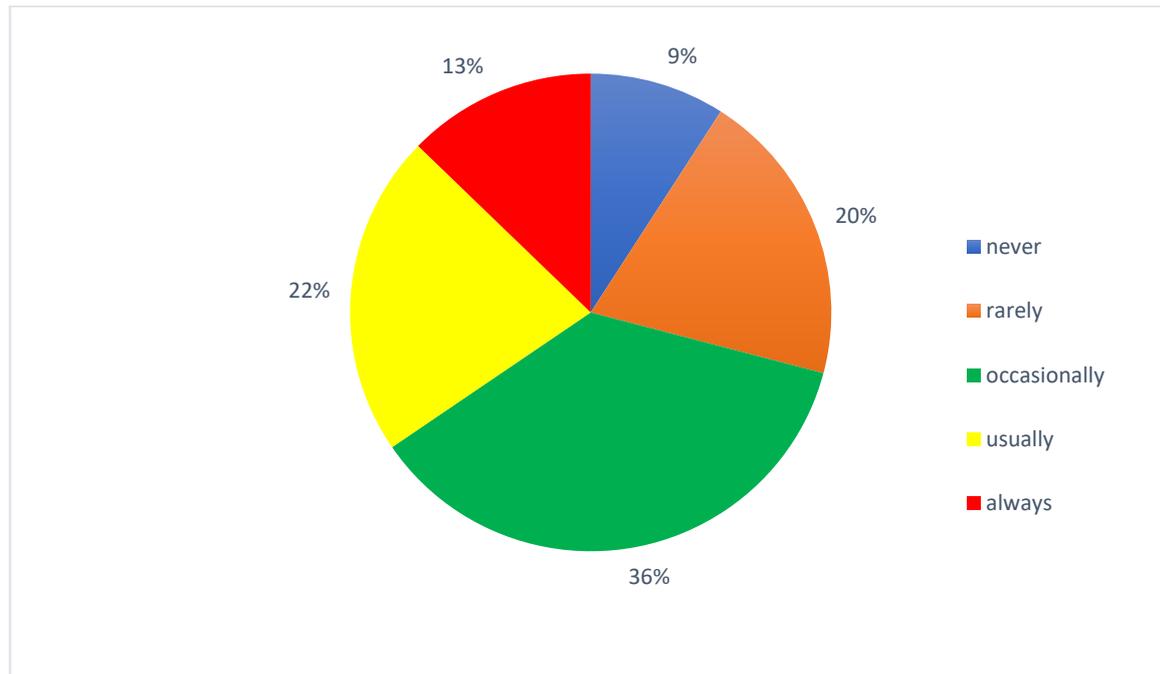


Figure- 1.1

According to this survey 13% of the non-native English-speaking teachers always felt that there was a need and necessity in doing homework and use activity-based teaching in an ESP class.

22% of the non-native English-speaking teachers expressed that they usually revise the syllabus before entering the class in the class usually which mean that they also use to be innovative methods to teach ESP. 36% non-native English-speaking teachers expressed that occasionally they felt that, innovative methods involve lot of time and needs lot of preparation. 20% non-native English-speaking teachers expressed that they are rarely use or do homework before the class. And 9% non-native English-speaking teachers expressed that they never try new methods and hence don't do homework before class.

2. I teach General English because it is not demanding

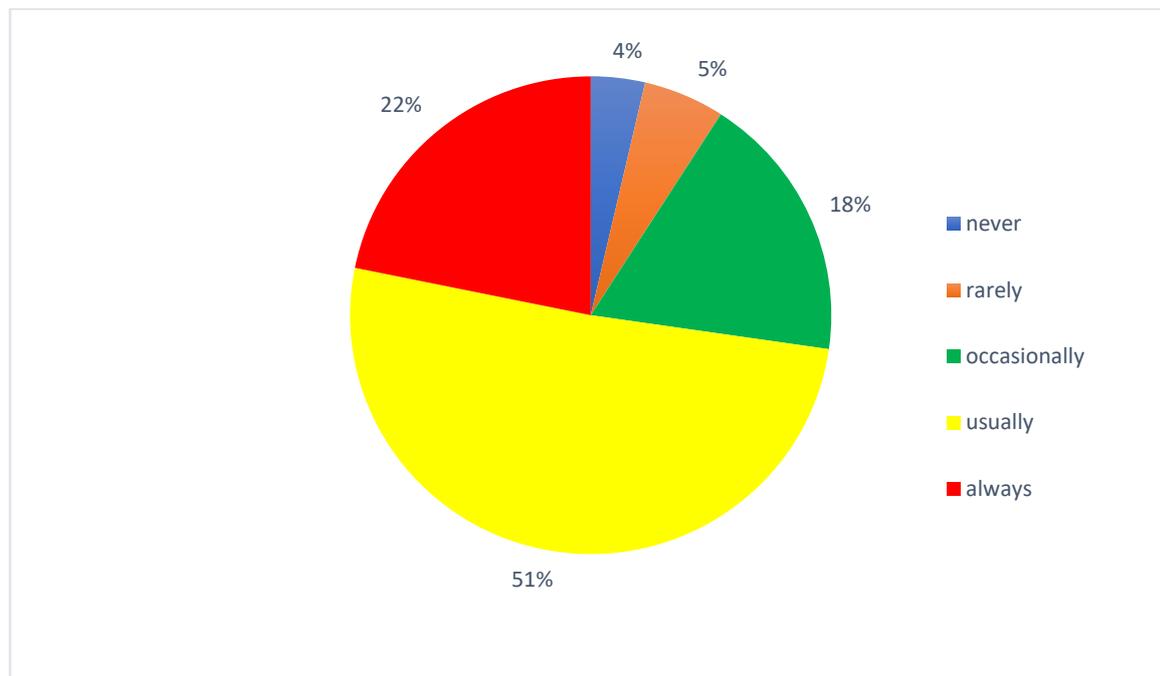


Figure- 1.2

According to this survey 22% of the non-native English-speaking teachers stated that always there is a benefit in teaching General English because it is less demanding. 51% strongly mentioned that usually teaching General English is much easier compared to other genre. 18% non-native English-speaking teachers stated that they opted for other genres occasionally. 5% non-native English-speaking teachers stated that they rarely picked up through in reading. 4% non-native English-speaking teachers stated that they never try to opt any other subject other than General English because it is one-time preparation maybe due to their concentration and acquisition levels.

Parallels and Diversities in Teaching ESP and General English

Important difference between English for Specific Purpose and General English is in learner and their purpose for learning English. ESP learners are generally adult learners. ESL and ESP is not only different from the medium of instruction and nature of learner but it is also different from the point of language skills as general English focus on all four language skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing but ESP is based on need analysis and so it focus on language skills which is most needed by the learner and syllabus is designed accordingly. ESP combines subject matter as well as English language teaching which will

motivate non-native English-speaking teachers as they can apply their learning into their main field of work. Moreover, the term “specific” in ESP refers to the specific purpose for learning English.

An ESP teacher can play many roles in the classroom such as organize courses, set learning objective, to evaluate student’s progress etc. The learners come to the ESP class with specific interest for learning, subject matter knowledge and well-built adult learning strategies. In ESP the student is well disposed to focus on meaning in the subject matter field. English should be presented not as a subject to be learned in isolation from real use.

ESP always rests on the knowledge of General English. The latter is more devoted to learning grammar structures and general vocabulary. The first one aims at consolidating grammar, pronunciation and other skills and at acquisition of a specialized meaning of words in specific professional contexts. Many a student still may feel like being at school. Thus, they wait for the teacher’s instructions. Such non-native English-speaking teachers must learn how to learn language independently, that is how to study the language by oneself and become an independent learner. The language teacher should encourage the student to attend the classes and be active during them. Such activity is profitable as it makes him think and share his ideas expressing them in English. Only speaking he learns the language. The teacher must always stress “the need to develop “speakers” sense as communicators at a global level by adding an extra dimension to our communicative competence”.

The Role of Non-native- English-Speaking Teachers

It is the responsibility of the teacher to guide the language learning process in a General English Classroom by:

- Modelling pronunciation, intonation, stress, rhythm, and oral expression
- Facilitating comprehension of vocabulary, idioms, cultural aspects, and plot
- Stimulating interest and conversation, and interacting with the non-native English-speaking teachers
- Establishing an acting workshop atmosphere
- Creating a student-participatory language learning experience

The ESP teacher needs to create a specific domain to teach the learners according to their need, say for example for literature non-native English-speaking teachers creating a poetry file by carefully selecting and categorizing a substantial variety of poems. In selecting poems, special consideration must be given to appropriateness of the following:

- non-native English-speaking teachers' language level skills
- non-native English-speaking teachers' ages
- non-native English-speaking teachers' interests

Categorizing poems makes them easy to reference and integrate into other instructional disciplines (i.e., science, health, math, and citizenship) and themes (i.e., holidays and seasons). To further facilitate the communicative approach to second language acquisition, the teacher can record the dramatizations and improvisations. A great deal of conversation will be stimulated when the non-native English-speaking teachers relive their experiences through tape recordings, video recordings, and still photography.

The teacher should plan follow-up activities about the dramatizations and improvisations that allow for individual expression of the cooperative experience. The non-native English-speaking teachers can illustrate and write about the activity or poem. Future lessons can also include the dramatization and improvisation of short stories, fables, and plays. The same techniques and follow-up activities should be employed.

Conclusion and Discussion

Teaching English to speakers of other languages by non-native English-speaking Teachers can be looked at from many different angles. One useful way is to look at the teaching process as the teaching of various language skills. There are, in general, four language skills, each based upon the modality of emphasis. These are the Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing skills. Generally speaking, it is emphasized that we first teach listening, then speaking, then reading and writing. However, in real life situations of language communication, these skills are interdependent in many ways, even though they can be taught independently to some extent. For decades or more English has been taught as a content-based subject like mathematics or science and so on. But it is not a content-based subject; it is a skill-based subject. English is not about any particular subject but it is rather about practicing something - listening, speaking, reading and writing. Of course, while practicing these, non-native English-speaking teachers do not do these in a vacuum. Rather they speak, read or write about something. Topics, therefore, have been included in the curriculum, but they are not important in themselves. They have been so treated as to work as necessary vehicles for the practice of four language skills.

In the information rich and technology intensive society, teaching of English has to be relevant in term of learner's needs, parallel to ESP. The socio-economic needs of the learners

are changing day after day under the influences of globalization. Each of us begins to realize that the traditional system of teaching English as a second language is inadequate in several respects for meeting the changing needs of the learners. In most of non-metropolitan colleges/schools, the non-native English-speaking teachers are still being taught through the traditional way of teaching English. So, teaching of General English in Indian classrooms along with its curriculum, written materials, teaching system, etc. do not help the non-native English-speaking teachers to meet the new requirements of today. It is clear that more than 80% schools/ Colleges/ universities have the traditional departments of English. The chief objective of teaching English is to enable the student to use the English effectively. But it is noticeable how many non-native English-speaking teachers are achieving this goal. In the colleges/ schools of small cities, the non-native English-speaking teachers remain crazily exam-centric, and for them learning equals memorization. For this deplorable situation, the reason is that they do not have much chances of listening the teacher and reading of good books on English for Specific Purpose.

The attitudes of teachers in general are yet another factor that stands in the way of effective English language teaching. These attitudes are a legacy of the past and have become part of traditional thinking and practice. The teachers do not exactly understand the main aim of teaching English for specific goal. They feel fully satisfied if the pupils are kept busy during the whole period during the general English classes. In addition, there is a shortage of well-trained, fully qualified teachers of English in schools and colleges for teaching and facilitating English for a specific purpose. The direct method and the bilingual method have been introduced and the structural approach and the communicative approach have been adopted, yet no progress seems to have been achieved. Teaching has received a stimulus from the testing movement, however, and has been given a name borrowed from the medical profession. It has for its objectives the development of effective techniques for the correction of mistakes in all sorts of learning.

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