

‘WHO AM I?’ INTERROGATING MY IDENTITY

AS ESP TEACHER: PERSONAL NARRATION

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Abstract

Abstract— The notion of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program which integrates language and content at one go could be challenging for language teachers as their expertise is only on the language, not the content. Consequently, it affects ESP teachers’ identity. This study takes a deeper look on a teacher’s personal experience teaching ESP that contributes to ESP teacher’s identity construction. It is a qualitative research using narratives as the approach, written records are taken as the main data. In the study, there are three participants in the research; two are ESP teachers and another is the researcher herself as she also involved in the teaching ESP. The study has revealed that the identity construction of ESP teachers is mainly built through two dimensions: students-related challenge and institutional challenge. To deal with students, teachers are no more as the primary source to knowledge; meanwhile, it is highly possible that students have more understanding than the teachers. To deal with institutional challenge, developing general English curriculum into more specific purposes is demanding for teachers. In addition, teaching ESP for more than one major in a semester adds to its complexity.

Keywords— *ESP, Teacher Identity, Narrative*

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at interrogating English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teacher identity. ESP is one form of Content and Language Instruction Learning (CLIL) approaches. It is argued that the notion of establishing ESP as English language learning model for adult learner in university setting is practically advantageous for learners’ future study and career. However, implementing ESP as teaching approach can be a daunting task, particularly it has an effect in shaping teachers’ identity. Based on this argument, the issues in ESP teaching and learning will be initially theorized consisting of its contentious debates and teacher identity formulation. Next, it will picture the writer personal narration in the context that she is familiar with—Asian EFL context. Finally, the theory and practice will be discussed.

CONTENTIOUS DEBATES

Do We Really Need ESP?

The tenet of implementing ESP as English Language Teaching (ELT) approach in EFL context is indeed appealing. This is such a shortcut of learning English—students can learn language and content at the same time. In addition, it also has an idea of giving students more opportunity to English exposure. Take, for example, students can learn this subject knowledge such as business, law, politics, engineering, medicine, and etc. in English. It is remarkable, isn't it?

The aforementioned assertion has clearly pictured the reason why many institutions are trying to adopt CLIL. It was initially advocated by immersion and bilingual program in North America then bilingual education in Europe (Perez-Canado, 2012). To make this happens, EU Council has stipulated a policy into its education, it is the concerned of using foreign language for specific domain, i.e., public domain, occupational domain, educational domain, and personal domain (Marsh, Mehisto, Wolff, and Frigols, 2001). It is observable that, in Europe, learning foreign language is projected to get better job, well-education, and improved life.

Subsequently, in Asian EFL context, English learning is driven by global socioeconomic. Life today is internationally more competitive, so that English language learning approach such CLIL is prospective. For instance, The Ministry of Education of Taiwan has established CLIL in tertiary education aiming at promoting internationalisation of higher education (Yang & Gosling, 2014). Similarly, in Japan, one-third of universities have implemented CLIL in response to meet the need of student recruitment and reach prestige (Brown, 2015). Additionally, in Indonesia, the notion of ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) has also brought another sense of anxiety of not mastering English—loosing or gaining.

In a similar vein, the other proponents have another consideration on the implementation of CLIL program is the communicative approach conveyed. A study conducted by Lasagabaster and Sierra (2009) reveal that “CLIL caters for all types of learners/different learning styles and provides much richer communicative situations and “can do” opportunities which engage students and foster the development of language awareness” (p.13). The finding is trying to underline that in Asian EFL context, English is

needed in more practical use. As it commonly occurs that the use of English in EFL context is often ended up in the classroom situation and less realistic. Thus, CLIL comes as solution by providing learning in more lifelike and authentic way. In his study, Lasagabaster (2008) finds that albeit English occurs in a minimum exposure, CLIL implementation has brought a success to students' foreign language attainment.

On the contrary, teachers find it challenging to run CLIL program as an ideal concept. The question arises around the effectiveness of CLIL, i.e., integration between language and content. Studies by Dafouz (2007); Tudor (2008); Vazquez (2010) show that learning academic material through foreign language is a complex task in regards to knowledge construction and conceptualization. Not surprisingly, that content specific term and the use of foreign language can be a barrier to teachers' explanation as well as students' understanding. Furthermore, Evnitskaya (2011) points out that different linguistic use between teacher and students to meaning-making and interaction occurs in CLIL science class adds to this complexity.

The next question lies on the difficulties in determining students' need. In CLIL program, needs analysis become central to design pedagogical framework—on what and how to teach. In fact, this measurement becomes vague when students cannot identify their own needs, subsequently it is plausible being over-assumed by the institution. When the course is determined by students, it has a tendency to be lack of consistent, thorough (Vilkanciene, 2011), and eclectic.

The next issue will be address on material selection. A study on Greek and Cypriot teachers in regards to aspects of skill necessitated for CLIL teaching reports that difficulty in designing and using appropriate materials, e.g. collect material and task-design, was on vast majority agreement compared to other components such as knowing learners' need and content-competence (Griva, Chostelidou, and Panteli, 2014). Yet, in reality, material selection in CLIL teaching is prone to change, either lenient to teachers' preference (depends on teachers' ability) or students' need. It is implied that teachers' cognition, knowledge and belief, is still in question here. Then, it is now clear that there is a need to teacher training or education which focuses on CLIL approach.

Are teachers ready to teach?

What makes someone is regarded as a qualified teacher? There is broad consensus within the experts that the success of CLIL program relies highly on teachers' competence.

Which competence are we now talking about? Apart from experience, quality, integrity, personality trait and so on, teachers' previous education has been concerned as crucially paramount to the determination of teacher quality. In respect to CLIL, teachers need to undertake the expertise in integrating subject knowledge, language, and pedagogy (EU Commission 2008; Loranc- Paszyk, 2007). Without having been trained, CLIL teachers would find it hard teaching new area that they have never been exposed to in their previous education.

One and the foremost capability that CLIL teachers need to be proficient is the foreign language competency. In respect to this, Rodriguez, in his research (2012) finds that "The most outstanding negative aspect they [students] found is lecturers' insufficient level of English. CLIL training specially adapted to university teachers is necessary so that lecturers can overcome their reluctance to a methodological training and thereby the potential of CLIL is realized" (p. 183).

The supply of teachers' vocabulary is the area that profoundly challenged when teaching ESP. Often, ESP teachers and not to mention all English teachers are assumed to know the whole bunch of vocabularies related to students' field. It is something that hardly managed by teacher for noticeable reasons. How would someone know all these, while it is not the field that they have been taught previously.

Looking at this density, the need to CLIL teacher training must be embedded in teacher education curriculum. For not doing so, teachers have a tendency to teach in the way they have been taught. This is what Sylven (2013) is trying to remark that teachers' previous education has, in fact, envision their professional concept. Yet one might then ask, how was the teaching quality in teachers' previous education? Was it done professionally? If it is also insufficient, apparently CLIL implementation would be at high risk.

The framework that would be addressed here is teacher education in my previous university. English teacher training was given in 4-year program—learning linguistic, literature, EFL teaching method, some pedagogical principles, and teaching practice given at the end of program (for about two months). Language improvement was less emphasized after all. As a result, during the semester break, some students, still had to go to English institution to address their language problems.

To reach the success of implementing CLIL, as well as language competence, teacher

education should also give more emphasis on how to teach subject knowledge. It is due to the fact that CLIL teachers are mainly recruited because of their English proficiency, not the subject knowledge. Without having sufficient knowledge on subject specific discipline, teachers will find themselves enforced to change teaching systems (Vazques, 2010), it even worsens their role in teaching ESP (Ghanbari & Rasekh, 2012).

Furthermore, in certain specific study like English for Business, the need to teachers' specific knowledge of business is required. As what is always pondered, there is a demand that ESP Business teacher is essentially a businessman that has a role as negotiator and language consultant or a good English teacher would be sufficient Bereczky (2009). Overall, the need to a good English teacher who has knowledge in the skill and subject field is in demand.

In short, on what aspect that CLIL teachers need to be equipped, Perez-Cañado (2016) has researched on 706 CLIL pre-service and in-service teachers' needs in Europe. He diagnosed that teachers are in need to improve linguistic and intercultural competence, theoretical and methodological aspects, teaching resources, and ongoing professional development. He further concludes that to best achieve a success implementation of CLIL, institution has to assure that teachers are ready to teach.

IDENTITY FORMATION

Teacher Identity

As applying this new approach of ESP in tertiary level is a complex responsibility, while teachers taking this role are having insufficient knowledge and training, then what possibility might be resulted from such a situation? Yes, teachers' teaching credibility will be in challenge. Who may challenge this? Students, other practitioners, and society possibly may. Identity, as it is defined by Musanti (2010) is developed through discourse which attach to a norm in particular society—within social practices and endorsed through language.

To view teachers' identity, Gee (2001) pinpoints that identity is someone acknowledgement as a 'kind of person' in a given context, this is in regards to a person connection to his performance in society, not because of his 'internal states'. He further addresses four frameworks to view identity. First, it is *nature identity* which is static in nature. Second is *institution identity*; it is authorized by the place where a person

associates with or a position he has within institution. Next, *discourse-identity* is personality trait that recognized through discourse or dialogue with ‘rational’ individual. The last definition is *affinity-identity*; this is the practice that is shared in the affinity group.

Similarly, based on three perspective brought by Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005), teacher identity can be formulated from social identity theory, situated learning, and an image text, i.e., teachers everyday practice at school. According to social theory, teachers are associated with the race, nationality, culture, and also political context. In addition, situated learning indicates us that identity is constructed, manipulated, negotiated to the position, situation, and a place where teachers work. Also, image-text is very much driven by teacher-student relationship.

Based on the above continuum, ESP teachers’ identity can be analysed using the four frameworks mentioned. In this paper, we will look at ESP teachers’ identity which is constructed within the social context—institution and professionally driven. Some concerns that normally related to language teachers’ identity are teachers’ role in the classroom, the position of non-native speaker, and teachers’ education. Those three issues in fact can contribute to teacher-student relation. As students are the primary stakeholder at school, their rapport towards teacher will rely highly on how teachers use their identity.

Basic Roles of ESP Teacher

Based on Dudley-Evans and St John’s (1998) explanation, the role of ESP practitioner is divided into five, namely ESP practitioner as teacher, course designer and material provider, collaborator, researcher, and evaluator. The consideration on these different roles was the main reason why the two authors select the term ‘practitioner’. Referring to this framework, each definition will be described then analysed as follows.

The ESP practitioner as teacher. ESP practitioner roles as teacher is significantly different from general English teacher. As it is defined, teacher is now not the ‘primary knower’ (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) rather students can be more knowledgeable if the course has more emphasize on students’ subject specific knowledge or has relation to students’ project that they are involved in. For apparent reason, this situation may challenge teachers’ credibility in the classroom.

ESP practitioner as course designer and material provider. The role of selecting materials then designing tasks can be time consuming and demanding. As using textbooks

that exist has no guarantee to answer students' needs, consequently, to self-produced textbook and materials might be the best practice to undertake. This situation can increase practitioner's creativity and autonomy. Yet, the authenticity should be well-assessed, otherwise classroom activity would be in danger.

ESP practitioner as researcher. The ability of practitioner to diagnose students' needs which has projection to their future career and study has to be emphasized. Therefore, the formulation of course design and material selection are outlined in learner-centred approach. Learner centre has been recognized as a dimension where students' need is appreciated and acknowledged. Implementing such approach, ESP practitioner needs experience, knowledge, and belief.

ESP practitioner as collaborator. As there is dual focus in ESP, learning skill and knowledge, ESP practitioners has to collaborate with teacher of the subject field. Teacher of the subject field can be the carrier of the content, the party who prepare the materials, the specialist assesses the content that has been prepared by the ESP practitioner, and the fullest role as team-teaching partner (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). However, this situation is not always ideal as it has been described, ESP practitioners and subject teachers' workload can be the limitation and the term collaboration has the idea to increase more cost.

ESP practitioner as evaluator. To see the effectiveness of ESP program, on-going formative assessment is an evaluation that can give feedback to practitioner and also the institution on what to improve. In exhibiting formative assessment, most of the time, teachers' idea contradicts what is so called with standardized assessment that the institution wants to have to measure overall achievement of the program. This approach has negatively conflicted with the agreed curriculum.

The above roles have already described how vary the ESP teacher job is. We have to understand that without collaboration on how to run ESP, indeed this approach will always be infant in our context. It is a job that should be shared within practitioners and supported by the stakeholder.

Native divide

The dichotomy of Native Speaker and Non Native Speaker (NS-NNS) can be very personal for English teachers. Thomas (1999) experience in teaching native Americans has full of challenges which occurs in various contexts such as in the appearance she looks

(race) along with the accent, professional organization, hiring practices, from students, and as graduate student. She further asserts that these challenges have effects on her credibility as teacher. Consequently, this perspective leads her to be apologetic, nervous to succeed, and even worst it causes her to be paranoid of the experience she had. What is more, in Asian context, the issue is not only about NS-NNS but also are you a graduate from state of private university? or even are your degree from local or overseas university?

On the same line, Liu (1999), on her study, finds that if teacher and students have the same perception, mutual understanding will be reached. For instance, students have a tendency to high appreciate NNS teachers for their professional competence. Meanwhile, when teacher and students have discrepancy on their perspective, there will be a surprise on students. Positive remark is shown when a teacher revealed her Danish background, students admire her English and comment that she has worked hard to learn it. On the contrary, negative remark was given when a teacher revealed that he was a native speaker of English while in fact he has Asian look.

The tenet that only NS teachers are having right to teach English is still attach to Norton's (1997) term 'the ownership of English', who is more and less capable. The White teacher is perceived as the one who is having more fluent English compared to the other counterparts. As Amin (1997) argues,

The students' construction of their minority teachers as nonnative speakers and therefore less able teachers than White teachers has an impact on their identity formation. When the students give the message that they consider their teacher to be a nonnative speaker of English and therefore one who cannot teach them the English they want or feel they need, minority teachers are unable to effectively negotiate a teacher identity. In such a classroom, minority teachers, no matter how qualified they are, becomes less effective in facilitating their students' language learning than, perhaps, White teachers (p. 581).

Albeit sociolinguistic defines that there is no such connection between race and language ability, but students' perception tells so. In sum, it is clear that, such dichotomy is more about students and even society's perception of a teacher.

METHOD

This is a qualitative research using narrative as the approach. Narrative study is also called as biography, life story, life narratives, and oral history that documented first-person experience (Ary, 2006). Personal information is used to highlight a person's life in the form of story. This is to convey the meaning of a person's experience. Data gathered was written records about challenges of teaching ESP that form identity construction. Also, the researcher acts as participant in this study.

RESULTS

PERSONAL NARRATION

Teacher A

I was 24 years old to begin my career teaching ESP in tertiary level. It was just three months away from my graduation day. Once I came in to the classroom on the first day, students did regard me as young and some of the students were in my age. They expected a senior lecturer who would be perceived to be professional and had more experience. Overall, my being young was in question.

In my context, ESP has different scheme in comparison to other major planned programs. It is run more like bridging or language additional support. The underlying aims of this setting is attaining English competence through content rather than mastering the subject knowledge itself. However, the issue of teaching foreign language with the use of specific discipline in tertiary level is still stringent concern for teachers.

There are some problems I encountered when initially experienced teaching ESP. The very first fundamental one was questioning about the material that I used—whether I had implemented what is so-called ESP teaching materials or not. The next was about my own capacity to teach the subject, I did not feel confident teaching the subject that I was not familiar with or even I was not personally interested, such as English for Math and other science classes. Although preceded by some learnings and preparations with the help of colleagues and other resources, it still did not significantly work out. Albeit, I was that confident to teach subjects that I was interested in, for example, English for Psychology, Politics, Islamic Studies, Journalism and so on.

In a similar strain, institutional constraint and students' learning needs seem to be my next issue. The institution required teachers to teach English based on students' discipline, however, students enrolling in ESP class came from different background. In regards to this issue, teaching ESP in my context can sometimes end up provisioning students with general English. Even then, I had no clear answer about how broad ESP may be? and how specific ESP should be? Here is the challenge on how to keep advance students challenged and lower-level students motivated take place. It is implied that students' readiness to receive this program should also be

taken into concerns.

Another issue, ESP teachers are often perceived as a threat to subject teacher and the knowledge itself. As the one who only, let say, has expertise in language teaching, ESP teachers are seen as not having value to teach the content. For instance, in my case, as a language teacher who once had experience teaching English for Islamic studies, the subject teacher tends to have an idea of apprehension, i.e., if the content taught and teaching method used would be liberated and westernized. In fact, English is a language associates to Western paradigm.

It can be derived from the narration above that the aforementioned factors can shape my ESP teacher' identity. Those all are initiated from personal limitations then supported by institutional challenge.

Teacher B

At first, I was worried that I might have limited to prepare the materials in accordance with the major I would be teaching. It is because I had to teach four different majors in one semester. But then, after reading the syllabus, it turned out that the ESP was more like general English. So, I found it was not too difficult, I just had to customize a little bit for each major/class.

Dealing with the students, some students could build good cooperation with me, while some others might not. Anyway, I thought it was just normal. It was all depended on their interest in learning English.

However, it is really a challenge when I have to teach students from engineering faculty and health faculty. Usually, most of them already had good English, and I have to really prepare the materials that closely related to their field, so they could still feel engaged and interested in the learning activity.

I think, in my opinion, it would be better for us as an ESP lecturer/teacher/instructor to teach in one specific faculty. Therefore, we could have enough time to prepare, observe, and research the materials that related to the major of study. Because the current policy changes the class every semester, and each semester we could have 5-6 different majors. So, it is quite difficult to adjust/prepare the materials in accordance with the class we are currently teaching.

Teaching ESP is fun because we teach the students from various majors, so I could enrich my vocabulary related to the field that normally I might not know about. Besides, the responsibility is not too demanding too. So, I could really enjoy teaching ESP.

As I have stated previously, I think it would be better if the teacher of ESP have the same class/faculty. And each semester all ESP teachers from that faculty could be gathered together to discuss and share the materials that would be given in the following semester. So, the materials would be not too different from one to another.

Teacher C

Several years teaching ESP at tertiary level, I found teaching ESP is somewhat

challenging because I have to deal with both English and the mastery of the technical content (every single department) which I do not have the basic knowledge.

In one classroom, I have to deal with mixed-ability students that make me hard to design the appropriate material and set the assessment. In addition, lacking of students engagement and motivation is another challenge that I have found. It is hard to create meaningful training content for ESP students. Also, limited classrooms and inconvenient schedule might affect the students' motivation to learn ESP.

One thing I like from teaching ESP is because it is a pivotal subject that might equip students to compete in the global era. If students master English and their discipline as well, they might be competitive and competent workforce. Thus, it leads lead them to be successful persons in the near future.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Given the tenet that ESP approach have motivational advantages to English teaching model for adult learners in any context, particularly in Asia, implementing ESP approach should consider on several pedagogical aspects. Are ESP teachers ready to teach? Have students been aware of ESP learning? To succeed implementing this concept, ESP teacher training has to be given more emphasized. As teaching ESP is a complex task, insufficient provision on teachers' education will raise an issue to challenge teachers' identity.

As it can be derived from the described theory, there are several issues that may affect ESP teachers' identity. First, it is a strategy necessity to define students' need and material selection. Locating students' needs for their future career, study, and everyday life success is the gist to ESP establishment. Accordingly, failing to adapt and construct material based on students' needs and contexts can also challenge teachers' credibility. Therefore, the notion of embedding material selection is a subject that needs to be taken into account in language teacher education.

Likewise, ESP teachers' readiness comes as the next issue. Are they qualified enough to teach ESP? What does it mean to be a qualified ESP teacher? The underlying quality for ESP teachers is the ability to integrate subject knowledge, use linguistic competence, and apply pedagogical principle. To fulfill the three continuum is in fact a complex duty, but lacking in one of those would arise questions to ESP teachers' standing. As a matter of fact, teacher identity formation occurs upon knowledge construction, meaning-making negotiation, and interaction (Evnitskaya, 2011).

Following that, ESP teacher roles also have some issues. For example, *ESP practitioner as teacher* can be unnerving responsibility as their role is no more as the 'primary knower'. Being not well-prepared, ESP teacher coming in the classroom can be at

risk as students may be more knowledgeable. Next is *ESP practitioner as collaborator*. The tenet of team-teaching indeed brings a good sense, but the two teachers—subject and language teacher—may also negotiate their own identities due to different teaching styles and other personality traits. Musanti & Pence (2010) add that “Fundamental to understanding the implications of collaborative practices in teachers’ professional development are the discursive concepts of knowledge and identity” (p.74).

Additionally, the next issue that would be addressed here is the notion of native divide. English ownership that is still and may always be attached to the White teachers has indeed neglected the existence of NNS teachers. This situation often occurs in more political interest than pedagogical definition. Take, for example, the institution’s willingness to invite the White teachers along the way from their countries—though their L1 is not English and some does not have teaching degree—to teach ESP at a university in Asian context. The institution will pay them higher than the local teachers, who have teaching qualification, it is observably designed for the need of attracting more students and rising international exposure. It is implied that NNS are perceived as less capable, and this results in threatening the NNS value. Still, the NS teachers can enjoy the power and status, while the NNS cannot (Varghese, et. al, 2005).

The last issue is related to my personality trait. My personal narration mentioned about the struggle to be what is so called a professional ESP teacher. The personal and institutional demand sometimes arise a conflict within identity. A notion of fulfilling stakeholder needs—students and institution—is required, meanwhile, I am still in a progress of learning how to teach ESP, as a new approach. Consequently, teaching ESP as a new practitioner, I have to deal a lot with feeling of insecurity, worries, nervousness, and difficulty. It can be said that my ESP teacher identity is very much constructed through social process, occurs within institution as legitimate or illegitimate teacher; situated learning, running the obligation to teach ESP; and image-text, negotiating relation with my students.

In regards to this concern, it is the ESP teacher education, linguistic competence, pedagogical principle of identifying students’ needs and giving them encouragement are the ultimate continuum to define a professional ESP teacher. To sum up, as ESP teacher identity formation mainly relies on their teacher training or education, stakeholder needs to take this feature into real concern. Positive or negative identity attached to ESP teachers is shaped by how they are educated. As Kumaradivelu (2001) has argued, “in any educational

reform, teachers and teacher educators constitute pivotal change agent” (p. 555).

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