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**Developing an ESP Course for Students of Applied Sciences
in Pakistan**

Muhammad Nawaz, Ph.D. Candidate

Abstract

This paper describes a proposed course of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for students of BS in Applied Sciences. In so doing, the study is informed by various previous models and approaches to ESP course design. Moreover, data from former Applied Science students, who have completed their studies and are presently employed in various organizations, has also been used to validate the proposed course.

Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) refers to the courses which meet the specific needs of the students in their academic and professional settings. Chen (2006) states that ESP includes various types of courses like, English for Engineers, English for Doctors, English for Lawyers, English for Businessman, English for Academic purposes and English for Technical Purposes etc. The aim of such types of courses is to prepare the learners to handle any situation in specific context. So, it is imperative for the syllabus designers to design such a course which helps the students in their academic and real life. In addition, need analysis in the relevant field can play a vital role to make the programme more successful.

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Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to propose an ESP course which meets the needs of Applied Sciences students in their educational and occupational settings.

Review of Related Literature:

Sysoyev (2000) prepared an ESP course in Russian which was based on the need analysis of the students. Further, in this study, he described the objectives of the course, the contents of the course, the materials of the course and evaluated the course. He suggested that development of the course should be viewed as an ongoing process to meet the needs of the learners.

Flowerdew (2005) designed a course for English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) that integrated the traditional and critical approaches to syllabus design. The writer posited that the synthesis of different approaches enabled the designer to develop a model keeping in view the students' needs in terms of the demands of the occupation.

Hassan (2005) devised an ESP course for engineers. The researcher highlighted that ESP techniques should be integral part of engineers' syllabus. He concluded that technological need be included in basic communication training to engineers for their preparation to be effective for industry.

Kantonidou (2008) conducted the research on ESP for electrical engineering curricula. He highlighted that theoretical evidence should be reconciled with hard facts through the cooperation of all the stakeholders. Furthermore, he recommended that if ESP students will not be provided the opportunities, it can de-motivate the students.

Research

The study draws upon the experiences of the former BS students, who are presently employed in various organizations. Twenty former students, who were easily accessible, were taken as the sample for the study. The researcher designed and conducted semi-structured interviews with the former students. They were asked questions keeping in view the objective of the course, content and material development, emphasis on different language skills and the needs of their profession.

Data Analysis

Data collected through semi-structured interviews from the former students for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) were analyzed under various themes.

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Results and Discussion

Formulation of Objectives

At the end of the ESP course, the students will be able to apply communication skills effectively in both academic and professional settings.

Specific Language Skills Integration

The ESP course, which is based on four language skills, i.e., reading, writing, listening and speaking, should be developed in such a way as to develop all the skills. The well trained teachers and well planned contents of the course can play a positive role in enhancing the skills of the students.

The data collected from the former students indicated that all the four skills are very important in vocation. However, the utmost need of the former students is speaking, as they reported that, right from the beginning of the profession, the candidate needs to respond in English to the interviewers before entering the profession. In addition to that, the candidate is also required to give presentations before the panel of the interviewers. At the work place, within the organization and outside the organization, in order to enhance the business relationship, one needs to have a reasonable command over speaking skills. To make the learners proficient in speaking skills, there should be more practical tasks in the classroom. The tasks should be selected from real life situations.

Writing should be practised in the classroom. Former Students' interviews reveal that they need to write reports, letters, documents, explanation of the assigned tasks, assignments, application and projects. Hence, there is need to revise the writing portion of the existing course and to add the relevant grammar and functions based materials, keeping in view both academic and occupational settings which enable the students to write correct language.

Reading skills should be practised in the course. In the reading skills, students should be given latest topics which demand that students consult recent researches. The students should be aware of the importance of reading skills. The different practical tasks should be given to the students to develop their reading skills.

In listening skills, the former students said that watching movies has helped them in vocation. Hence, the same activities should be kept continuously in the classes which included famous and well recorded movies. In fact, listening develops the language skills of the learners with a variety of functions like accent, proper use of vocabulary, logical order in the dialogues, understanding the dialogue, conversations, instructions, and comments on an issue. It helps the learners in academic and professional fields.

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Material Development

In speaking skills, the course should cover: presentations, interaction with teachers, role plays, dialogues, interviews, telephone conversation, seeing the boss, going to market, conversation between two engineers on an issue occurring at the work place, meeting with the Dean, requesting, complaining, greeting, apologizing, creating real or imaginary situation, reflection of situation outside the classroom, meetings, inviting, leading a team or a group.

In writing skills, the students would be enabled to have a command of the following: parts of speech, sentence structure, vocabulary in technical context, usage, narrations and voices, simple, compound and complex sentences, paragraph writing, precise writing, dialogue writing, essay writing, speech and debate writing, assignments writing, writing complaints, requests, acceptance and rejections of order, creating real or imaginary problems and providing solutions, writing business letters, memorandum, circular, notification, minutes, business card, an invitation letter, report, especially the technical report, methods of writing a research paper and dissertation, analysis reports and documentation which need proper vocabulary, formatting and proper organization in writing skills.

In reading skills, they need the specific and to-the-point materials, which is graded, i.e., from simple to complex exercises, latest articles, journals with solid information, and reading material relevant to their field. Reading newspapers to extract specific information, reading technical information in the newspapers, practice of skimming and scanning, reading for understanding the actual message of the writer, reading for main ideas, reading for inferences, reading articles for general or specific information, reading comprehensions to understand the contextual meaning of a text and answering multiple questions should be part of the reading skills. Reading the reports, menu, complaints, formal letters, new discovery reports, and analysis reports, etc., should also be included in ESP course.

The course should include listening comprehensions based on questions and exercises, listening dialogues and instructions specifically in technical disciplines, listening to lectures in the students' areas of interest, listening in office which may include bulletin, comments, order, and new policy etc., listening in meeting, demonstrations, telephone conversations, and lectures about the newly launched machinery, etc. In listening skills, students require different well recorded movies and cassettes which provide opportunity to the students to listen to different characters in different accent. On the whole, in ESP course, well planned outline will be provided which will comprise of authentic materials in the field of four skills.

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Methodology

In ESP courses, students should be given a chance for practical tasks in the classroom which are based on activities taken from real life-situations. In this case, the teachers' training is very important in which they may be trained to apply a teaching method as needed. During teaching, the teachers should keep in mind the objectives of the course which has dual purposes, enabling the students to become proficient academically and professionally. The students should be taught with the help of modern equipments which may motivate them for further research. The students should be given more and more exercises which may develop the students' skills. The teachers should use different methods which may enable the students to work independently. Different techniques should be applied which may motivate the students for team work. The teachers' attitude towards students should be flexible which may facilitate them for bold interaction.

Formative Evaluation of the Course

Evaluation is an integral part of the development of any model of a course which comes after the implementation stage of the course. The formative evaluation, in fact, decides whether the course fulfils the needs of the students and provides the updated materials to them or not.

To make the ESP course up-to-date, all the stakeholders, namely, the students, teachers, departments and the administration should play a vital role by participating in formative evaluation. The proposed model should be evaluated twice in a semester in order to measure the effectiveness of the model and if any modifications required it must be adopted accordingly. Equal opportunity should be provided to each of the stakeholder. At the end of the semester, a comprehensive test should be given to the students with the aim of assessing their overall performance. This would also help change and improve the ESP course.

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Colophon:

This paper is a part of an M.Phil. thesis “Evaluation of Functional English Courses for BS Programme” in progress at the Faculty of Applied Sciences, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan.

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