SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES IN DESIGNING MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE

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Abstract English for Specific Purpose (ESP) has grown up quickly in the area of English Language Teaching (ELT). It is separated from English language teaching in general since the needs for English in a defined context becomes essentially significant. Thus, the central focus of ESP is subjective to the students’ needs. The course is preliminary intended to address what students expect to have and to do in learning activities. One of the important elements in ESP course is material design. In this paper, the discussion is related to some basic principles in designing ESP materials; they are stimulating, sequenced, authentic, and supplemented.

Key Words: ESP, Needs Analysis, Materials

INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purpose (ESP) has been discussed and written frequently in the literature of English Language Teaching (ELT). There are many definitions of ESP proposed by scholars who concern in this area. Some mention ESP feature, others describe how it differs from English language teaching in general. Here deal the descriptions to obtain an in-depth understanding of the terms.

ESP refers to teaching and learning the specific skills and language needed by particular learners for a particular purpose. Day and Krzanoswski state that
the purpose in ESP is always a professional one.\textsuperscript{1} That is a set of skills that learners currently need in their work or will need in their professional careers. Similarly, Richards and Schmidt mention that ESP relates to the role of English in a language course or program of instruction in which the contents and aims of the course are determined by the specific needs of a particular group of learners.\textsuperscript{2} The learners may belong to the academic field or professional area.

There is a more detailed concept suggested by Dudley-Evans and ST. John. They propose Absolute and Variable Characteristics.\textsuperscript{3} Absolute Characteristics comprise of: a) Its designing is to meet learners’ particular needs; b) ESP applies definite methodology and activities of different field of study; and c) The main focus of ESP is on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres suitable to certain activities. Variable characteristics involve: a) ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines; b) ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English; c) ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be used for learners at secondary school level; and d) ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

Moreover, some other linguists write the difference between ESP and ELT in general. In this case, Basturkmen says that the focus of ESP is narrower than general ELT because ESP concerns mainly on the analysis of learners’ needs.\textsuperscript{4} ESP views learners in terms of their work or study roles, therefore it focuses on work or study-related needs, not individual needs or general


\textsuperscript{4} Helen Basturkmen, \textit{Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes}. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2010), p.3.
interests. Regarding to the needs function, English learners of both specific and general purpose, in fact, mostly have their own reasons to learn the language. For example, the group of schoolchild possibly has either specific or general needs. Regarding to this view Hutchinson and Waters point out what distinguishes ESP from the general course is not so much with the existence of the needs but rather the awareness of the needs. They also suggest that needs analysis becomes priority in ESP. The awareness of target situation – a definable need in English – makes ESP and English course in general are different.5

Accordingly, in the terms of definition, most ESP practitioners propose that English needed in a particular context has different linguistic characteristic from another one. For example, the language feature of English in economics can be distinctive if it is compared to that in medical science, and so on. Therefore, various language needs of English learners can be identified and grouped based on their own specific area of work or study. This aspect becomes the basic principle of ESP.

Furthermore, ESP is typically divided into several sub divisions. Hutchinson and Waters identify three common groups of learners’ specialism. They are: English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics (EBE), and English for the Social Science (ESS). The categories are usually associated with two main areas whether the learners belong to academic domain: English for Academic Purpose (EAP) or professional field: English for Occupational Purpose (EOP). In a particular specialism, there are some individual programs offered based on EAP and EOP. For example, English for Business and Economics involves English for Economics belonging to EAP and English for secretaries to EOP.6

5 Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters, English for specific purposes, a learning-centered approach. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1987), p.53-54.
In addition, there is also a theory that converses EOP and EAP being at the top level in ESP division. Dudley-Evan and ST. John state that EAP consists of English for Science and Technology, English for Medical Purposes, English for Legal Purpose, and English for Management, Finance, and Economics. Within EOP, there are English for Professional Purpose (English for Medical Purpose and English for Business Purposes) and English for Vocational Purpose (Pre-vocational English and Vocational English).7

NEEDS ANALYSIS

It has been stated that in the area of ESP needs analysis becomes the central focus. Needs analysis is the stage of identifying what specific language and skills the learners require to study. According to Iwai, et al needs analysis involves activities that discover specific information about the needs of a particular group of learners as the basic determination for learning.8 Likewise, Robinson mentions that a needs analysis is the basic phase in ESP in order to specify what the learners have to do through the medium of English.9 In other word, needs analysis functions to appropriately link what is taught and what is needed in ESP classroom.

There are a number of different purposes of needs analysis. Richards explain that the needs analysis is used to find out: a) what the language skills a learner needs in order to perform a particular role, such as sales manager, tour guide, or university student; b) to help determine if an existing course adequately addresses the needs of potential students; c) to determine which students from group are most in need of training in particular language skills; d) to identify a change of direction that people in a reference group feel is important; e) to

identify a gap between what students are able to do and what they need to be able to do; and f) to collect information about particular problem learners are experiencing.\textsuperscript{10}

Moreover, needs analysis can be distinguished between information about the present and the learners’ needs to learn or to change. Correspondingly, Graves describes some information that need to query concerning the present facts.\textsuperscript{11} These involve learners’ personal background, their level of language proficiency and intercultural competence, the learners’ interest, preference, and attitudes. He also suggests information about what the learners need to learn or want to change. It refers to the learners’ goals and expectations, the target context (situation, roles, topics, and contents), types of communicative skills needed and task to perform, the purpose of language modalities. Besides, Hutchinson and Waters propose target needs (what the learners need to do in the target situation) to analyse the learners’ needs. In target needs they distinguish: necessities relating to what the learners have to know in order to function effectively in the target situation; lacks referring to what the learners knows already; and wants concerning with what the learners wish to learn.\textsuperscript{12} Nation and Macalister provide a framework related to target needs by summarizing the works of Munby and Hutchinson and Waters. The framework is organized based on four learning goals: language, ideas, skills, and text, as the following table (1):\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{12} Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters. \textit{English for specific purposes, a learning-centered approach}. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1987), p.54.

Table 1: Questions for Focusing on Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Types of information in the answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>What will the learning be used for?</td>
<td>Sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How proficient does the learner have to be?</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What communicative activities will the learner take part in?</td>
<td>Grammatical structures</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where will the language be used?</td>
<td>Functions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Set phrases and set sentence tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas</td>
<td>What content matter will the learner be working with?</td>
<td>Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>How will the learner use the language?</td>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under what conditions will the language be used?</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who will the learners use the language with?</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Degree of accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Degree of fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>What will the language be used to do?</td>
<td>Genres and discourse types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What language uses is the learner already familiar with?</td>
<td>Sociolinguistic skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Notion and Macalister (2010)

Moreover, needs analysis can address personal and professional information about the learners. Dudley Evan and St John list several aspects related to this issue as follow:

- a. Professional information about the learners: The tasks and activities learners are/will be using English for.
- b. Personal information about the learners: Factors which may affect the way they learn such as previous learning experiences, cultural information, reasons for attending the course and expectations of it, attitude to English.
- c. English language information about the learners: What their current skills and language use are which allows us to assess (d).
- d. The learners’ lacks: The gap between (c) and (a).
- e. Language learning information: Effective ways of learning the skills and language in (d).
f. Professional communication information about (a): Knowledge of how language and skills are used in the target situation.
g. What is wanted from the course.
h. Information about how the course will be run.\textsuperscript{14}

Related to the material development in ESP, the needs analysis becomes the prior concern. Tomlinson says that the needs and wants of the learners should drive the materials. But teachers have needs and wants to be satisfied too and so do the administrators, with their concerns for standardization and consistency with, for example, a syllabus, a theory of language learning, the requirements of examinations and the language policies of a government.\textsuperscript{15} These needs and wants are not irreconcilable and they can best be satisfied by localized projects which consult learners, teachers and administrators before, during, and after the materials design process.

**ESP LEARNING MATERIALS**

First of all, it is necessary to address definitions of material in a language program. According to Tomlinson materials include anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of a language. They can be linguistic, visual, or auditory. They can also be presented in print, through live performance or display, or on cassette, CD-ROM, DVD or Internet. The materials can be in the form of instructional or exploratory so that they can inform learners about the language and provide experience of the language in use. Similarly, Richards states that materials may take the form of printed materials such as books, workbooks, work-sheets, or readers, or nonprint materials such as cassette or audio materials, videos, or computer-based materials. Besides, materials can comprise both print and nonprint sources such as self-access materials and materials on the Internet. Materials that are not designed in the purpose of a course use such as magazines, newspapers, and TV materials are also useful in


language classroom. In addition, Graves points out that teaching materials are tools that can be figuratively cut up into components pieces and then rearranged to suit the needs, abilities, and interests of the students in the course.

The selection of ESP materials should thus above all depend on the needs of the learners in relation to their future or present jobs; that is, materials should focus on the appropriate topics and include “tasks and activities that practice the target skill areas” (Ellis and Johnson). In this case, it is essential to ensure that the materials meet learners’ needs and the language taught matches the language that the students will use (Cunningsworth). After analysing learner needs and setting objectives for the course, the ESP teacher has to select materials that will help the students achieve the course objectives. These materials should also relate closely to the learners’ specific skills and content needs, which is an important factor in learners’ motivation.

1. Important factors in Learning Material

There are several important factors in teaching materials. They are learner, teacher and contextual factors. According to Richards, learner factors include learners’ preferred learning style, their language learning needs, interest, and motivations. Teacher factors involve the level of teacher’s language skills, experience of teaching and training, background of culture, and favoured teaching technique and strategy. Contextual factors include school culture, classroom conditions, class size, and availability of teaching resources in

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situations where the materials will be used.\textsuperscript{21} Equally, Howard and Major suggest that one of the important factors is the learner. Thus, considerations of how to develop for teaching materials must be done by doing a needs analysis. This should reveal learning needs with regard to English language skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary knowledge and grammar. Also, students’ learning preferences, experiences, level of language competence, interests, and purposes become equivalently important. Related to the teacher factor, Howard and Major propose teacher personal confidence and competence that determine the willingness to get on material development. The level of teachers’ experience and their perceived creativity and comprehension to material principle will give significant effects. Besides, Howard and Major also mention resources and facilities as the element of context. Teachers, in this case, must consider the availability of resources and facilities. Resources and facilities such as computers, a video player and TV, radio, cassette recorder, CD player, etc. will impact on decision in material development.\textsuperscript{22}

Briefly, learners, teachers, and contextual variables can influence the quality and effectiveness of material development. Therefore, consideration on the factors should become the priority above all.

2. Language Skills of ESP Learning Material

ESP materials can be done for different reasons and can be presented in different forms. Kennedy and Bolitho suggest that ESP materials are beneficial to make students read then get the meaning, read then write summarizing or paraphrasing, listen when teachers read from them, speak when the teacher motivates his students to communicate, or do different tasks when the teacher


integrates different skills. Thus, students should be equipped with the sets of skills and strategies necessary to use the language in their academic studies (Cunningsworth). The skills are namely reading, listening, speaking and writing. Each specialty is based on some skills according to students’ needs and the form of the present lesson. In addition, Schleppegrell and Bowman describe that while in general ELT all four skills are stressed equally, needs analysis in ESP determines which language skill/s are most required to emphasize. Accordingly, an integrated approach is usually desirable (Dudley-Evans and St. John).

3. Material for Listening

Materials for listening might be the most difficult choice. According to Elimane the materials have to be selected in an appropriate way in order to motivate students and make them listen without getting bored. ESP students may listen to lectures, instructions, seminars, meetings, and committees. Then they have to get key words, main ideas, speakers’ attitude, and switches of register. The teacher’s role here is to be attentive concerning students’ reactions and to the atmosphere of each lesson so that to attract students’ attention and satisfy their needs in an appropriate way without making them get bored or confused.

4. Material for Speaking

Speaking activities need more work for teachers but it is worth using them. They make the speaking process seems easier and more active as they help in making the students’ involvements more obvious. So, the use of speaking activities would highly improve students’ retention. Such activities add

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variety to range of learning situations, maintain motivation, refresh learners during formal learning, encourage students’ interest, help in making teacher-student distance less marginal, and provide more student-student communication. The more students get motivated, the more students get comfortable and can speak confidently (Kennedy and Bolitho in Elimane).  

5. Materials for Reading

Reading has been recognized as an essential skill to be taught in the ESP area. Kennedy and Bolitho in Elimane state that materials for reading play the role of activities. Students are asked to read and try to comprehend as they are allowed to use dictionaries to learn new structures and vocabulary. Students have to skim, scan, relate graphs to text, relate diagrams to text, predict and sequence the structure of a text, and understand elliptical writing-telexes. Such activities are means of joy as well as of teaching and learning. They help students in using and practicing their available language resources as to develop their own skills, strategies and level of comprehension. Besides, they are the practical contribution of theoretical lessons. Each material for reading is given to students in order to make them master specific points which are helpful for their studies. Moreover, reading activities in ESP are characterized in emphasizing the information comprehension. Johns and Davies cited by Dudley Evans and St. John distinguish between TALO (Text As a Linguistic Object and TAVI (Text As a Vehicle of Information). For ESP learners, comprehending information in material accurately and quickly is more significant than language details.  


6. Materials for Writing

Many ESP courses also emphasize writing competence as the students’ needs in the study or occupational field. In ESP, teachers do not only need to ask students to write, but also teach particular kinds of writing which are advantageous and required in some academic or professional contexts. “The literacy demand of the modern world, therefore, challenges ESP teachers to recognize that their task involves more than simply controlling linguistic error or polishing style. Instead it encourages them to respond to a complex diversity of genres, contexts and practices29 (Hyland).” In addition, Dudley-Evant and St. John mention that knowledge of genre involves an understanding of the expectation of the discourse community about the structure, the language, and the rhetoric of genre. In this account, ESP writing activities may include writing business letter and email, taking a note, writing reports and research articles.30

7. Material for Integrated Skill Activities

Materials for integrated skills are those integrating two skills or more: speaking, listening, writing, and reading on the same activity. The use of activities should help in making the lesson well prepared and organized. Moreover, the teacher has to confirm the presence of all available facilities. Teachers must confirm that activities are simple and can provide the instructions that are intended to do. Philips emphasizes that the activities should be simple enough to understand what is expected of them, but some activities may require the four skills and they have a considerable value.31 Simulation, games and information gap activities, and project work are integrated skills activities.

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THE CRITERIA OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING MATERIALS IN ESP

ESP teachers have to provide the material for the program. Teachers of ESP can apply materials by selecting from the existing sources, simplifying if it is not suitable, or writing by their own. Whatever the ways they choose, the teachers must have critical eyes so that the learning materials can function effectively in the classroom. In the following are some criteria of teaching materials that need to be taken into account.

1. Materials Should Provide a Stimulus for Learning

The learning materials for ESP should be a stimulation and motivation. According to Dudley Evan and St. John (1998) effective materials need to be challenging but achievable; to offer new ideas and information whereas being grounded in the learners’ experience and knowledge; and to encourage fun and creativity. The input must contain concepts and knowledge that are familiar but it must also offer something new, a reason to communicate, to get involve.32 Similarly, Hutchinson and Waters suggest that good materials do not teach but encourage learners to learn.33 Therefore, to make materials effective there should be interesting texts, enjoyable activities which engage learners’ thinking capacities, and opportunities for learners to use their existing knowledge and skills. Beside, variety is also essential. Even though any language class requires varieties, the case becomes more important in an ESP class to motive students learning. Practicing a number of macro and micro skills in one class, introducing a range of activity types and varying the type of interaction taking place during the class are activities that can be put into practice accordingly.

2. Materials Should be Sequenced

The learning materials should be sequenced in the presentation. In accordance with this, Dudley-evans and St. John state that materials need to be

consistent and to have some recognizable pattern. Additionally, Hutchinson and Waters write that material help to organize the teaching and learning process, by providing a path through the complex mass of the language to be learnt. Good materials should, therefore, provide a clear and coherent unit structure which will guide teacher and learner through various activities in such a way as to maximize the change of learning. This structure should help the teacher in planning lessons and encourage in the learner a sense of progress and achievement.

3. Materials Should be Authentic

An important component of teaching ESP is the introduction of authentic teaching material to the classroom. Basturkmen states that one of the key characteristics of ESP is that teachers and course developers value the use of authentic texts and tasks. 34 The term authentic denotes that the texts were written for purposes of other than language teaching and learning. According to Blagojević, in teaching ESP, the use of authentic material implies reading comprehension and interpretation of the texts which are written by native speakers for non-pedagogical purposes. 35 This means if a course needs to provide materials for financial accountants, the texts included should be written by accountants and those in related financial sectors such as the financial section of a company annual report. Also, texts written by journalists could possibly be used if they were written for the purposes of communicating financial or economic ideas and information. The authentic texts play an important role in demonstrating real language use.

4. Supplementary Materials are Needed

The most essential materials usually refer to paper based, however, ESP teacher sometimes apply audio and video cassette, computer, or other real

objects (Dudley-Evans and St John). In line with this, Crawford views that using multimedia as classroom materials is valuable since advanced technology in an increasing multimedia world allow for expanding flexible delivery. It is also because such materials can create a learning environment that enriches linguistic and cultural information about the target language. The material such as video and multimedia allow teachers and learners to explore the non verbal and cultural aspects of language as well as the verbal. In addition, Torrez and Barbera use technical dictionaries, realia, and Internet as their supplementary material. Specialized dictionaries are used by students to cope with problems of terminology. Realia involves catalogues, sketches, drawings, and photographs. Internet is the source for students in the field of their study.

CONCLUSION

Needs analysis is the key point in the stages of ESP program including material development. It is used to assess the appropriate contents that relate to learners’ present condition and their needs to learn. Thus, needs analysis is used to query: the level of learners’ language proficiency - skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing and the language components such as vocabulary, grammatical structure, and pronunciation; effecting factors in their study – experience and knowledge of culture in target language, learners’ preference and interest in their study – topics and activities; and expectation in the target language – the use of skills and language in target situation. This analysis is undertaken by involving several parties in the course namely students, teachers, and stakeholders.

The materials in ESP should meet the students needs. It can be concluded that the criteria of effective materials for ESP are: Firstly, the materials should stimulate for learning activities. In this account, the materials containing various activities and integrated learning skills are suggested. Secondly, the materials need to be sequenced. It means that there is a clear structure of the materials that allow students to experience progression of skills and understanding. Thirdly, authenticity is also prominent in ESP. Authentic materials place the learners into the situation of which the use of natural language by native speakers. Eventually, supplementary materials such as audio and video package, realia, dictionary, and internet are centre in ESP classroom.
REFERENCE


