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*AN INTRODUCTION TO
ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES
(ESP)*

Online lectures for third year 'Licence' level

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CONTENTS

1 Introduction

2 English for Specific Purposes

2.1 ESP Genesis

2.2 ESP Characteristics

2.3 The Difference between ESP and EGP

2.4 Types of ESP

2.5 EAP versus EOP

3 Objectives in Teaching ESP

4 ESP Teaching-Learning Processes

5 Stages in the ESP Process

5.1 Needs Identification and Analysis (NIA)

5.1.1 Rationale for Needs Identification and Analysis in Pedagogy

5.1.2 Types of Needs

5.1.2.1 Target Needs

5.1.2.2 Learning Needs

5.2 Syllabus Design

5.2.1 Types of Syllabi

5.2.2 Conditions to Syllabus Design

5.2.3 ESP Syllabus

5.3 Materials Production

5.4 Teaching

5.5 Assessment /Evaluation

6 References

1 Introduction

The prevalent use of the English language as an international means of communication is in constant expansion. This fact is reflected in different fields and in various domains where English is considered as a working tool. In order to reach specific objectives, world countries, including Algeria, introduced English courses at all the levels of the educational system especially at the university through ESP. The latter is the common and well established teaching methodology that the language teachers actually use to achieve the specific learners' needs, and meet the social requirement.

2 English for Specific Purposes

Since the 1960's ESP has become one of the most active branches of Applied Linguistics in general, and of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in particular. Among the factors that could explain its vitality and its expansion is, as previously mentioned, the emergence of English as a world language, for this reason the necessity to cope with the different teaching situations and needs that such a position brings about. Such necessity implies an understanding of its development, types and the different teaching concepts of ESP. However, it is of great importance to start with the main definitions stated by the linguists concerning ESP.

Apparent variations in the interpretation of ESP definitions can be observed;

Some people described ESP as simply being the teaching of English for any purpose that could be specified. Others, however, were more precise describing it as the teaching of English used in academic studies or the teaching of English for vocational or professional purposes.

Anthony (1997: 9-10).

“ESP is generally used to refer to the teaching of English for a clearly utilitarian purpose.” Mackay and Mountford (1978: 2). That is to say that English should be taught to achieve specific language skills using real situations, in a manner that allows them to use English in their future profession, or to comprehend English discourse related to their area of speciality.

Generally the Students study English “not because they are interested in the English Language or English culture as such, but because they need English for study or work purposes” (Robinson, 1991: 2). In ESP, “language is learnt not for its own sake or for the sake of gaining a general education, but to smooth the path to entry or greater linguistic efficiency in academic, professional or workplace environments” Basturkmen (2006: 18). This denotes that, the role of ESP is to help language learners to build up the needed abilities in order to use them in a specific field of inquiry, occupation, or workplace. These definitions were stated according to ESP evolution through time, this latter is viewed in more details in the following section.

2.1 ESP Genesis

The origins of teaching Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) can be traced as far back as the Greek and Roman empires (Dudley-Evans and ST Johns, 1998:1). In the same vein, Strevens (1977) stated that the history of LSP goes back to “at least half a century”. For Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 6) “ESP was not a planned and coherent movement, but rather a phenomenon that grew out of a number of converging trends”. The latter have functioned and operated in diverse ways around the world, “but we can identify three main reasons common to the emergence of all ESP.”(Ibid, 1987: 6): the demands of a brave new world, a revolution in linguistics and a new focus on the learner.

After 1945, the New World knew an age of massive and unprecedented growth in all the activities especially the economic, technical and scientific ones dominated by two divergent forces, inexorably it engenders a demand for an international language, this responsibility was accredited to English for various reasons. Consequently“..., it created a new generation of learners who knew specifically why they were learning a language...”(Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 6)aiming at fulfilling the daily needs which consisted in the comprehension of the simplest brochure or manuals to most complicated genres of discourses as law texts and scientific articles .

Some linguists, being aware of the world changes, began to focus their studies on the ways in which language is used in real situations. Traditional approach in language study centred the attention on the grammatical rules governing the language usage, though it was found that the discourses varies according to the contexts, it was necessary to reorganise the teaching and learning methodologies and make the specific features of each situation the basis of learner’s courses. The English used by doctors, linguists or officers is not based on the same terminological terms consequently, the teaching and learning process was directed on the basis of the use of specific corpora for each field.

In the same period learner’s motivation towards acquiring a foreign language was the subject study of the educational psychologists, who noticed the use of different learning strategies by learners; they have different attitudes, needs and interests. The idea was based on the statement of tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English you need. It was a natural expansion of this philosophy to plan special courses for each range of specific learners. Strevens (1977:152) notes: “...the existence of a major ‘tide’ in the educational thought, in all counties and affecting all subjects. The movement referred to is the global trend towards ‘learner-centered education”.

Like the world, language study and concepts of education fundamentally changed, the English language teaching changed with it, and knew the birth of teaching English for Specific Purposes which is considered as the direct result of the world evolution. However, ESP is seen differently by the scholars in terms of its characteristics and functionality.

2.2 ESP Characteristics

ESP is a recognizable activity of English Language Teaching (ELT) with some specific characteristics. Dudley-Evans and St. Johns' tried (1998) to apply a series of characteristics, some absolute and some variable, to outline the major features of ESP.

Absolute Characteristics:

1. ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners;
2. ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;
3. ESP is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genre appropriate to these activities.

Variable Characteristics:

1. ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
2. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English;
3. 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 for learners at secondary school level;
4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems, but it can be used with beginners.

(Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998:4)

It is obvious that the absolute characteristics are specific to ESP because learners' needs are of central importance when designing language activities. Concerning the variable features, ESP courses can be designed for a specific group using definite teaching methodology, nevertheless, all learners' categories and disciplines can be concerned with ESP. For that reason ESP should be seen simply as an 'approach' to teaching, or what Dudley-Evans and St. John illustrate as an 'attitude of mind'. Similarly, Hutchinson and Waters' (1987:19) stated that, "ESP should properly be seen not as any particular language product but as an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning".

In the course of the statements suggested below great similitude is noticed between ESP and General English Purposes (EGP) as teaching approaches knowing that each methodology is set up to fulfil specific social requirements, So in what terms are they different?

2.3 The Difference between ESP and EGP

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) stated that there is no difference between the two in theory; however, there is a great deal of difference in practice. ESP, like any other language

teaching activity, stands on facts about language nature, learning, and teaching; it is, however, often contrasted with General English.

ESP teaching approach is known to be learner-centred where learners' needs and goals are of supreme value, whereas General English approach is language-centred, and focuses on learning language from a broad perception covering all the language skills and the cultural aspects of the English speaking community.

Robinson (1980: 6) stated that “the general with which we are contrasting the specific is that of General education for life, culture and literature oriented language course in which the language itself is the subject matter and the purpose of the course”. However, In ESP after the identification and the analysis of specific learning needs, students learn “English en route to the acquisition of some quite different body of knowledge and set of skills” (ibid 1980: 6).

Further distinction between General English courses and ESP is that, learners of the latter are mainly adult with a certain degree of awareness concerning their language needs (Hutchinson & Waters 1987). Whereas, General English courses are provided to pupils as compulsory module at schools, their unique purpose is to succeed in the examinations.

Basturkmen (2006) maintains that General English Language teaching tends to set out from a definite point to an indeterminate one, whereas ESP aims to speed learners and direct them through to a known destination in order to reach specific objectives. “The emphasis in ESP on going from A to B in the most time- and energy-efficient manner can lead to the view that ESP is an essentially practical endeavour” (Basturkmen, 2006: 9)

It is observed from the above distinctions that ESP and General English are different in the aims and objectives of the courses, the nature of the learners and the themes. The latter is also a point of disagreement between the linguists concerning ESP branches or the categorisation of its subjects of practice.

2.4 Types of ESP

The maturity of ESP through time knew multiple views concerning its subdivision. Different types are proposed by the linguists; the present study relies on Hutchinson and Waters' subdivision. In 1987, they rooted one of the most well known and useful theories regarding English language teaching branches with the ‘Tree of ELT’ (see Appendix 6), in which they divided ESP into three types:

- a) English for Science and Technology (EST),
- b) English for Business and Economics (EBE), and
- c) English for Social Studies (ESS).

Each type is concerned with specific field of scientific knowledge as technology, business and economy or the social fields in general; with its various and large amount of human sciences studies. Additionally, each of these is divided into further sub-branches: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). An example of EOP for the ESS branch is 'English for Psychology' whereas an example of EAP for the ESS branch is 'English for Teaching'. Yet Hutchinson and Water's classification of EAP and EOP is rather unclear; that is why further clarification is needed in order to distinguish between them.

2.5 EAP versus EOP

Hutchinson and Waters admitted that there is not a precise distinction between EAP and EOP:

People can work and study simultaneously; it is also likely that in many cases the language learnt for immediate use in a study environment will be used later when the student takes up, or returns to a job.

(Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 16).

However, the distinction can be made in the sphere of convenience. Courses in English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) train individuals to perform on the job, using English to communicate. This type of course would be useful for the training of lawyers for instance and administrative chiefs aiming at reaching a proficiency level.

On the other hand, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is applied for common core elements also known as 'study skills'. They basically consist of writing academic texts, taking notes and observations, listening to formal academic discourses and making presentations.

Through this clarification it is noticed that both the academic and occupational domains are concerned with teaching ESP, but the main question that should be answered is: where does ELP stand?

3 Objectives in Teaching ESP

The main aims of the teaching and learning process is to enable the learners to acquire information in its general sense. Concerning ESP Basturkmen (2006: 133) states the existence of five broad objectives, which are also applied to ELP, on which specific teaching process is based and should be reached:

- To reveal subject-specific language use.
- To develop target performance competencies.
- To teach underlying knowledge.

- To develop strategic competence
- To foster critical awareness.

The researcher shall examine these objectives one after the other.

a- Reveal subject-specific language use: this objective aims to demonstrate to the learners how the language is used in the target setting.

b- Develop target performance competencies: this objective is concerned with what learners do with language and the needed skills to be competent. “This orientation can be categorized as a proficiency objective, according to Stern’s classification (1992)” (Basturkmen, 2006: 135).

c- Teach underlying knowledge: the aim is to focus on developing students’ knowledge of fields of study or work in addition to their language skills. “The objective of teaching underlying knowledge can be classified as a cultural knowledge objective, according to Stern’s categorization (1992)” (Basturkmen, 2006: 137).

d- Develop strategic competence. “Strategic competence is the link between context of situation and language knowledge” (Basturkmen, 2006: 139) and enables successful and efficient communication.

e- Foster critical awareness: “This objective can be linked to the cultural knowledge and affective objectives in Stern’s (1992) classification” (Basturkmen, 2006: 143) and aims at making students conscious and culturally aware of the target situation.

It is evident that great similarity exists between the objectives established by Stern (1992) for language education and the ones stated by Basturkmen for ESP context. The teaching /learning process associated to appropriate methodology may result in mastery of language by correctly using it in the context.

4 ESP Teaching and Learning Processes

The methodologies of ESP teaching conform to the same model of the language teaching process as does any other form of language teaching. That is to say, the basic teaching activities are these; Shaping the input; Encouraging the learners’ intention to learn; Managing the learning strategies and Promoting practice and use.

(Strevens, 1988: 44)

In ESP teaching, some basic elements have to be taken into consideration, the most important of which are the learner needs, goals and motivation. Furthermore learners’ attitudes towards learning and learning strategies are emphasized and seen as fundamental to the ESP process.

The ESP teacher in the classroom is “...a knowledge provider and a facilitator of students’ learning and no more as a resourceful authority.”(Kashani et al 2007: 85).However, he/she is more concerned with designing suitable syllabi and courses for different learners with various needs and fields. “Thus, whereas course design plays a relatively minor part in the life of General English teacher, courses here usually being determined either by tradition, choice of textbook or ministerial decree, for the ESP teacher, course design is often a substantial and important part of the workload” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 21).

As the students are sited in the core of the learning process they have to be dynamic contributors in their learning either in the classroom or out of it. Students use the adequate and favourite learning strategies and put a rapid and durable learning rhythm to achieve the stated objectives. They are more intrinsically than extrinsically oriented. “Learning is more individualized than standardized and students are more open to new ideas. They take responsibility for their own actions and accept related consequences”. (Kashani et al 2007: 87).

ESP teaching/ learning processes necessarily go through different stages.

5 Stages in the ESP Teaching Process

Dudley-Evans and Johns (1998:121) maintain that “The key stages in ESP are needs analysis, course (and syllabus) design, materials selection (and production), teaching and learning, and evaluation.” ESP course design is the product of a dynamic interaction between these elements which “... are not separated, linearly-related activities, rather, they represent phases which overlap and are interdependent”.

Dudley-Evans and St. Johns illustrate the theory and the reality of the stages in ESP process through these cyclical representations:

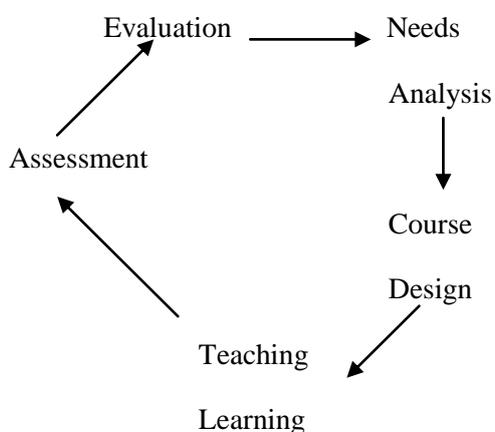


Figure 1.1: stages in the ESP process: Theory

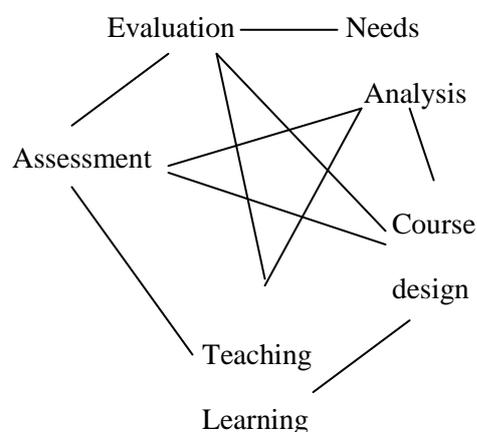


Figure 1.2: stages in the ESP process: reality

It is well demonstrated that the basic elements in the ESP teaching process are interconnected and there is no differentiation between theory and reality “the simplicity and clarity of figure 1 is in reality more like figure 2” (Dudley-Evans and St. Johns, 1998: 121). Therefore, the achievement of ESP courses are: those where the syllabus and the material are determined by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learner (Mumby, 1978: 2), and those in which the aims and the context are determined principally or wholly not by criteria of general education but by functional and practical English language requirements of the learner (Stevens 1977 :90).

However, designing effective ESP course is governed by further parameters that have to be examined first. According to Miliani (1994), after his exploration of the Algerian context, stated that four essential points have to be studied and analysed as a pre-design process, which consist of:

a-Situation analysis: it envelop the general requirements of both learners and institutions, their profiles and attitudes, also the existing materials.

b-Setting Aims and Objectives: the results of learners needs identification and analysis (NIA) lead to setting up general statements and what would be achieved at the end of the courses.

c-Generating Syllabus Content: organising the syllabus content “through the sequencing of materials whose layout and presentation should form a continuum”. (Benyelles, 2009:58).

d- Assessment: gathering data regarding syllabus before or during the course implementation let to readjust the content of the syllabus.

From the quoted descriptions of ESP teaching process it is viewed that in the first instance, learners’ needs have to be identified and analysed. Therefore, the development of an ESP course should be in line with learners’ requests and wants. Thus, needs outcomes will operate as a guide for the teacher in designing a suitable syllabus, producing course materials as well as teaching and testing methods.

A detailed description of each step follows:

5.1 Needs Identification and Analysis (NIA)

“As in all ESP teaching situations, we must start by considering the needs of the learners and what they have to do in the target situation”(Flook 1993 qtd in Benyelles 2009 :21) . In general, the term ‘needs’ is defined as the differences between the actual state regarding the group or situation in relation to a specific question and the desired state. They reflect the existence of a certain problem that requires an intervention and must be dealt with.

A needs assessment attempts to identify such problems, to analyse their nature and causes and to establish priorities for future actions. It is a systematic approach to identifying social problems, determining their extent, and accurately defining the target population to be

served and the nature of their service needs (Rossi, P. H., Freeman, H. E., & Lipsey, Mark, W. L., 1998).

An NIA answers the questions who, what, when, and where but not how, that is, the target audience (who needs to be trained), the task or content (what needs to be taught) and the context or training environment (where and when the training needs to be conducted) (Clark, 1998).

5.1.1 Rationale for NIA in Pedagogy

Pedagogically, needs are always defined as the learners' requests in order to communicate efficiently in specific situations. "The idea of analysing the language needs of the learner as a basis for course development has become almost synonymous with ESP". (McDonough 1984: 29). Hence, ESP has its foundation on the exploration and analysis of learners' purposes and the set of communicative requirements arising from these purposes.

The analysis of the specific needs serves as the introduction to an ESP course design, "...any course should be based on an analysis of learner need" (Hutchinson & Waters 1987: 53), because it determines the reasons and procedures that should be used to achieve satisfactory communicative results. "The rationale for needs analysis is that by identifying elements of students' target English situations and using them as the basis of EAP/ ESP instruction, teachers will be able to provide students with the specific language they need to succeed in their courses and future careers". (Johns, 1991: 67).

In sum, the reasons for performing NIA, according to Long (2005) are to determine the relevance of the material to the learners' situation, to justify the accountability of the material to all the constituents implicated in the situation, to describe and explain learners' differences in terms of needs and style and, finally to produce efficient materials that will fulfil learners' requirements and needs as wholly as possible.

5.1.2 Types of Needs

ESP specialists (Hutchinson & Waters 1987, Robinson 1980, 1991, West 1993), agree on the fact that the term needs is the learners' requirements aiming at communicating effectively in the target situation. "An ESP course will not only involve these requirements, but will also consider the different levels of language knowledge of the learners in order to specify the conditions of their learning situation" (Benyelles 2001:26).

Accordingly, this entails that NIA taxonomy may be viewed differently, however two (02) types, i.e. 'Target Needs' and 'Learning Needs', are the main concepts used by the scholars in ESP literature and practices.

5.1.2.1 Target Needs

Needs analysis is a complex process which has to take into account what Hutchinson and Waters (1987:54) define as "target needs", what learners need to do in the target

situation. In other words, what are the linguistic elements needed to achieve specific communicative purposes.

Robinson presents aspects of the target situation and students' educational backgrounds: "study or job requirements," "what the user-institution or society at large regards as necessary," "what the learner needs to do to actually acquire the language," "what the students themselves would like to gain from the language course," "what the students do not know or cannot do in English" (Robinson 1991pp. 7-8).

In this respect, Hutchinson and Waters propose further subdivisions of target needs which are: Necessities, Lacks, and Wants.

Necessities

Are the academic or occupational requirements of the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation. Accordingly, needs "are perhaps more appropriately described as objectives" (Robinson, 1991: 7) to be achieved.

Lacks

Are what the learners are deficient in, i.e. what they ignore or cannot perform in English. Subsequently, lacks are the gaps between the initial or actual situation of the learners in terms of language proficiency or aptitudes, and the one which is required after the accomplishment of the language training.

Wants

Are the learners' personal expectations and hopes towards acquiring English, i.e. what they would like to gain from the language course.

In order to design the syllabus content, the ESP practitioners have to take into consideration the learners aims; however, in almost all cases, these contrast with the lacks identified by the teacher or the necessities of the target situation. This divergence leads West (1993) to add 'constraints' as fourth type of target needs. "It involves the non-pedagogic limits that control a course planning process such as the role of the national policy, and financial restrictions, which the analysts need to be aware of once they start the process of NIA"(Benyelles 2001:31).

5.1.2.2 Learning Needs

According to Hutchinson and Waters a relevant needs analysis of the target situation can divulge and reveal "What the learners need to learn"; however, it is not sufficient, in ESP context the question "How will the learners learn" in order to learn, is of central importance to determine the content of the course.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987:54) define learning needs as “what learners need to do in order to learn”. In the same vein, Robinson (1991: 7) states that learning needs are “...what the learner needs to do to actually acquire the language.”. In this sense, learning needs look for data in relation to the learning situation which take into consideration learners’ type, cultural awareness and proficiency level in English, the available materials, the existing resources and all the information that can help the teacher to provide the learners with the appropriate knowledge.

All Wright (1982, qtd in West, 1994) states that “the investigation of learners’ preferred learning styles and strategies gives us a picture of the learners’ conception of learning”.

The findings of the gathered data will provide an overview regarding learners’ feelings and positions to learn a foreign language in specific contexts. For language audit, it is generally used to establish the role assumed by this foreign language in business, industrial or public enterprise, accordingly ESP researchers have to:

- Determine the language skills needed to carry out specific jobs or studies (West: 1993).
- Evaluate the actual proficiency level of the target population in order to compare the different levels of achievement at the end of the course.
- Find out the necessary time volume needed for language instruction.

In sum and regardless of the various approaches recommended to identify students’ needs, almost all the scholars mentioned above (West, Hutchinson and Waters, Robinson, All Wright) have the same opinion on the collection of the same type of information during the needs analysis stage. The information concerns:

a- The target situation: the role of ESP practitioner is to take into consideration the needs of the target situation through the enquiry of the variety, the language forms and the necessary level of performance required in the target language.

b- Learners: the researcher has to determine learners’ language lacks, investigate their wants, and attitudes concerning language course, taking into consideration their current language ability.

c- The learning situation: it broadly reveals significant information regarding the learning environment and specifically the teaching situation, the nature of the setting, the available materials and the time volume.

After the identification and analysis of learners’ needs the ESP teacher can go through the next phase which is syllabus design.

5.2 Syllabus Design

It is not easy to separate the issues concerning syllabus design set up for specific purposes programmes from general language teaching. Designing a syllabus to a specific group in a particular situation is not a simple task for the designers aiming at achieving learners requirements, since the existence of various concepts and basis dealing with syllabus. Thus, it seems of great importance to define ‘syllabus’ in order to have a better understanding of what it actually meant by the term in education.

Hutchinson & Waters (1987: 80) define “Syllabus” as “... a document which says what will (or at least what should) be learnt”. In the same vein, Robinson (1991: 34) states that syllabus is “a plan of work and is, thus, essential for the teacher, as a guideline and context of class content.” The above assertions point out that the syllabus first concerns the teacher, and that it helps him/her plan courses.

Basturkmen (2006:20) argues that “in order to specify what language will be taught, items are typically listed and referred to as the syllabus”. She exemplifies the definition by giving a standard view of the syllabus through the figure below.

A syllabus:

- 1- Consists of a comprehensive list of
 - content items (words, structures, topics)
 - process items (tasks, methods)
- 2- Is ordered (easier, more essential items first)
- 3- Has explicit document
- 4- Is a public document
- 5- May indicate a time schedule
- 6- May indicate preferred methodology or approach
- 7- May recommend materials

Figure1.3: Characteristics of a syllabus

(*Course in Language Teaching*, CUP, 1996:177 qtd in Basturkmen 2006:21)

Another issue in defining ‘syllabus’ is that it is “an instrument by which the teacher,..., can achieve a certain coincidence between the needs and the aims of the learners, and the activities that will take place in the classroom” (Yalden 1987:86) that is to say that the syllabus is “a teaching device to facilitate learning” (Nunan 1988:6) which organises classroom activities according to learners aims and requirements after the process of needs identification and analysis.

The syllabus is perceived differently in the goals and functions by the literature in the field, because of the existence of different educational approaches, accordingly, various types of syllabi are suggested by the scholars each one being systematically planned according to specific language components.

5.2.1 Types of Syllabi

According to Basturkmen (2006:21) syllabuses can be ‘synthetic’ in which the “language is segmented into discrete linguistic items for presentation one at a time”, or ‘analytic’ wherein “language is presented whole chunks at a time without linguistic control”.

Long & Crookes, (1993) give a classification of the different syllabi which compose the synthetic and analytic programmes.

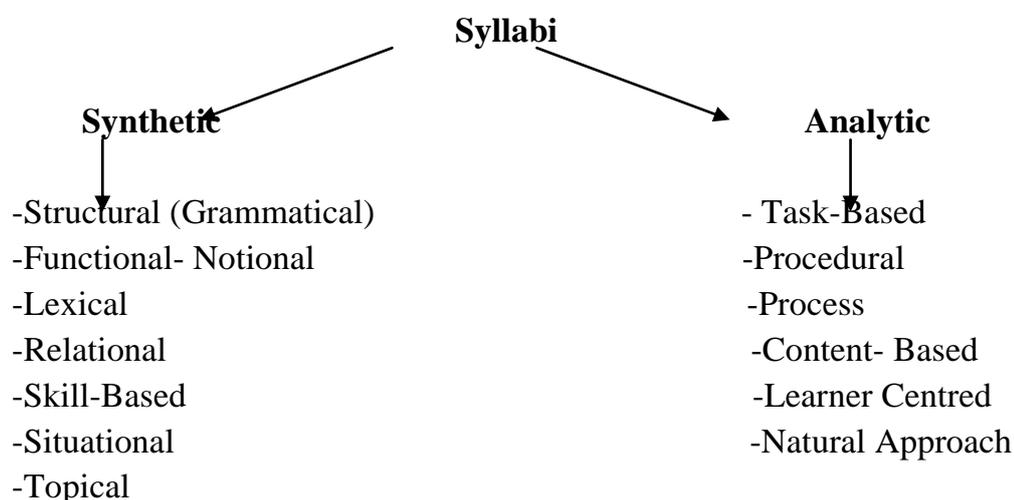


Figure1.4: classification of syllabi (Long and Crookes, 1993).

The figure shows that the ‘Synthetic’ syllabus includes the classical approaches to syllabuses as the grammatical, the lexical, the functional- notional, the situational and topical ones. However, the ‘Analytic’ one consists of the task-based, the learner centred and content- based syllabi which are considered as modern approaches in language teaching methodologies.

Each one of them is based on a specific conceptual teaching ideology and not all of them received popular status, accordingly the researcher will deal only with the most known and largely used.

a-Synthetic syllabi

The synthetic syllabi “...rely on learners (assumed) ability to learn a language in parts independently of one another, and also to integrate, or synthesise the pieces when the time comes to use them for communicative purposes” (Long & Crookes, 1993:12). That is

to say that the teaching/ learning process is based on providing the different language forms and structures separately.

b-Analytic Syllabi

The analytic syllabi "... rely on the learners' ability to induce and infer language rules, as well as on innate knowledge of linguistic universals" (Long & Crookes, 1993:11). So, analytic syllabi are based on learners' personal capacities and aptitudes to produce the different grammatical structures and forms. The syllabus plan is "organised in terms of the purposes for which people are learning language and the kinds of language performance that are necessary to meet those purposes" (Wilkins,1976:13).

In reality, the different kinds and forms of syllabi previously referred to and even other types, not mentioned in this work, are relatively in almost all the times pooled when using them. Furthermore the syllabi elements are combined by the practitioners so as to find the correct and suitable teaching plan. It is important to admit that "no syllabus can bring positive results on its own because of the variety of students' needs." (Benyelles, 2009:55). For this reason it is essential to expose learners to the various elements of the target language knowledge in a systematic way in order to help the students to produce correct language forms and to use English appropriately.

In line with the fact that it is difficult to achieve satisfactory outcomes by using a single syllabus, Harmer (2001) suggests that instead of courses founded on a specific types, "the syllabus may show a combination of items from grammar, lexis, language functions, situations, topics, tasks and different language skill tasks or pronunciation issues" (Benyelles, 2009:55), this view is labelled 'multi-syllabus syllabus' or "eclectic syllabus" in which all the elements are matched and synchronized.

5.2.2 Conditions to Syllabus Design

Harmer (2001) establishes some rules that should be taken into consideration when designing a syllabus, and states that "every syllabus needs to be developed on the basis of certain criteria" (Harmer, 2001:295), which consist of:

- a- Learnability: the content should be organised in a gradual manner in order to be more efficient, i.e. from the easier themes to the more complex ones.
- b- Frequency: integration of the most frequent items used in target language.
- c- Coverage: incorporate the terminology and structures that have wider coverage in the use of the language.
- d- Usefulness: set up language forms and skills that are socially useful for the learners.

These criteria are greatly influenced by some environmental factors surrounding the teaching learning situation as the existence of a number of social restrictions that have a great impact on its effectiveness. Benyelles (2009) selected the main constraints as follows:

- The language setting which concerns the role of the language in the community.
- The areas of language use in society (how and where it is used).
- The role of the language in the political life taking into account the countries economy and technology (Ashworth, 1985 a).
- The attitudes of groups and individuals towards the language. This is determined by the degree of their awareness of the language (Van Leir, 1995).

(Benyelles, 2009: 58-59)

To summarise, the designer will have to take into consideration the various parameters that can influence the technical and pedagogical criteria in designing appropriate and practical syllabus.

5.2.3 ESP Syllabus

Designing an ESP syllabus is not an easy task to perform because of its significant and complex role. However, it obviously satisfies a lot of needs since it has a multi-functional purpose. Thus, syllabus designers need to be aware of the different functions the syllabus fulfils so that it can be designed and used most appropriately.

For that reason, Munby (1978) introduced Communicative Needs Processor (CNP) as an approach to investigate specific communication needs of a particular group, according to socio-cultural and stylistic variables which act together to find out a profile of such needs. That is to say that the target needs and target level performance are established by investigating the target situation. In the CNP, descriptions are taken from “the variables that affect communication needs by organizing them as parameters in a dynamic relationship to each other” (Munby, 1978: 32). This process will engender the nature of the content that will be selected and set up for ESP learners’ programme.

In ESP, the nature of the content is extracted from real life situations in which the syllabus designers have to select the most relevant language discourses that will supply for learners target requirements. However, “it is necessary to introduce what is known as common-core language (Miliani, 1994) selected according to students own needs” (Benyelles, 2009:64) in order to provide basics of language knowledge. Accordingly, “one might begin with grammar and pronunciation only, as one does in a structural approach, but introduce work in the language functions, and in discourse skills fairly early, and in time increase the component of the course” (Yalden,1987:94).

ESP rejects ‘synthetic’ approaches to course design (Basturkmen 2006:103); so, it is important to present the language using an eclectic method by combining the required features of the language systematically and gradually according to the target objectives.

The syllabus is also an essential document in the teaching/learning process since it provides a set of principles for materials production, teaching, and testing; this is why, it should be flexible, open-ended, and subject to regular adjustment.

5.3 Material Production

Do ESP textbooks really exist? This is a fundamental question Johns (1990) addresses. One of the core problems he presents is that "ESP teachers find themselves in a situation where they are expected to produce a course that exactly matches the needs of a group of learners, but are expected to do so with no, or very limited, preparation time" (Johns, 1990, p. 91).

"In the real world, ESP developers are not provided with sufficient time for needs analysis, materials research and materials development" (Kristen Gatehouse, 1999). The notion of time in the teaching process is of paramount importance especially in ESP, because the analysis of the target situation and the research of the appropriate materials need adequate time.

Suitable materials in ESP are not generally easy to get "It is likely that a course tailored to the needs of specific group of learners will not be available," (Hutchinson & Waters 1987: 106). For that reason, the ESP teacher has to develop materials which present as clearly as possible useful area of the language so that learners can perceive the relation between the content of the course and their requirements.

The production of such materials and suitable activities is not a simple task because the ESP teacher is neither a materials designer nor a subject specialist; besides, "few teachers have had any training in the skills and techniques of materials writing". (Hutchinson & Waters', 1987: 106).

In order to assist and guide ESP teachers in producing adequate materials, Hutchinson & Waters (1987:106-108) identify some defining principles that should be stated as purposeful objectives in designing pedagogical materials:

a- good materials give a stimulus to learning; in other words, they do not teach but, encourage learners to learn, they will, therefore, contain:

- Interesting texts;
- Enjoyable activities which stimulate the learners' thinking capacities;
- Opportunities for learners to use their existing knowledge and skills;
- A content which both learner and teacher can cope with.

b- Adequate materials provide a comprehensible and rational unit structure which will conduct both the teacher and the learner through a range of activities in such a way as to maximise the chances of learning. Accordingly, "a materials model must be clear and systematic, but flexible enough to allow for creativity and variety". (Ibid, 1987:107).

c-Materials should represent a vision of the nature of language and learning, and reflect the teacher considerations and feelings about the learning process.

d-Materials should reveal the nature of learning tasks and should “create a balance outlook which both reflects the complexity of the task, yet makes it appear manageable.” (Ibid, 1987:108).

e-Materials should introduce the teachers to the use of new and updated teaching techniques.

f-Materials should supply appropriate and correct representation of language use.

In ESP, the analysis of the target situation provides the basic data that leads the material designer to establish the process through which the course will be presented. By the combination of the different outcomes related to the learners needs, the learning environment and the pedagogical approach, it will be possible to produce the needed ESP course with an appropriate content.

Hutchinson and Waters(1987) designed a model for materials production aiming at providing a “coherent framework for the integration of the various aspects of learning, while at the same time, allowing enough room for creativity and variety to flourish” (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 108) .This model consists of four elements according to the figure:

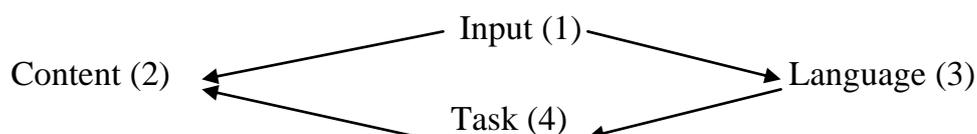


Figure 1.5: A material Design Model (Hutchinson and Waters,1987: 109).

The model established by Hutchinson and Waters aims to build a support to language use and shows that from, NIA process, the required input can be selected to achieve communicative tasks performance, using and combining the content needed by the target situation and the students’ language knowledge.

The ESP learners aim to handle the communicative acts related to their field of interests and to acquire the linguistic repertoire associated to that matter. For that reason, they make use of authentic materials which is, generally, seen as indispensable in an ESP teaching situation, as maintained by Robinson (1991: 54) : ” A key concept ...felt to be particularly relevant for ESP, is that of authenticity.”

“It has been traditionally supposed that the language presented to learners should be simplified in some way for easy access and acquisition. Nowadays, there are recommendations that the language presented should be authentic.” (Widdowson 1990:67).

“Materials writing is one of the most characteristic features of ESP in practice” (Hutchinson & Waters 1987: 106).In reality script materials are the major tool mainly used by almost all ESP teachers; however, with the availability of technological supports in

academic settings “a great number of teachers, nowadays, use many types of language learning videos accompanied by course books or workbooks solely for instructional purposes” (Baleghizadeh & Oladrostam, 2010) targeting at providing authentic simulated situations, interesting and pleasant activities to the learners.

Therefore, and if videos are considered as technological materials it is recommended, “as one of the main types of authentic materials, be constantly used in order to contextualize language for students” (Baleghizadeh & Oladrostam, 2010). According to Harmer (2001, 2007), there are a number of reasons why videos should be used:

- Seeing language-in-use;
- Cross-cultural awareness;
- The power of creation;
- Motivation.

Moreover, video production can lead to creative and communicative uses of language to the extent that students may remember those exciting moments for relatively extended period of time. Also Brown (2007) argued, that the “students who are right brain dominant rely on images to remember and think, by which one of the sources he surely meant were videos”.

In a sum the role of ESP teachers is to produce and present the language content and the course activities in a various ways to help and motivate the students to learn the target language needed to update their academic or occupational knowledge.

5.4 Teaching

The final aim of designing materials is the performance of the task; hence, with the help of the teacher, the students need to be given activities to achieve this aim. In an ESP situation, the roles of the teacher would be “instructor, facilitator, role-advisor, monitor, co-communicator, classroom manager and consultant”. (Benyelles, 2009:42).

However, in almost all cases, the ESP teachers are in front of various problems of different nature. The main one occurs from the fact that they are called upon to carry out new assignment and perhaps with no specific training. In this respect, Strevens (1988: 41) describes the ESP teacher as “...a teacher of General English who has, unexpectedly, found him/herself required to teach students with special needs.” Explicitly, the ESP teachers have to adapt and adjust themselves in order to deal with a new situation and environment for which they are not generally well trained and equipped.

Hutchinson & Waters (1987: 157) states that the ESP teacher’s role is one of many parts. “Swales (1985) prefers... to use the term ‘ESP practitioner’ ... It is likely that in addition to the normal functions of a classroom teacher, the ESP teacher will have to deal with needs analysis, syllabus design, materials writing or adaptation and evaluation.” That is to say that the ESP teachers are involved in designing, setting up and administering the ESP course, and teaching.

A further difficulty is facing ESP teachers when dealing with specific situations; it is that of knowledge specialist. In this respect, Hutchinson & Waters (1987: 163) state that “ESP teachers do not need to learn specialist knowledge. They require three things only: a positive attitude towards the ESP content; knowledge of fundamental principles of the subject area; an awareness of how much they probably already know.” In other words, the teachers should have the “ability to ask intelligent questions”.

Accordingly, Robinson (1991) states that flexibility is a key value needed by the ESP teacher, in order to change from being a general language teacher to being a specific purpose teacher, to cope with different groups of learners, and to perform different tasks.

The principle of flexibility implies an eclectic approach to the teaching methods. In this vein, Miliani (1994) stated that “...eclecticism ...leaves the door open for any stratagem or technique which could fit in a given situation. It all depends on the teachers’ know-how and his approach to language teaching”.

As a conclusion the ESP teachers should implement different teaching methods, techniques and materials in order to reach the learners required competence.

5.5 Assessment /Evaluation

Assessment and course evaluation are two important stages in ESP teaching process. Hypothetically, an ESP course is supposed to be successful; it is set up to fulfil particular learners’ needs and enable them perform specific things with language.

Normally, ESP course has specified objectives, which have to be assessed and measured in terms of how well these objectives have been provided and served. Targeting at helping the ESP practitioners and achieving these stages Hutchinson & Waters (1987) propose a complementary procedure based on two levels:

Learner Assessment:

This procedure main task is to measure the learners’ performance and level of proficiency, in other words what they actually know in terms of language knowledge at this level of the course achievement. Assessment, also elicits learners’ linguistic problems and difficulties, and sets other views for pedagogical solutions in the next courses.

Course Evaluation:

ESP course itself needs to be evaluated, whether the sets of objectives designed were achieved or not, to reach the course aims.

Both learner assessment and course evaluation facilitate and help providing the teacher with feedback on the efficiency of the course, the teaching methods and materials, and the improvement of the necessary revisions in the ESP course design.

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