

1- Introduction

Although teaching ESP is supposed to take its path in many Algerian faculties and institutes, General English is still the dominant discipline on the ground. Thus, many studies have been elaborated to reveal the absence of such ESP courses for students of different domains. This was mainly due to a number of reasons, among which: a difficulty to apply a correct teaching methodology, the nonexistence of any kind of teacher training; whether in-service or pre-service, the inappropriate selection of teaching materials, and basically the no identification of the learners' needs by the ESP teachers. Nevertheless, the subject matter still needs much talk about how to offer a real effective ESP course for a specific group of learners. The issue is more than just a matter of possessing certain teaching qualities; it is rather a question of how to design a successful ESP course

In fact, ESP is not only a question of teaching specific terminology related to the field or listing a set of grammatical rules to a particular group of learners. Eventually, that is the case for many teachers who are charged of designing effective ESP courses for their students. An ESP teacher is rather supposed to be a course designer taking into account his learners' needs to devise efficient courses.

Accordingly, the present study aims at exposing the major principles of designing an ESP course and recommends a number of effective strategies of teaching ESP for students of whatever specialty or field. This investigation is more concerned with how to teach instead of what to teach. It aims to guide ESP teachers who may come across some problems in designing ESP courses and seek convincing answers to some of their questions: How to design an effective ESP course? What are the principles that an ESP practitioner takes into account when devising successful courses? How to select teaching materials? What can be done of students' interests and expectations of the course?

While many studies focus on the immense role of the ESP learner and place him at the centre of the learning process, the present study tackles the issue from another perspective and highlights the huge work of the ESP teacher and emphasizes his role as a course designer. The teacher's presence is very crucial to achieve successful learning, particularly, for the ESP learner who is supposed to be mature enough to be responsible for his own learning. This implies exposing the principles which need to be followed for designing effective ESP courses.

2- ESP Course Design Components

The current study considers the view of Hutchinson and waters (1987) regarding the factors affecting ESP course, mentioned below, as a starting point to tackle the different components of ESP course design. These factors are presented under the title of three main headings: Language Description, Theories of Learning and Needs Analysis. Although the three factors are treated separately, their interdependence in a course design process is of great importance. They represent their relationship the following way:

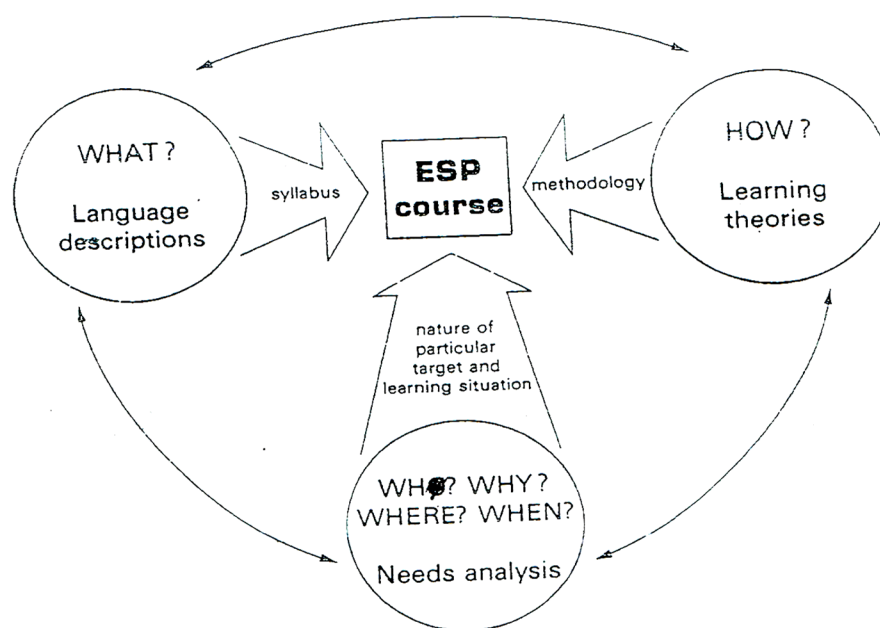


Figure 1: Factors Affecting ESP Course Design (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 22)

A course designer is required to find answers to every question raised in the above figure so as to shape his course and realize the desired goals and objectives. This should be done under the umbrella of two types of analysis: target needs and learning needs analysis (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). It is, for instance, by analyzing the questions: who are my learners? Why are they taking the course? Where and when does course take place? The course designer is supposed to undertake a deep needs analysis seeking the identity of his learners, the general circumstances that surround the learning process and the objective of taking the course.

The first element to consider is, then identifying the learners' needs under what is called needs analysis.

2.1- Students' Needs Analysis

According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) Needs analysis (NA) is neither unique to language teaching nor within language training but it is regarded as being "... the corner stone of ESP and leads to a much focused course" i.e. any ESP course is based on an analysis of the learners' needs.

ESP teachers need to pay attention to their learners' interests and requirements so as to form a clear image of their target situation. Students are the essential source of information. They can provide their course designers with what they have already known, what they don't know (lacks), what they have to know (necessities) and what they want to know (wants). (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

In its specific sense, necessities refer to the type of need determined by the demands of the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation.

With regard to the second item "lacks", Hutchinson and Waters stated that identifying necessities alone is not enough because the concern in ESP is the needs of particular learners. So, it is required to know what the learner knows already so as to decide which of the necessities he

lacks. In other words, lacks refer to the gap between the existing proficiency level of the learner and his target proficiency level.

As far as the third term is concerned, “wants” refer to what learners personally want the course to provide them with, i.e. learners may have a clear image of the “necessities” of the target situation, and they will undoubtedly have a view about their lacks, but it is quite possible that the learners’ views will conflict with the perceptions of their course designers, sponsors or teachers.

In practice, there is a wide range of methods in which information can be gathered about students’ needs, among which: questionnaires, interviews, observation, informal consultations with sponsors...etc.

2.1.1-The Role of Needs Analysis in ESP Course Design

English for Specific Purposes is considered as a learner-centered approach to teaching English. Thus, designing an ESP course is mainly based on identifying the learners’ needs taking into account their specific areas of study or work such as medicine, science, technology, etc. Thus, any effective ESP course should undoubtedly give much importance to needs analysis which is the convenient source of gathering the required information to specify the goals and the teaching objectives of the intended course. Besides, Needs Analysis is regarded as the foundation for the choice of the appropriate materials, assignments, classroom activities and tests. According to Jordan (1997) needs analysis should be the starting point for devising syllabus, course materials and classroom activities.

For Mc Donough (1984) the language needs of the learners are, indeed, the bases for course development since the information on the language learners ‘needs will help to draw up an idea about the course objectives and then the course content. In the same context, Clark (1980) stated:

The first step in any language teaching project must surely be to design a syllabus that will reflect the language needs and wishes of the learner concerned and that will accord with a responsible theory of language learning

All in all, needs analysis helps the course designer place a learner on an appropriate course, and gives focus to the course. It is true that when we design any course, we begin with certain assumptions about what the students need but, it is only through needs analysis that we come to know about the real needs of the learners.

2.1.2 - Approaches to Needs Analysis

At present, to design an ESP course, one should rely on one of the following approaches to needs analysis which are explained below.

The first kind is called Present Situation Analysis (PSA). It is mainly concerned with the strengths and the weaknesses of the learners. Its objective is to assess the learners’ lacks through looking at their current use of language.

The second type is known as Learning Situation Analysis (LSA). It is more concerned with identifying the learners’ wants as it helps the course designer to know about the learners’ previous learning experience as well as their reasons for learning, and their expectations from the course. It is more concerned with the learners’ learning styles, their level of motivation and their methodological experience.

The third type is Target Situation Analysis (TSA). It helps the course designer to identify the language needs of the learner through making an idea about the learners’ objective and the

product-oriented needs. This will make it easy to find out more activities and tasks for the appropriate English use.

2.2- Syllabus Design

Another important component of devising ESP courses is syllabus design. A syllabus deals with the major elements that serve in planning a language course and provides the framework for its content and instructional application. It is, in simple words: "an instrument to link learners' needs and aims to activities that take place in the classroom" (Yalden, 1987). Throughout the history of ELT, a variety of syllabi have been elaborated as an attempt to improve English language learning. Their variance, mainly, lies in the particular assumptions and beliefs made by syllabus designers about the approach to language learning and teaching. Nonetheless, choosing a particular syllabus framework for a course proves to be a major decision in language teaching for the planners are influenced by several factors, namely, the knowledge and beliefs about the subject area research and theory, common practice and national or international teaching trends. On the whole, Syllabi are divided into two different types: Product-oriented and process-oriented.

The product oriented syllabus is commonly known as the synthetic syllabus. It employs instruction to emphasize pupils' learning. It typically lists a selection of graded items to be 'learnt'. Hence, a synthetic approach is contrasted with an analytic approach that attempts to exert no control of the learning environment. This type of syllabi may include a wide number of syllabi mainly: grammatical syllabus, lexical syllabus, functional-notional syllabus, situational syllabus.

The Process-Oriented Syllabus (Analytic Syllabus) is interested in the pedagogical processes of how learners can achieve their outcomes and enhances communicative language skills. Thus, much more focus was oriented on specifications of the learning process by the use of tasks and activities. Nunan (1989: 44) claimed that the focus is on the learning process rather than the learning product and there is little or no attempt to relate these processes to outcomes. Likewise, this type of syllabi may include: Competency Based Syllabus, Topical or Content Based Syllabus, Skill Based Syllabus and finally, Task Based Syllabus.

The role of a syllabus is to provide some kind of security to both students and teachers. There are some basic principles that syllabus designers or ESP teachers should consider when designing a syllabus:

The learners' age, their language proficiency, their level of competence, the course's goals and objectives, the students' interests and other contributions.

2.3- Material Development

It is one of the most crucial tasks of an ESP teacher. In fact, materials evaluation, development or adaptation is a difficult task; that is why most of ESP teachers are lost in the search and selection of appropriate materials which are most of the time far from their reach, and even if they are available they do not meet the objectives of the designed courses and satisfy the students' needs in language learning. As a result, most of them, in many faculties and departments, feel free to teach whatever they judge relevant to their students far from any kind of guidance or control from the official administrative or pedagogical authorities of the university.

However, material design is one of the most arduous assignments of the ESP teacher who is required to tailor his materials according to the needs of his learners and the course goals he has already set. For Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 107) an ESP teacher should consider a number of principles when producing his own materials. First, he needs to select materials that motivate learners and stimulate learning. For example, selecting interesting texts and topics, setting

enjoyable activities and assignments, and enabling students to use their existing knowledge and skills to cope with the course content. Second, materials model should be clear and systematic, but also flexible to allow variety and creativity. Third, materials have to reflect the teachers' expectations and opinion about the learning process. Fourth, materials should reflect the complexity of the task but make it appear manageable. Finally, materials should expose teachers to new techniques so as to avoid repetition and students' disgust.

On the ground, ESP teachers have a wide range of options to select their authentic materials. They can resort to journal articles, scientific magazines or some web sites on the internet. They can also rely on certain research articles considering the level of proficiency, interests and students' needs. The most important thing is to negotiate with content instructors and the students themselves whenever they decide to make such materials into practice. Indeed, the selection of materials should be based on the criteria whether they stimulate learning and motivate learners, meet the learning objectives and the students' needs are available and easy to get. Brown (1995) asked for preparing a checklist of convenient materials. For him, those which do not match the objectives of the course or the students' needs should be eliminated. In this respect, one should note that the non- selection of appropriate materials makes, most of the time, the English teacher in many faculties and departments free to teach whatever he determines to be appropriate to his students.

2.4- Methodology

Methodology in ESP refers to the practical implications of learning theories; it is to turn models of learning into model lessons. For Robinson (1991) methodology means what goes on in the classroom and what students have to do; it refers to classroom activities and techniques. Thus, Methodology in ESP is more than setting an outline of a set of basic principles of language learning, but it has rather to be experienced in the classroom.

Although there is nothing specific about methodology in ESP, a course designer is required to use a number of integrated methods relying on a wide range of skills to increase the number of activities in the classroom (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In fact, there are many methods and approaches to be used in the classroom effectively; ESP teachers need to choose which one to use according to their learners, and most of the time the integration of teaching methods is more than a necessity for successful courses. Among these methods, one can list the following: grammar-translation method, direct method, audio-lingual method, communicative method and finally the Principled Eclecticism approach. The latter seems to be the most convenient to the ESP context where the choice of techniques and activities are more appropriate for each particular task, context and learner, with a focus on **motivating** learners to become independent and enhanced to learn more. However, Dudley Evans and St John (1998) viewed strong methodology in terms of the integration of language learning and subject learning approaches. They suggested two types of approaches: project work and case studies.

Robinson (1991) presented two characteristic features of ESP methodology: First, ESP activities can be implemented on the basis of students' specialism. Second, ESP activities can be based on the learners' target needs. Nevertheless, for him, there is no specific method, but there is a method that a teacher can choose which is best for his learners, and meet not only their needs but their expectations too. It is through collaboration and assistance of content teachers (other instructors) that ESP teachers succeed to frame the content of the course and motivate their learners to connect between what is done in English classes and their academic studies of specialism.

2.5- Evaluation

Evaluation is the last important component to be described in this study, and considered as one of the most significant parts of an ESP course design; without it, ESP teachers fail to improve the quality of instruction and measure the effectiveness of their teaching methods. It is through evaluation that we come to analyze and interpret our learners' achievements, and turn the received feedback into formative recommendations and summative decisions. For Nunan (1998) the results of evaluation can determine the success or failure of the objective and the goals set for the ESP course. Thus, the need to take measures to modify or remedy the shortcomings of the course is very necessary. Evaluation in an ESP course is:

an ultimate measure for making decisions on curriculum changes, documenting events, measuring cost-effectiveness, identifying intended and unintended outcomes and clarifying the objectives. (See: Handan Çelika, 2016)

With regard to types of evaluation in ESP, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) made a distinction between two prominent levels of evaluation: learner assessment and course evaluation. However, these two forms may not be always distinct as the evaluation of learners does not only reflect the students' performance but can also give the ESP teacher a vision about the effectiveness of his course.

2.5.1- Learner Assessment

As mentioned above, learner assessment focuses on students' performance through submitting three different types of tests; placement tests, achievement tests and proficiency tests. The first kind is mainly diagnostic and examines the students' competencies and skills. It generally takes place at the beginning of the course where the ESP teachers feel the need to know about their learners' existing knowledge in the different aspects of language such as: grammar, spelling, vocabulary, speaking skills, writing abilities, communication...etc. "The aim of the placement test is to determine the learners' state of knowledge before the ESP course begins" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 146).

The second type is internal and takes place during the course process. "It reflects the nature and the content of the course itself". (Alderson & Hughes, 1981). There are some basic principles for achievement test to be constructive:

- a) Test what you can reasonably assume the learners have learnt.
- b) Your test should test what you actually want it to test.
- c) Avoid bias in the test. (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 147).

The third type; proficiency test refers to: "the type of testing designed to assess whether candidates will be able to perform the language tasks required of them" (Davies & West, 1984). In fact, this fits the concept of ESP which revolves around enabling learners to perform specific language tasks. What matters in this kind of tests is not the pass/ fails distinction, but rather the scale of degrees of proficiency in the task.

2.5.2- Course Evaluation

Course evaluation is generally conducted after assessing learners and is mainly concerned with evaluating the course itself. The course designer seeks assessing the realization of the desired objectives and goals set for the course. This form of evaluation is, most of the time, a unique characteristic of ESP and is rarely applied in the General English context (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

There are a number of methods and several data collection techniques to conduct a course evaluation, among which: summary of responses to questionnaires, interview surveys, formal or informal talks, observations, and checklists. Whatever the means are, combination of appropriate ones can definitely provide invaluable feedback for the identification of areas in which some revisions and improvements might be made. On the whole, ESP teachers can evaluate their courses either quantitatively or qualitatively. They can also resort to an outsider evaluator to guarantee an objective evaluation and ensure reliable data or they can do the job themselves as inside evaluators.

3- Conclusion

Designing effective ESP courses is the core concern of ESP which aims to meet the needs of particular learners. This needs much competence and knowledge from the part of teachers who should not only develop their learners' language skills, but also the necessary knowledge related to the field they are supposed to teach. Successful ESP teachers are then, required to devise effective ESP courses for their learners. To achieve that goal, they need to develop some pedagogical roles (Vassilakis, 2011) such as: identifying their learners' needs, opting for the convenient syllabus, developing appropriate materials, setting well-selected activities and assignments, and finally evaluating their courses related to their students' achievements.

4- References

- Brown, J.D. (1995) *The Elements of Language Curriculum*. NewYork: Heinle and Heinle Publishers
- Clark. J.L. (1987) *Curriculum Renewal in School Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, S and West, R. (1984) *The Pitman Guide to English Language Examinations*, Pitman Publishing Ltd.
- Dudley-Evans, T. and St. John, M. (1998). *Developments in English for specific purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Handan Çelika, (2016) International Conference On Teaching and Learning English as an Additional Language, Glob ELT 2016, 14-17 April 2016, Antalya, Turkey, Evaluation of the Methodology of an ESP Reading Skills Course for Undergraduate Medical Students: Outsider Perspective, Foreign Languages Department, Edirne 22030.
- Hutchinson, T. and Waters, A. (1987). *English for specific purposes. A learning centered approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mc Donough, J. (1984) *ESP in perspective. A Practical Guide*. London and Glasgow: Collins Educational.
- Jordan, R. R. (1997). *English for Academic Purposes. A guide and Resource Book for Teachers*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Nunan, D. (1989) *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Robinson, P. (1991) *ESP Today: A Practitioner's Guide* (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall).
- Yalden, J. (1987). *Principles of Course Design for Language Teaching*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press
- Vassilakis, G. (2011) Teacher Development. What do you mean? Available at: <http://lionsvoice.edublogs.org>. Retrieved in May 2013.