The Establishment of New-breed Departments

The middle and late 1990s witnessed a drastic shift of English education in Taiwanese colleges and universities. That was the time when many science/technology institutions leaped to the idea of establishing English or foreign language departments that are application- or utility-oriented. While the emergence of the first flagship department took a long duration to become realized, the subsequent setting up of sister institutes increased by leaps and bounds. Bearing the unconventional titles of “Department of Applied English”, “Department of Applied Foreign Languages”, or something nearly alike, these academic entities aspired to bring a stronger foothold for the disciplines of English or foreign language studies. In the past years this educational trend led to the multiplication of ESP curricula or programs in higher education institutions throughout the island. Individuals in charge of the establishment believed that we could make a difference for college English education by injecting into it the new blood of so called “applied English” or “practical English”, much the same way we embrace the concept of “applied chemistry” or “applied mathematics.” They honored passionately the coaching of English for specific purposes (ESP, in contrast to that for general use), intending to develop graduates who demonstrate an effective command of job-specific language.

Up to this moment a considerable number of ESP curricula and programs have arisen in the Taiwanese context. The establishment of these “new-breed” departments steadily gained public attention and support at their initial stage, when the government and the private sectors strove to build Taiwan as a regional operation center. The kick-off of this business infrastructure, as they expected, would convene an enormous pool of manpower or work force that was bilingually competent.

A decade or so has passed since the first “Department of Applied Foreign Languages” came out. There is evidence showing signs of mal-operation or mal-functioning pertaining to these institutes. A buzz becoming increasingly audible is concerned with the roles that these new-breed academic units fail to play. Ideally, these departments should be responsible for the spreading and upgrading of

English education in the institutions where they station. In reality, they are running into a dead-end in recent years, when they have weathered the downgrading of student quality, lost the number of the newly admitted, and fell behind their peers in maintaining the cutting edge of competitive power. Here comes the judgment time for us to redefine the roles, purposes, and even necessity of these institutes.

ESP in Taiwan: The Application of an Imported Idea

To get a well-round knowledge of the problems underlying ESP practice in Taiwan, we need to gain a fundamental understanding of the categories and natures of ESP. In essence, the idea to implement ESP in a non-English-speaking culture like Taiwan was not locally hatched. It is an imported idea or concept that needs adjustments in goal and practice to make it applicable in the local environment. In this regard, we may get a rough idea of the applicability issue by referring to some prominent scholarly works. According to Johns and Price-Machado (2001), ESP is a movement "based on the proposition that all language teaching should be tailored to the specific learning and language uses needs of identified groups of students--and also sensitive to the sociocultural contexts in which these students will be using English" (p. 43). Most of the movement's practitioners are teachers of adults, those students whose needs are more readily identified within academic, occupational, or professional settings.

Johns (1991) mentions that ESP in the western societies comprises a diverse group of teachers and curriculum designers. These individuals are dedicated to the proposition that all teaching must be designed for specific purposes of language learning and use done by identified groups of students. Taking the programs of ESP in the North America as an example, they are closely allied to content-based instruction for primary and secondary immigrant students, and to survival and vocational programs for adults who are not native speakers of English. What the students need to master is to know the features of the English that they must employ in the "real world" (Johns, 1991, p. 67).

It is beneficial for us to maintain minimum knowledge of the categories of ESP that are prevalently practiced throughout the US and other European countries. Figure 1 illustrates an adaptation of the construct seen in Johns and Price-Machado

(2001, p. 44). At the conceptual level, we need to first become acquainted with the unique features of ESP programs. In practice, we need to be able to identify the difficulties facing ESP programs offered by local science/technology institutions.

What is worth mentioning is that, frequently, ESP is assumed to engage students who are not beginners of English. Rather, the intended learners are the ones who have already studied general English for some years. However, as Robinson (1991) puts it, ESP can certainly be taught to students who are beginning their study of the language. According to him, a number of features are often thought of as criterial to ESP courses. First, ESP is normally goal oriented, with students who may study English not because of interest but because they need it for study or work purposes. Second, an ESP course is based on a needs analysis, which aims to specify as closely as possible what exactly it is that students have to do through the medium of English. Finally, ESP courses may be written about as though they consist of identical students; that is, all the students in a class are involved in the same kind of work or specialist studies (Robinson, 1991).

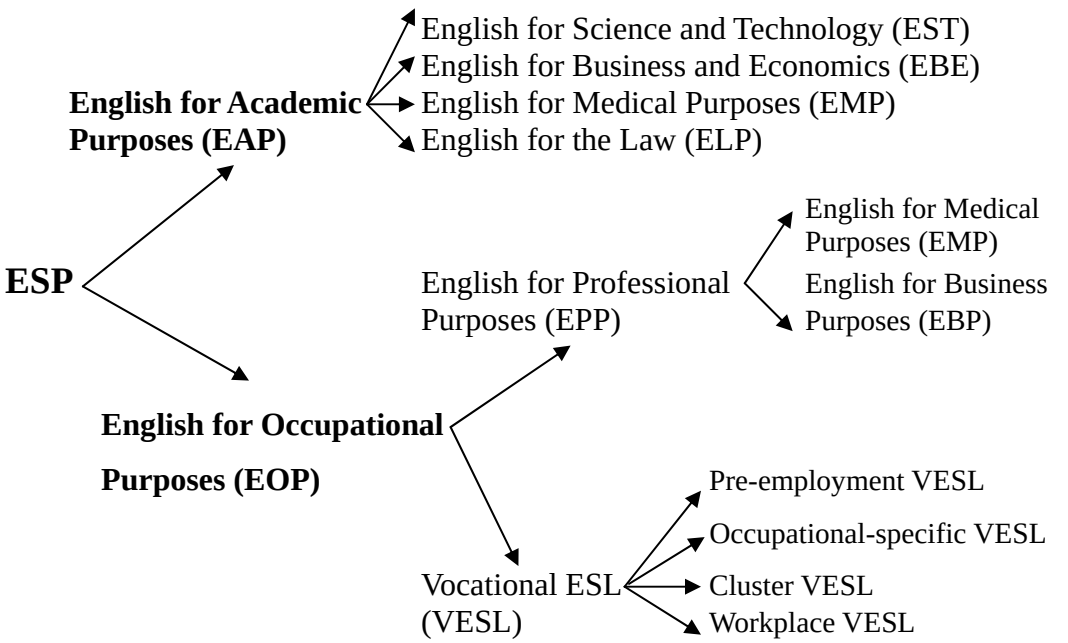

Figure 1. Classification of ESP categories

The Down Sides of Implementing ESP Programs

When observing the above figure, I instinctively notice that ESP programs in Taiwan generally share the diversity with their counterparts in the US or European countries. Whether these programs are pedagogically or technically feasible is a question demanding further examination. On the surface, the concerned colleges and universities have put their best foot forward by making their programs as encompassing as possible, so encompassing as to produce a gigantic curricular mixture at the department level. Despite of this, there seems to be bottlenecks for the institutions to remove so long as they aim to keep the operation of programs visionary instead of temporary.

In a review of what is practiced for ESP programs in the UK, Johns (1981) lists five problems pending instructors. Ranked in order of importance, they include: (1) low priority in timetabling (so that classes are at awkward times of the day or week); (2) lack of personal and professional contact with subject teachers; (3) lower status than subject teachers; (4) isolation from other teachers doing similar work; (5) lack of respect from students. The UK experience seems to get repeated here in Taiwan, where we easily detect the down sides of ESP implementation. What differ are the magnitude of problems and the levels of frustration that practitioners experience. Typically, there are problems ranging from the less serious one of improper time allocation to the more serious one of unclear goal orientation. Nowadays there lies in front of us a miserable scene where we see poor quality students, untrainable learners, and lack of financial or psychological supports from the school hierarchy. These matters are counterproductive as they throw the field of ESP into turmoil. The rosy picture of producing graduates qualified for English use has largely become a dream shattered.

When the Practice of ESP Turns Stressful

A closer examination of the problems circling ESP programs in Taiwan leaves us doubt and confusion about the workability issue concerning their pedagogical actualization. In my estimation, these problems are manifested in several domains as I describe below.

Lack of Clear Curricular Foci or Goal Orientation

Since the beginning of ESP in the 1960s, advocates have continued to insist that curricula should be based upon the most systematic, accurate, and empirical measures of student needs. They also need to consider the language required by the tasks that learners must perform outside the classroom (Johns, 1991). This criterion is usually not working for the case of ESP practice in Taiwan. It happens often that what is accomplished here is just a shot in the dark, or a consequence of rough guesses or random actions which are made without any real thought.

No problem is more explicitly noticeable than the lack of clear curricular foci and goal orientation in ESP programs. The new-breed departments, to set themselves apart from the traditional or old-fashioned academic units, emphasize the practical components of English or foreign language studies. They thus despise the conventional wisdom that traditional departments took, which stuck to the principle of treating language study as a form of humanities and the craft in language use as a pathway to liberal arts education. The new-breeds purposefully overturn the conventional ways of dividing disciplinary concentrations into three clusters of literature, linguistics, and language (English) teaching. They ambitiously add to the course prescription a long list of courses, which fall into the categories or subcategories of English for science and technology (EST), English for business and economics (EBE), English for medical purposes (EMP), English for the law (ELP), etc. They also offer many other courses of English for professional purposes (EPP) which somehow mix with the category of English for occupational purposes (EOP).[1]

The widespread presence of translation and interpretation courses is also phenomenal. An ambitious attempt like this serves to expand the professional territory for departments of applied English or applied foreign languages. The concerned persons seem to be unaware that the consequence of this curricular expansion may turn out to be equally harmful as helpful, as most of them are short

[1] A broader view of ESP would involve courses related to English for academic purposes (EAP) into course design. Unfortunately, this emphasis is seldom observed by most science/technology colleges or universities.

of qualified and quality instructor to carry out regular teaching routines[2].

In a survey study with professors, university students, and employers of international trade companies, Lin (2003) tries to determine the worth of specific English courses and the prospect to match student training with job requirements. The institutes she surveys include seven applied English departments in southern Taiwan. For the institutes surveyed, there is no significant difference in the way they design curricula and prepare course contents. On the other hand, the respondents rank most highly the training of language skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar. Courses featuring these skills are considered to be of greatest value because they are adhered to the needs of job markets. Two pedagogical implications can be drawn from this study. First, most new-breed departments are in want of creativity, as shown in the rampant copying of course and curriculum design among different institutions. Second, the value of general English proficiency should not be held cheap, as it may functionally surpasses the value of specific English proficiency in many cases.

Widdowson (1983), a renowned British scholar, once suggests that specific purpose language teaching suffers from a lack of theoretical motivation for course design. It becomes a very narrowly focused training exercise in which learners are taught specific behaviors but not strategies. These strategies enable them to adapt to new, unspecifiable situations. Because of this narrow focus of training, learners always fail miserably to transfer the skills to the requirements of communication outside the classroom. Unfortunately, ESP practice in Taiwan has fell into the pitfall that Widdowson (1983) disapproves, as exemplified in the ubiquitous lack of clear curricular foci or goal orientation for most programs.

Duty to Teach Students with Diverse Needs and Specialisms

Additional difficulty arises for instructors because of their obligation to deal with students who have diverse needs and specialisms. They automatically encounter the

[2] We can look at the courses or programs of translation and interpretation as an example. Recent statistics conducted by Yang and Zhang (2003) suggests that for the time being, Taiwan needs about 100 interpreters who are on a regular basis of employment throughout the year. The number of translators to be hired by different occupations is not indicated. By any means, there will be an oversupply of human resource had most institutes aspired to train their graduates into “competent” translators or interpreters for the job market.

formidable job to identify and prescribe learners' needs and differences, which paves the way for determining the sequences and scope of course contents. For most instructors, carrying out this duty is certainly uneasy if not overwhelming. It is a game of wits. Predictably they are often at their wit's end groping for effective tools to carry out needs analysis or diagnosis. Additionally, they are facing an excessive demand to cope with a wide range of ESP courses though they were previously trained in dealing with English for general purposes (EGP). The disparity between what they can do and what they are expected to do often creates teacher depression if not teacher burnout.

The difficulty to cater for the diverse needs and interests of ESP learners is vividly portrayed by Phillips and Shettkesworth (1987). They indicate that "These factors lead us to question the practicability of preparing specialized teaching material to a high standard when one is dealing with a diversified demand often on a 'one-off' basis at very short notice" (1987, p. 107). Likewise, this is a problem that greatly annoys ESP instructors in Taiwan. In theory, they should seek a solution which appeals to students with diverse needs, interest, and specialisms. In so doing, however, they may run into a problem in which the time and manpower involved can quickly become costly. Other than these, there arises a subsequent issue that is in conjunction with ESP methodology. It is about teaching methods, students' specialisms, and more important, the place and nature of language practice. The last one is particularly tied to the relationship between acquisition and learning and between old and new knowledge and abilities (Robinson, 1991)[3].

With regard to the popular concern of teaching method for ESP learners, Dudley-Evans (2001) reminds instructors of the need to exploit their subject specific knowledge. This knowledge leads to classroom interaction and teaching methodology that can be quite different from that of general English. Moreover, they have to distinguish the environment in which English is taught from the one in which it is used. The distinction is made for ESP courses to be successful and to have a lasting effect on learners' ability to study or work using English.

A somehow humorous yet cynical quote from Strevens (1988) may depict

[3] Although most people may disagree, I tend to believe in Johns and Price-Machado's (2001) argument that a good [English] teaching is "specific purpose" in approach.

faithfully the miserable condition for ESP instructors, who face an excessive demand to deal with students with heterogeneous needs and specialisms. He comments: “Who is the ESP teacher? Almost always he or she is a teacher of General English who has unexpectedly found him/herself required to teach students with special needs. The experience is often a shock!” (p. 41)

The Daunting Job to Train Marketable Graduates

ESP instructors constantly run into pedagogical difficulties that are resulted from the remarkable heterogeneity of students’ needs and ability. They are facing bigger hardship, or rather a daunting job, of training students into marketable graduates for potential occupations. Fairly speaking, to train these learners into quality candidates for the job market is a task dreadful. These learners, generally characterized as learners with limited English proficiency (LEP), display cognitive and affective traits that differentiate them from more capable peers. To save myself from the sin of “immorally” criticizing their cognition level, I opt to only focus on discussing their weakness in the affective domain. This is done out of my realization that language learners’ affective status may be intimately juxtaposed to their cognitive styles.

I would like to first recognize the ESP learners in science/technology institutions as examination system failures who suffer from inadequate confidence. They are largely weak in self-esteem, global or general self-esteem basically[4]. They depend on inspiring instructors to boost their situational or task self-esteem (Brown, 2000). They are tempted to show signs of inhibition in the learning of general and specific English, readily building a set of defense mechanism to protect their “language ego” (Ehrman, 1996). They are essentially reluctant or timid to try risk-taking, a process that is characteristic of successful learners of foreign languages. Notably, their anxiety level is enormous and is associated with the feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, and apprehension. They are passive learners who are short of proper motivation, though they are eager to anticipate

[4] I cannot agree with Brown (2001) more as he illustrates that “Self-esteem is probably the most pervasive aspect of any human behavior. It could be easily be claimed that no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-esteem, self-confidence, knowledge of yourself, and belief in your own capabilities for that activity” (p. 145).

extrinsic rewards of any kind. Because of these affective characteristics of learners, ESP instructors are facing a disheartening job to change learners into individuals otherwise. In my imagination, to do a thing like this is somewhat like “strenuously turning the tide to its opposite direction”, as the proverb goes.

Self-perceived Incompetence in ESP Instructors

There have been attempts to formulate qualifications to be imposed upon ESP practitioners, taking into account the unique characteristics of ESP as an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary field. Williams (1981, p. 91) emphasizes the personal qualities needed by an ESP teacher. He says:

> At the chalkface, such personal attributes as enthusiasm, the ability to develop and administer a course, work-rate, rapport, and a knowledge of the students’ world are equally as important as the ability to write teaching materials or perform a Munbyian needs analysis.

Lavery (1985) remarks that fluency in a foreign language is a prerequisite for ESP practitioners. They need this competence to be able to sympathize with the difficulties of the students and to achieve credibility as a professional instructor. Further, he asserts that “knowledge of behavior sciences, analysis of training needs, counseling, feedback skills and cost effective training planning are all vital in the transformation process from language teacher to industrial language trainer” (cited from Robinson, p. 80).

The lack of confidence in ESP instructors, as a contrast to the abundance of their self-perceived incompetence, is a problem that is no less serious. This fundamental issue is pertained to what Johns (1981) describes, a problem of professionalism, and is concerned with how far EAP/ESP teachers regard themselves as professionals. For individual instructors or practitioners of ESP, the requested tasks are so overwhelming as to create threatening stress nine out of ten times. They face an even bigger headache in being asked to make forced change of their original majors and develop extra specialist disciplines. This change is usually not voluntary, being the outcome of interventions embodied in different forms of administrative measures. What these interventions lead to are conceptual and

attitudinal difficulty that impede job satisfaction. By attitudinal difficulties, I mean instructors' negative attitude towards natural science or social science subjects because of their preoccupied self-perception as a liberal arts person. This psychological inclination is well remarked by Ewer (1983), who recognizes that traditionally teachers of English are trained in literature and language. They tend to claim EGP as their specialist discipline and may display a hostile attitude to anything outside the humanities. The sense of self-perceived incompetence, as many ESP instructors exhibit, calls for immediate action. It is a psychological barrier that forcefully impacts these practitioners' morale.

Insufficient Collaboration between ESP and Subject Specialists

The success of ESP programs calls for multidisciplinary partnership among instructors of English and other subject matters. While it is a must for English instructors to dutifully do their part, a partnership between different departments and colleges is inevitably more crucial.

Provided that ESP calls for a collaboration and coordination among different academic and administrative units, this is a thing that is more easily said than done. Robinson (1991) recognizes the impossibility for language and subject teachers to work together in the same classroom. The failure is due to the teachers' heavy teaching load and some subject teachers' fear of being observed by a language specialist, he adds.

Ultimately, the issue I highlight here seems to be one that is related to autonomy, as Arnold (1988) suggests. He argues that, to achieve effective teaching in the ESP situation, it is absolutely crucial that both the subject specialist and the English instructor in ESP should give up some of the autonomy which has traditionally been held to be theirs (Arnold, 1988, p. 7; see Robinson, 1991, p. 93). Each party needs the advice and guidance of the other and never will be truly effective without it. Previous to Arnold, Crofts (1981) makes a comment that sounds much alike. He suggests:

> The ESP teacher's most acceptable and effective role, in addition to that of pure language teacher, is not a pseudoteacher of subject matter [that] students have previously learned or expect to learn in their specialist studies or

> occupations, but as a teacher of things not learned as part of courses in these specialisms (Crofts, 1981, p. 149).

For cross-discipline collaboration to work out, there must be a perceived autonomy by the parties involved so that they can assure their sense of professionalism and ownership. The co-presence of sense of autonomy is something whose importance cannot be overemphasized. Additional administrative schemes have to be carried out to break up the barrier of self-centered mentality and narrow-mindedness, two personality traits that are typical of academic persons.

Seeking a Balance between Critical Elements

For almost all science/technology colleges or universities, the long-term operation of ESP necessitates a dynamic interaction between several critical elements. They include setting curricular goals that are attainable, maintaining balanced ways of student training, envisioning reasonable institutional prospects, assuring professional growth for instructors, and building cross-disciplinary partnership. All of these are mediated by contextual or environmental constraints. Knowing that a comprehensive observation of any component would be almost impossible, I hereby try to take a quick glimpse at each one.

Setting Curricular Goals That Are Attainable

As mentioned earlier, the establishment of new-breed departments in the last decade was an answer to the nationwide call of building Taiwan an operation center in the Asia Pacific region. The curricular goals formulated by these units were directly geared to the development of English or foreign language specialists who hold an intermediate- or advanced-level of proficiency. Some academic units even set curricular or program goals that were aggressively encompassing, as embodied in an ambition to offer integrated programs fitting the name of “three in one” or “four in one”. They intend to combine together the disciplines of English or foreign language, business administration, information science, and many others to truly make their trainees “professionally muscular.”

To be honest, I am sympathetic with the intention to make curricular goals for ESP as inclusive and extensive as they can be. Still, I nod in approval in the face of

curriculum specialists or course designers who are willing to set realistic or "earthly" objectives for ESP practice. I guess the so called "old-fashioned" departments may offer inspiring thoughts in this regard. Volatile backers of the new-breed departments, those who favor the fresh idea to prepare "all-purpose" curricula, tend to downplay the goals set by traditional units. They criticize those goals as too conservative, too outdated, and too impractical.

There is no problem for me to agree with the argument that we need specific or practical goals for English learners on a vocational track. This is a consensus repeatedly addressed in the works by most western scholars. For example, early researchers such as Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens (1964) assume that ESP enables us to specify more precisely what language learners will eventually have to cope with. Its function is thus in a sharp contrast to general language courses. Later, Widdowson (1987) remarks that it seems reasonable to assume that a specification of language needs should define the language content of a course designed to meet such needs. Still, I disagree with the ways that new breed departments formulate curricular goals. In retrospection, we are caught between a traditional emphasis on the coaching of EGP and a postmodern obsession with the introduction of things practical. The unfulfilled dream of building Taiwan a regional operation center has betrayed a gap between what the new breeds purported to accomplish and what they should have done. Yet English teachers are still forced to walk a tightrope of their own, with deep depressions well up in their psyche. Their career-long dependence on the ability to teach general English seems to contradict with the newly bred enchantment to teach practical English for vocational or employment ends.

To many people, the conventional wisdom of requesting English or foreign language departments to engage in coaching general English rather than job-specific English may sound old-fashioned or outlandish. Nonetheless, these units aim to lay a solid foundation upon which we build the linguistic competence for each individual learner. This goal setting is based on a firm belief that knowledge will not reveal its usefulness until the due course of time arrives. It is unreasonable to wipe out the traditional vision of language education as we are busily digging up the practical elements of ESP programs. We may lay curricular

goals that are as unreachable as a castle in the air so long as we are blind to the potential goods that traditional English teaching may bring.

Maintaining Balanced Ways of Student Training

There is a popular belief or rather misconception that the only way to foster English proficiency for LEP students is to feature the teaching of specific English. The more specific the courses are, the higher the instructional efficiency will be. In response to this specific view of ESP practice, I would like to propose a balanced view. While I dislike indulging in the habit of ridiculing the former view, I cannot help but doubt about the creditability of the ways that most new academic units train students. Personally, I believe that LEP students would have a better buy for their education if they follow the sequence of first receiving teaching of general English and then acquiring training in subject specific knowledge. The goal of general-purpose language courses, as Widdowson (1983) underscores, is to enable learners to solve independently the profusion of communication problems. They need to build their "linguistic muscle" by magnifying their command of the English language so that they can transit from the process of learning English to that of using English to learn. Once this is done, they ought to accumulate their background knowledge in different subjects or fields so that they can achieve specific language performance. They need to acquire subject specific concepts because the amount of context-embedded information in a text or prompt affects filed specificity (Douglas, 2001). This balanced way of training serves to cultivate ESP students into competent users of English and develop them into specialists of the intended specialism(s) they go after.

Envisioning Reasonable Institutional Prospects

Nationwide there is a perceived urge for all the science/technology institutions to train their students into marketable graduates. The premise that we should train applied English (foreign languages) majors into employable candidates grows out of a noble ideal that college is a boot camp breeding potential employees. This assumption is especially prevalent in institutions that are vocationally tracked.

In an era whereby citizens and parents aspire to higher education for all, where being graduated is synonymous to being unemployed, it is a stressful mission to equalize English or foreign languages studies with job security. Hu Weizhong

(2002), a professor of Beijing Foreign Studies University in China, reflects on the malpractice of vocationalized foreign language studies in the country in recent years. He illuminates a significant change in China's tertiary foreign language education for the past 15 years, identifying an explicit trend to move towards vocationalization. According to him, many foreign language departments and institutions have introduced career-oriented programs that combine acquisition of foreign language skills and knowledge of another specialization. Among the specializations that are most sought after are international business, finance, tourism, and journalism. The popularity of these specializations suggests citizens' natural responses to China's expanding economy. Hu (2002) argues that the liberal arts stand should be strengthened in the foreign language curriculum so that well-rounded generalists can be trained.

In one word, we need to build science/technology colleges and universities an environment conducive to reasonable expectations. While it makes pedagogical sense for these institutions to put a lightly higher priority to ESP than to EGP, it is strategically unwise to put aside the ideas of deeming English or foreign language study as a form of whole person education. The dichotomous distinction between teaching practical or useful English versus unpractical or useless English is deteriorating. We accordingly need to adjust institutional goals when implementing ESP. In one sense, ESP programs in Taiwan should not be thrust upon with the fearsome obligation to turn out salable products. The obsession to turn college education into a preparatory stage for visiting employment office is harmful, so is the enchantment to judge the value of a discipline or field by the marketability of its graduates.

Assuring Professional Growth for Instructors

While most ESP practitioners acknowledge that they sometimes feel awkward or reluctant to carry out the capacity as a specialist of additional disciplines, the chance is really not on their side in this regard. They can opt to continue to be resistant to change, or they can seek the opportunity to seek "self-renewal" or professional growth through in-service training. To our comfort, there are plenty of theories of language and its description that are at their service. ESP practitioners can be benefited greatly from work done in theoretical linguistics, applied

linguistics and other discipline such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and sociology (Robinson, 1991). Furthermore, they can see themselves as opportunistic in that they can take whichever theories seem most appropriate to their purposes, as Robinson recommends.

Skehan (1980) once mentions “we may reach a stage where ESP teachers are generally expected to have introductory knowledge of two or three subjects areas” (p. 26). In a review of previous studies, Jackson (1998) identify several traits and skills that are important to success in teaching ESP: flexibility, adaptability, creativity, resourcefulness, well developed organizational and material/leadership skills, effective interpersonal and cross-cultural communication skills, and mature problem-solving and decision-making skills. Based on the “prescription” that Jackson (1998) makes, we know clearly that to be an ESP instructor is a job that is demanding. At the same time, though, it is an experience that is substantively rewarding. By any means, ESP instructors need to first overcome their attitudinal complexity by not rejecting what their job presupposes upon them. They then have to win over conceptual complexity when polishing their knowledge in additional specialisms. With these they may turn themselves into professionals who are self-evolving; likewise, they hopefully may achieve subject-language integration by coping with both the language and the content.

Building Cross-Disciplinary Partnership

It is self-evident that successful practice of ESP in a university setting necessitates contributions from a wide range of academic disciplines and persons. Additional administrative measures and personnel may also be called upon to sustain teamwork as a key to maximize program effectiveness.

Presently there is a significant number of recent ESP practice which fails to achieve the goal of cross-disciplinary synthesis. If this problem is to be remedied, more efforts have to be made to guarantee inter-departmental or inter-college support for ESP programs. These efforts will not be helpful without extensive coordination that is adherent to both top-down and bottom-up types of administration. In particular, academic parochialism has to be torn down while teamwork has to be encouraged to achieve reciprocal understanding between the concerned parties, normally the language instructors and the discipline specialists.

There is no way for ESP practitioners to steal the whole show. Instead, cooperation between language and subject matter specialists is imperative so long as they wish to make curricular goals realized. To put it in a concrete way, both parties need to seek mutual agreements concerning the issues of course and curriculum design, course material preparation, allocation and division of resource, learner needs analysis, communicative purposes of language training, standards of student and instructor evaluation, methods and techniques for class teaching, integration of English and content instructors, special language needs of the workplace, and so forth. This is the best way if not the best shortcut to keep ESP practice innovative and to reflect the disciplines or professions which English instructors need to relate to.

Putting Things in Apple-pie Order

Throughout the 1990s Taiwan witnessed a rapid growth surge of applied English or foreign language departments. Accompanying the drastic change in academic setting up was the prevalent movement of ESP practice. As we are striding into a new millennium at which educational accountability becomes a buzzword, at which foreign language study in general and English study in particular is associated with a country's competitive power, we cannot bypass the urge of pondering over the face value of these academic units.

We may get a rough understanding of the contemporary practice of ESP by observing what have been done by several flagship institutions. They were the pioneers responsible for the initiation and maintenance of ESP programs in different institutional settings. So far I have provided some personal or subjective thinking regarding the proper ways they should design curricula and programs, the effective strategies for them to train prospective English specialists, and the efforts they must make to sustain program operation. We may acquire more professional insights or insider knowledge by making close-distance or first-hand encounters with the concerned personnel. This knowledge make possible our accurate and objective identification of the trouble spots that are attached to the outlook of these new-breed departments.

As competition among higher education institutions in this country and

overseas gets increasingly stiff, we may question the feasibility and the accountability related to current ESP practice. Has ESP movement secured a strong foothold for the "territory" of English and foreign language studies? Are these pragmatism-centered programs showing the superiority to stay on the cutting edge of competition? Have they actually done more good than bad, as their pioneer initiators wished them to do? Does the original goal of breeding learners with a sophisticated proficiency in English become a dream realized or rather a promise broken? Can these institutes preserve the stamina that they summoned the time when they were established? Are ESP programs as useful to the concerned instructors and learners as they are stressful? Are new-breed departments capable of showing their muscle in solidifying their status as a qualified contestant, much similar to what their predecessors were doing? Or, rather, they are actually sinking their spirit and losing their ground in various battles while ceaselessly twisting their arms?

In my opinion, the establishment of the new-breed departments no doubt adds a new dimension to the fields of ELT/EFL education in Taiwan. Their setting up certainly reflected the popular thinking or social expectations about the role that English or foreign language departments must fulfill. As time advances, the ill-reputed operation of most ESP programs has become increasingly explicit, creating among and within academic communities controversies about their long-term presence. A commonly asked question then springs up, as many people challenge if we are on the right track of practicing ESP. As for English professionals, they complain about the gloomy scene whereby an expected great prospect is declining into a broken promise, or something that does no good but stirs the dust.

Sounding exaggerative may I be, I need to be outspoken by saying that ESP practice in Taiwan is at a mysterious juncture. Like their counterparts in other countries, ESP programs here are now facing the "ecological" issue of how to make themselves last and continue in the local situation, as Johns and Dudley-Evans (1991) describe. Extra effort needs to make while teamwork has to be commanded to put ESP programs in apple-pie order. I guess we cannot do things otherwise because that's the way the cookie crumbles.

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