English For Specific Purposes

BBI 3211 UNIT 1-7/7

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English For Specific Purposes  
(BBI 3211)

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

1. Name of Course  
   English for Specific Purposes

2. Course Code  
   BBI 3211

3. Credits  
   3 (3+0) hours per week over 14 weeks

4. Prerequisites  
   None

5. Learning Objectives  
   By the end of this module, you will be able to:
   1. identify the differences between teaching/learning ESP and General English;
   2. explain the different perceptions about needs analysis;
   3. describe the different approaches to needs analysis;
   4. list and describe the possible constraints on the process of analysing needs and designing ESP courses;
   5. identify the various approaches to ESP course design;
   6. determine how special language can be analysed and described;
   7. describe the role of the ESP practitioner and appropriate methodology in ESP;
   8. identify the features of sound ESP materials; and
   9. describe the functions of evaluation and apply techniques of assessment in ESP.
6. Course Synopsis

The course deals with aspects of theory as well as the practice of speech communication with special reference to English in second language contexts. As an introductory university-level course that surveys the broad field of communication, it covers traditional approaches and new developments, samples theory and research, and devotes attention to important communication skills and strategies. Hence, as a course that caters for students with little or no prior background in human speech communication, it provides a sound foundation in the general principles of this liberal rhetorical art that will serve as the basis for more advanced and specialised study of human discourse.

7. Materials Needed

- Notes provided in this module
- Set textbook; and
- Prescribed extended reading material (where possible, including those accessed via the Internet)

Module Notes for Intensive Study

These are organised in a series of seven units of content.

Textbook to be purchased by Students


This book can be purchased from Pekanbuku, Universiti Malaya, or ordered through your lecturer. If possible, you should buy it when you attend your first face-to-face session at UPM. Frequent references will be made in the module to appropriate sections of the book, so it is necessary for you keep a personal copy of the textbook throughout the duration of the course.
BBI 3211 English for Specific Purposes/Overview of the Course

Recommended Reading


8. How to Use this Module

This module is about an important area in English Language Teaching called English for Specific Purposes, or simply, ESP. To a small extent, especially if you are an English language teacher, the course reviews and builds on your knowledge of English language teaching. Given the fact that you are an English language major, this course helps focus your interest in ESL (English as a Second Language) use in work and study settings. Those of you who are keen to pursue a career in language training in specific areas of use in the public as well as the private sector will find that the material in this course relevant as a first step towards more specialised study and practice.

Unit Objectives

These are listed at the beginning of individual units so that you will know what aspects of content to focus on. Also keep in mind that these objectives are also learning outcomes, that is, what you can actually do after studying the contents of each unit and doing the tasks that you are set.

References to other sources
Overview of the Course

Each unit of this module presents information that will help you build up on your existing store of knowledge progressively. However, you must remember that the content provided in the unit usually highlights the important aspects of the topic under discussion. Thus you will find that at various points in the development of the unit, you will be directed to read specific sections of the set textbook and/or related articles published elsewhere. Although the additional references are not essential to complete the tasks, you will find that actually reading them will significantly enhance your understanding of the issues highlighted.

As I have expressed in earlier modules written by me for IDEAL, I am optimistic that the many among you who have taken the rare initiative to study on this distance education programme will continue to seek out other sources of information that is related to the topics of this course. You may also want to form a small co-operative/collaborative network of say, five or six colleagues who are studying on a similar programme. (I know now that some of you have already started on this). Such a network must include members who have better access to information sources like conventional libraries and especially the Internet. These friends can then mail photocopies of useful articles and text extracts (at cost, of course!) to those who need them. After all, much effective learning at university level is often the result of collaborative effort on the part of students who have developed a voracious appetite for reading and reflecting with their colleagues. In such situations involving close cooperation, more often than not the ‘giver’ usually learns as much if not more than the ‘taker’. So, for maximum benefit get organised from the beginning of the semester.

Learning Activities

In each unit of this module, besides the text that presents and discusses the content, there are set tasks that students are expected to attempt without exception. For most of these tasks Guidance Notes are provided at the end of the module. The symbol ● next to the task number in the main text of the module indicates when such ‘model answers’ and/or suggestions are available. The tasks themselves comprise opportunities by which you are able to apply the ideas you
have learnt within the framework of the course and the module of learning material.

9. Assessment

Assessment scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Assessment Element</th>
<th>Weightage (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mini-project/Task (individual/group)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mid-semester test</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Library Research Project (longer paper assignment)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Total marks</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Product-oriented Group Tasks

These tasks are characterised by the fact that students have to work collaboratively in groups of three/four to carry out a set of instructions within a given time. The execution of the tasks involves the students’ creative/critical evaluation of their own responses to given questions. Each group has to appoint a leader, who can lead the discussion of the answer(s) to the question(s), and a secretary or ‘recorder’, who will be able to keep a record of the main points and/or decisions made by the group.

The material for group tasks will be sent separately at a later date.

Mid-semester Test

This is a 50-minutes test comprising open-ended questions that require short answers. There will be five sections, each made up of blank filling, True/False, matching, or information transfer items. Some questions will seek to get you to write short paragraphs of 5-8 lines to respond to a focused question. The test will cover the first three units of the course materials. Your performance in this test will contribute to 20% of the course marks.

IDEAL UPM........................................................................................................5
Overview of the Course

Library Research Project

This is an extended writing assignment that requires you to do some secondary research using reference materials e.g. books, articles, magazines, and Internet resources. All sources that you use to develop your answer to the given question must be properly documented and acknowledged. A printed project assignment sheet will be given to each of you. You will be required to work in groups of three or four as far as might be possible.

Final Examination

The assessment of your knowledge of the course content will comprise 40 multiple-choice questions and three essay questions. You must attempt all the multiple-choice items (30% of course marks) and choose one essay question (10% of course marks).

STRUCTURE OF THE MODULE

OVERVIEW OF THE MODULE

Unit 1: INTRODUCING ESP

Unit 2: LEARNER NEEDS ANALYSIS

Unit 3: COURSE DESIGN

Unit 4: DESCRIPTION OF SPECIAL LANGUAGES

Unit 5: ESP MATERIALS

Unit 6: ESP METHODOLOGY

Unit 7: EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT
BBI 3211 English for Specific Purposes/Overview of the Course

AUTHOR’S BIODATA

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- Currently Senior Lecturer in English Language Studies and Head of Department of English at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, UPM

- Courses taught over the last five years include Speech Communication I & II, English Research Project, Contrastive and Error Analysis, Introduction to the Psychology of Language, Language, Ideology and Power (undergraduate), Advanced Expository Writing, Reading Theory and Practice, Critical Discourse Analysis, Genre Studies, and English for Specific Purposes (postgraduate)

- Have taught the English language at secondary school and university levels since 1974 and was the Coordinator of English Language Proficiency Courses (ESP) UPM between 1990 and 1994

- Major areas of academic/professional interest are cognitive discourse analysis (both spoken and written genres), strategic reading, and English for Specific Purposes (needs analysis and course design)

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Overview of the Course

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Wishing you success in working with the materials in this module and a satisfying learning experience at UPM!

"There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio"
(William Shakespeare)
UNIT 1: INTRODUCING ESP

Reading for this Unit


Unit Objectives:

By the end of the module, you will be able to:

1. provide an extended definition of ESP as a distinct field of theory and practice within English language teaching;
2. identify the absolute and variable characteristics of ESP;
3. describe the nature of ESP practice in general; and
4. identify the main developments within ESP over the last four decades.
Unit 1/Introducing ESP

Sub-topics

1. English as an international language
2. What is 'ESP'?
3. Why do we need ESP?
   - Learners and their needs
   - The role of the ESP teacher
   - The choice of text and the design of materials
   - Aspects of language
   - Appropriate Methodology
4. An Extended definition of ESP
5. Recent Developments in ESP
6. The ESP Family Tree
7. Review

1. English as an international language

The English language has generally been acknowledged as the lingua franca of much social, professional and academic activity in the international milieu. Given today's era of 'globalisation', it is not surprising that the national economies of many developing countries (and some developed countries such as Japan) are continuing to spend a substantial proportion of their valuable resources on the teaching of English as the language of universal communication. In fact, it might now be considered superfluous to mention the phrase “to be internationally intelligible in English” when referring to the aims of secondary school curricula in terms of school leavers’ desired terminal competence in the language.

At higher levels of education, the role of English appears to be even more pronounced in specialised areas of research and scholarship especially in relation to the manufacture and exchange of information. For example, out of the several million research papers published annually all over the world in all languages, Swales (1987: 42) assessed that “a reasonably conservative estimate would be that at least half of these millions of papers are published in the English language, and in some disciplines considerably more than half.” He went on to say that given the increasingly predominant position of English over the previous two decades, “there is every indication that English will remain the primary language of research at least for the remainder of this century”, effectively emphasising the Anglophone grip, as it were, on the sphere of human activity in question. More than ten years on into the new millennium, it would appear to be futile for anyone to argue otherwise.
To what extent is our entire knowledge systems encoded in the English language?

Besides attaining its present formidable position in the academia and in the field of science and technology, English has also made inroads into the world of business and international relations for reasons that are not difficult to see. With the liberalisation of business practices in tandem with the increasingly dominant position of western economies, particularly the US and Britain, English has indeed become the language of 'modernisation' and economic development. Countries which previously persisted with a focus on their national as well as indigenous languages (e.g. Japan, Korea, China, etc.), are now aggressively pursuing radical policy change where language learning and use is concerned. Hence, courses and training programmes in business English proliferate in these countries, to some extent reminiscent of the socio-economic boom years of the post-war period. An important point to be noted here is that with the corporatisation of traditional commercial practices and academic/educational institutions alike, lines of demarcation between activities that were strictly academic/educational and those that business-oriented are beginning to blur. This hybridisation of activity-type has far-reaching implications for language training, as we shall see later when we explore the concept of 'genre' as a class of communicative event within the context of a special type of English language learning/teaching commonly known as *ESP*.

2. What is 'ESP'?

For quite obvious reasons, then, there are more learners of English as a Second/Foreign Language than of any other language. Many have no clear objectives in learning the language and because of this, sometimes TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) has been cynically called TENOR (Teaching English for No Obvious Reasons)! Many more study English because it is an important world language, as
briefly discussed above, which they may require later in their studies or career for purposes yet unknown. Yet others study English because they have no choice because it is a compulsory foreign language in the school and/or university curriculum.

However, a significant number do have very specific reasons for learning English. English may be the medium of instruction in higher education in their countries or at least the language of their textbooks. For professionals, it may be their working language, for example, hospital doctors in some Gulf countries. For scientists, English may be the language of the professional journals they read to keep up to date with their specialism or specialist area and for which they write if they wish to make their research known to the rest of the world.

David Crystal (1999) lists some of the many reasons for learning English. “It is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, technology, medicine, diplomacy, sports, international competitions, pop music and advertising. Over two thirds of the world’s scientists write in English. Three-quarters of the world’s mail is written in English. Of all the information in the world’s electronic retrieval systems, 80% is stored in English.” In many ways, Crystal is talking about ‘English for Specific Purposes’ (ESP), that is, the use of a particular variety of the language in a specific context of use.

Hence, ESP “almost by definition, is language in context” (Robinson, 1991: 20), and ESP courses are justified primarily on the basis of learners’ communicative needs (Munby, 1978; Kennedy and Bolitho, 1984: 14-6; Bloom and Bloom, 1986: 5-6). Robinson (1991) adds that “ESP courses are those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the communicative needs of the context” (p.20; see also Munby, 1978: 2) e.g. a course in English for Academic Purposes could train undergraduates to read textbook chapters efficiently, as and answer questions in class, participate productively in study group discussions, write acceptable essay-type answers to test questions, etc. to enable students to function effectively in the undergraduate teaching/learning environment.
Anyone for 'English for Computer Programming' 
or 'English for Science and Technology?'

But it is not easy to define ESP in any precise way because it is not a monolithic enterprise, that is, an area of work or way of teaching/learning English that is unchanging nor is it a field that abides by a set of fixed principles. This is further essentially due to the fact that very context where English is needed is in itself unique (See Robinson’s simple definition above), which means to say that factors found in one situation may or may not be found in another apparently similar one. Strictly speaking, ESP is protean in nature: there are as many ESP courses as there are contexts where ESP may be learnt or taught. The major factors that contribute to the fluid nature of ESP are learners’ needs, the role of the ESP teacher, materials and their design, aspects of language, and teaching/learning methodology. These are briefly dealt with in the next section together with some well-known attempts at defining ESP more comprehensively in the field.

◆ Task 1.1

(Expect to spend about 10 minutes on this task.)

1. Write one sentence to give a simple definition of ‘ESP’.

2. Look up the word ‘protean’ in a good dictionary. How does the word describe ESP as a field of English language teaching and/or learning?
3. What do you think are the advantages of an ESP course for the learner and for the sponsor of the course?

3. The Nature of ESP

What is *specific* about English for Specific Purposes in the English language teaching/learning world? ESP is often defined by contrasting it with EGP (English for General Purposes) or 'General English', the variety of English taught in most primary and secondary schools all over the world. Discussion of what makes ESP distinct from EGP has focused on:

1. learners and their needs,
2. the role of the ESP teacher,
3. the choice of text and the design of materials,
4. aspects of language, and
5. appropriate teaching/learning methodology.

Which of these differences is the most significant has also been a matter of considerable debate (see e.g. Hutchinson and Waters 1987). We look at each of these aspects of ESP briefly below:
a) Learners and their needs

What sort of needs do ESP learners have? How and when are these needs to be assessed? Who should participate in the needs assessment? How is the analysis of needs to be translated into course design? These are some of the kinds of practical and theoretical issues which arise in relation to needs analysis in ESP.

b) The role of the ESP teacher

How is the role of ESP teacher different from that of the EGP teacher? What additional roles may she be asked to play and are there other than pedagogy in which the ESP teacher should be proficient? In what sense, if any, is the role of ESP teacher more demanding than that of the EGP teacher? These questions relate to the status of the ESP professional as well as the training that ESP teachers require.

c) The choice of text and the design of materials

Are ESP materials distinctively different from ‘General English’ materials? This is a controversial question. ESP materials are obviously different in their choice of topic and in language content, especially vocabulary. However they may share the same principles of format, staging and activity types.

d) Aspects of language

Do the language needs of ESP learners differ from those on ‘General English’ courses? While there is some overlap, most ESP learners need a vocabulary not normally found in General English course books and the vocabulary they need will vary according to specialist area of work or study. Some ESP learners may need development of one language skill more than others e.g. a course in Reading Medical English. ESP learners may also need to be familiar with particular types of text, such as business letters or laboratory reports.

e) Appropriate Methodology

Does ESP have a distinct methodology? Although at one time ESP could claim to be more communicative in its approach than EGP or ‘General English’ on the grounds that it was based more firmly on student needs, this difference has become less salient with the adoption of communicative approaches in most teaching of EGP. There is now considerable overlap between EGP and ESP teaching in terms of classrooms activities. It is in the way that ESP teaching relates to the specialism and takes into account the specialist knowledge the learner brings to the classroom that distinct differences emerge.
4. Towards an Extended Definition of ESP

Earlier, we looked at a simple definition of ESP as English Language learning in specific contexts of language production and use. However, we need an extended definition of ESP that is more reflective of the field of study and practice, and that will include more information about components that set it apart from the competing area of school-oriented, general English Language Teaching (ELT). To do this, we look further at the following views or positions in the literature:

Strevens (1988, in Dudley-Evans & St John 1998: 3) makes a distinction between the ‘absolute’ and ‘variable’ characteristics of ESP. He says that ESP is a type of English Language Teaching (ELT) that comprises absolute characteristics, which are:
- designed to meet specific needs of the learner;
- related in content (that is in its theses and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities centred on language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics and so on, and analysis of the discourse; and
- in contrast with ‘General English’;

and variable characteristics, which are:
- may be restricted to selected learning skills to be learned (e.g. reading only); and
- may not be taught according to any pre-ordained methodology.

Robinson (1991) says that we can conceptualise ESP in terms of the following key and variable features:

Key defining features that are 'criterial' to ESP:
- ESP is 'normally goal-directed'; and
- ESP courses are based on needs analysis.

The variable features of ESP are:
- ESP courses are taught/learned over a limited time period
- Courses are normally taught to adults in homogeneous classes who are engaged in specialist studies or work
- ESP learners are not beginners
- Course does not necessarily contain specialist language, content
- Specialist activities or those that are appropriate are included
BBI 3211: English for Specific Purposes/Unit 1

Dudley-Evans & St John (1998: 4 – 5) sum up their position as follows:

a) Absolute characteristics:
   - ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner;
   - ESP makes us of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;
   - ESP is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

b) Variable characteristics:
   - ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
   - ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
   - 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;
   - 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.

It would appear that Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) are ‘closer to the truth’ given that they draw from the earlier views as well from their own extensive experience in designing and conducting ESP courses in a wide variety of contexts. Why do you think ‘General English’ is missing in Robinson’s (1991) and Dudley-Evans and St John’s definitions of ESP?

♦ Task 1.2

a) Complete Column 1 of the following note-taking frame with reference to Robinson’s (1991) extended definition of ESP.

b) In column 2 enter the characteristics of a special English language course with which you are familiar. How far does this course match Robinson’s characteristics?

c) Compare Robinson’s characteristics with those of Strevens.
### Note-taking Frame (Cf. Robinson 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 ESP courses</th>
<th>2 Your course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Based on</td>
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<td>Duration</td>
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<td>Age of students</td>
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<td>Level of students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Content of course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of activities</td>
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### 5. Recent Developments in ESP

For now, a little recent history of the ESP enterprise will be useful towards an understanding of the proliferation of activity in the field. While the origins of ESP have been traced deep in the history of specific purpose language teaching (Howatt, 1984: 218, in Bloor and Bloor, 1986: 4), its recent ascendancy and development in relation to international education, i.e. the teaching of English for academia, business, and other vocational pursuits (Johns, A. M. and Dudley-Evans, 1991: 297) are often attributed to the socio-economic and political needs of newly-independent nations of the developing world. Nations like Malaysia and Singapore have sought to assert their own
cultural identities and indigenous languages, but have at the same time adopted a utilitarian stance as far as the teaching/learning of English is concerned. This has clearly been in recognition of the language's international status as the medium of global communication.

Going back about 30 to 40 years, we need to take note of three closely related developments that have gained prominence in the English language teaching world at large. The first development has been the emergence of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as a distinct area of investigation in its own right (Bloor and Bloor, 1986: 5), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) being the main purpose-related strands. EAP has evolved from what was generally known as EST (English for Science and Technology), an area where much of the earlier work in ESP appears to have been concentrated. EOP is in many ways similar to the somewhat fashionable 'English for the workplace'.

The second development has been the increasing attention given to the development of reading competence in English especially amongst students at the higher levels of education world-wide who need it as a means of access to academic materials published in the language (Johns, T., 1994: 102). The importance of developing students' reading competence can be seen both in terms of academic need and expediency within tertiary institutions in these countries as well as its theoretical validity as a skill underlying development and performance in the other language skills (see Grabe’s [1986] postulate concerning reading primacy within a critical mass of knowledge and skills required for academic excellence).

A third, more recent development on the EAP scene, perhaps more closely related in the initial stages to the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement in North America, would be the ascendancy of genre. It began by shaping the research as well as the pedagogical orientations of writing scholars towards approaching academic writing in colleges and universities as a 'socially-situated act' and as "an acquired response to the discourse conventions which arise from preferred ways of creating and communicating knowledge within particular communities" (Bizzell, 1982; cited in Swales, 1990: 4). The logical offshoot of this emerging concept are genre analysis and genre-based pedagogy that have been developed and brought to maturity in EAP by John Swales since the early 1980's. For the purpose of reading and writing development in EAP, the prior analysis of academic genres has made pedagogical inroads, as it were, by making explicit established patterns of content organisation in key genres by which arguments are presented to readers in a plausible manner. However, genre studies are not concerned with text analysis per se for textual knowledge of itself "cannot provide a rationale of why genre texts have acquired certain features. ... It is [also] more
appropriate to consider the roles that texts play in particular environments" (Swales, 1990: 6-7; Swales' italics). In practice, EAP researchers and practitioners have generally concentrated on the rhetorical analysis of genre texts with minimal attention to their social roles.

The introduction of EAP courses at tertiary level is aimed at helping students come to grips with academic materials written in English in developing countries where the language is not the main medium of instruction. This move is an outcome of converging influences brought about by the three related developments in ESP mentioned earlier. In other words, given the acknowledged need amongst undergraduate and postgraduate students to use their knowledge and competence in English to process written communication in the language, the majority of EAP courses within these ESL/EFL contexts have generally tended to focus on improving reading abilities with due consideration for related development in the other skills for reasons of effective pedagogy as well as of consideration of the learners' extended needs.

The analysis of learner needs, it must be emphasised, is the main defining feature of ESP courses; in short, 'no needs analysis, no ESP'. The Munbyan model of prior analysis of learner needs, however, has had a rather restricted following within the ESP movement due to the CNP's (Communicative Needs Processor's) "ultimate sterility" as a needs assessment approach (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:54). In addition to being criticised as being impractical (Davies, 1981, Mead, 1982, and Porter, 1983, cited in Alderson, 1988: 93-4), a Munby-type needs analysis has been singled out for its lack of theoretical justification for the categorisation of macro- and micro-skills, and how the analysis of related needs might be relevant to a heterogeneous group of learners. As Alderson (ibid.) appropriately notes, the most serious shortcoming of Munby's CNP (Communication Needs Processor) model is its predominantly linguistic or sociolinguistic orientation rather than a psycholinguistic one. Consequently, the success of ESP courses has been attributed to more pragmatic approaches to needs analysis (Robinson, 1991: 7-17). These approaches comprise various combinations of a 'Target Situation Analysis' (TSA), and a 'Present Situation Analysis' (PSA) (ibid.), sets of procedures that attempt to analyse and account for the different types of needs that impinge on the learner and the learning situation.

ESP courses, by virtue of the fact that they are relevant to the learner's authentic contexts of language use and learning needs, are claimed to be "more efficient because they get their priorities right... and that they are educationally more effective because they are motivating" (Bloor and Bloor, 1986: 5; original emphasis). In short, a properly instituted and conducted ESP course may be deemed to have linguistic,
sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic validity in terms of the language learning enterprise, and the fact that it has a higher propensity to motivate the learner is probably what counts as far as the language teaching cause is concerned.

The question of motivation on the part of the tertiary ESL learner is indeed a crucial one: the language course must be seen by students to be explicitly relevant and of unquestioned utility for their academic and/or projected professional needs. Put differently, the ESP/EAP teaching programme must be valid both in terms of its subject-specific content and pedagogical approach to make for sustained interest and optimal learning on the part of the students who have hitherto been like Shakespearean schoolboys, like snails, crawling unwillingly to school.

The exigencies of the situation considered, it would be difficult to dispute the fact that the real value of tertiary ESL learning lies in discipline-specific EAP courses which have been constructed on the basis of 'real' needs negotiated between students and the sponsor and/or teaching institution rather than in 'general' ESL courses. The latter type of course, which in extreme cases is often based on some hypothetical, intuitive conceptualisation of need, is likely to have a demotivating effect on tertiary level students who tend to resist any threat to their status that promises 'more of the same' secondary school type of teaching/learning situations.

6. The ESP ‘Family Tree’

In line with current practice in ESP, courses of instruction may be divided into EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) and EAP (English for Academic Purposes), that is, English for the purposes of work, and English for purposes of study, respectively: see Robinson’s classification as the ESP ‘Family Tree’ below. Of course, we can apply a discipline specific classification scheme, and come up with something like the following:

EOP:  EPP (English for Professional Purposes)  
       EVP (English for Vocational Purposes)

EAP:  EST (English for Science and Technology)  
       EMP (English for Medical Purposes)  
       ELP (English for Legal Purposes)  
       EMFE (English for Management, Finance and Economics), etc.

If you can see problems in this type of classification (e.g. overlap between areas of work and study), then you will understand why it is difficult to define ESP precisely.
The ESP ‘Family Tree’ (Robinson 1991, p. 3)
* EEP = 'English for Educational Purposes'

(Task 1.3)
Expect to spend about 1 hour on this task.

1. What are the three major developments in ELT in recent years that underlie much ESP practice today?

2. State the defining feature of ESP courses.
BBI 3211: English for Specific Purposes/Unit 1

3 Study this list of abbreviations below for some of the different branches of ESP. What do they mean? What other types of ESP are familiar to you?

EAP: ____________________________
EOP: ____________________________
EST: ____________________________
EVP: ____________________________
EPP: ____________________________
EMP: ____________________________

2 Can you think of ways in which ESP courses can be classified? Try to express your answer in a diagram like this:

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  ESP
   |__
   |  
   |   
   |   ----
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What problems, if any, did you encounter in classifying ESP courses in this way?
Unit 1/Introducing ESP

7. Review

By the end of this unit, you should have some understanding of the following topics, and you should be able to relate them to your own situation:

- What ESP is within the general context of English Language Teaching
- Major developments in ELT that inform ESP
- The claims made by ESP practitioners and teachers
- The main branches of ESP and problems in classification of ESP courses

Remember: Whenever possible, study the 'Big Picture' first to get an overall understanding of a given topic before you look more closely at the specific problems, issues, etc. As Samuel Johnson has noted in his Preface to Shakespeare, "Particulars are not to be examined till the whole has been surveyed".
UNIT 2: LEARNER NEEDS ANALYSIS

ESP NEEDS INFORMATION  ➔  COURSE DESIGN

Reading for this unit

Unit 2/Learner Needs Analysis


Unit Objectives

At the end of the unit, students are able to:
1. describe the concept of 'need' in ESP;
2. identify the different types of need;
3. classify the various types of need with respect to ESP learners' target, present and learning situations;
4. outline the various techniques of needs analysis; and
5. conduct small-scale needs analyses to meet the initial requirements of proposed ESP courses.

Sub-Topics

1. Introduction
2. Defining needs analysis
3. Approaches to needs analysis
   (a) Target Situation Analysis
   (b) Present Situation Analysis (PSA)
   (c) Learning Situation Analysis (LSA)
4. Language audits
5. Methods of needs analysis
6. The timing of a needs analysis
7. Who carries out the needs analysis? Who decides what the language needs are?
8. Translating needs analysis outcomes
9. Review

1. Introduction

In ESP as in any other educational context, course design is fundamentally about choosing questions and interpreting the answers to draft or formulate a learning plan, curriculum, syllabus or teaching programme for a specified group of language learners. We will look at the differences between these terms that describe the programme of learning later; for now we need to focus on the set of questions and/or
rationale that motivates the teaching/learning activity, that is, the needs analysis and its outcomes.

ESP practitioners are often expected to be able to design, as well as teach, courses for learners with specific needs, that is language needs which may relate to their occupation (e.g. a marketing manager, a pilot, a tourist guide, a train driver, etc) or their course of study (e.g. as an undergraduate or post-graduate student of bio-chemistry or agriculture, etc) or their academic discipline (e.g. English for Medicine, or Engineering or Law, etc) How is this done? A key tool in course design is need analysis. In fact, many ESP practitioners and theorists regard it as criterial to ESP (although needs analysis is also very relevant to General English course design, including that in adult education, and has implications for learner training and the development of learner autonomy).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) write succinctly about the need for needs analysis in ESP as it stands in contrast with GE (General English):

"...if we had to state in practical terms the irreducible minimum of an ESP approach to course design, it would be needs analysis, since it is the awareness of a target situation – a definable need to communicate in English – that distinguishes the ESP learner from the learner of General English." (p.54)

You might like to reflect at the end of this unit on how far you agree with this statement.

In this unit we will explore:

- what needs analysis is – its scope, theoretical bases and methodology – and how it contributes to ESP course design
- some of the possible constraints on needs analysis and ESP course design

2. Defining needs analysis

Richterich (1983) has said that "The very concept of language needs has never been clearly defined and remains at best ambiguous" (p. 2).

A number of articles and books have been written about the theoretical bases, methodology and practice of needs analysis (Robinson's 1991 practitioners' guide to ESP cites 43 such publications; West's survey of
needs analysis in language teaching refers to over 200 of them. However, many writers and practitioners use the terms 'needs analysis' in different ways to refer to a range of perceptions of 'need' and a range of approaches to 'analysis'. These perceptions and approaches reflect what Berwick (1989) has called the conceptual baggage of teachers and course planners: that is, their conscious, and unconscious, beliefs about the nature of language, learning and teaching "which translate eventually into positions about learners' needs, needs assessment processes and syllabus design".

The reading you are asked to do in this unit is intended to help you familiarise yourself with these differing perceptions and approaches, and in particular with approaches used in ESP and developed since 1970. You should, by the end of this unit be able to define what you intend when you use the term, needs analysis, and have a critical awareness of a range of possible approaches and methodologies.

Technically speaking, needs analysis in ESP basically involves the collecting and subsequent collating of relevant information about a single learner's or a set of learners' common purpose(s) for learning English, and interpreting the data so that choices and/or decisions can be made about defining objectives and principles for course design and materials. However, the process of collecting relevant information, analysing it, and identifying learners' needs that are translatable into curriculum goals would appear to involve asking a number of 'unavoidable questions' for which tenable answers must be sought, questions such as who decides to identify the needs, who compiles the information, what information to collect, on whom, how, where and when, who makes use of the information, how, to do what etc. (Richterich, 1983: 1).

The various types of information collected in the needs analysis must work together within the proposed ESP course to optimise learning outcomes.

While some of the questions (e.g. why the analysis is being undertaken, whose needs are analysed, who performs the analysis, when the analysis is conducted, and where the course is to be held) might be quite readily answered or acted upon, others that crucially depend on how the concept of need is actually conceptualised (e.g. who decides what the needs are, what is to be analysed and correspondingly, how the data is to be collected) would almost certainly
colour the whole process and its outcomes in line with the prevalent ideology and/or socio-political constraint of the situation. However, as Richterich (1983) has observed, "The very concept of language needs has never been clearly defined and remains at best ambiguous" (p. 2).

The issue has been variously interpreted and defined by assessors and curriculum planners on the basis of what they see as being the dictates of a particular situation of assessment, and how they distinguish between various concepts of need: *necessities or demands* (also called *objective, product-oriented or perceived* needs), and learners’ *wants* (*subjective, or felt* needs), indicating, as it were, that the various concepts of need "do not have of themselves an objective reality" (ibid.). In other words, a new operational definition of 'need' would have to be constructed for each assessment "because its elements will change according to the values of the assessor or influential constituents of an educational system" (Berwick, 1989: 52). Therefore, "what is finally established as 'need' is a matter for agreement and judgement, not discovery" (Lawson 1979: 37, quoted in Brindley op. cit.). Richterich (1983), however, does shed some light in the right direction towards resolving the issue from a pragmatic viewpoint:

- What is essential is not so much to give an accurate definition of the word 'need' as to measure pragmatically the educational, ideological and political effects, scope and impact in the actual process of teaching and learning, of the methodological questions ...and the answers which we will give to them. (p. 3)

So, while an accurate definition might not be possible nor for that matter, intrinsically desirable, a broad one of needs analysis that reflects the various dimensions of need briefly referred to in the above paragraph would certainly serve to inform any assessment in practical terms for the purpose of curriculum design, that is, as the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners requires a language and arranging the needs according to priorities, making use of both subjective and objective information. Further, since there seems to be some agreement amongst needs analysts as to types of needs, these may be generally divided into:

- *goal-oriented* needs; and
- *process-oriented* needs.

The concept of 'goal-oriented needs' is based on a "narrow" interpretation of needs in that the student's needs are viewed in terms of the elements of language, and related knowledge, skills and strategies s/he will have to use for study and/or occupational purposes. Hence needs analysis is to a certain extent a process of determining the learner's *target* language use. On the other hand, the concept of *process-oriented* needs is a 'broad' one for it attempts to deal largely with the needs of the student *qua* (as) language learner. This aspect of
needs analysis should therefore take into account the affective and
cognitive factors relating to the learning situation as attitudes,
motivation, wants, desires, expectations and learning styles/strategies,
constraints etc. (Brindley 1989: 63). For all practical extents and
purposes, the two interpretations and/or approaches to needs analysis
may be roughly glossed as 'target situation analysis' and 'present-
situation analysis' respectively.

Nevertheless, it might be quite mistaken on our part to perceive the
above divisions strictly in terms of the objective/subjective divide. Since
the concept of need does not have objective reality, it can be argued
that there would be a tendency for all parties involved to perceive
students' needs both in objective and/or subjective terms. In other
words, both objective and subjective elements could be present in the
perception of the rather nebulous construct of need regardless of
whether the perceiver is the learner, the teacher, or the sponsor. For
example, it is generally thought that teachers will be best placed to
perceive objective, target needs while learners tend to perceive the
subjective needs in learning-centred terms. However, this does not
always have to be true because many ESP students do often have a
clear perception of most of their objective needs (Robinson 1991: 8).
On the other hand, many learners may not themselves perceive a
particular subjective need (e.g. the need to develop confidence) which
a teacher is capable of 'seeing'.

The potentially important role played by learners' wants towards the
forging some kind of negotiated "happy mean" (Richterich 1983: 4)
between conflicting perceptions of need cannot be over stressed,
especially as regards perceived relevance of the course to their needs
and consequential benefits in motivational terms. This crucial point is
made by Bowers (1980) as a caveat against the mere foisting of
teacher/sponsor perceived needs on the learner to the utter disregard
of the latter's wants:

If we accept ... that a student will learn best what he wants to
learn, less well what he needs to learn, less well still what he
neither wants nor needs to learn, it is clearly important to leave
room in a learning programme for the learner's own wishes
regarding both goals and processes (p. 67; original emphasis).

Notable examples where mismatch in expectations is likely to
occur are 'grammar' and degree of emphasis on the speaking skill
(eespecially in EAP situations where there might be no explicit need for
oral communication). Brindley (1989) suggests that reconciliation by
way of accommodation and compromise, though by no means an easy
task, would be of crucial importance in a learner-centred system in that
"sharing of information regarding each other's expectations is a first
step which can help avoid such conflicts" (p. 75), and, after Littlejohn
(1985), that "allowing learners a choice of learning activities according to their preferred learning modes and styles has been shown to be an effective way of involving them in the management of their own learning while at the same time reducing the risk of conflicting expectations". Brindley's point comes across better as he goes on to point out that when learners say 'This is what I want to learn', they may in fact be saying, in some cases at least, 'This is how I want to learn!'.

**Task 2.1**

Richterich (1983) has suggested a number of "unavoidable questions" (p 1) which must be answered as a "pre-requisite to all identification methodology". Attempt the task that follows this table to the best of your ability, and answer as many of Richterich's questions as you can.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. who decides to identify the needs:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. who compiles the information:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. what information is compiled:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. information on whom:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. how is the information compiled:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. where and when:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. who makes use of the information:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. how is the information used:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_IDEAL UP_
Unit 2/Learner Needs Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. to do what:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. in what form is the information used:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. what is the relationship between the cost of the operation and its usefulness/effectiveness:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. how to assess the whole needs identification procedure:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EITHER**

Using the above table consider an ESP course you have participated in (as a student, teacher or course designer) or are familiar with, and list in note form your answers to Richterich’s “unavoidable questions”.

**OR**

If you have no experience of any ESP course, consider an ESL/EFL (English as a Second/Foreign Language) course you have participated in and list your answers in note form:

**Take about 30 minutes to consider and formulate your answers**

3. Approaches to needs analysis

(a) Target Situation Analysis

In his introduction to eleven 1970’s case studies in identifying language needs (most of which were concerned with teaching Language for General Purposes (LGP) but three were concerned with the needs of migrants and one with the need for English for vocational purposes in a
Venezuelan university), Richterich summarized assumptions held at that time about the purpose and scope of needs analysis:

"Traditionally, the purpose of compiling information to identify language needs is to determine objectives." (p 2)

"...identifying language needs consists primarily in compiling information both on the individuals or group of individuals who are to learn a language and on the use which they are expected to make of it when they have learnt it." (ibid)

This approach has been called Target Situation Analysis or TSA. In 1975 the English Language Teaching Development Unit (ELTDU) in Colchester published an instrument ("Stages of Attainment Scale and Test Battery") and a procedure to enable language needs analyst assess what language skills were necessary in particular business situations. The procedure used descriptor scales to help locate detailed needs in the target situation and was used by many organizations involved in teaching business English. However, the most influential approach to 'target situation analysis' has been Munby's Communication Needs Processor (1978). All subsequent approaches to the analysis of language needs have been, to a greater or lesser extent, developments, adaptations or reactions to his socio-linguistic model.

Munby argued that "the most crucial problem facing foreign language syllabus designers, and ultimately materials producers, in the field of language for specific purposes, is how to specify validly the target communicative competence." (p vi)

In his discussion of the theoretical bases for his model, he emphasised the need for a framework which had a socio-cultural view of knowledge and communication, and which took into account contextual appropriacy rather than a frame based on linguistic competence. However, despite the focus on 'communicative competence', Munby's model is essentially performance-based.

Munby presented a dynamic processing model from which a profile of the learner's communication needs could be generated. He proposed the following stages for specifying communicative competence:
THE COMMUNICATION NEEDS PROCESSOR
(Adapted from Munby 1978, p. 13)

Participant

Communication Needs Processor (CNP)

Profile of Needs

Language Skills Selector
(Interpret needs profile in terms of a taxonomy of 260 skills including: 'producing interaction patterns', 'understanding relation within sentences', 'skimming', 'maintaining the discourse', etc.)

Meaning Processor
(Interpret needs in terms of 'events' e.g. headwaiter attending to customers in restaurant; 'activities' e.g. 'serving the order'; 'subject matter' e.g. food, drink; and 'macro-functions' e.g. question/confirm)

Linguistic Encoder
(Identify stylistically appropriate exponents for language 'micro-functions' e.g. "... for you, sir/madam?")

Communicative Competence Specification
But what exactly is the Communication Needs Processor (CNP)? It is the collection of information from the nine data categories (parameters) by the needs analysis:

**PARAMETER:**  **INPUT INCLUDES:**

1. **Participant:** Learner’s age/sex/nationality/place of residence; mother tongue/target language

2. **Purposive Domain:** type of ESP/the occupational or educational purpose

3. **Interaction:** possible interlocutors (their characteristics) and the relationships (social and psychological) experienced

4. **Instrumentality:** medium of communication (e.g. spoken/written) mode (e.g. written to be read monologue – books- etc) channel (print, face-to-face etc)

5. **Dialect:** i.e. language variety – which region/social class etc

6. **Target Level:** size, complexity, flexibility, speed, range, etc – the degree of mastery needed

7. **Communicative Event:** macro activities (e.g. ‘waiter serving customer in restaurant’ or student studying reference material in library etc) and subject matter related to activity (e.g. food/drink/cooking) – i.e. the productive & receptive skills needed

8. **Communicative Key:** manner or style exemplified in attitude or tone (e.g. ‘respectful’ for waiter). [Munby, pp 104-110, provides an ‘attitudinal-tone index’; it functions as a thesaurus but with 51 sets of continua e.g. courteous-discardourteous’, ‘respectful-disrespectful’ etc.]

Now compare Munby’s list of parameters with Hutchinson and Waters’ (1987, pp 59-60) target situation analysis framework below. How similar are their data fields to those of Munby?
Unit 2/Learner Needs Analysis

A Target Situation Analysis framework (Hutchinson & Waters 1987)

**Why** is the language needed?
- for study;
- for work;
- for training;
- for a combination of these;
- for some other purpose, e.g. status, examination, promotion.

**How** will the language be used?
- medium: speaking, writing, reading, etc.;
- channel: e.g. telephone, face to face;
- types of text or discourse: e.g. academic texts, lectures, informal conversations, technical manuals, catalogues.

**What** will the content areas be?
- subjects: e.g. medicine, biology, architecture, shipping, commerce, engineering;
- level: e.g. technicians, craftsman, postgraduate, secondary school.

**Who** will the learners use the language with?
- native speakers or non-native;
- level of knowledge of receiver: e.g. expert, layman, student;
- relationship: e.g. colleague, teacher, customer, superior, subordinate.

**Where** will the language be used?
- physical setting: e.g. office, lecture theatre, hotel, workshop, library;
- human context: e.g. alone, meetings, demonstrations, on the telephone;
- linguistic context: e.g. in own country, abroad.

**When** will the language be used?
- concurrently with the ESP course or subsequently;
- frequently, seldom, in small amounts, in large chunks.

You can see from their list how data may be sought by transforming the information categories (Munby’s parameters) into a list of questions for use as a simple questionnaire to be completed by the learner and/or the sponsor (e.g. the learner’s company/employer or educational institution) and/or an informant (e.g. someone who is already performing the job competently using the target language or a student in mid-course or who has recently completed). The questions could
also form the basis of a structured interview with the learner / sponsor / user-institution / informant etc.

♦ Task 2.2

What are your criticisms (practical and theoretical) of Munby’s approach to the analysis of learner’s needs? List them.

Expect to spend up to 30 minutes reflecting and brain-storming a list. Expect to spend a further 30 minutes reading text set out in the key to this task at the end of the module.

Another form of analysis related to the target situation is of the learning processes specific to the specialist discipline of the student e.g. legal case studies in MBA courses, etc. Flowerdew, in Robinson (1991, p 39), proposes that course designers should conduct a “task analysis of the intellectual abilities employed in the activities of the academic discipline for which the course is designed”. This information feeds directly into considerations, in course design, of appropriate methodology and may lead to a task-based syllabus.

Central to the above task analysis approach to target situation analysis in ESP in general, and particularly in EAP, is the concept of genre. A genre is a class of communicative events in the target discipline’s discourse community i.e. the community or groups of scholars, researchers, practitioners and students who share specific interests with regard to the types of work done in the discipline (Swales 1990). In other words, the discourse community of a discipline gets its work done through the genres it owns, and which are realised in the discourse
context as research articles, abstracts, textbook chapters, e-mails, memos, theses, seminars, oral progress reports, etc. Understanding how each key genre in a discipline is structured and how it functions in the discourse community often helps students understand the important topics and issues that are current and how these are addressed and/or resolved. Swales (1990) proposes that this understanding of genres is enhanced in ESP through the use of properly designed learning tasks (hence, the need for task analysis above). Each learning task may comprise a series of content- and/or language-focused exercises or activities that highlight different aspects of a particular genre and its role in the community.

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) advocate that the TSA in any needs analysis must first identify the key genres, comprising spoken and/or written genres, and then proceed to analyse how each genre is structured. This is called genre analysis in ESP, the purpose being to investigate:

- why the genre is important i.e. the role it plays in the discourse community;
- how it is different from other genres in the discipline (i.e. its rationale);
- what purposes of communication it contains by way of communicative 'moves'; and
- how communicative moves (sections of text) are signalled through the type of language used (linguistic signals).

Genre-based pedagogy uses the above information to train students of a particular discipline to learn to process (listen to, read, write, speak) the essential genres of their target discourse community so that they can be 'initiated' into it i.e. become members. Hence, genre theory and genre-based pedagogy approach ESP as a socialisation process in which aspiring students of a particular discipline or area of work acquire new ways of thinking and using language via the disciplinary community's genres.

Worked example of a genre and its moves:

Schematic Structure of the Research Article Abstract (adapted from Bhatia, 1993)

1. **WRITER INTRODUCES PURPOSE OF STUDY:** The purpose of the study was to examine ... 
2. **WRITER DESCRIBES METHODOLOGY:** 50 high school students in Kelantan participated in the study. They were selected from ... 
3. **WRITER SUMMARISES RESULTS OF STUDY:** It was discovered that ...
4. **WRITER PRESENTS CONCLUSIONS**: High school students in Kelantan, and probably in other similar settings ...

Name of genre: Research article abstract  
Rationale: To present an abstract or summary of a study in Kelantan  
Communicative Moves: Four moves (communicative purpose indicated above in bold)

Main linguistic signal of each move shown above in *italics*.

(b) Present Situation Analysis (PSA)

West (1994) adopts the term ‘deficiency analysis’ to cover those sorts of analysis procedure which seek to measure the gap between the learner’s current state of language competence and the desired future state. However, a better term might be what Robinson terms as **present situation analysis** (or often known in ESP circles as a PSA) because both strengths and weaknesses are considered:

“A *PSA seeks to establish what the students are like at the beginning of their language course, investigating their strengths and weakness.*” (Robinson 1991, p 9)

A practical way of accomplishing an analysis of the gap (what Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p 55) have called **lacks**) is to determine the required target competences using the sort of procedures set out in TSA and using information about target language derived from language analysis (see the unit on language description in this module) and to measure current skills and competences, using tests and descriptor scales. The gap between the TSA and the PSA could constitute (part of) the syllabus specification which can then feed into the course design. For a summary of the different approaches to this, read West (1994, p 10).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p 55) make a useful distinction between different type of needs which they term **necessities** (determined by the demands of the target situation), **lacks** (the gap between existing proficiency and target proficiency) and **wants** (the learner’s view of their language needs, sometimes called **expressed needs** or feel **needs** or, more dismissively, **desires** – see next section on the LSA). In particular they focus on the importance of distinguishing between needs as perceived by the learner (which they term **subjective**) and those perceived by teachers / course designers / sponsors etc (which
they term **objective** – although this may suggest a degree of value-free thinking which may not exist in practice

* Task 2.3

Read the following extract from Hutchinson and Waters (1987, pp 56-57).

Li Yu Zhen is a Chinese graduate in Chemistry, who is going to study in the United States. She needs to be able to survive socially and professionally in an English-speaking community. Fluency is, therefore, her greatest need. Li Yu Zhen, however, prefers to spend her time improving her knowledge of English grammar. Why? Her answer lies in her own estimation of priorities. In order to be accepted for her course of study she must first pass a test. The most important criterion in the test is grammatical accuracy. Li Yu Zhen, therefore, sees her priority need as being to pass the test.

Use the information about Li Yu Zhen above to analyse some possible different perceptions of her needs in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Li Yu Zhen’s language needs</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE (i.e. as perceived by sponsor)</th>
<th>SUBJECTIVE (i.e. as perceived by learner)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NECESSITIES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LACKS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expect to spend about 15 minutes on this task.

*IDEAL UPM*
(c) Learning Situation Analysis (LSA)

Learning Situation Analysis investigates psycho-pedagogical, methodological and logistical factors which will effect decisions about the design of a course and which may subsequently impede or positively influence the success of a language learning programme. This has been sub-categorised by various writers as *strategy analysis* and *means analysis*.

- **Strategy Analysis**
  Analysis procedures discussed so far have been concerned with determining the target situation and measuring the gap between it and present proficiency. However, some ESP practitioners have focused on the importance of taking into account: the process of learning (e.g. the habits of the "good language learner"); theories of learning (see Hutchinson and Waters (Chapter 5); and the learner’s own preferred learning strategies, previous experiences of learning, motivation and interests, attitudes and expectations (e.g. of content, of the roles of the teacher and learner, of the methodology to be employed, of methods and assessment etc). The first two provide an empirical and theoretical framework to strategy analysis which is the collection of information about the learner’s preferred strategies etc through questioning and observation by the needs analyst (who may also be the teacher). For a survey of approaches to strategy analysis, read West (1994, pp 10-11).

- **Means Analysis**
  This has also been called *constraints analysis* or *management issues* (Robinson 1991, p 42). These are some of the variables which Munby initially excluded from needs analysis (e.g. logistics, administrative factors, socio-political factors), viewing them as part of the second stage of information collection.

**Task 2.4**

Look at Hutchinson and Waters’ checklist (1987, pp 62-63) for analysing learning needs and answer the question that follow;

*A Framework for Analysing Learning Needs*

**Why** are the learners taking this course?
- compulsory or optional;
- apparent need or not;

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Unit 2/Learner Needs Analysis

- Are status, money, and promotion involved?
- What do learners think they will achieve?
- What is their attitude towards the ESP course? Do they want to improve their English or do they resent the time they have to spend on it?

How do the learners learn?
- What is their learning background?
- What is their concept of teaching and learning?
- What methodology will appeal to them?
- What sorts of techniques are likely to bore/ alienate them?

What resources are available?
- number and professional competence of teachers;
- attitudes of teachers to ESP;
- teachers' knowledge of and attitude to the subject content;
- materials;
- aids;
- opportunities for out-of-class activities.

Who are the learners?
- age/sex/nationality;
- What do they know already about English?
- What subject knowledge do they have?
- What are their interests?
- What is their socio-cultural background?
- What teaching styles are they used to?
- What is their attitudes to English or to the cultures of the English-speaking world?

Where will the ESP course take place?
- Are the surroundings pleasant, dull, noisy, cold, etc?

When will the ESP course take place?
- time of day;
- every day/once a week;
- full-time/part-time;
- concurrent with need or pre-need.

1. Which group(s) of questions is/are concerned with means analysis?
2. Make a list of questions/factors you might want to add to Hutchinson and Waters’ list above if you were doing a means analysis.

Expect to spend about 25 minutes on this task.

4. Language Audits

The term **language audit** has been used to refer to:

a) A combination of TSA and PSA (using proficiency level descriptors) in specific job contexts from which a training specification (including potential costs) has been drawn up at a request of a company by language trainers. Utley* outlines the following stages:

1. Information gathering – from senior management about the company (e.g. its products, markets, plans for expansion, documentation in foreign languages)

2. Information gathering – about the company’s need for foreign language activities (e.g. publicity material) from key personnel

3. Development of a questionnaire (about the language use and skills of key personnel)

4. Interviews with key personnel using the questionnaire.

5. Production of a report (outlining the findings)

6. (Possible) Implementation of options by the company.

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Unit 2/Learner Needs Analysis

The audit report may be expected to cover:

- a management summary;
- introduction/scope/background;
- objectives;
- procedure adopted
  - the questionnaire
  - the interviews;
- results
  - typical profiles
  - main needs identified
- (training/development and language services);
- options available and;
- appendices
  - the questionnaire
  - assessment scale used
  - list of interviewees and levels.

b) A large scale analysis of language needs and training requirements for an institution or an organization for an industrial or commercial sector, for a region or a country. For this information strategic decisions are made about whether or not to implement language training and about who should receive language training. Language audits have grown with the advent of the single European market.

5. Methods of needs analysis

In practice, a combination of methods is generally used to collect information. Decisions about which methods to employ depend on the resources (time, money, experience, expertise etc) available. Read West (1994, pp 7-8) and Robinson (1991, pp 12-15). A summary of methods for analysing needs and their principle advantages and disadvantages is presented here. Add your own ideas and views based on your own experience.
## METHODS OF ANALYSING NEEDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tests</td>
<td>Could reveal ‘gaps’ in proficiency; give diagnostic information</td>
<td>Time-consuming to construct valid, reliable tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Questionnaires</td>
<td>Can be used with large numbers of people; easy to administer; easy to analyse if possible responses are limited and/or structured (e.g. ‘tick the box’ type responses)</td>
<td>Time-consuming to construct good questionnaires; low rates of return; not very flexible, especially if there are large number of open-ended responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interviews /structured interviews</td>
<td>Flexible; more in-depth responses that help fill in gaps in other types of data e.g. from the survey</td>
<td>Interviewer skill and rapport with respondents are important; can be time-consuming to analyse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Observation</td>
<td>Provides more authentic data about TSA or LSA needs</td>
<td>Time-consuming; needs good relations with those being observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Case studies</td>
<td>Provides in-depth authentic data of various kinds</td>
<td>More suitable for long term study, hence time-consuming; results may not be generalisable to population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Learner diaries</td>
<td>Can provide data on learning strategies, learner styles and preferences, etc.: can serve as basis for negotiation of syllabus</td>
<td>May be difficult to distinguish between the interesting and the useful; too much data could be confusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Previous research</td>
<td>May be time-saving as reports of needs of similar groups may be transferred to target context</td>
<td>‘Lacks’ of two groups may be similar but ‘wants’ may differ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Participatory needs analysis</td>
<td>Useful to identify TSA and LSA accurately; may help motivate learners</td>
<td>May be difficult to separate ‘wants’ that do not fit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. The timing of a Needs Analysis

Needs analysis can be carried out at different times and more than once.

a) Before the course begin training programme has been agreed upon;
b) At the start of the course (where it has not been possible to get advance information about the learners e.g. their language level, 'wants' etc)
c) During the course (taking into account that learners' and teachers' perceptions of needs change). This may aid learner motivation and can be part of formative evaluation.

7. Who carries out the needs analysis / Who decides what the language needs are?

This depends on the type of course. The needs analysis may be carried out by an external consultant, an 'outside expert', or it may be an 'insider', a member of the institution which will be running the course. Robinson (1991, pp 10-11) discusses the role of possible analysts. A number of parties may participate in decisions about what the language needs are; the teacher, the student, the sponsor, informants (eg former students, those already working in the target situation, a lecturer/tutor in the student's receiving institution). The potential for conflict in the analysis of needs is outlined by West (1994, p 6).

The various methods of needs data collection will produce different types of information that must be compared (or triangulated) to understand the requirements of the ESP learner.
8. Translating needs analysis outcomes

Assuming that we have completed the needs analysis using a number of techniques, what do we do with all the information we have collected? How do we translate the outcomes into parameters or principles that will feed into the ESP course? Well, to help you answer these questions, I use extracts from my own work concerning the analysis of academic reading needs of 446 Malaysian TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages) students in the United Kingdom (Faiz 1998).

Using questionnaire surveys, interviews, proficiency tests, genre text analysis and processing tasks, and an experiment based on a genre skills workshop, I collected different kinds of data (TSA, PSA, and LSA) which I analysed both statistically and qualitatively. The findings enabled me to construct a generalised needs profile of the Malaysian tertiary learners’ academic reading in English (see below). The next step would have been the design of the EAP course comprising mainly topics and tasks (which I did not do because it was not part of the study).

Among other minor factors, the needs profile tells the course designer about:
- key genres that are required in the target situation;
- students' areas of strengths and weaknesses with respect to language proficiency levels;
- text processing styles and preferences; and
- study habits and interests

Of course, how these types of information about the learners are actually put to good use in planning and designing the syllabus and course materials will depend on the pedagogical approach to course design in ESP. For this we turn to the next unit.

GENERALISED ACADEMIC READING NEEDS PROFILE OF MALAYSIAN TESOL STUDENTS (Adapted from Faiz 1998: 28 – 29)

A. Target Situation Needs (TSA outcomes)

I. Prioritised Academic Reading Materials (Genres)

(a) Student perceived needs:
- Journal articles, textbooks, duplicated notes, seminar papers, dissertations, magazines and newspapers, notices and memos (most homogeneity for journals)
(b) Staff perceived student needs:
- Duplicated notes, textbooks, journal accounts of classroom practice, reports of empirical research, position papers, review articles, magazines/newspapers, notices/memos, visual materials as video and
Unit 2/Learner Needs Analysis

- computer screen information, official documents such as government reports, syllabuses, curriculum specifications etc., language data comprising assorted written text samples and transcripts of spoken language for research purposes, sample ELT materials (published or in-house), photocopies of literary texts as objects of study, and sample tests and assessment tasks relevant to TESOL.

2. Most Frequently Read Journal Titles

3. Prioritised Academic Reading-related Tasks
   Searching for information relevant to a task, getting main ideas, completing graded library research projects, *(distinguishing between fact and opinion), (critical evaluation of writer’s position), discussing assigned reading in groups, checking sources of new information, (writing summaries of readings), and talking to lecturers about materials read
   *Areas of student-staff mismatch in perception in brackets.

B. Present Situation Attributes (PSA outcomes)

1. Language Proficiency:
   Homogeneously self-rated as proficient in ESL and overall proficiency commensurate with individual areas/skills; Malaysian public examination grades (‘O’ level equivalents) - 93% and 99% obtained above average passes (credit/distinction) in the SPM 1119 and SPM 122 respectively.

2. Professional Standing
   Average 11-15 years’ teaching experience, mainly at Malaysian primary school level; generally compare with each other well in terms of entry qualifications, TESOL background knowledge and requisite study skills; interested in postgraduate work in TESOL.

3. Basic Reading and Study Habits
   Almost all students able to read in Malay; claim to be relatively fluent readers in ESL, but only about 50% read daily; claim to comprehend academic materials completely; only 50% do referencing regularly; study an average 10 hours or more per week; most believed they worked hard at their studies and studied as efficiently as other course-mates.

4. Lacks/Difficulties
   Genre Text-Processing Abilities
   Critical evaluation of writer’s viewpoint, reporting materials read and incorporating related ideas in argument, sufficient academic reading, talking to lecturers about reading issues, working with other students outside class, working in small groups in class, chunks of unrelated and/or unanalysed text in written assignments, plagiarism, deep
5. **Metacognitive Awareness Factors**
   Reading confidence localised to textual information; need greater awareness concerning non-effective “local” strategies other than word-level strategies e.g. focus on grammatical structures, “local” difficulties that do not hinder comprehension of meaning, and strategies that promote effective reading and confidence.

6. **Approaches to Studying**
   Surface processing tendencies: some reliance on rote-memorisation, concern about coping with study demands; lack of direction; some of these correlated to repair strategies (metacognitive awareness).

7. **Genre knowledge and strategies**
   Awareness of generic structure, identification of features of genre and content; knowledge about basic empirical research; skill with comprehension of rhetorical acts and form-function correlations.

C. **Learning Situation Attributes/Wants (LSA)**

1. **Learning skill/area preferences**
   Writing, reading, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary preferred in that order (reading and writing high in all institutional rankings).

2. **TESOL academic reading course content**
   50 - 75% of content preferred to be genuine subject-specific texts.

3. **Help needed with comprehension**
   Textbooks, duplicated notes, and journal articles in that order.

4. **Contact with Local Culture/Language**
   Regularly communicate in English, both in the oral and written modes, with course-mates in UK; most students interact daily with native speakers; listen to music, local news, weather reports and talk shows on the radio; watch television often - news, weather, movies, and game shows.

5. **Metacognitive Factors**
   Generally aware that text-based “local” reading strategies are ineffective and that “global” difficulties might impede comprehension.

6. **Approaches to Studying**
   Some strategic orientation to studying; organised studying; reasonably confident about background knowledge in TESOL and requisite study skills for academic study.
9. Review

By the end of this unit, you should have some understanding of the following ideas and concepts, and be able to relate them to your own situation:

Concept of 'need' and 'needs analysis'
Target Situation Analysis
Present Situation Analysis
  - Deficiency analysis
  - S.W.O.T analysis
Learning Situation Analysis (Learning Needs Analysis)
  - Strategy analysis
  - Means analysis
Language audit
Methods of needs analysis
Using needs data to construct a generalised needs profile of target learners

*Teachers tend to perceive 'grammar' in a language programme in terms of content while learners have been known to use it as a blanket term for "preferred ways of learning", e.g. a systematic approach, formal explanation of grammatical rules, more class time spent on doing written exercises etc. (Brindley, 1989: 75)
UNIT 3: COURSE DESIGN

Reading for this Unit


Unit Objectives:

At the end of the unit, students are able to:
1. distinguish between popular terms used to describe ESP instruction;
2. describe a classical model of language course design;
3. compare two or more models to cite similarities and/or differences;
Unit 3/Course Design

4. identify the three main approaches to course design;
5. use their knowledge of the various types of learner need to plan a short ESP course; and
6. identify the various constraints that impact ESP course design.

Sub-topics

1. Introduction
2. Issues in ESP Course Design
   a) Argument against a ‘narrow-angle’ approach
   b) Argument against a ‘wide-angle’ approach
   c) Argument against ‘mono-skill’ focused courses
   d) Special methodologies for ESP courses
3. Possible Components of a Syllabus
4. The Role of a Syllabus
5. Approaches to Course Design
   a) Language-centred Approach
   b) Skill-centred Approach
   c) Learning-centred Approach
6. Types of ESP Syllabus
7. Case studies
8. Review

1. Introduction

What is the difference between ‘curriculum’, ‘syllabus’, ‘programme’ and ‘course’? The terminology can sometimes be confusing in discussions of course design. In addition, there may be differences in British and North American usages.

Curriculum in British usage is concerned with the context of education and its rationale; it reflects policy and planning issues in wider context. It includes courses of instruction as well as all the external factors in the general context that have the potential to promote learning. Hence, we can talk about the B. A. (English) curriculum in the sense that it encompasses the various courses that students have to take to fulfil predetermined requirements together with the facilities that are available for successful learning activities within the educational environment.

Syllabus is a more restricted concept; it is often a physical document providing an inventory of contents, a specification of intent, which is

IDEAL UP-M........................................................................... 52
Based on a needs analysis. It will reflect ideology about the nature of language, learning and teaching. A course includes a syllabus and the coherent scheme of teaching-learning activities that are based on the syllabus. A programme generally refers to a series of courses that has pre-determined aims (general targets), and objectives that are specific and often measurable within a specified period of time.

Clearly, the term ‘curriculum’ is the broadest educational concept followed by ‘programme’, ‘course’ and ‘syllabus’ in terms of specificity of focus.

Now, course design in ESP refers to the process of interpreting information about the learner's needs for the purpose of producing ‘an integrated series of teaching-learning experiences, whose ultimate aim is to lead the learners to an ultimate state of knowledge’ (Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 65) based on a specific syllabus. To this process, we must add information about constraints on the course (resources of time, physical facilities, teaching staff, etc.) and this consideration results in a time-table so that general aims and specific objectives are attainable given the time and other resources that may be available.

2. Issues in ESP Course Design

Several issues have been raised concerning the design of ESP courses.

- How specific should ESP courses be?
- Should the four skills always be integrated?
- What is the relationship between syllabus and methodology?

If you recall our extended definition of ESP in Unit 1, we will come to understand that the answers to the above questions concern the variable characteristics of ESP courses. Restating the ‘answers’ to the above issues, we have in ESP:

- Narrow-angle or wide-angle courses (how specific in content)
- Mono-skill or multi-skill courses (focus on language skill)
- ‘Common core’ or discipline specific (focus on discipline methodology*)

*Note: ‘Methodology’ here means the way specialists think and solve problems in a given discipline or specialization that is different from that in other disciplines

From the outset it must be noted that all these ‘types’ of ESP course are found in practice and it is better to think of each opposing set as located on a continuum of extremes. This is because in the real world,
the context and, of course, the needs analysis would determine the degree to which a course is:

- narrow-angle or wide-angle (e.g. English for Nuclear Physicists is more narrow-angle than English for Nuclear Science);
- mono-skill or multi-skill (e.g. Reading for Academic Purposes is more mono-skill than say, English for Academic Purposes); and
- ‘common core’ or discipline-specific (e.g. English for the Social Sciences is more ‘common core’ than English for Economics).

In short, this is a question of focus, as noted above and the three continua (plural of ‘continuum’) of course focus on a given criterion in each case will look something like these:

```
Narrow-angle content

Mono-skill language

Common core methodology
```

```
Wide-angle content

Multi-skill language

Discipline-specific methodology
```

We are now ready to look deeper into arguments against a particular type of focus. We do this by responding to some important questions that we need to keep in mind when interpreting the information that has been collected in the needs analysis:

a) What is the argument against a ‘narrow-angle’ approach?

Writing about English for academic purposes, Hutchinson and Waters have argued that a narrow-angle (subject or skill specific) approach is demotivating and irrelevant to the students’ needs and that the students share a ‘common core’ of learning needs.

b) What is the argument against a ‘wide-angle’ approach?

Some rhetoric studies (i.e. studies about language use in context) have demonstrated differences in the knowledge assumptions and the rhetoric conventions (i.e. rules of language use) of academic disciplines (See the unit on language description in this module). Some reports on ESP courses in other EAP contexts have shown the importance of focusing on specific needs related to the students’ academic discipline and their study context.

Other arguments, concerning the approach to courses for professionals, may include the effect on time constraints which
require a narrow specification of learning objectives and course content. Put simply, we want students to use the available time to learn the things they really need. As they say, ‘time is of the essence’!

c) What is the argument against ‘mono-skill’ focused courses?

Many English for academic purposes courses have focused on a single skill – typically reading (recall what I said about the primacy or importance of reading in EAP in Unit 1). It is argued that focus on one language skill can be too limiting, can also be demotivating, and that focus on other skills is likely to improve performance in the target skill. (Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 75 – 76). In practice, mono-skill courses do in fact include some practice in the other skills – see again what I said about the continuum of specificity above.

d) Are there special methodologies for ESP courses?

The relationship between syllabus and methodology is controversial and much has been written about it. Methodology is concerned with how content will be taught. With older types of syllabus it is possible to maintain a distinction between content and methodology, but with newer types of syllabus it is difficult to keep this distinction.

In other words, ESP does require specialized methodologies which reflect the degree of specialist subject matter (e.g. collaborative team-teaching between subject specialist and language teacher) and other variables such as class size and location (e.g. classes which take place in the workplace sometimes with very small groups [e.g. 1:1 or 3-4 students of mixed language ability but with a common work-related objective or the same work task]) etc. In addition, the process view of learning and information derived from genre analysis have influenced decisions about course content and the types of learning activities learners are to experience during a language course. E.g. university students in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context, who only need to read and make notes from research articles to complete their written project paper, do not have to ‘waste’ valuable time learning to talk extensively about what they are reading (although, as I said earlier, this can be done to a small extent to enhance the language learning process).
Task 3.1

Think about an English language proficiency or ‘special English’ course that you have attended or taught since leaving school. Which of the following features or criteria of focus would apply? Tick any number of boxes in the list below:

☐ Narrow-angle content
☐ Wide-angle content
☐ Mono-skill language
☐ Multi-skill language
☐ ‘Common core’ methodology
☐ Discipline-specific methodology

Further questions:

1. Did you tick more than one box? Why was this necessary?

2. Now, place a cross (X) on the appropriate continuum line(s) below to indicate its orientation. E.g. if you think your course is narrow-angle, then place your cross to the left of the centre, the exact location depending upon the degree to which your course is seen as narrow-angle as opposed to wide-angle.

3. Would it be possible for your course to be located right at the centre of the continuum, i.e. neither narrow-angle nor wide angle? Why? Think about all three continua, and think carefully about where you place your crosses on the first and last continua.

![Diagram of continua](image)

IDEAL UPM.................................................................................................................. 56
BBI 3211: English for Specific Purposes/Unit 3

3. Possible Components of a Syllabus

Task 3.2

What are the components of a syllabus? (These components may be arrived at through needs analyses procedures.) Write down as many as many components as you can (some are given to help you). Then check your answers against the list given in Guidance Notes.

1. general aims
2. 
3. a rationale (i.e. why the course is necessary)
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. assessment procedures
11. indications of non-linguistic content (e.g. topics)
12. 

Expect to take about 15 minutes for this task.

4. The Role of a Syllabus

A syllabus can serve different purposes. Its main functions could be summarized as follows:

- An instrument of accountability (Does it meet learner needs?)
- An instrument of organizational control (How and to what extent is the content of the syllabus structured or ‘chunked’ to facilitate the learning process?)
- An instrument of professional guidance (How does it guide the teaching-learning process?)

In other words, the syllabus reflects the extent to which the learners’ needs have been taken into account in the course design process. The content of the syllabus is broken up or ‘chunked’ into learning units e.g. a series of pedagogic or learning tasks and exercises before a major real world task. Of course, the syllabus also guides the teacher so that
s/he can plan the teaching-learning activity. In the case of school-based ‘General English’ courses, teachers often have to work with a standard, prescribed syllabus from a central authority because of the often massive scale of the educational operations. ESP practitioners often work alone or in small groups constructing, using and in many cases modifying a specific syllabus in line with the needs of the context of the study or work place. Can you say why this might be so?

5. Approaches to Course Design

There are many models for course design that determine what steps the course designer has to take from the needs analysis stage to the syllabus specification stage. However, in nearly all the models, the following operations are usually found:

1. Focusing on **area of knowledge** and/or **skill**
2. Matching **objectives** arising from needs analysis with **content**
3. **Specifying content** e.g. structures, functions, cognitive operations, communicative events, linguistic and non-linguistic content (topics)
4. **Sub-dividing content:** breaking down content into manageable units often hierarchically organised
5. **Sequencing** and **grading** topics and tasks

The classical or traditional curriculum model prescribes the following steps for arriving at syllabus content:

![Diagram](image)

However, there are other ways of arriving content. A more intuitive approach to syllabus content may involve any of the following though not necessarily in this order:

- Choosing textbooks around which the course will be organized
- Thinking of essential tasks/activities
- Reviewing one’s knowledge of the subject and introspecting
BBI 3211: English for Specific Purposes/Unit 3

- Looking at past examination papers
- Reviewing textbooks at the same level as the learners
- Analysing similar courses
- Refining input of previous courses.

The syllabus might serve as a checklist for the teacher or course planner, who works in the following way:

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 65 – 77) have categorised three general approaches to course design:

a) **Language-centred** approach: The needs analysis leads to the incorporation of linguistic features from the target situation. Naturally, TSA-type needs often take precedence over the others. **Genre** analysis and **register** analysis (see Unit 2 & 4) figures prominently in this approach because of the greater importance given to language-oriented needs.

b) **Skills-centred** (or process oriented) approach: This is based on the analysis of a skill (e.g. reading) needed in the target situation including the identification of the sub-skills or enabling skills involved (e.g. skimming, scanning text, using contextual clues to derive meaning of words, etc.) leading to a possible hierarchy of micro-skills. However, several skills may be integrated or dealt with separately in this approach to course design.

c) **Learning-centred** approach: he approach is based on an analysis of the process of learning and the learning strategies of learners, where the syllabus and materials evolve simultaneously and methodologically as an intrinsic part of the syllabus. This approach is very complex because the focus is more on developing the learners’ ‘underlying competence’ rather acquiring the special language of a particular ESP context. Hutchinson & Waters (1987) themselves agree that this approach might be extremely difficult to put into practice because of the large number of variables or factors that need to be given attention at all times.
Unit 3/Course Design

Task 3.3

Compare the course design model below (Coffey 1984) with the two other models presented above. What similarities/differences in terms of major components can you find?

Coffey’s 6-Step Model of Course Design (Adapted from Coffey 1984: 7-8)

Task 3.4

Read again Hutchinson and Waters’ (1987) approaches to course design listed above. Then look at the following extracts from 3 published courses/textbooks and answer the following questions:

a) What (different) approaches to course design seem to have been adopted by their authors?

b) What do you think are the assumptions about language and learning that underlie each course?

Expect to spend around an hour and a half on this task.

Course A: ‘Contents’ page from Study Listening (Tony Lynch)

Unit 1 Introduction
2 Recognising spoken sentences
3 Voice emphasis
4 Importance markers
5 Guessing

IDEAL UPM
BBI 3211: English for Specific Purposes/Unit 3

6 Note-taking practice
7 Reference
8 Addition
9 Contrast
10 Cause and effect
11 Listing
12 Note-taking practice
13 Recognising the sections
14 Recycling
15 Expansion
16 Recognising important points
17 'Competition for land use'
18 'Preventive medicine'
19 'Micro-technology'
20 'Development and aid'

Course B: Extract from 'Contents' page from English in Medicine
(Glendinning & Holmstrom)

Unit 1 Taking a history I
   1.1 Asking basic questions
   1.2 Taking notes
   1.3 Reading skills: scanning a case history
   1.4 Case history: William Hudson

Unit 2 Taking a history II
   2.1 Asking about systems
   2.2 Asking about symptoms
   2.3 Reading skills: noting information from a textbook
   2.4 Case history: William Hudson

Unit 3 Examining a patient
   3.1 Giving instructions
   3.2 Understanding diagrams and documents
   3.3 Reading skills: using a pharmacology reference
   3.4 Case history: William Hudson

Unit 4 Special examinations
   4.1 Instructing, explaining and reassuring
   4.2 Re-phrasing, encouraging and prompting
   4.3 Reading skills: reading articles
   4.4 Case history: William Hudson

Course C: Extracts from 'Contents' page from Airspeak: Radio
telephony communication, Robertson

Part One – Pre-flight to line-up
1.1 Departure information
   1.1.1 Departure information (routine)
   1.1.2 Departure information (ATIS)
   CHECK for section 1.1

IDEAL UP
1.2 Route clearances
CHECK for section 1.2

1.3 Start-up
1.3.1 Start-up (routine)
1.3.2 Start-up (non-routine)
CHECK for section 1.3

1.4 Push-back
1.4.1 Push-back (routine)
1.4.2 Push-back (non-routine)
CHECK for section 1.4

1.5 Taxiing
1.5.1 Taxi (routine)
1.5.2 Taxi (routine exchanges)
1.5.3 Taxi (non-routine)
Check for section 1.5

1.6 Line-up
1.6.1 Line-up (routine)
1.6.2 Line-up (non-routine)

1.7 Review of Part One
1.7.1 Routine phraseology review
1.7.2 Flight from Rextbury to Winton (from departure ATIS to line-up)
1.7.3 Flight from Dublin to Paris (from initial contact to line-up)

1.8 Supplementary vocabulary
1.8.1 Phase of flight
1.8.2 Airport words
1.8.3 Airport vehicles

6. Types of ESP Syllabus

Tasks 3.5

Read Hutchinson and Waters (pp85-89) and Robinson (pp 34-41). On what criteria is each of the following ESP syllabus extracts (from published materials) organised? Content-based? Wide-angle or narrow angle? etc.

For example,
Course C, in Task 3.5, seems to be content-based (or product) syllabus focusing on situation, topics and language functions.
BBI 3211: English for Specific Purposes/Unit 3

Syllabus A: from the Contents page of English for Travel (Eastwood)

1. Asking about travel
2. Making travel arrangements
3. At an airport
4. At a hotel
5. Ordering a meal
6. Changing your arrangements
7. On the telephone
8. Asking the way
9. Hiring a car
10. Seeing a doctor
11. Shopping

Syllabus B: extracts from the Contents page of Ready for Business, Vaughan & Heyen

1. Meeting a visitor
   Greeting someone, offering help, making small talk

2. Company description
   Giving company outline, describing company history, talking about future plans

3. Describing job responsibilities
   Making introductions, describing your job and responsibilities, describing job history

4. Giving a presentation
   Talking about sales, market share, and customers, describing graphs

Syllabus C: extracts from the Contents page of English for the Construction Industry (Waterhouse)

Unit Two: Superstructure

Language Practice

2.1a Loadbearing walls. 'Which way up does a brick go?'
2.1b 'Have to' expressing obligation or need
2.2a Reinforced concrete frame. 'A crisis on site'
2.2b Using the imperative form
2.3a Steel frame. 'Seeing a mistake is the first step to rectifying it'

IDEAL UPM
2.3b Using 'must have' to express certainty about the past

Communication on Site
2.4 Giving instructions and warnings

Reference section
2.5 Loadbearing walls
   2.5a Materials
   2.5b Components
   2.5c Tools and plant
   2.5d Actions
   2.5e General
2.6 Reinforced concrete frames
   2.6a Materials and components
   2.6b Tools and plant
   2.6c Actions
   2.6d General
2.7 Steel frames
   2.7a – d
2.8 Timber frame buildings
2.9 Drawings and Specifications

Syllabus D: extracts from the Contents page of Negotiating, O’Conner et al

Introduction to the learner
1. Relationship building
   A Language – How to greet and introduce people
   B Interaction – How to keep a conversation moving
   C Style – What to call people
   D Cross-cultural differences – what would you do?
   Answer Key
2. Agreeing procedure
   A Language – How to introduce and check acceptance objectives
   B Interaction – How to create climate of co-operation
   C Style – How to make suggestions and statements less direct
   D Cross-cultural differences – what’s going wrong?
   Answer Key
3. Exchanging information
   A Language – How to make opening statements
   B Interaction – How to check understanding
   C Style – How to clear and maintain cooperation
   D Cross-cultural differences – what’s going wrong?
   Answer Key

Expect to spend around an hour for this task.
BBI 3211: English for Specific Purposes/Unit 3

7. Case studies

A number of articles, both theoretical and descriptive have been published reporting on methodological aspects of ESP course design. Swales*, in a survey of them, has noted that among the descriptive accounts there is a frequent emphasis on the pragmatic elements in course design. He quotes two other writers, Hiragama-Grant and Sedgwick who say

“Our syllabus design seemed to conform to a logic when viewed in retrospect; however in reality ad hoc decision making, intuitive, and educated guesses provided much of our momentum and direction.”

This observation reinforces the view that course design, in practice, is a pragmatic rather than a scientific activity.

Review

By the end of this unit, you should have some understanding of the following ideas and concepts, and be able to relate them to your own situation:

- needs analysis
  - target situation analysis
  - deficiency analysis
  - learning needs analysis
    - strategy analysis
    - means analysis
- language audit
- course design
  - a language-centred approach
  - a skills-centred approach
  - a learning-centred approach
- the constraints operating on needs analysis and course design

MINI-PROJECT (15% of Course Marks)

You may do this assignment individually or in groups of three. You will need to review Units 1 - 3 of this module.

You have been asked to design an intensive, month-long English for Science course. The course is to take place in your own institution/school for Malaysian second language speakers of English. It is aimed at helping the upper secondary students cope with their General Science subject which is currently being taught in English.

IDEAL UPM
Unit 3/Course Design

1. Write a short description of the teaching and learning context.
2. What types of needs data would you want to collect? (Give examples)
3. How and when would you collect it?
4. Who would you collect it from?
5. What constraints would you anticipate on the NA?
6. What constraints would you anticipate on the design of the course?
7. What steps would you take to design the course?
GUIDANCE NOTES TO TASKS

UNIT 1: INTRODUCING ESP

Task 1.1

1. Simple definition: ESP is English language learning in specific contexts of language use.

2. ESP is protean because ESP courses are designed on the specific needs of learners in a broad range of situations. Therefore, the nature of such courses ‘mutable’, ‘changeable’, ‘variable’, ‘dynamic’, ‘alterable’ (even in mid-course), etc.

3. Advantages of an ESP course

   Time and effort are saved: This is the main advantage for the learners because the course focuses on the skills and aspects of language required to meet their objectives. Because of this and because the materials and methods employed may relate closely to the specialism, it is also argued that ESP courses are more motivating and hence promote learning.

   In some ESP classes learners may be able to discuss their specialism with other learners from other specialisms, hence improving not only their language skills, but also updating their specialist knowledge. However this must be regarded as an incidental spin-off. The real value may be motivational – working with like-minded people and having one’s knowledge of the specialism respected and valued in the classroom.

   For the sponsor, in the case of learners whose courses are funded by employers or agencies, the chief advantage claimed is cost-effectiveness. Everything learned in the ESP classroom should be of benefit in the student’s professional or study context.

   The validity of such claims is one issue of concern in course evaluation which is discussed in Unit 7 of this module.

Task 1.2

(Suggestions… Task 2…p.95)

Robinson’s characteristics of ESP courses are:

• goal orientated
• based on needs analysis
• limited time period
• mainly adult learners
• not beginners
• not necessarily specialist language and content
• specialist/appropriate activities

Strevens’ four ‘absolute’ and two ‘variable’ characteristics of ESP are:
• designed to meet specified needs
• related in content to particular disciplines, etc
• centred on language appropriate to these activities
• in contrast with ‘General English’
• may be restricted in skills to be learned
• may not be taught according to any pre-ordained methodology

Strevens and Robinson disagree on the need for specialist language and content which the latter considers not entirely necessary. Robinson makes the additional points that ESP courses are usually subject to time constraints, that the learners are for the most part adult and have already completed at least a beginners’ level course in General English. Strevens adds that courses can be restricted to particular skills.

Both agree that courses are needs specific and that the methodology may be distinct. In the case of Robinson, this means appropriate to the specialism. In the case of Strevens, it means not pre-ordained – not standard, off-the-shelf activities but methodology which reflects the specialism and the learners.

Task 1.3

1. The three major developments in ELT:

   Emergence of ESP as an area of study and practice in its own right
   Importance of reading competence, especially in EAP
   Genre analysis and genre-based pedagogy in ESP

2. Defining feature: analysis of the target learners’ needs

3. The main branches of ESP

One of the simplest ways of dividing up ESP is between courses for students and courses for professionals – between courses for those who are studying to be engineers, sales personnel, technicians, etc. and those who are already practising their chosen careers. The former may require English for study purposes, for example, reading textbooks and understanding lectures on their specialism in English. Such courses are often labelled English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The latter may require English for work purposes. For example, technicians in the oil industry may require English for working on a drilling rig with crews recruited from a number of different countries. Courses for Such learners are sometimes
grouped as English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). Or English for Professional Purposes (EPP).

In practice, such a divide is too simple. For example, in Italy technical college students receive English instruction which does not relate to study skills as all their specialist subject tuition is provided in Italian. They study English because at some time in their post-college career they may require it for work purposes.

In the UK, universities often provide EAP courses for overseas students who are already qualified professionals with work experience but who are returning to university for postgraduate studies.

Subject-specific titles are often used to include in both courses for students and courses for professionals. Hence English for Medical Purposes (EMP) could cover both courses for medical students and courses for doctors. Similarly, English for Science and Technology (EST) groups courses for engineering students and courses for practising technicians and engineers.

Such labels are important to textbook writers and publishers, who have an obvious interest in making their books applicable to as wide a group of learners as possible, and to ESP teacher trainers who have to seek common ground to discuss the broader issues of the discipline. For the individual teacher planning and delivering a course for a specific group of learners, they are of limited relevance. What matters is that the course meets the needs of her students.

UNIT 2: LEARNER NEEDS ANALYSIS

Task 2.1

Richterich’s questions

This is an exercise in which there are no ‘right’ answers. You may not have been able to answer all of the questions, or at least only partially (e.g. the relationship between the ‘cost of the operation’ and ‘its usefulness/effectiveness’ is essentially subjective and depends on whose perspective is used – the learner’s? the teacher’s? the course designer’s? the sponsor’s? the user institution’s or company’s? etc – and at what point in time the relationship is assessed – e.g. before or during the course, at the end, after 6 months, after a given critical event (e.g. an exam, a business negotiation, a conference paper presentation), etc. – and above all it depends on the criteria used to assess the relationship). Yet all of the questions point to factors which are inter-dependent and which critically affect decisions about whether there is a need for language course in the first place, and if there is, what its objectives, components and organization could be.
Task 2.2

What are your criticisms (practical and theoretical) of Munby’s approach to the analysis of learner needs?

Your response to this depends on your views about the nature of language, learning and teaching – as well as any experience you have had in designing courses for ESP.

A summary of what some practitioners consider to be the main shortcomings of Munby’s approach to needs analysis is set out in West, pp 9-19, under the headings ‘Complexity’, ‘Learner’ centredness’, ‘Constraints’, and ‘Language’.

Hutchinson and Waters 1980 in Swales Episodes in ESP (pp 177-182: Sections 1-3), criticize Munby’s approach and argue that in EAP contexts it is necessary to examine the ‘underlying competence’ which the learner must bring to... the study of any specialized subject (p 178) rather than focus exclusively on the target competence. Their discussion is particularly relevant to decisions about the design and content of materials (see Unit on ESP materials in this module). You should also recall some of the problems Richterich highlighted in the identification of needs, focused on in Task 2 in this unit.

You should now compare your response with the discussion in West and Hutchinson and Waters and make notes of any criticism not covered in your own list.

Task 2.3

Perceptions of Li Yu Zhen’s language needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVE (ie as perceived by sponsor)</th>
<th>SUBJECTIVE (ie as perceived by learner)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NECESSITIES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English for post-graduate Studies &amp; living in US; to pass course entry test</td>
<td>to pass course entry test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LACKS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oral fluency; grammatical accuracy</td>
<td>acceptance for her course of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to succeed socially and professionally in the US</td>
<td>to improve grammatical accuracy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Task 2.4

Which group(s) of questions are concerned with means analysis?
What / Where / When…?

What questions/factors might you want to add to Hutchinson and Waters’ list if you were doing a means analysis?

E.g. Questions about ‘real-world’ factors including political issues affecting the target language, government attitude, status of English, logistical and administrative matters, students’ motivation levels and expectations, available resources, and management and methodological issues.

Compare your list of additional questions and from your reading add on any factors/questions which seem important and are missing from your list.

UNIT 3: COURSE DESIGN

Task 3.1

(Students’ individual responses.) If you ticked more than one box, it means that there is overlap in focus e.g. an English for Study Skills course (some university students are required to take this course in their first semester/year of academic study) might be wide-angle but also provide focused training in a particular language skill, usually reading.

You probably (or should have) ticked one box in each paired orientation e.g. either narrow-angle or wide-angle because it would not be possible for a course to be both at the same time.

Working with the continua (example):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrow-angle content</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>Wide-angle content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mono-skill language</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Multi-skill language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common core methodology</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Discipline-specific methodology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your course is narrow-angled, then it must be more discipline specific than ‘common core’ because narrow-angle courses have greater specificity of content, and therefore more discipline specific.
Task 3.2

Possible syllabus components:

1. general aims
2. specific objectives
3. a rationale (i.e. why the course is necessary)
4. an inventory of (language) items
5. an indication of entry level (essential previous learning)
6. an indication to mastery level
7. indications of teaching methodology
8. explanations for students and teachers
9. indications of time distribution
10. assessment procedures
11. indications of non-linguistic content (e.g. topics)
12. variation provisions (e.g. enrichment activities for more able learners and remedial activities for weaker learners)

Task 3.4

Approaches to course design
NB. The following comments are based only on the ‘Contents’ pages of these ESP textbooks. A closer look at the organisation of the units, the type of texts and tasks used, the instructions to teacher and student etc would give more accurate data from which to analyse the author’s assumptions about language and learning, and their approach to course design.

Course A:

A skill-based approach – ‘listening to talks’ – building on a hierarchy of sub-skills e.g. prediction (‘Guessing’), ‘recognising spoken sentences’, ‘recognising the sections of a talk’ etc.

Appears to draw on a descriptive genre view of language (e.g. the organisation of talks, their competent parts and internal ordering) as well as an analytical view of language as notions/functions e.g. ‘contrast’, ‘cause and effect’, ‘recycling’ etc.

Assumes that learning is more effective when language is divided into manageable chunks, arranged in order on the basis of increasing conceptual and structural/phonological complexity; that it needs to be relevant to the learners’ target context; that repetition of activities (e.g. note taking) aids learning; that learning is assisted by variety of topic; that learning is aided by the conscious adoption of strategies (e.g. ‘guessing’, ‘recognising the sections of a talk’).

Other assumptions about learning may be deduced from the type of exercises and texts used in the book.

Course B:

A multi-skills-based approach - speaking ('asking about systems', 'asking about symptoms' etc), reading and note taking – which also build a hierarchy of sub-skills (eg reading: 'scanning a case history', 'using a pharmacology reference' etc).

Appears to draw on a descriptive genre view of language (e.g. the reflection or 'mirroring' of a medical specialist's stages of dealing with a patient) as well as an analytical approach to language as composed of functions (e.g. 'instructing, explaining, reassuring') and lexical/topic content ('systems', 'symptoms', 'diagrams and documents', 'pharmacology reference' etc).

 Assumes that learning is more motivating if tasks directly reflect aspects of the learner's target situation; that learning is easier if the target performance is broken into manageable units which have recognisable patterns; that 'skill getting' comes from 'skill using'; that repetition of activities (e.g 'giving instructions') aids learning; that discrete language items are more easily learnt in context (e.g. 'understanding diagrams and documents').

Other assumptions about learning may be deduced from the type of exercises and texts (e.g how authentic are they?) used in the book.


Course C:

A language-based approach focusing on the restricted linguistic competence (a narrow-angle approach) identified as the target situation.

Appears to draw on a view of language arising from register studies – a concept of 'special language' – (in this case set phrases for communications in relation to flying planes); language as a body of knowledge composed of functions (e.g. 'Taxi-routine exchanges'), lexical items ('phrases of flight', 'airport words', 'airport vehicles' etc). However, it seems to acknowledge that not all communication, even in restricted contexts, is predictable (see '1.3.2 Start-up [non-routine]'). Also seems to draw on descriptive studies of discourse – it mirrors the chronological stages of communication in relation to patterns for flights.

Assumes that learning is easier if the target performance is broken into manageable units; that it is more motivating if tasks directly reflect aspects of the learners' situation; that revision aids learning (a behaviourist view) of the 'Check' section of each unit and the 'Review unit'; that individuals may learn at different paces (see the 'Supplementary vocabulary'). Appears to give no acknowledgement of the learning context.

Extract from: Robertson, F. Airspeak: Radiotelephony Communication. Prentice Hall 1988

You may have identified other additional assumptions.
Syllabus A: content-based (product) syllabus – focusing on situations / functions
From: Eastwood, J. English for Travel. OUP. 1980

Syllabus B: content-based (product) syllabus – focusing on topics / functions / notions

Syllabus C: content-based (product) syllabus – focusing on language forms (structures and lexis) / topics / situations

Syllabus D: discourse-based syllabus – focusing on functions / topics / strategies / skills (oral-aural)
UNIT 4: DESCRIPTION OF SPECIAL LANGUAGES

READING FOR THIS UNIT:


UNIT OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. identify the various terms used to describe language in ESP,
2. trace the major stages in the analysis of language,
3. describe the special role of vocabulary learning in ESP, and
4. explain how special language can be analysed and described, with particular reference to register and genre.
SUB-TOPICS:

1. Introduction
2. Concepts of special language, register, and genre
3. Language content in syllabus specification
4. Vocabulary
5. Form and function
6. A Theory of Language in Context for ESP

1. Introduction

A crucial difference between *English* for specific purposes (i.e. the language taught/learnt in ESP courses) and *English* for general purposes (i.e. the language taught/learnt in 'General English' courses e.g. in the school system) lies in:
   - the way elements of language are selected; and
   - how these are expressed in the syllabus.

It is sometimes assumed that ESP courses consist mainly of technical terms or grammatical items such as the passive form. This is sometimes the case, but there are other features that distinguish the language in ESP courses from general English.

In Unit 3 you learnt that syllabuses can be based on skills development, or learning processes, rather than language content. However, even when the primary consideration of an ESP course is not language description, it always includes language content that is based on some kind of description or analysis of the English language. This description is likely to be drawn from the language used in the learners' professional or occupational field. Hence, the ESP practitioner should have some knowledge of the special language concerned, whether for direct teaching or in order to make informed choices (i.e. based on understanding) about authentic texts and tasks.

This Unit will
   - introduce the concept of a special language,
   - give examples of approaches to analysing and describing special languages, and
   - consider how such descriptions can be used in the development of ESP materials.

Finally, you will be asked to describe the language features of an authentic specialist text, and indicate how the text could be used as a source for ESP materials.
2. Concepts of special language, register, and genre

It is important to note here that various terms are used to describe language according to different contexts of use. In your reading you will find that different writers use different terms, sometimes to speak about the same concept. Hence, you must learn to compare their definitions where these are given and note how consistently a term or concept is used with its definition.

The English language consists of many different varieties or ‘Englishes’ used by groups of people according to social context, topic and purpose. They include formal and informal styles, regional dialects and also varieties based on age, social class and gender.

Those which are connected with professional or occupational use are usually called ‘registers’. However, the terminology in this area is not consistent. Crystal and Davy, for example, use the term ‘style’ to include varieties related to work use.

The term ‘sublanguage’ is used by computational linguists to refer to a very restricted variety, limited to a specific subject domain. Both sublanguage and ‘special language’ refer to a variety of language that has some internal system although still based on general language.

The term ‘register’ has no such implications because it is an unstructured collection of language items associated with professional or occupational use. Because in the past register was used in sentence-level frequency studies (ie how often a grammatical element occurs in a given special language), many people now prefer to avoid the term. Pickett has proposed a new term ‘ergolect’ and Lauren and Nordmann have proposed ‘technoloect’ but register and special language are still the two most commonly used terms for work-related varieties of language.

The significance of degree of autonomy is an issue among linguists ie. whether a particular grammatical feature or structure occurs only in a given context of language use. Hutchinson and Waters (1987), for example, reject the concept of register. They accept the concept of variation but do not accept that there are definable varieties of language related to specific contexts of use. Turner points out the dangers of speaking e.g. Banking English, which implies a fully autonomous special language (ie. a type of English that is found only in banking) but like most linguists today are attracted by the concept of semi-autonomous special languages. However, the problem remains with adequately defining what ‘semi-autonomy.’ is!

Many ESP practitioners are currently interested in the concept of genre. But there is also some difference between the terms genre,
register and **text type**. Genre has been defined by Swales (1990) as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes." Genre is expressed through register. Genres are defined in relation to communicative purpose, but text types are sometimes defined according to linguistic form and function e.g. narrative text, descriptive text, argumentative text and so on. In the main, though, the terms of genre and text type are often used interchangeably by many ESP researchers.

To conclude this brief discussion about terms to use to describe language in ESP, I think it is best to use the terms **genre** and **register** consistently. In fact, these terms are indeed used in current ESP theory and practice. In the final section of this, I give a short description of the theory of language that helps explain genre and register in terms of context of language use. Remember that ESP is essentially about language use in **context** regardless of whatever ESP course we may be talking about (Robinson 1991). However, because this approach to the analysis of language in ESP is relatively new and holistic (i.e. looking at the language of specific contexts as a 'whole'), I have decided to present the theory and related aspects of practice at the end of this unit.

In the mean time, we will continue to look at 'special languages' and their 'parts' (as opposed to 'wholes').

3. **Language content in syllabus specification**

The figure below represents the relationship of three special Englishes to English as a whole. If you complete the remaining parts of each special English circle using a dotted line, you will be able to identify a common area among the three Englishes. What can you say of this area in relation to the grammar of English as a whole? (See Task 4.1 below).

Note that even the language found in, for example, nuclear physics is still part of the English language as a whole. Further, the relationship between the language content of different types of courses is not the same as that shown by this figure. A 'General' English course does not contain everything in all ESP courses.
Task 4.1

a) Draw three figures using circles to represent (approximately!) the relationship between the course content of
   - General English and Business English
   - English for Nuclear Physics and English for Science
   - General English, Business English and English for Science

b) Make some notes on what your circles represent, i.e. what language features do these courses share, and what do they not share? What do you think is represented by the area of the overlap?

(Expect to spend about 30 minutes on this task.)

Special languages are most obviously different from each other in their vocabulary. E.g. look at the formal language used by medical doctors and lawyers. There are, of course, other differences. Studies into different aspects of different special languages, registers, and genres have been carried out by ESP researchers working in a wide variety of
contexts. Hence, the descriptions of various ‘Englishes’ are gradually adding up.

The rest of this section will focus on a few key areas of language description. This is organised as:
A. Vocabulary, and
B. Form and Function, respectively.

4. Significance of Vocabulary

In some ESP areas, the vocabulary can be highly technical, reflecting the special knowledge of the discipline or occupation. Even at not very specialised levels, the difference can be striking. For example, a word frequency study of the language used in biology textbooks for first year undergraduates gave evidence of a very different frequency of lexical items in this corpus (or selection of texts) compared with a general English corpus:

**Top 20 nouns in COBUILD (Birmingham University Corpus)**
time, people, way, man, years, work, world, thing, day, children, life, men, fact, house, kind, year, place, home, sort, end

**Top 20 nouns in Biology**

cell, cells, water, membrane, food, plant, root, molecules, plants, wall, energy, concentration, organisms, cytoplasm, animal, stem, structure, body, part, animals

This compares with the findings for grammatical, or form, words, which are similar in both corpora (plural of corpus), representing part of the “common core”:

**Most frequent word in COBUILD (in order of frequency)**

the, of, and, to, a, in, that, I, it, was

**Most frequent words in biology (in order of frequency)**

the, and, of, is, a, in, are, to, it, this

The high frequency lexical items in the biology corpus above are evidence that the language of biology is different, in its vocabulary at least, from ‘general’ English. However, not all the high frequency words are technical. Another look at the list will show that some words are in general everyday use (e.g. water, food, plant, body, part). Other words
in the list are technical (e.g. cell, membrane, molecules, organisms, cytoplasm).

Words (i.e. vocabulary) in ESP texts can in fact be grouped into three categories:
- **technical** words
- **general** words, i.e. words in common general use
- **sub-technical** words, i.e. words which are part of the "common core" of English vocabulary but likely to be of higher frequency in the ESP context than other contexts.

Technical words, which in the sciences tend to be derived from Latin or Greek roots, are learned in connection with work or study, and are often presented with definition by the work trainer or subject teacher. **Sub-technical words are often the main vocabulary learning load in the ESP classroom.** This is an important point to note in vocabulary learning in ESP.

**Task 4.2**

Read the extract below, which comes from a transcript of a recording made in a factory (Jupp & Hodlin, 1975, p 43). Some of the words from the extract are grouped below. Which group is:
- technical?
- not technical, but likely to be of higher frequency than normal in this workplace?
- in general common use?

Then you pick your battenholder up. Make sure there are no cracked key holes and you've got all the screws in. Then that goes into the slot like that. You pick a ring up, put it on. Pick a short skirt up and then twist it round. You have to make sure it's not cross-threaded. Then you put it in a bin ready for packing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Group C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>screws, slot</td>
<td>pick, go</td>
<td>battenholder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ring, twist</td>
<td>round, in</td>
<td>skirt (in this sense)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>packing, bin</td>
<td>you, ready</td>
<td>cross-threaded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Expect to spend about 5 to 10 minutes on this task.)
Unit 4/Description of Special Languages

It is worth noting that some technical words are taken from everyday language but given a special meaning in the technical context. An example here is "skirt".

Task 4.3

Read the following extract from a medical journal article. You do not need to have a complete understanding of the article, but it may help you to know that a small number of people have an appendix which is "retrocaecal", or turned backwards. It is usually thought to be of no significance.

a) Find twelve words which are clearly technical. How many of these words are of Latin or Greek origin?
b) Find twelve words which are clearly sub-technical (general academic).
c) Find six phrases in which the non-technical word becomes technical.

Familial Retrocaecal Appendicitis

Introduction
Acute appendicitis is the most common acute condition of the abdomen that requires surgical intervention. However, the occurrence of retrocaecal appendicitis in members of the same family is a rare event. The appearance of this phenomenon in certain families may suggest the involvement of some genetic factors rather than a simple coincidence. One such family is reported here.

Case reports
Case 1: MB, a grandmother of the family, aged 62, was admitted to the hospital with a 24-hour history of right lower quadrant abdominal pain, fever and mild leukocytosis. Upon physical examination, the abdomen was found to be diffusely tender, and guarding was most marked in the right lower quadrant. A tentative diagnosis of acute appendicitis was made. Exploratory surgery revealed a retrocaecal inflamed appendix, and an appendicectomy was performed.
Case 2: LB, the granddaughter aged 13, was admitted with a 10-hour history of a right lower quadrant abdominal pain, fever and leukocytosis. Physical examination revealed signs of peritoneal irritation in the right lower quadrant. At operation a retrocaecal, acutely inflamed appendix was found and removed.
Case 3: EB, the grandson aged 4, was admitted with abdominal pain of several hours duration, vomiting and fever. On physical examination tenderness and guarding were felt, especially in the
right lower quadrant. At operation a retrocaecal inflamed appendix was found and removed.

Case 4: GB, another grandson, aged 10 and previously healthy, was admitted to hospital complaining of abdominal pain mostly in the right lower quadrant and fever. Physical examination revealed a tender abdomen, especially in the right lower quadrant. Again, at operation, a retrocaecal inflamed appendix was found and removed.

Discussion
Acute appendicitis is a very common surgical emergency. It occurs mainly in the second and third decade of life and accounts for 1-2% of all surgical operations. Despite its frequent occurrence, the precise cause of acute appendicitis still remains a matter of controversy. Most authors agree that the primary event is the obstruction of the lumen, followed by an inflammatory process. However, it is very difficult to establish the existence of any predisposing factor which promotes such a condition.

In the family reported here, the grandmother, two grandsons and a granddaughter all suffered from retrocaecal appendicitis. In the light of our, and other previously reported studies, it would seem that in certain cases some hereditary factors are involved in the pathogenesis of acute appendicitis. Further research is necessary to assess the exact value of such genetic factors.

(Expect to spend about 50 minutes on this task.)

5. Form and function

Register studies were an important part of linguistics in the 1960's, and at that time were based mainly on frequency counts of lexical items or syntactic features such as the passive voice. In other words, how many times does each item or feature occur in a set of texts (corpus)? However, during the 1970's and the 1980's, scholars criticised these studies because the findings did not help explain how special languages function. Hence, dissatisfaction with this approach to the description of language led to a decline in the number of register studies.

Recently there has been a revival of interest in register studies, but the focus of attention is now on studying the occurrence of syntactic features connected to context of use, in terms of rhetorical function (ie. how a given feature creates meaning) within discourse and genre studies.

Trimble's (1985) rhetorical analysis of scientific discourse has been a significant step in this development, making an influential contribution.
Unit 4/Description of Special Languages

to EST (English for Science and Technology) materials development. It is also worth noting, however, that Trimble’s analysis is prescriptive rather than purely descriptive i.e. in the tradition of rhetoricians, he recommends good ways of organising discourse, rather than describing a mixed set of data. Trimble’s analysis was intended to be generalisable (or applicable) across all science. However, because people are increasingly aware nowadays of different genres within science, it is now recognised that Trimble’s approach may be relevant mainly to EST textbooks and manuals, that is, the text-types which made up most of his linguistic data.

The importance of not over-generalising from data was demonstrated by Swales (1990) in a comparison of definitions in science and law. He pointed out that definitions in science have been shown typically to take the form: “A is B which is C”

but definitions in law can have different linguistic forms, e.g.:

A person is guilty of theft if he dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it; and ‘thief’ and ‘steal’ should be constructed accordingly.

This difference, he argues, reflects different functions of definitions within the respective disciplines. While some definitions in law take the same form as definitions in science, Swales says that:

...there are also quite a number of definitions in Law that have quite a different function; these are not designed to help students come to terms with legal vocabulary; nor are they clarifications or reminders for colleagues. They are in effect the Law itself...

Analysis of specific genres, rather than registers, is the most promising approach to special language description today (see the last section in this unit). In genre analysis descriptions of linguistic forms and rhetorical functions are related to conventional information structure and communicative purpose.

An example of the value of this approach is the investigation into the frequency of the passive voice in scientific research articles by Heslot (quoted by Swales 1990). The passive voice is generally considered to be frequent in scientific writing. In an analysis of 16 articles, Heslot recorded the frequency of the passive voice across the four sections that form the conventional information structure of a research paper:

1. Introduction,
2. Methods,

3. Results, and

4. Discussion.

335 of verbs in the introduction were passive, 835 in Methods, 28% in Results, and 16.5% in the Discussion. It appears that it would be more accurate to say that the passive voice is frequently used for the description of methods and procedures in science, rather than in all scientific writing. (This another important point to note.)

Task 4.4

a) Look back at the four case reports in *Familial Retrocaecal Appendicitis* in Task 3 above. They all have the same information structure, beginning with the initials of the patient's name. On the basis of these data, what is the sequence of information in case reports?

1. initials of patient's name

(You may expect to spend about 20 minutes on this task.)

6. A Theory of Language in Context for ESP

The diagram shown below is used by an Australian English language teaching organisation called LERN (Language Education and Research Network). It is based on a theory of language in context that was developed by J. R. Martin in his book *English Text* (1992). According to
this theory, all three areas enclosed by the circles may be collectively called 'language in context'. However, note that 'genre' encompasses both 'register' and 'language' while 'register' includes only 'language'. In other words, language is expressed or realised as register, and register in turn is expressed or realised as genre.

Now we will look at each of the major components of this 'model' of language in terms of 'context of use'. You will see that register occurs in context of situation and genre in context of culture, but language (centre circle) does not have a context of its own. The following simple description of each of these components will help you understand why and perhaps you can then explain it to your friends.

**The Contexts of Genre and Register (LERN 1990)**

LANGUAGE is a system of resources that we use to create meaning in social contexts i.e. to communicate. It comprises phonology (system of sounds that we can put together meaningfully) and graphology (system of writing symbols that we can put together to make sense). However, these systems do not have a context of their own because we use them in specific situational contexts to create the meanings we want to express. E.g. the expression 'I like you' only makes sense when used
with reference to someone whom you like, in a certain place, at a certain time, and who is some kind of relationship with you, etc.

REGISTER refers to the features of language used in specific situational contexts e.g. at the lecture hall, in the classroom, at home, at the office, by the roadside, etc. Each of these contexts of situation may be described in terms of three dimensions or aspects of language use:

- content of activity (‘what is going on?’) known as ‘field’;
- relationship between participants (‘who is involved?’) known as ‘tenor’; and
- channel of communication (‘how is the interaction taking place – spoken or written?’) known as ‘mode’

Hence, register concerns the description of the lexis (vocabulary) and grammatical structures (words, phrases and clauses) that are used to express specific meanings in situational context. Now, situations always exist or arise in particular cultural contexts of language use.

Culture is a very broad concept. However, to make a long story short, all of us have a primary (ethnic) culture and many secondary cultures depending on our different areas of interest, education and work. For our needs in ESP, we can speak about scientific culture, business culture, engineering culture, classroom culture and so on. To study or describe each of these larger areas of language use, we have to first understand the nature of genre.

GENRE is a term used to describe a class of communicative events that has its own cultural rationale or overall purpose. E.g. a joke, a classroom lesson, a political speech, an official meeting, a sermon, a journal article, a textbook chapter, etc. Genres may occur in the written or the spoken form. Generally speaking, an academic lecture is a spoken genre while the module that you are studying now is written genre.

Each genre is structured in stages according to the norms (conventions) and values of the discourse community (i.e. the people who regularly use the genre) and its communicative purposes. E.g. a textbook chapter may have the following general structure: Introduction, Topic 1, Topic 2, Topic 3..., Summary, and Conclusion. This staging process in a genre is part of the discourse community’s culture and is encoded into the genres that it owns. Various discourse communities may also share similar genres. E.g. the academic discourse community is a very broad one in that it contains smaller communities such as language studies (i.e. your own discourse community), engineering, physics, business, economics, education, and many, many more!
You should now read Hutchinson & Waters (1987: Chapter 4) for an overview of language descriptions that emphasises what ESP has in common with general English; and also Robinson (1991: Chapter 5) for an overview which includes references to many ESP studies that could not be mentioned here. You should also read Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: Chapter 5) for language issues and an excellent section on the relevance of discourse and genre analysis in ESP.

7. Review

1. **Various terms** are used to describe language according to different contexts of use. You must learn to compare their definitions where these are given and note how consistently a particular writer uses a term or concept with its definition.

2. Even the language found in, for example, nuclear physics is still part of the English language as a whole. Hence it is possible to learn the ‘common core’ of English (sometimes, wrongly called “general English”) from any variety of English.

3. **Sub-technical** words are often the main vocabulary learning load in the ESP classroom. The other two categories of words are ‘general’ and ‘technical’. This is an important point to note in vocabulary learning in ESP.

4. The **passive** voice is generally associated with scientific English. It would be more accurate to say that the passive voice is frequently used for the description of methods and procedures in science, rather than in all scientific writing.

5. ‘Genre’ encompasses both ‘register’ and ‘language’ while ‘register’ includes only ‘language’. In other words, language is expressed or realised as register, and register in turn is expressed or realised as genre.

6. Genre is analysed with reference to context of discourse community culture in ESP language analysis. Register analysis concerns the linguistic features of the genre with respect to specific situations of language use.

7. The three dimensions of register are ‘field’, ‘tenor’, and ‘mode’.
UNIT 5: ESP MATERIALS

Reading for this unit:


Unit Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. describe ways in which knowledge of special language can be used in the development of ESP materials,
2. identify authentic texts for use in ESP classes,
3. distinguish between language-focused and authentic activity-focused use of text,
4. assess the relative merits and demerits of using textbooks and in-house materials, respectively, and
5. select appropriate techniques of ESP materials design and apply these to their own practice.
Subtopics

1. Introduction
2. Using authentic texts
3. Language-focused and authentic activities
4. Textbook and in-house materials
5. Using resource materials
6. Review

1. Introduction

Descriptions of special language act as a link between needs analysis in terms of activities and what will become the language content of the course. Specification of language needs may be carried out in a preliminary needs analysis stage of course design. For example, the study quoted in the Vocabulary section of Unit 4 aimed to establish the language content of a course for first year undergraduates who were required to read textbooks in their subject courses.

A description of special languages is clearly an essential basis for the development of materials in ESP. However, when making use of other researchers’ language descriptions, it is important to keep in mind that analyses of e.g. scientific rhetoric are not necessarily applicable to all courses. In this regard, you will remember the circles you drew in Task 2 Unit 4), where English for Nuclear Physics was not the same as English for Science. Taking another example, from English for Medicine, the patterns of word formation in medical terminology could equally be used in English for Medicine materials, but would be inappropriate for most groups of English for Medicine learners.

The language needs analysis is then an important first stage in the selection of content for the ESP course, and language descriptions can form the basis of ESP materials. This is seen most clearly in materials that are language-focused, e.g. exercises on word formation, collocations (i.e. words that tend to occur together), abbreviations, and the linguistic forms associated with the expression of rhetorical functions and discourse moves or stages. If exercises of this kind are carefully chosen to reflect the real language needs of the learners then they can be very motivating.

Not all ESP materials are language-focused. As in other areas of language teaching, materials may function to stimulate communicative activities of various kinds:
• Reading for comprehension,
BBI 3211 English for Specific Purposes/Unit 5

- Discussion,
- Writing reports,
- Following instructions, etc.

Language descriptions are not usually evident or explicit in these communicative activities, though they may be presented in a “language input” stage, but knowledge of the special language, especially of typical genres, is useful for the teacher or materials-writer, as a basis for structuring the more communicative activities. The activities should be related as closely as possible to the learners' needs, both in terms of target activities and the learning process (see Unit 2). In order to design relevant activities that promote the required language behaviour among ESP learners, authentic tasks are devised, based on authentic texts. Authentic tasks resemble the actions learners need to do in real life situations, and authentic texts are those which are similar to actual texts found in those situations. Authenticity of text and task is therefore a key consideration in ESP materials, probably even more so than in General English (see Unit 4). (Note this point: it is very important in ESP.)

In the rest of this unit we will look at the concept of authenticity and its relation to materials development, both language-focused and communicative. We will also look at the advantages and disadvantages of ESP textbooks as against in-house materials (i.e. materials prepared by the ESP practitioner/teacher), and consider how to exploit source material for a particular group of learners.

2. Using authentic texts

Some important points that we need to keep in mind are presented below.

Properties of authenticity with regard to ESP materials include the following:
- the texts were not produced for language teaching purposes
- the texts are relevant for the specialism
- the texts should be what the learners would do in their specialism

If authentic texts are linguistically too difficult for the learners, simple or simplified texts can be used. The meaning of these terms in ESP are as follows:
- simple = specially written for the language class
- simplified = the original text is modified to make it simpler

In simplified accounts, two features that are usually changed are:
- lexis, or vocabulary
- syntax

However, two textual features that one should be careful to preserve unchanged in simplified accounts are:
- rhetorical structure
- information structure

Two other ways of making difficult texts more accessible to the learner are:
- grading by information density (i.e. controlling focus on content from less to more)
- grading by task complexity (i.e. arranging tasks from easy to more difficult)

3. Language-focused and authentic activities

Here, we look at what Johns and Davies (1983) say about texts that focus on language (TALO – Text as Linguistic Object) and texts that are used to stimulate authentic activities (TAVI – Text as Vehicle of Information). Their terms, 'TALO' and 'TAVI', are concerned with teaching reading in ESP, but they can be extended to ESP materials in general through the following matrix:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TALO</th>
<th>TAVI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selection of text i.e. principles whereby the text is chosen – what the teacher looks for</strong></td>
<td><strong>Text chosen to exemplify syntactic structures being taught at the time; and some new vocabulary.</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Subject matter of secondary importance, usually of general interest, comprehensible to both teacher and learner.</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Short, linguistically graded, sometimes simplified.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Working with text | • Focus is on language rather than information, and on detail rather than an overall meaning.  
  • The text is closely worked through first, and any discussion of meaning or identification of main points for summary is done at the end. | • Focus is on meaning, first overall meaning, guessing from context, not interrupting flow of argument by checking on details.  
  • After the gist is understood, then details and specific points are dealt with. |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Classroom interaction i.e. teacher and learners – who is talking, and to whom? | • Teacher does most of the talking.  
  • Teacher talks, asks questions, and checks on answers.  
  • The learners answer teacher’s questions. | The learners work in groups, talking with each other. They work together on comprehension tasks, answering questions, filling in a matrix, etc. Then they tell the teacher about the meaning of the text. |
| Follow-up activities i.e. in class or as homework | • Written answers to comprehension questions, if not done in class.  
  • Grammar and vocabulary exercises.  
  • Summary-writing. Translation. | • An authentic task in accordance with real-life use of the text  
  e.g. for study purposes transferring information from the text into notes, diagram or flow-chart; or combining the information with information from other texts; or using the information to carrying out a subject-related task. |

The TALO and TAVI categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, many teachers like to teach a TAVI type lesson with TALO
follow-up activities. But the above matrix from Johns and Davies makes clear the two main approaches to ESP materials and methodology.

4. Textbook and in-house materials

The textbooks listed below were intended for particular learner groups but are sometimes used with a wider range. "Writing Up Research" has been used with postgraduates in fields other than science; because no textbooks is available for ESP students writing up research in, for example, law. "Check-in" has been used for workers in the tourist industry other than hotel receptionists, because hotels sometime train all their staff together; and Nucleus: General Science has been used with postgraduate scientist at elementary language level.

Weissberg, R and Buker, S. Writing Up Research. Prentice-Hall, 1990
The book is intended for postgraduates writing up research for publication, and the language level is high intermediate to advanced.

Yates, C St J. English in Tourism: A Course for Hotel Reception Staff. Prentice-Hall, 1992. The book is for trainee or experienced hotel receptionists, and the language level is intermediate.

Bates, M. and Dudley-Evans, T. Nucleus: General Science. Longman, 1976.A. Although published some time ago, the book is still used in many centres. It is intended for science undergraduates, mainly first or second year, and the language level is low to intermediate.

Perhaps it should be noted here that there are many textbooks in some fields. E.g. there is an enormous number of Business English textbooks now available, with consequently less need to produce in-house materials in that field.

When an appropriate textbook is not available, many ESP teachers produce their own in-house materials. But the production of in-house materials has its own problems.

Task 5.1

Think about the advantages and disadvantages of ESP textbook compared with in-house materials. Note down as many as you can think under the headings below. Then read Robinson (pp 56-59). When
you have read these pages, you may have more points to add to the list below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESP textbooks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESP in-house materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Expect to spend about 90 minutes on this task.)

5. Using resource materials

Note: Ideally, ESP materials should be produced in context i.e. having taken into account the various types needs (Cf. TSA, PSA & LSA –

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Unit 2) of the learners but this is difficult to do in practice. Swales has suggested using a textbook systematically linked with supplementary in-house materials; this is used for compromise and many ESP practitioners do in fact adopt this approach.

Source materials can be found in the occupational workplace, or in journals and textbooks, in newspapers and magazines, and from on-site or off-air recordings, audio and video. Commercial companies or academic staff may be able to supply sample texts and forms. In many parts of the world there is little difficulty in finding texts and diagrams from books and journals, and examples of business letters, but internal business memos, hotel booking forms, hospital case forms, etc. may be difficult to acquire in a non-English speaking country. Finding authentic listening material is even more difficult, accounting in part for the relative neglect of listening skills even when they are important, as in the tourist industry.

The most commonly used sources are magazine articles, which have the advantage of being topical, often interestingly presented, and accessible in content to the teacher as well as the learners. Their main drawbacks are that they are not authentic texts in the subject specialism, with different information structures and a different vocabulary needed as a priority by the learners. Care must therefore be taken both in the selection of magazine articles, and how they are exploited. Language-focused tasks with magazine articles are likely to be inappropriate, drawing attention to language features not relevant for the learners. On the other hand, the articles can be stimulating sources for communicative activities when used as input for speaking practice, perhaps through jigsaw reading followed by discussion, or a problem-solving task (see Unit 6).

As Robinson (1991) points out (p 56) "... materials, however selected, will not work well in the classroom unless the methodology is carefully considered". This is true of all materials, authentic and otherwise. This is dealt with in the next unit of your module.

6. Review

By the end of this unit you should have some understanding of the following main ideas and concepts, and be able to apply them to your own situation:

- authenticity of text and task in ESP
- Textbooks and source materials.

Note that several important points have been made in this unit about ESP materials:
1. **Authenticity** of text and task is therefore a key consideration in ESP materials, probably even more so than in General English. Ideally,

2. ESP materials should be produced in context i.e. having taken into account the various types needs (Cf. TSA, PSA & LSA – Unit 2) of the learners.

3. Language-focused activities view texts as TALO Text as Linguistic Object)

4. Authentic activities employ texts as TAVI (Text as Vehicle of Information)

5. Textbooks are a convenient source of resource materials that can be complemented with other in-house materials relevant to learners needs.
UNIT 6: METHODOLOGY

Reading for this Unit


Unit Objectives:

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. distinguish between ESP methodology and EGP
2. describe the role of the ESP practitioner and appropriate methodology in ESP;
Sub-topics:

1. Introduction
2. ESP Methodology and EGP Methodology
3. Activities in ESP
4. Using Students' Knowledge of the Specialism
5. Problem Solving Tasks
6. Review

1. Introduction

Robinson (1991) says, 'By methodology I refer to what goes on in the classroom, to what the students have to do. This has implications for what the teacher has to do...' (p. 46). Then she goes on to highlight on the same page 'the key issues that we must consider in connection with methodology in ESP [which are] the relationship between the methods and the students' specialism, and the place and nature of language practice.' While we will readily understand the 'what goes on in the classroom' part as being language teaching-learning activity in general, it is the key issues concerning students' specialism that is of immediate relevance to ESP.

In this unit, we will consider the differences between ESP teaching and the teaching of English for General Purposes or EGP. We will focus on:
- teacher roles in the ESP classroom,
- teacher and student knowledge of the specialism,
- the relationship between the specialism and ESP methodology,
- tasks for the ESP classroom.

Because of space constraints, we will not look into 'teaching methods', nor will we cover ways to develop the various skills in ESP. If you want to know more these areas, you have to read on your own. The books listed at the beginning of this unit will be a good starting point.

Another very important point to consider in this unit will be your own background experience in teaching, if any. The material in this unit, and perhaps in the other units of this module as well, does assume that you have some teaching experience. This is because reflecting on past experience is a necessary part of teaching activity. Good teachers...
often know what works and what doesn’t by actually trying out ‘new’ approaches, methods, and techniques and thinking about what success they bring in terms of student learning.

If you do not have any experience at all, you should ask or talk to friends who are teachers particularly about the various issues or questions that are raised in connection with methodology. The series of tasks below will help you get started.

**Task 6.1**

Consider first your own views on teaching English for Specific Purposes. How is the role of the ESP teacher different from that of the teacher of English for general purposes?

Note down your views briefly.

(Spend about 20 minutes only on this task.)

**Task 6.2**

As an ESP teacher, what forms of collaboration (i.e. working together) with the subject specialist can you think of? What benefits and difficulties do you expect in such collaborative work?

**Task 6.3**

Study this list of roles for ESP teachers:

- Empathiser
- Consultant
- Course designer and administrator
- Diplomat/Negotiator
- Analyst
- Materials writer
- Evaluator and tester
- Report writer
- Collaborator with content specialists
- Classroom researcher
Unit 6/ESP Methodology

Explain these roles briefly with reference to Robinson (1991: Chapter 8) and to your experience. In what way, if any, are these roles more appropriate to the ESP teacher?

(Expect to spend about 2 hours on the above tasks.)

2. ESP methodology and EGP methodology

In Unit 5 we studied how the texts and topics used in ESP materials can be very specific to the students' discipline. Materials then are one major difference between ESP and EGP. What about methodology? Does ESP methodology differ from that of EGP?

This is what Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 142) have to say about the issue:

a) 'There is nothing specific about ESP methodology. The principles which underlie good ESP methodology are the same as those that underlie ELT methodology in general. Similarly, at the level of techniques the ESP teacher can learn a lot from General English practice.

'The teacher who has come to ESP from General English need not think that a whole new methodology must be learnt. The classroom skills and techniques employed in General English teaching can be usefully employed in the ESP classroom.'

And from Robinson (1991, p. 47):

b) 'If we consider what methodological options are available in ESP, then an inevitable conclusion seems to be that there is very little difference from general ELT.'

While the two sets of views above suggest that there are no clear differences between ESP, and EGP methodology, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 187) emphasise otherwise:

'We [suggest] that ESP teaching can be very different to EFL [EGP] teaching and that there is a distinguishable ESP methodology. This arises mainly from two factors associated with the learners:

• the specialist knowledge that they bring – both conscious and latent.'
BBI 3211 English for Specific Purposes/Unit 6

- the cognitive and learning processes that they bring with them from their experience of learning and working within their specialist field.

What do you think? My own position on the issue is closer to what Dudley-Evans and St John say. More often than not in ESP classes, the two factors they mention tend to determine the type of learning activities that take place. In other words, the tasks and activities in these classes often reflect the real world activities of the learners’ specialist area of work or study.

Let us now look at some of the activity types that are found in the ESP class.

3. Activities in ESP

*Role Plays* allow students to take on a different identity. In ESP teaching these roles are ‘borrowed’ from their professional life outside the classroom. Learners stop being students and adopt the roles they may play in completing their studies or the roles which are familiar to them in their mother tongue contexts, i.e. the real world contexts of language use.

*Simulations* are more complex tasks sometimes taking several hours to complete. Learners are faced with information in a variety of media which they must use to solve a problem. In the case of a well-known activity called *North Sea Challenge*, this involves transporting petroloum rigs to the mainland. Modern simulations may be computer based, e.g. *Sim City* which involves running a large city beset with problems. If the simulation matches the student’s professional context, it can be motivating as well as providing a rich variety of skills practice.

*Case studies* are real-life cases commonly used in ESP in teaching English for medicine, law and business. The advantage is that authentic text is used and professional skills are exercised; hence the tasks are motivating.

*Project work* may have a practical output, e.g. constructing an engineering model, or it may result in a piece of written text or an oral presentation. EAP projects frequently involve surveys and literature searches. Project work has particular value in ESP because it can be focused on topics from the student’s area of study or work in addition to practising study skills or work-related language skills. It comprises an authentic task based on authentic materials.
**Oral presentation** like projects can involve a wide variety of authentic text in researching the topic and form authentic tasks for many students and professionals particularly those preparing for business presentations, conferences, etc.

Other activities to add are:
- Information transfer
- Information gap
- Jigsaw listening/reading

**Information transfer**: An information transfer activity has this structure:

In its complete form the activity has three stages but often only the first stage is used:

In stage 1, students transfer information from a linear text provided by the teacher to a non-linear text. This could involve, for example, labelling a diagram with information from an/the text.

In stage 2, the student uses the non-linear text as input to a writing task. In the final stage the student compares his version with the original text. An alternative is for the students to use the non-linear text as a basis for an oral presentation.

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BBI 3211 English for Specific Purposes/Unit 6

The activity is suitable for ESP for a number of reasons. EAP students frequently have to transfer information from texts into a variety of other formats as a means of note-taking. In addition, a great deal of information, particularly in the sciences, is presented by non-linear text. Transforming such texts into written or spoken texts provides useful practice in comprehending this form of text.

*Information gap:* Such activities are commonly used in EGP and ESP. Working in pairs, students exchange information to solve a problem, complete a diagram, etc.

*Jigsaw listening/reading:* A longer text is divided into several shorter texts. Working in groups, students share the information they have heard or read so that all in the group become familiar with the content of the whole text. The activity is used in both EGP and ESP. Its value is that long authentic texts can be broken up into more easily handled sections.

4. Using the students’ knowledge of the specialism

In any language teaching situation, teachers should respect and make use of knowledge students bring to the classroom knowledge of:
- the world,
- their mother tongue, and
- other languages.

In most ESP classrooms the most important thing students bring is knowledge of their specialism and of their work or specialist study environment. This knowledge will vary, of course. In some ESP situations the learners are acquiring knowledge of the specialism at the same time as they are learning English. With professionals however, the learners are already experts in their fields. How can the ESP teacher exploit this resource to motivate her learners?

5. Problem solving tasks

This section looks at the use of one kind of task – the problem-solving task – as a means of relating ESP teaching to the specialism.

**What are problem-solving tasks?**

Problem-solving tasks are activities which provide opportunities for language-using AND language-learning through use, for pairs and groups of learners. These task types:
• emphasise oral skills, although other skills are involved
• pose a challenge to the learners to solve a problem – the focus is on the challenge not the language. This shift of focus is to free learners from anxiety about their language as this can inhibit production.
• require both information and opinion sharing; hence offer room for disagreement. Activities which require only the exchange of information – information-gap tasks – provide little opportunity for learners to disagree; hence the interaction between learners is more limited.
• have a product – learners produce a single solution to the problems in words, diagrams or even an object, for example the construction of a model. Tasks with a single product (convergent tasks) may lead to more effective acquisition that divergent tasks – those which allow different opinions. If learners are required to reach agreement, they have to make more adjustments to what they say and hence have to try out new ways of saying things.

How do problem-solving tasks relate to the specialism?

We can categorise problem-solving tasks in ESP according to the degree of specialist knowledge required by the teacher in devising the task and the learner solving the task.

a) No specialist knowledge required by the teacher or the learner
b) Specialist knowledge required by learners to reach a solution but no specialist input required from the teacher
c) Specialist input required from the teacher and specialist knowledge required by the learners to reach a solution

We can summarise these categories in a table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INPUT</th>
<th>OUTPUT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Teacher)</td>
<td>(Learners)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>Specialist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Task 6.4

a) Categorise the following three problem-solving tasks using the above table
b) Consider the advantages and disadvantages of problem-solving tasks in the ESP classroom.
Problem Solving Task A
A group of doctors learning English for Medical Purposes are each given different test results for a patient, eg blood tests, ECG printout, X rays. Each learner explains in English his/her findings to the group. Together they agree on a diagnosis for the patient.

Problem Solving Task B
EAP learners are asked to solve this logic problem in groups: In a set of 12 tennis balls, one ball is different in weight from all the others. What is the minimum number of weighings required to identify the odd ball and to determine whether it is heavier or lighter than all the others?

Problem Solving task C
Groups of engineers studying technical English are asked to design a plant for recycling domestic refuse.

Groups compete to find the most effective solution. (This involves separating and recycling glass, plastics, metals, paper and organic waste.) Each group presents its solution to the class who decides which is the best.

(Expect to spend about 1 hour on this task.)

6. Review

By the end of this unit you should have some understanding of the following ideas and concepts, and be able to apply them to your own situation:

- Teacher roles in the ESP classroom
- Teacher and student knowledge of the specialism
- The relationship between the specialism and ESP methodology.
- Tasks and activities for the ESP classroom
UNIT 7: EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT IN ESP

Reading for this Unit


Unit Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Identify various techniques of testing language performance,
2. describe the functions of evaluation in English language learning,
3. apply appropriate techniques of assessment and evaluation in the teaching/learning of ESP.

Sub-topics

1. Introduction
2. Evaluation
3. The Design of Evaluations
4. Guidelines on Evaluation
5. Evaluation Methods: Data Gathering
6. Evaluation of Process and Product
7. Programme-Fair Evaluation
8. Evaluation Criteria
9. The Evaluation of Projects
10. The Realities of Evaluation
11. Evaluation in ESP
12. Testing in ESP
13. Review
1. Introduction

In this Unit we shall look at the principles and the practice of evaluation and assessment in ESP.

We need first to distinguish between the terms ‘assessment’ and ‘evaluation’. **Assessment** principally involves testing the achievement, or the language proficiency, of learners/students. **Evaluation**, on the other hand, is a broader concept which refers to the process of collecting information about a course or programme for the purpose of decision-making. See the table below:

**Main differences between assessment and evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Assessment = measuring or judging the progress, achievement, or proficiency of students.</td>
<td>• Evaluation is a broader concept than assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The focus is on student learning, the outcomes of instruction.</td>
<td>• Assessment may be one part of an evaluation. But evaluation may focus on many other aspects of a course apart from student learning; e.g. quality of the teaching or the materials, the appropriateness of the objectives, the classroom climate and so on.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The plan in this unit will be first to examine evaluation in ESP and second to take a brief look at testing in ESP.

We shall consider principles for conducting an evaluation and review these in the light of the practical problems of doing an evaluation. Since we take the view that there are few differences between principles of evaluation in ESP and those in language
education in general, you will find that we draw heavily on the general literature on language education evaluation.

Regarding testing, we shall consider in what ways testing in ESP poses different problems and requires different procedure from language testing in general contexts.

2. Evaluation

Evaluation has been variously defined. We look at some these definitions below:

"The process of determining to what extent the objectives are actually being realised."

"Systematic educational evaluation consists of the formal assessment of the worth of educational phenomena."

"Evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum and assess its effectiveness and efficiency, as well as the participants attitudes within the context of the particular institutions involved."

"The systematic investigation of the worth or merit of some object."

From a practical perspective, evaluation has also been viewed as a process of collecting information for decision-making.

An evaluation may focus on any one, or any collection of, educational phenomena. For example:

- the achievement of learners
- the teachers
- the materials
- the teaching methodology
- the syllabus, etc.

Part of the evaluation design is to make clear and explicit what exactly the evaluation is evaluating.
Unit 7/Assessment and Evaluation in ESP

In practice, most evaluation in ESP is concerned with the evaluation of programmes or courses as a whole, so this is the perspective from which we will consider evaluation in this unit.

3. The Design of Evaluations

In designing evaluation, it is first essential to consider the following:

1. the purpose of the evaluation
2. the audience for the evaluation (who the evaluation is for)
3. the evaluation personnel (who is to do the evaluation)

4. Guidelines on Evaluation

- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- Who is the audience?
- What is the focus (i.e. what is to be evaluated)?
- Who makes up the evaluation personnel?
- Funding, timing and the status of the final report may be negotiated at the outset of the evaluation with the sponsor.
- The methodology of the evaluation falls more clearly, however, within the province of the evaluator alone.

Formative evaluation and summative evaluation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>FORMATIVE</th>
<th>SUMMATIVE</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Gathers information about an on-going program</td>
<td>- Appraisal of a completed program at its end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Periodic – aims to check on progress and suggest improvements to program. Focus is on improvement – the professional guidance function</td>
<td>- Asks if objectives have been met. Serves the accountability function. Informs decisions on renewal or abandonment of the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Usually internal agents of evaluation</td>
<td>- Usually external evaluator</td>
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</table>

If your audience is a non-specialist one, it wouldn’t be sensible, obviously, to write and present the report in highly technical terms.
As regards the content of the report, it is a possibility that external sponsors will be more interested in learning outcomes, in the product, in ‘value for money’ aspects than in process; whereas the teachers and course designers may be as, or more interested, in, process than in the outcomes (e.g. in how the materials worked, how the participants experienced the course, why things happened as they did?)

**Internal evaluator:** those who are closely involved with the programme or course. e.g. as teachers or administrators.

**External evaluator:** those who are not involved in the programme and who come to it from the outside.

**External** evaluators enjoy the presumed benefits of being detached i.e. ‘looking in from the outside’ and hence, objectivity. They may also bring a fresh vision and outlook to the programme. They can say things that insiders may for local diplomatic reasons not be able to say. On the other hand, their lack of familiarity with the programme may inhibit their understanding of all the process going on, they may be less sensitive to local constraints, and may not arrive at such a good understanding at the subjective meanings of the participants. They are also ultimately dependent on insiders to furnish the data for the evaluation.

**Internal** evaluators do have all the advantages of familiarity with all the processes and details involved in the implementation of the programme. The principal disadvantage is that they may not be too closely involved to be achieving the necessary detachment, objectivity and fairness.

External evaluators may well be preferred for summative evaluations, to establish final success, and to decide whether the programme should continue. Their function is to serve accountability. Internal evaluators may, however, be preferred for formative evaluation, for evaluating the process rather than the final product.

5. Evaluation Methods: Data-Gathering

It must be noted here that evaluation is not the name for a particular methodology but rather denotes a study with a particular purpose. Thus, like other forms of research, evaluation crucially involves the gathering of data, which may be either quantitative (e.g. test scores) or qualitative (e.g. comments/opinions)
Gathering data necessarily requires the use of a data-gathering instruments. The instruments used by evaluators have tended to resemble those used in social research in general, or, to take a particular case, those used in needs analysis. For example:

- questionnaires
- interviews
- classroom observation
- study of documents
- tests
- ratings

Careful construction and pilot testing of these instruments is clearly a very important matter. But, for reasons of space we cannot enter into these details here. Instead, we shall focus on rather broader issues in evaluation methodology. These include:

- the relative merits and problems of quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluation
- the role of testing and measurement in evaluation
- the question of 'program-fair' evaluation: how it is possible to compare fairly an innovative programme with a more traditional one

Task 7.1

Clarify your understanding of the difference between quantitative and qualitative methods by writing down a few examples of
a) quantitative methods, and
b) qualitative methods of data collection.

6. Evaluation of Process and Product

A distinction is sometimes drawn between evaluation of product (outcomes, the learning resulting from a course of study) and evaluation of process (the learning experience, what takes place while learning is going on).
Task 7.2

On the basis of your reading, can you say why it is generally sensible in evaluating a course or programme to evaluate both the product and the process. What would be the disadvantage of evaluating only the product or only the process?

Alderson and Beretta (1992; Chapter 2) point out that there is no one best method of evaluating a programme: the methods chosen should suit the circumstances and purpose of the evaluation. Nevertheless, there are some applied linguistics who argue strongly in favour of testing as an instrument of evaluation.

Task 7.3

What do you consider are the advantages of testing learners when evaluating a course or program? Are there disadvantages? If you were to test learners as part of a course evaluation at what points of time in the course would you test the learners? Why at these times?

7. Programme-Fair Evaluation

Nunan, following Baretta, makes the point that when evaluating an innovative programme in comparison with a more traditional programme, it is important to use an instrument that is fair to both.

Task 7.4

If you were evaluating an ESP course using a communicative methodology in comparison with the traditional grammar-based and general (i.e. non-ESP course) which it replaced, and if your evaluating criterion was learner achievement (i.e. improved language abilities), would it be fair and sensible to use:

1. a test of grammar and listening
2. an existing standardised test of language proficiency?

Why or why not? Advance reasons.
8. Evaluation Criteria

For many educational evaluators, evaluation is not simply a process of information collection. The data have to be interpreted and ultimately some conclusion has to be reached on the worth or merit of the programme evaluated.

This immediately raises the issue of the criteria against which worth, success, or ‘value for money’ should be judged.

In the literature the following criteria are often mentioned:

- goal attainment (i.e. have the objectives been attained?)
- known standards set by experts or relevant groups (this might be termed ‘evaluation through connoisseurship’)
- the quality of comparable objects (e.g. similar courses elsewhere). (This might be called ‘evaluation by comparison’)

It is also possible to avoid the issue of criteria altogether by defining evaluation, as some do, as simply data-gathering in the service of decision-makers.

Task 7.5

Do you see any problems with the three evaluation criteria mentioned above? What limitations, if any, do they possess?

Some evaluation specialists also distinguish between global and local criteria for an evaluation.

Global criteria involve judging the worth of a programme, course or textbook in relation to universal (state-of the art) standards of excellence. Local criteria, on the other hand, entail the application of less stringent and more locally sensitive standards. Local circumstances and difficulties are taken into account in judgement.

Talk of criteria, and of measuring achievement against objectives, also touches on another point often urged by evaluators; which is that evaluation should be built into a programme at the very
beginning of a programme. It should not be an afterthought. The relevant concept here is that of baseline data.

9. The Evaluation of Projects

In recent years, there has been a tendency for aid for language education to be provided through the framework of projects. This seems to be particularly the case in ESP: recent years have seen a number of large-scale projects for the development of ESP funded by the British Overseas Development Administration, the British Council, and other agencies.

Since considerable money is invested in the programmes and the various other inputs that make up a project, it is unsurprising that such funding agencies as the ODA and British Council have taken a keen interest in project evaluation. The ODA framework used for the project evaluation in diverse fields (agriculture, for example) has now been applied to language education.

Study the examples of an ODA Project Framework (Alderson and Baretta Pt III).

You will notice that one column in the framework has the heading ‘Indicators of Achievement’. The indicators are supposed to provide some independent, objectively verifiable criteria for success. They should:

- focus on what is important in the project objectives
- be plausible in their relationship to particular objectives
- provide sufficient detail to allow adequate measurement
- be precisely defined in terms of targets to be attained

The next column, ‘How Indicators can be Quantified/Assessed’, asks for a spelling-out of how the indicators can verified. They help the process of evaluation by establishing in advance how the indicators can be measured.

The column ‘Important Assumptions’ requires the project planner to take into account conditions which affect the progress and success of the project but over which the project manager may have no control.
From the document, it can be seen that the model of evaluation adopted here is one that places emphasis on the assessment of the degree to which pre-specified objectives are attained. Note how evaluation is built into the project from the beginning.

This approach to evaluation includes the following steps:

1. First establish what the project set out to achieve and how it was going to do this. Examine the inputs and outputs. Examine the implementation plan.

2. Next consider what actually happened. Were inputs as planned? What problems are encountered? Was the implementation well managed?

3. Then examine what the project actually achieved – in comparison with original objectives. What were the most important contributory factors to success/failure? Could the same results have been achieved in a more cost-effective fashion.

4. Bring together the findings and draw conclusions and ‘lessons’.

10. The Realities of Evaluation

In the real world an evaluation is rarely able to adhere faithfully to the most desirable principles. In its very nature it is a practical and highly political enterprise and some accommodations may have been made to the sensitivities of sponsors or evaluatees. The following are also among the contingencies that may interrupt or complicate the implementation of an evaluation.

- evaluation may be introduced as an afterthought long after the programme is underway. Consequently, there may be a shortage of data on how things were before the programme started
- the persons supplying data, or those who are to be evaluated, may withhold their co-operation or only co-operate half-heartedly with the result that reliable data is hard to come by,
- there may be insufficient time to devise or pilot instruments for data collection (e.g. tests)
BBI 3211 English for Specific Purposes/Unit 7

- the evaluation sponsors may have an agenda and objectives that are not disclosed to the evaluators
- the aims for the evaluation may be vague. The sponsor may have no clear idea why they want an evaluation in the first place
- adverse comment may be unwelcome or even unacceptable to sponsors

11. Evaluation in ESP

The view taken here is that there are few differences in principle between evaluating ESP programmes and evaluating other kind of language education programme. Nevertheless, it could be argued that programme or course evaluation is particularly important in ESP.

Task 7.6

Can you identify any reasons why evaluation might be particularly important in ESP? Why or Why not?

12. Testing in ESP

Testing in ESP will be considered under three headings: Test content, Test method, and Test Validation. In each of these areas there are some differences between language testing in general and testing in ESP.

First, however, we need to review very briefly some essential concepts in language testing. Read the explanatory comments below:

Essential Concept in Language Testing

Testing Purpose and Test Types

Testers distinguish tests by their purpose. The following are common categories:
Achievement test: a test which measures student achievement on a completed course of study. The test sample from the course syllabus.

Proficiency Test: a test which aims at measuring a person’s language ability – independent of any particular course of language study. The test result may be used for purpose of selection. The test content is based on a theory of what constitutes language proficiency.

Placement test: a kind of proficiency test. The aim is to separate students into different levels of proficiency so that they can be allocated to a language class of an appropriate level.

Diagnostic test: A test to identify weaknesses in student’s language knowledge or use. Also to identify areas that students have not yet mastered as a guide to future testing.

Progress test: usually an informal kind of achievement test administered by a class teacher during a course. It provides information on how much the students are learning of what is taught.

The Interpretation of Test Scores

The way test scores are interpreted distinguishes two important testing categories:

Norm-Referenced testing: Is a score of 60/100 good or bad? What does it mean? We need to compare the score by looking at other scores in the population of people tested. Scores are interpreted by comparing them with other scores. This is the essence of criterion-referenced testing.

Criterion-referenced testing: Can a person take a memo from a message delivered by a phone? Yes or no, with what degree of success? We examine the person’s performance on the task or question and see if they have reached the target we set. In other words we compare a person’s test performance not with other people’s performance of the same task but with some external standard or criterion. This is the essence of criterion-referenced testing.
Scoring Tests

Scoring can be either objective or subjective.

**Objective scoring:** the scorer has no interpretation to make. The answer is right or wrong – yes or no. A machine could equally well do the scoring.

**Subjective scoring:** the marker/score needs to exercise interpretation and judgement to arrive at an appropriate scored.

Test Validation

To be a test rather than an exercise, a test must have certain essential properties. The most important of these are:

**Reliability:** This is essentially a mathematical concept. It means that if a person takes the same test on repeated occasions, he/she should obtain the same or a very similar score. The key components of reliability are consistency and stability of measurement. There are many factors both internal and external to the test which can affect reliability.

**Validity:** This has to do with whether the test actually measures that ability which we want to measure and nothing else which is irrelevant.

Test Method

There are many different methods of testing the various skills and abilities that are thought to make up language proficiency. Well-known testing formats include multiple-choice, dictation, cloze, gap-filling and so on. For our purpose we need only distinguish:

- Direct v Indirect tests
- Tests of Performance v Test of Competence or Knowledge

The distinctions are linked.

**Direct tests:** In these the candidates are required to exhibit the skill/ability as a whole. For example, a direct test of writing might include the candidate writing a composition – the skill of writing is observed by making the candidate engage in an extended piece of writing.
Indirect tests: These involve testing the subskills or components that are thought to constitute the whole skill. For example, in an indirect test of writing we might ask the candidate to join simple sentences from longer, more complex ones.

Performance tests: They are a form of direct tests. They involve the candidate carrying-out what resembles a real-world task in a test setting. The test literally involves a performance.

Competence tests: These attempt to tap the competence or knowledge that is hypothesised to underly successful performance. Correcting sentences containing errors might be an example of a test format intended to test grammatical knowledge/competence.

13. Review

By the end of this Unit, you should have an understanding of the following concepts and the procedures, and be able to apply them to your own situation:

- some key factors in designing language education evaluation studies (e.g. purpose, audience, focus, personnel)
- the methodology of language education evaluation – including the difference between quantitative and qualitative methods and their respective advantages and limitations
- the ODA framework for conducting evaluations
- the real world constraints that may affect the conduct of an evaluation, and that will need consideration in designing an evaluation
- the notion of ‘participatory’ evaluation; its advantages and limitations
- the role of evaluation in ESP
- the differences between language testing in ESP and Language testing in general contexts in the particular areas of:
  - test content
  - test method
  - test validation
- some typical steps followed in the construction of ESP/EAP tests
GUIDANCE NOTES TO TASKS

UNIT 4: DESCRIPTION OF SPECIAL LANGUAGE

Task 4.1

These circles are very approximate representations.

Language content in General English (GE) and Business English (BE) courses

With regard to language content (not activities) there is not a great difference between General English and Business English courses. In business a good command of general English is needed, for social contact is important. Business English courses will also contain some specific vocabulary and deal with specific genres, such as negotiation, memos, reports and meetings.

Language content in English for Nuclear Physics (ENP) and English for Science (SE) courses

What is relevant for nuclear physicists may not be so for all scientists, e.g. botanists, and vice versa. The main differences are likely to be in vocabulary, but also certain forms and functions. Classifying, for example, is important in botany, and casual relationships in nuclear physics.

Language content in General English, Business English and English for Science Courses
If the course has to be for a class containing both nuclear physicists and botanists, the ESP Science course is more relevant for that group than General English.

There is an area where all three circles overlap. Some applied linguists refer to this as the ‘common core’. This typically consists of basic grammar and general vocabulary. There is no reason why the ‘common core’ cannot be learned in an ESP course. Reasons for not doing so are usually practical rather than theoretical. There are many good General English course books at elementary level but few in ESP, and when ESP teaching expertise is scarce it is better to reserve it for intermediate and advance levels, when the courses are more specific.

Task 4.2

Technical words

C: technical
A: not technical, but likely to be of higher frequency than normal in this workplace
B: in general common use

Task 4.3

Extract from a medical journal

a) e.g. abdominal, appendicectomy, appendicitis, appendix, diagnosis, examination, familial, fever, guarding, inflamed, inflammatory, leukocytosis, pain, pathogenesis, peritoneal, quadrant, retrocaecal, signs, vomiting

b) e.g. assess, condition, common, factors, involvement, occurrence, phenomenon, rare, remains, reported, studies, suggest, value

c) e.g. at operation, diffusely tender, physical examination revealed, inflammatory process, acute appendicitis, appendix was found and removed, on/upon physical examination, examination revealed, exploratory surgery, admitted with, complaining of

Task 4.4

Sequence of information in case reports

1 initials of patient's name
2 relationship in family
3 age
4 admission to hospital
5 history of symptoms
UNIT 5: ESP MATERIALS

Task 5.1

Textbooks vs In-house materials

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<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESP textbooks</td>
<td>-good quality, from expert authors and editors</td>
<td>-irrelevance of topics for group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-good appearance</td>
<td>-wrong language level for group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-convenient to have a book</td>
<td>-wrong level of subject knowledge for group</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-the book provides a syllabus and a course shape</td>
<td>-not suitable for learning style of group</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-accountability, control and co-ordination when there is a large-scale</td>
<td>-not meeting their particular language difficulties</td>
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<td></td>
<td>programme with several groups of student to be taught the same course by</td>
<td>in UK, students may have used the book before at home</td>
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<td></td>
<td>different teachers</td>
<td>-in other countries, the book may be culturally inappropriate</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-not enough copies for students</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESP in-house materials</td>
<td>-relevance and appropriacy for particular group of learners, with regard to</td>
<td>-very time-consuming to produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-topic</td>
<td>-variable quality</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-level of subject knowledge</td>
<td>-difficult to coordinate across teachers — they tend to want to use their</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-language level</td>
<td>own only</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-language difficulties</td>
<td>-lots of bits of paper inconvenient for students, and also teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-learning style</td>
<td>-a syllabus and course plan must also be drawn up</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-cultural acceptability</td>
<td>-difficulty in finding suitable source material, especially for listening</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>-flexibility – responding to needs as they arise, or keeping up-to-date</td>
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<td></td>
<td>with topical subjects</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-materials writing is professionally prestigious</td>
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UNIT 6: ESP METHODOLOGY

Task 6.1

Discussion of teacher roles in ESP has focused on these issues:
- Additional skills required by the ESP teacher
- Degree of specialist knowledge required
- Collaboration with the subject specialist

Additional skills required by the ESP teacher

Amongst the roles the ESP tutor is encouraged to play in a communicative approach are those of:

Facilitator
Consultant
Activator
Monitor
Manager
Classroom Researcher

The ESP teacher may be required to play not only these parts but additional roles before, during and after a course. Because of these additional roles, Swales prefers the term ‘ESP practitioner’, a suggestion adopted by Robinson, but we will use ‘teacher’ throughout. Before teaching begins, the ESP teacher may be required to undertake the needs analysis and negotiate timing, intensity and duration of the course with the students or sponsor.

In ESP, it is unusual to find published materials which match closely the students’ needs. Often before and during a course the ESP may have to adapt existing materials and to write new materials.

Some ESP teaching, particularly for Business Purposes, is on a one-to-one basis. In such circumstances, there are greater pressures on the teacher to tailor materials and teaching to the individual needs and interests of the students. The one-to-one teacher may be expected to diagnose and remedy language problems; to act as a consultant on learning strategies both for present and future study and even to arrange meetings with native speaker counterparts and visits of professional interest.

Evaluation, testing and paper work tend to be greater in ESP teaching. Many clients, particularly sponsors of expensive courses, require evidence of student progress and application. This may involve teachers in preparing and marking tests and writing regular reports for the client in addition to preparing internal course report for the institute.
Degree of specialist knowledge required

How much does the ESP teacher need to know of the students’ specialism and of their professional or study context? For example, in teaching English for Engineering how much need the teacher know of engineering science, the work patterns of engineers or the study modes of engineering undergraduates? This is one of the oldest questions in ESP. It is relevant to our choice of text, task and course design.

The answers are varied. At one end of the spectrum is the view that no specialist knowledge is required or desirable. ESP teaching roles, materials and techniques are not significantly different from EGP. Moreover, the ESP teacher should not put herself in the false position of seeming to teach the specialism. At the other end is the view that the specialism should be taught in English by subject specialists. The compromise view is that ESP teachers should have at least a lay knowledge of the specialism and an interest in the way in which their students work or study. Such knowledge is required to fully understand the needs of one’s students, choose appropriate materials, and devise activities which allow students to use their knowledge of the specialism.

A related question, ‘to what extent do we take into account in our teaching the specialist knowledge the learners bring into the ESP classroom?’ is explored in Section 3 of this unit.

Collaboration with the subject specialist

One way of ensuring that English teaching relates to the specialism is for the ESP teacher to work closely with the subject specialist. A number of approaches have been tried ranging from team-teaching to simply seeking advice from subject specialist colleagues.

Task 6.2

ESP and subject specialists

In team-teaching, the ESP teacher and subject specialist share classes – one focusing on language and the other on content. Such co-operation is usually only possible when both language teacher and specialist work in the same institute. One drawback is that it is costly in terms of staff time.

Other approaches involve the ESP teacher attending specialist classes with their students and noting for later comment language difficulties likely to cause comprehension problems. Some teachers make teaching materials from lecture notes, handouts and extracts from set texts either to prepare students for the specialist lecture, tutorial, etc. or to provide support afterwards.
Task 6.3

Roles for ESP teachers

- **Empathiser** (Deyes): Capable of seeing things from the students’ point of view before leading them towards an ESP approach, for example, in developing reading skills for specific purposes.

- **Consultant** (Piotrowski) Diagnosing individual student needs and planning individual programme for improvement. Particularly the case with postgraduates writing these and academics preparing research articles.

- **Course designer and administrator** (Mackay) In ESP the teacher or a small team may be asked to set up, design and administer courses.

- **Diplomat/Negotiator** Obtaining the information and materials to devise an ESP course may require diplomacy.

  Explaining the nature of an ESP course and gaining the approval of the sponsors who are paying for it may require negotiating skills.

- **Analyst** The teacher requires analytic techniques to select the appropriate language and other features of the course.

- **Materials writer** Often not suitable teaching materials are available; hence the teacher must prepare her own.

- **Evaluator and tester** Client and institute will require a course evaluation. The client may also demand progress tests which will have to be specially written.

- **Report writer** The sponsor will require regular reports on the student.

Task 6.4

Advantages and disadvantages of problem-solving tasks in the ESP classroom.

Advantages:

- Face validity; hence motivation.
- Differs from school/previous learning approach.
- Restores the teacher/learner balance in the classroom because the learners can contribute their specialist knowledge.
- When focus is shifted from language to task, the affective filter which inhibits performance may be neutralised.
- Creates a need to communicate, ‘Language ability develops in direct relation to communicational effort.’ Prabhu (1987)
• Creates a need for language. Prabhu states that in problem-solving, the learner communicates initially by using language from the task worksheet or from the others in his/her group. He contrasts his ‘borrowing’, which he defines as ‘saying what YOU want to say in someone else’s words’, with ‘reproduction’ – ‘saying what the TEACHER wants you to say in someone else’s words’.

Disadvantages:
• Language needs are unpredictable, therefore it is difficult to prepare learners.
• Task monitoring with large classes
• May promote fluency at the expense of accuracy.
• How can the teacher provide feedback on performance?
• Real-world needs may be remote for many learners who have not yet started their professional careers.
• Some learners prefer to solve tasks on their own.

UNIT 7: EVALUATION IN ESP

Task 7.1

Quantitative methods: typically involves measurement, the characteristic question is: How much of a given attribute (e.g. proficiency) is in a person or an object.

Administering tests is a prototypical example of a quantitative method.

Qualitative method: typically involves judging and assessing on a more subjective basis. The typical questions asked are: how can I describe this to capture how it felt like for participants? what is the worth of this educational object (e.g. programme)?

The boundary between quantitative and qualitative methods is by no means clear-cut. For example, questionnaires may be used to collect subjective perceptions of a course, but if the response are turned into scores and quantified we have quantitative data.

Task 7.2

Process and Product

If your evaluation only focuses on the product (what was achieved), you have no indication of why things happened as they did. You will not know the reasons for successes or failures and so you will have little information to guide you in improving a course. You will have no understanding of untypical or unusual results and how they came about.

On the other hand, if your evaluation only focuses on the process and ignores the product, you will not have provided ant useful information for sponsors or
decision-makers who are typically interested in the pay-off. What did the course or programme achieve? Was it value for money? With only an evaluation of process we have no real evidence whether the course was successful or not.

Task 7.3

Testing and evaluation

Testing learners, in particular their achievement at the end of a course of study, can have an important place in an evaluation. It is the one sure way of establishing how much was learnt from a course of programme, and this information is undoubtedly of great interest to sponsors.

The possible disadvantage of testing is that it may be threatening or demotivating. There may be problems with the reliability of the testing instrument. Testing alone will not tell you why the students performed as they did. For a full evaluation, tests need to be supplemented by other instruments.

In ideal evaluation circumstances, participants should be tested at the beginning of the programme to establish what they already know and what they are capable of, and then tested at the end of the programme. Their performance at the end of the programme can then be compared with their performance before the programme got underway. The difference in performance provides some indication of how much they have improved during the course. Even then, it is not always possible to say whether any improvement was caused by the programme itself – since there may have been other intervening factors.

Task 7.4

Language tests and ESP course evaluation

Neither test would be fair to the ESP course.

a) The test of grammar and listening would be biased in favour of the traditional grammar-based course and against the communicative ESP course. The traditional grammar course would presumably involve more grammar-focused teaching and this would give the grammar course students an advantage in grammar-based test.

b) A standardised test might initially seem fairer to both programs since none of the test items would be derived from the content of either one of the programmes. However, the test would still not be impartial in that it would not take the specific claims and features of ESP course into consideration.
Task 7.5

**Goal Attainment**: this may be an important criterion of success but it cannot be sufficient. The reason is that the objectives may themselves be trivial or unworthy. So the evaluation will need to consider the worth and appropriacy of the objectives themselves.

**Known Standards**: This criterion may work quite well but it tends to be a conservative one. There may be considerable subjectivity of judgement involved and much depends her on the quality of the individual ‘expert’.

**Quality of Comparable Objects**: Potentially, this criterion is useful but much depends on what is meant by ‘comparable’. In order to compare validly, you first have to establish that the two course (or objects) really are comparable, that you are comparing like with like. Also with new or innovative programmes there may no other course with an adequate comparison can be made.

Task 7.6

**Evaluation in relation to ESP courses may be important or useful** for any of the following reasons:

- ESP courses are often new and innovative. It is generally particularly useful to evaluate what is new or what claims to be innovative.

- ESP courses often (implicitly) make a number of claims: e.g. they are more relevant, motivating, effective than the general course they replace. It is important for learning/teaching and indeed for the self-respected of ESP practitioners that these claims are checked.

- ESP course are often established in an ideological climate supportive of cost-effectiveness, accountability, time-saving, efficiency. In such a climate evaluation often enjoys particular favour: it serves the function of accountability, and it can help in the monitoring of cost-effectiveness.