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## ADAPTATION AND PRODUCTION AS KEY FACTORS FOR ESP COURSE DESIGN IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

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*The article deals with ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses, as one of the predominant and progressive language teaching approaches in tertiary education as it is focused on the specific and profession-related needs of students. The paper studies the role of needs analysis and material selection, later adaptation according to particular specialty student requirements, changes of business environment and demands for English language skills. The implication of the study results is that ESP courses should be more attuned to students' needs targeting productive skills, specialized vocabulary and language functions.*

**Keywords:** *ESP course; tailor-made materials; needs analysis; material adaptation.*

## АДАПТАЦИЯ И РАЗВИТИЕ КАК ОСНОВНЫЕ ФАКТОРЫ ДЛЯ СОЗДАНИЯ АСЦ КУРСОВ В ВЫСШЕМ ОБРАЗОВАНИИ

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*В статье рассматриваются АСЦ курсы (английский для специальных целей), которые являются более доминирующими и прогрессивными подходами преподавания языка в системе высшего образования. АСЦ курсы ориентированы на конкретные профессии и связаны с языковыми потребностями студентов. В статье обсуждаются как роль анализа потребностей и выбора материалов, так и адаптация материалов в соответствии с конкретными требованиями специальностей и изменениями бизнес-среды.*

*Импликация результатов исследования заключается в том, что АСЦ курсы должны быть более приспособленными к потребностям учащихся, ориентированы на производственные навыки, словарный запас и специализированные функции языка.*

**Ключевые слова:** АСЦ курс; индивидуальные материалы; анализ потребностей; адаптация материала.

### **Introduction**

A noticeable trend in English language teaching and learning is the paramount importance of English for Specific Purposes in tertiary education. This tendency is driven by some reasons: first, learners' needs of language skills in a particular domain, occupation or vocation in order to perform particular job-related functions, second, the globalized world and international trade have set demands for peculiar language skills. 'Learners know specifically why they are learning a language and it is the awareness of the need that ESP distinguishes for' [1, p. 5].

As ESP approach is presumably student-centered, then learners' needs analysis is a key point in the course designing. Their needs are undergoing a constant change and improvement due to various socio-economic situations in the labour market and global networking.

### **Specifications of ESP courses**

Accordingly, ESP courses are distinguished by three common features: *authentic material*, *purpose-related orientation* and *self-direction*.

By authenticity is meant genuine communication through authentic texts or videos which are produced by real speakers or writers for a real audience aiming to convey a real message [2, p. 13]. Authentic materials are widely used by ESP course designers and have proved to be effective teaching resources as they enable learners to face the professional language they will deal with in the real labour world, thus react to it with confidence and competence. Under current education regulations students in tertiary education have enough level of language proficiency to deal with the complexity and authenticity of non-adapted materials which increase the learners' motivation and lesson engagement.

Purpose-related orientation is another key feature of ESP courses and it refers to simulation of communicative tasks. These tasks are required for further real job-related settings, such as simulation of a conference, negotiation, etc.

And by self-direction is meant turning learners into users which is a crucial aspect for the effectiveness and success of ESP courses. Self-direction occurs when learners have a certain degree of freedom and autonomy to make decisions on what, when and how to learn. This feature is aligned with autonomous learning approach where there exists high level rapport between learners and teachers, and learners take control over their learning.

Overall, ESP courses encompass the following key stages: needs analysis, course design (syllabus), materials selection (adaptation and production), course delivery, learning and assessment.

Needs analysis as a preliminary stage for any ESP course plays undoubtedly crucial role, as it helps to establish learners' purposes, present language level, feasible knowledge gaps and desired outcomes. And Strevens agrees 'ESP instruction is derived to meet learners' needs' [3].

Hereafter, it is due to mention that some scholars distinguish objective/perceived or subjective/felt needs. Objective needs refer to all factual information about the learners: language proficiency, language difficulties and the use of language in authentic situations. Subjective needs include cognitive and affective needs of learners: confidence, attitudes and expectations. Consequently, a careful and extensive needs analysis is the cornerstone of ESP course design as it helps to reveal learners' necessities, establish knowledge gaps and expectations, i.e. it defines what to teach and how to teach, which are essential for setting the goals or objectives of ESP courses. The further help of needs analysis is the correct choice of materials to be taught.

There may be diverse ways of carrying on needs analysis, like interviews, questionnaires, observations, pro-forma tests, work shadowing, discussions, telephone conversations, etc. What refers to tertiary education, learners' needs are identified and formulated by the institution faculty relevant to their study area, specialization and likely language proficiency, later turning them into syllabus.

Another key factor of ESP course design is the selection and evaluation of teaching and learning materials, which vary from handy textbooks, supplementary materials, online resources to tailor-made institutional ones. The choice of teaching materials is of paramount importance as they should suit the professional target needs of learners, be appropriate for present labour world, and closely related to learners' needs and motivation. 'Materials provide a stimulus to learning. Good materials do not teach: they encourage learners to learn' [1, p. 14].

Therefore, ESP materials undergo ongoing evaluation: *pre-use*, when the future and potential performance of the textbook is examined; *in-use*; assessing the currently used text-book; *post-use*; which enables to improve or replace the given teaching materials. In our case, in tertiary education, the evaluation process is a collaborative activity where the feedback of learners and their tangible progress is considered, and the evaluation of the faculty, who are responsible for the syllabus design and course delivery. Accordingly, Basturkmen H. outlines four areas of curriculum development – focusing on the course, determining the course content, developing materials, and evaluating courses and materials [4, p. 96].

It is due to point out that the selection, adaptation or production of ESP materials should above all depend on learners needs in relation to their future professions, should include relevant topics, tasks and approaches that practice the target skills area. The impact of selected materials on the entire ESP course is demonstrated in three levels by Ellis and Johnson [5, p. 115]:

- It determines the type of language the learners will be exposed to, and what they will learn in terms of vocabulary, structures and functions;
- It has implications for methods and techniques of teaching and learning;
- It is an essential component for being relevant and motivating.

The above mentioned ideas considering ESP materials selection, adaptation or production, and ongoing evaluation can be summarized in the following way:

- Relevant: materials should be adequate and appropriate for learners' age, language level, study area and future vocation.
- Diverse: they should include a range of activities and teaching techniques focused on specific language structures, vocabulary, and skills.
- Acceptable: they should address cultural diversity and nurture respect and tolerance towards other cultures since learners can act as intercultural speakers.
- Motivating: they should cover authentic, challenging and motivating content in order to increase students' interest, effectiveness and commitment to learn.

In this article it is made an attempt to highlight mostly the benefits and drawbacks of the institutionally derived or teacher derived materials for tertiary education as currently we witness a permanent surge in the quantity of in-company produced teaching materials. Relying on our own experience and survey carried on among third grade students a number of advantages can be stated:

- Adequacy: materials can be produced which are directly relevant to both students' and institutional needs, thus reflecting local content, issues and concerns;
- Expertise: material development can give the teaching board better understanding of the characteristics of effective materials and increase their expertise, contribution and confidence.
- Reputation: institutionally published teaching resources can foster the reputation and image of the higher educational institute by showing its competitive edge in providing its students with in-company produced materials.
- Adjustability: materials developed by the institution faculty can be revised, adapted or updated as needed, thus giving them greater flexibility than external published course books.

However, there are some potential drawbacks in the exploitation of teacher-derived materials:

- Cost and quality: high-quality materials prove to be time-consuming and demand greater resources to be allocated. Moreover, teacher-tailored materials can lack proper design and content to meet the needs of both international and domestic students.

- Training: it is of utmost importance to train and prepare teachers for producing high-quality and specialized materials.

In most situations commercial materials form the basis of the curriculum in ESP programs supplemented by teacher-tailored ones which better reflect the needs of the specific learning context.

### Conclusions

An overview of ESP courses in tertiary education reveals the importance of needs analysis, the careful selection and adaptation of teaching materials which determine the overall adequacy and significance of the course design, its implementation and direct relation to the students' needs. In most cases ESP courses are taught and learned with high motivation because students regard these language skills as important means of communication for their studies and professional life.

The teaching materials, either commercially published ones or institutionally produced should mostly satisfy the students' needs for professional English, thus being authentic, interesting, various, and providing helpful and relevant specialty data. It is worth quoting here that 'a key issue when considering the choice of course book or any material is *authenticity*' [6, p. 168].

The ESP courses should foster the use and development of functional language and productive skills. Therefore, the teaching resources after adaptation or reproduction should include tasks, techniques and content which, first, meet the requirements of learners, and secondly, are beneficial for learners in their studies and future profession.

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