Chapter 6

Beyond the Script: Intercultural Communicative Competence, Professionalism, and “Narrative Tourism”

John Corbett
University of Sao Paulo, Brazil

ABSTRACT

This chapter begins by reviewing the basic principles of teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) and argues that ESP has been characterized by an instrumental focus on equipping language learners to function in largely predictable and generalizable situations that involve learners mastering predictable genres or “scripts.” However, at more advanced levels of instruction, learners need also to develop the expertise and attitudes that enable them to function in less predictable situations, drawing creatively on their language resources to do so. This chapter argues that aspects of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) align closely with the expectations and curricular goals of reflective practice across a range of professions. Drawing on discussions of ICC, as well as on the model of “narrative medicine” in healthcare, this chapter offers a framework and suggests practical techniques for teaching language and critically reflective practices in one professional domain, that of tourism and hospitality.

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In its brief history, English for Specific Purposes has focused on language instruction for largely instrumental purposes, usually articulated as the satisfaction of certain, specified ‘needs’. These needs can be viewed from the perspective of the student (i.e. what the learner needs to communicate to function in the workplace) or from the viewpoint of an institution (i.e. what the employer or the professional body needs the learner to be able to do, linguistically). Laborda (2011, p. 103) elaborates on the former perspective:

[…] students’ needs can be understood as the language knowledge that the learner requires for professional development, the language and content knowledge that needs to be added or reincorporated to the learner’s knowledge and the learner’s desires of language or content.

This kind of statement is typical of the literature on ESP, and the ‘needs’ perspective that it typifies underlies the kind of materials and activities that have long characterised the ESP classroom. The ESP course designer normally follows a standard procedure, though pedagogical approaches may vary. In the context of English for Tourism and Hospitality, for example, the ESP practitioner will normally:

- Study typical situations that learners ‘need’ to know about (e.g. ‘in the restaurant’)
- Identify genres utilized by the discourse community, typical registers and linguistic realisations (e.g. ‘service encounters’; ‘dealing with complaints’)
- Use the resulting needs analysis and genre analysis to devise relevant materials
- Teach the materials using an audio-lingual, communicative and/or task-based pedagogical approach.

The materials that result from situational, register and genre analysis do not themselves presuppose a particular pedagogical approach, and the ESP teacher might choose to adopt more or less product-based classroom practices (e.g. teaching model dialogues, raising genre awareness through the analysis of model texts) or process-based activities (e.g. setting learners an initial challenge or task, reflecting on the outcomes, and introducing useful language in later iterations of the task). Whichever approach to instruction is adopted (and no doubt there is often a mixture of the two), there is an underlying assumption that, given effective teaching practices, the identification of needs, plus the provision of relevant genres will result in the development of skilled practitioners. And so, for example, the textbook Enjoy Your
Analysis of Speeches by the Former President of the US, Barack Hussein Obama, Regarding the Middle East and Northern Africa

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