ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP) AND SYLLABUS DESIGN

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Abstract

This research has discussed the origins of ESP, addressed key notions about ESP and examined issues in ESP syllabus design. The content of the paper was determined by a need identified based on my experience as an ESL instructor designing and delivering the content-based language program - Language Preparation for the Cadets and Employment in the Iraqi College of Police . These issues, where possible, have been supported by current and pertinent academic literature. It is my sincerest hope that these observations will lend insight into the challenges facing the ESL instructor acting as ESP syllabus developer.

Introduction

This research presents a theoretical overview of the important notion of English for Special Purposes (ESP) as a learner-centered approach by defining it first. Then, the survey describes ESP's origins, key notions and characteristics, and relatable types. This description is followed by a discussion of the characteristics of ESP courses, their benefits, and procedural parameters. Next, the research discusses the notion and types of needs analysis in relation to ESP and syllabus design. The research then describes the requirements of courses designed in accordance with the various provisions of ESP, and offers a survey of the related previous studies in Iraq, and offers a survey of the related studies in Iraq.

ESP: Definition

By the term **E**nglish for **S**pecific (or Special, Specified, Specifiable) **P**urposes is meant that type of language learning which has its focus on all aspects of language pertaining to a particular field of human activity (Wright, 1992: 3). In other words, it is a way of teaching/learning English for specialized

subjects with some specific vocational and educational purposes in mind. In ESP syllabus, the teaching content is geared to the special language 'repertoire' pertaining to the specialized aims that are required of the learners.

ESP is a relatively new discipline within Applied Linguistics that bids a new **learner-centered approach** to English language teaching whose methodology is based on the specific needs of the learner. Kennedy and Bolitho (1984: 3) point out that ESP is based on 'an investigation of the purposes of the learner and the set of communicative needs arising from these purposes'.

ESP is contrasted with EGP, or **E**nglish for **G**eneral **P**urposes. If English is taught as a second language along with other subjects for educational purposes as some useful subject to the learners in the future, then this is EGP. In this type of learning, there is generally no immediate requirement for the learners to use English for any real communicative purposes. In contrast, if English is taught for specialized learners with some specific vocational and educational purpose in mind, then this is ESP. ESP is learning and learner oriented, with a conception and preference for communicative competence.

Defined to meet the specific needs of the learners, ESP makes use of methodology and the activities of the discipline it serves by focusing on the language appropriate to these activities. As a specific approach to language teaching, ESP requires that all decisions as to content and method be based on the learner's reason for learning (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 19).

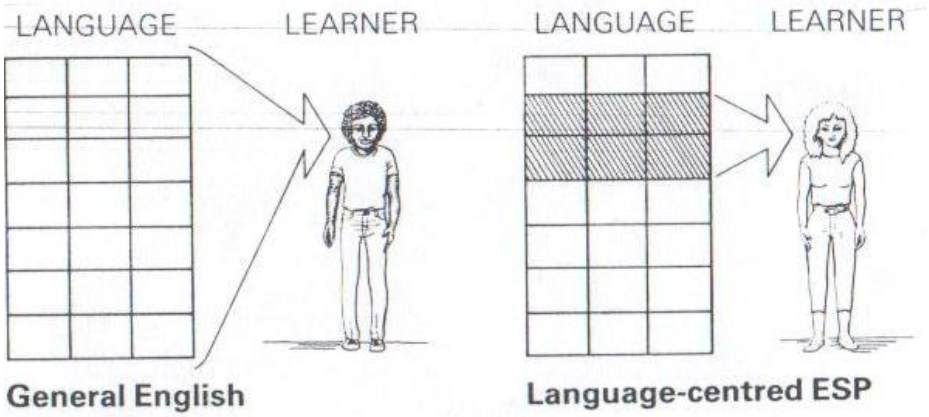


Figure 18: The learner-restricted syllabus

The Meaning of the Word 'Special ' in ESP

One simple clarification requires to be made here about the two entirely different notions of **special language** and **specialized aim**. It has been noted that confusion arises over these two notions. Mackay and Mountford (1978) explain the idea of a special language in the following manner:

> The only practical way in which we can understand the notion of special language is as a restricted repertoire of words and expressions selected from the whole language because that restricted repertoire covers every requirement within a well-defined context, task, or vocation (ibid. 4).

In order to rule out the unintended interpretation of the term 'special' to mean 'unique', many researchers prefer to replace it with the term 'specific' or 'specifiable'. The implication is that the terms 'special', 'specific', or 'specifiable' are not intended to qualify the language, but to highlight the purpose of studying it. It specifies the focus on certain features of the language that are immediately associated with the restricted use of the target language which is required by the learner in order to achieve a particular purpose (Munby, 1978: 2).

As mentioned above, a specialized aim refers to the purpose for which learners learn a language, not the nature of the language they learn. Consequently, the focus of the word **special** in ESP ought to be on the purpose for which learners learn and not on the specific jargon or registers they learn.

The notion of a language with singular characteristics began to take root in the sixties and the early seventies, being associated with the pioneering research of Halliday, MacIntosh and Strevens (1964). Then, many distinguished linguists subscribed to the approach above, among them Widdowson (1983: 10) who states that "ESP is simply a matter of describing a particular area of language and then using this description as a course specification to impart to learners the necessary restricted competence with this particular area". Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 19) second this by insisting that ESP must be seen as an approach, not a product.

ESP as a Learner-Centered Approach

> It is obvious from above that ESP is a new, learner-centered approach. This notion requires further specification, at least in its general sense. A learner-centered approach to learning and teaching sees learning as the active construction of meaning, and teaching as the act of guiding, scaffolding and facilitating learning. This approach considers knowledge as being an ever-changing process, which is built upon the learners' prior experience (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 59f).

A learner-centered approach provides opportunities for students to practice critical and creative thinking, proble m solving, and decision making. This involves recall, application, analysis, synthesis, prediction and evaluation; all of which contribute to the development and enhancement of conceptual understandings. A learner-centered approach also encourages students to demonstrate ownership of their ideas and to reflect on and monitor their thinking as they make decisions and take action.

> In the key learning area of EFL, learning experiences should be adjusted as required to meet the abilities, needs, and interests of individuals and groups of students. This may mean providing different amounts of time, space or materials, and offering a range of levels and types of support to students. Students may engage in experiences in different ways, or make choices from a range of options so that learning is relevant and meaningful. This approach can involve both students and teachers in the design of learning and assessment opportunities, and requires negotiation and flexibility (Wajnryb, 1992: 124).

> It has been stated that ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to syllabus content and method are based on the learners' reasons for learning. Though the needs for using English are varied, all learners need to use a specific area of the English language in the shortest term possible. After identifying a target situation - the need for a specific segment at school - the learners' needs have to be identified; and their current situation and

the target situation must also be analyzed. Additionally, learners' potentials require to be identified, as well as the skills and knowledge needed to attain the target situation without losing sight of such constraints as aptitude, time, and technical resources. With these data in mind, a course is designed and the materials are then chosen and organized. Finally, evaluation is a very important tool so that learning strategies can be redefined and results improved.

The Origins of ESP

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 5), there are three common reasons to the emergence of all ESP: the demands of New World, a revolution in linguistics, and focus on the learner. The co-authors note that two key historical periods breathed life into ESP. First, the end of the Second World War brought with it an "age of enormous and unprecedented expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale for various reasons, most notably the economic power of the United States in the post-war world, the role [of international language] fell to English" (ibid. 6). Second, the Oil Crisis of the early 1970s resulted in Western money and knowledge flowing into the oil-rich countries. The language of this knowledge became English.

The general effect of all this development was to exert pressure on the language teaching profession to deliver the required goods. Whereas English had previously decided its own destiny, it now became subject to the wishes, needs and demands of people other than language teachers (ibid. 7) .

> The other key reason cited as having a tremendous impact on the emergence of ESP was a revolution in linguistics. Whereas traditional linguists set out to describe the features of language, revolutionary pioneers in linguistics began to focus on the ways in which language is used in real communication. One significant discovery was in the ways that spoken and written English vary. In other words, given the particular context in which English is used, the variant of English will change. This idea was taken one step farther. If language in different situations varies, then tailoring language instruction to meet the needs of learners in specific contexts is also possible. Hence, in the late 1960s and the early 1970s there were many attempts to

describe English for Science and Technology (EST). Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Swales (1980), and Selinker and Tarone (1981) are identified among the few of the prominent descriptive EST pioneers.

The final reason Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 18-9) cite as having influenced the emergence of ESP is related to the psychology of learning. Rather than simply focusing upon the method of language delivery, more attention was given to the ways in which learners acquire language and the differences in the ways language is acquired. Learners were seen to employ different learning strategies, use different skills, enter with different learning schemata, and be motivated by different needs and interests. Therefore, focus on the learners' needs became equally paramount as the methods employed to disseminate linguistic knowledge. Designing specific courses to better meet these individual needs was a natural extension of this thinking. To this day, the catchword in ESL circles is both **learner-centered** and **learning-centered**. In this way, teachers should follow student's target situation needs and learning needs by focusing on the systems, procedures, and products that are at the heart of what the students do in English and to be able to deduce from this knowledge the language needs of each type of learners (Ellis and Johnson, 1994: 26).

The discussion above is meant to clarify the fact that ESP should not be considered as a product of language analysis; rather, it should be seen as an approximation to meet the needs of the learners. In this respect, Widdowson (1983: 10) affirms that 'ESP is simply of matter of describing a particular area of language and then using this description as a course specification to impart to learners the necessary restricted competence with this particular area'.

Key Notions of ESP

The following sections present the three key issues of: i) the distinction between the absolute and variable characteristics of ESP, ii) types of ESP, and iii) the characteristics of ESP courses. Then the discussion describes the benefits of ESP courses.

Types of ESP

Different taxonomies of ESP are offered by different educationalists. For example, David Carver (1983: 20f) identifies three types of ESP :

1. English as a restricted language;
2. English for academic and occupational purposes;
3. English with specific topics .

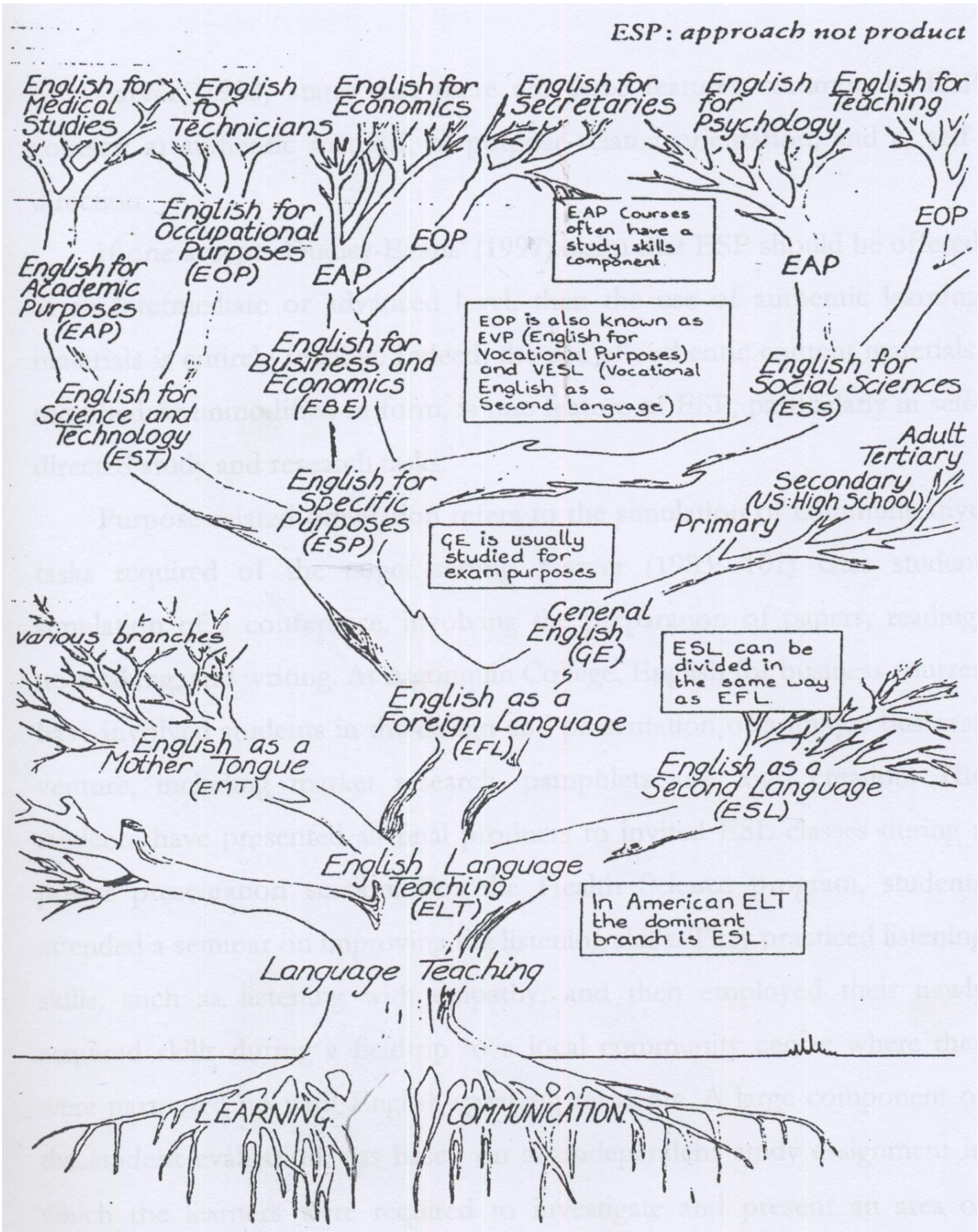
The language used by air traffic controllers or by waiters are examples of English as a restricted language. Mackay and Mountford (1978: 4-5) clearly illustrate the difference between restricted language and language with this statement:

> … The language of international air-traffic control could be regarded as 'special', in the sense that the repertoire required by the controller is strictly limited and can be accurately determined situationally, as might be the linguistic needs of a dining-room waiter or air-hostess. However, such restricted repertoires are not languages, just as a tourist phrase book is not grammar. Knowing a restricted 'language' would not allow the speaker to communicate effectively in novel situation, or in contexts outside the vocational environment. (ibid.)

The second type of ESP identified by Carver (1983) is English for Academic and Occupational Purposes. In the 'Tree of ELT' (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), ESP is broken down into three branches: a) English for Science and Technology (EST), b) English for Business and Economics (EBE), and c) English for Social Studies (ESS) (See figure 1 on page sixteen). Each of these subject areas is further divided into two branches: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). An example of EOP for the EST branch is 'English for Technicians' whereas an example of EAP for the EST branch is 'English for Medical Studies'.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) note that there is not a clear-cut distinction between EAP and EOP since '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' (ibid. 16). Perhaps this explains Carver's rationale for categorizing EAP and EOP under the same type of ESP. It appears that Carver is implying that the end purpose of both EAP and EOP are one in the same: employment. However, despite the end purpose being identical, the means taken to achieve the end is very different indeed. One can contend that EAP and EOP are different in terms of focus on Cummins' (1979) notions of cognitive academic proficiency versus basic interpersonal skills (See 2.4.2).

The third and final type of ESP identified by Carver (1983) is English with specific topics. Carver notes that it is only here where emphasis shifts from purpose to topic. This type of ESP is uniquely concerned with anticipated future English needs of, for example, scientists requiring English for postgraduate reading studies, attending conferences or working in foreign institutions. However, one can argue that this is not a separate type of ESP. Rather it is an integral component of ESP courses or programs which focus on situational language. This situational language has been determined based on the interpretation of results from needs analysis of authentic language used in target workplace settings.


ESP: approach not product
English for Medical Studies
English for Technicians
English for Occupational Purposes (EOP)
English for Academic Purposes (EAP)
English for Science and Technology (EST)
English for Economics
English for Secretaries
EOP
EAP
English for Business and Economics (EBE)
EAP Courses often have a study skills component
EOP is also known as EVP (English for Vocational Purposes) and VESL (Vocational English as a Second Language)
English for Psychology
English for Teaching
EOP
EAP
English for Social Sciences (ESS)
English for Specific Purposes (ESP)
Adult
Tertiary
Secondary (US: High School)
Primary
GE is usually studied for exam purposes
General English (GE)
various branches
English as a Mother Tongue (EMT)
English as a Foreign Language (EFL)
ESL can be divided in the same way as EFL
English as a Second Language (ESL)
English Language Teaching (ELT)
In American ELT the dominant branch is ESL
Language Teaching
LEARNING
COMMUNICATION

Is ESP different to General English?

If we agree with this definition,, we begin to see how broad ESP really is. In fact, one may ask 'What is the difference between the ESP and General English approach?' Hutchinson et al. (1987:53) answer this quite simply, "in theory nothing, in practice a great deal". When their book was written, of course, the last statement was quite true. At the time, teachers of General English courses, while acknowledging that students had a specific purpose for studying English, would rarely conduct a needs analysis to find out what was necessary to actually achieve it. Teachers nowadays, however, are much more aware of the importance of needs analysis, and certainly materials writers think very carefully about the goals of learners at all stages of materials production. Perhaps this demonstrates the influence that the ESP approach has had on English teaching in general. Clearly the line between where General English courses stop and ESP courses start has become very vague indeed.

Rather ironically, while many General English teachers can be described as using an ESP approach, basing their syllabi on a learner needs analysis and their own specialist knowledge of using English for real communication, it is the majority of so-called ESP teachers that are using an approach furthest from that described above. Instead of conducting interviews with specialists in the field, analyzing the language that is required in the profession, or even conducting students' needs analysis, many ESP teachers have become slaves of the published textbooks available, unable to evaluate their suitability based on personal experience, and unwilling to do the necessary analysis of difficult specialist texts to verify their contents.

ESP Course Overview and Objectives:

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is known as a learner-centered approach to teaching English as a foreign or second language. It meets the needs of (mostly) adult learners who need to learn a foreign language for use in their specific fields, such as science, technology, medicine, leisure, and academic learning. This course is recommended for graduate students and foreign and second language professionals who wish to learn how to design ESP courses and programs in an area of specialization such as English for

business, for Civil Engineering, for Academic Purposes, and for health service purposes. In addition, they are introduced to ESP instructional strategies, materials adaptation and development, and evaluation.

Its objectives include:

- To develop an understanding about the factors that led to the emergence of ESP and the forces, both theoretical and applied, that have shaped its subsequent development.
- To assist students develop needs assessments and genre analyses for specific groups of learners.
- To provide guidelines to adapt or create authentic ESP materials in a chosen professional or occupational area and to critically evaluate currently available materials, including technology-based ones.
- To become knowledgeable about assessment procedures appropriate for ESP and apply this knowledge in developing course and lesson evaluation plans in their professional or occupational area.
- To assist students in preparing a syllabus, lesson and assessment plan based upon their needs assessments and genre analyses.

Characteristics of ESP Courses

Carver (1983) states that there are three features common to ESP courses: a) authentic material, b) purpose-related orientation, and c) self-direction.

If one accepts Dudley-Evans' (1997) claim that ESP should be offered at an intermediate or advanced level, then the use of authentic learning materials is entirely feasible. Indeed, the use of authentic content materials, modified or unmodified in form, is one feature of ESP, particularly in self-directed study and research tasks.

Purpose-related orientation refers to the simulation of communicative tasks required of the target setting. Carver (1983: 101) cites student simulation of a conference, involving the preparation of papers, reading, note taking, and writing. At Algonquin College, English for business courses have involved students in the design and presentation of a unique business venture, including market research, pamphlets and logo creation. The students have presented all final products to invited ESL classes during a poster presentation session. For

the Health Science program, students attended a seminar on improving the listening skills. They practiced listening skills, such as listening with empathy, and then employed their newly acquired skills during a fieldtrip to a local community centre where they were partnered up with English-speaking residents. A large component of the student evaluation was based on an independent study assignment in which the learners were required to investigate and present an area of interest. The students were encouraged to conduct research using a variety of different resources, including the Internet.

Finally, self-direction is characteristic of ESP courses in that the "*... point of including self-direction ... is that ESP is concerned with turning learners into users*" (Carver, 1983: 134). In order for self-direction to occur, the learners must have a certain degree of freedom to decide when, what, and how they will study. Carver (1983: ibid.) also adds that there must be a systematic attempt by teachers to teach the learners how to learn by teaching them about learning strategies. As for the question of whether or not it is necessary to teach high-ability learners - such as those enrolled in the health science program - about learning strategies, the answer is not. Rather, what is essential for these learners is learning how to access information in a new culture.

Benefits of ESP

On the basis of what has been said before, one is now in a position to state the benefits of ESP. Basically; these are threefold in that they help achieve speed, efficiency, and effectiveness in learning. As far as **learning speed** is concerned, ESP results in faster acquisition of required linguistic items. This is because it follows the pattern of the native speakers' acquisition of language for specific purposes, in which speakers learn what they need, when they need it, in authentic, content-based contexts. ESP does not only follow this pattern, but also improves upon it by providing an opportunity to learn in an accelerated, intensive context (Wright, 1992: 5).

As for **learning efficiency**, on an ESP course, the trainees make the maximal use of their learning resources, all of which are brought to bear on acquiring specific, pre-identified linguistic items and skills. Obviously, the needs analysis is of vital importance here since it enables trainers to determine the specific requirements of trainees (ibid.).

Thirdly, there is **learning effectiveness**. On completion of an ESP course, the trainees are ready to use language appropriately and correctly in job related tasks, which have been identified prior to the course by means of a needs analysis. Accordingly, English becomes usable immediately in the employment context. In addition, the trainees are prepared for further job-related training in English. Such preparation will result in greater academic performance since no time is wasted in acquiring the necessary language (ibid.).

The benefits of ESP can be brought out further by contrasting ESP courses with General English courses. Such courses deal with many different topics, necessarily at a superficial level. In addition, they deal with many different skills, usually attempting to give equal treatment to each.

Due to the general nature of these courses, they can be extremely useful, which is why they comprise the vast majority of English courses. However, for students with specific learning needs, they are seriously lacking because their scope is too wide. The trainees learn many irrelevant things. Relevant material, if it is included at all, is treated in insufficient depth. These deficiencies cause the acquisition of the required linguistic items to be slow and minimal, and upon the completion of the course, the trainees are not prepared to function effectively in the required employment contexts.

Needs Analysis

> Needs analysis involves the assessment of the needs for which a learner or group of learners may require language. As a research area, it started in the early 1970s along with the development of the communicative approach, and has gone through substantial developments in the 1970s and 1980s owing much to the work done by Richterich (1972) and Munby (1978). Proponents of the communicative approach argued that the selection of instructional materials should be based on a systematic analysis of the learners' needs for the target language.

All authors seem to agree that it is essential to distinguish between needs, wants and lacks. 'Needs are those skills which a learner perceives as being relevant to him; wants are a subset of needs, those which a learner puts at a high priority given the time available; and the lack is the difference a learner

perceives between his present competence in a particular skill and the competence he wishes to achieve' (Dickinson, 1991: 91).

Some authors distinguish between the terms **needs analysis** and **needs assessment** - which are often used interchangeably - claiming that 'assessment involves obtaining data, whereas analysis involves assigning value to those data' (Graves, 1996: 12).

The rationale behind needs analysis is pretty straightforward: people learn a foreign language for different purposes and need it to do different things. The type of language varies along with the learners' needs for the language. So, to design an effective language course, it is critical to know why a learner decides to study a second language and under what circumstances she or he is going to use it.

Needs analysis involves "compiling information both on the individual or groups of individuals who are to learn a language and on the use which they are expected to make of it when they have learned it" (Richterich, 1983: 2). A variety of data collecting methods are used in needs analysis such as questionnaires, interviews, and observations.

Needs Analysis: Munby's Model (1978)

Initial "objective" needs analyses focused on identifying learners' real world communicative requirements so that courses could be designed reflecting these and preparing users for their intended use of the target language (TL). Munby's model (1978) is the most well-known of this type to the effect that it has become "an unavoidable reference point"(Tudor, 1996: 66). It contained nine components, relating to the learners' communicative requirements (participant, purposive domain, setting, interaction, instrumentality, dialect, target level, communicative event, and communicative key). A simplified view of the relevant part of the model is shown in Figure 2.

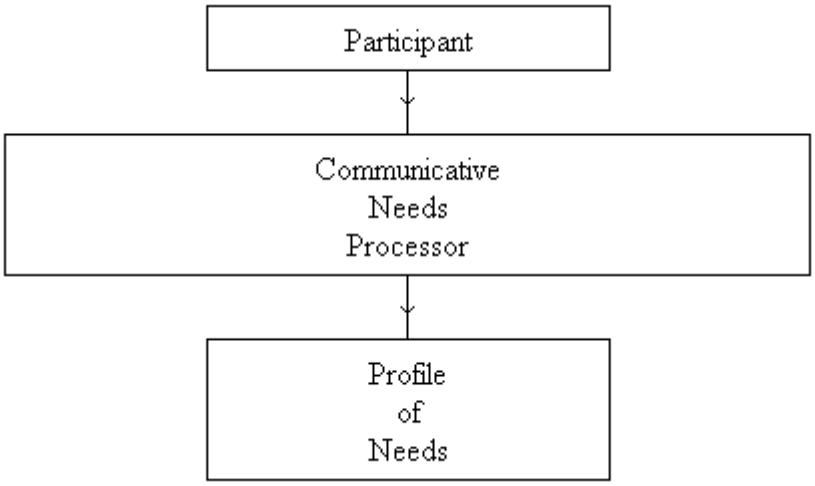


Figure *3: Munby's Model of Needs Analysis (1978)*

At the heart of the model is the Communicative Needs Processor (C. N. P.). Information about the learner, the participant, is fed into the C. N. P. which consists of a number of categories. After these categories have been worked through, we finish up with a profile of needs - a description of what the learner will be expected to do with the language at the end of the course. The following are the relevant categories (Munby, 1978, 154-167):

0. Participant - the learners.

Give details of the participant's identity and language as follows:

0.1 Identity

0.1.1 Age (specify either exactly or in broad terms)

0.1.2 Sex

0.1.3 Nationality

0.1.4 Place of residence

0.2 Language

0.2.1 Mother tongue

0.2.2 Target language

0.2.3 Present level/command of the target language:

Zero/false beginner /elementary/ lower intermediate/upper intermediate /advanced

0.2.4 Other language(s) known

0.2.5 Extent of command of other languages

1. Purposive Domain - this category establishes the type of ESP, for what purpose.

1.1 ESP classification

Is the purpose for which English is required occupational or educational?

e.g. Educational: social science, communications studies.

1.1.1 If occupational, will it be pre- experience or post- experience ESP?

1.1.2 If educational, will be discipline-based or school subject ESP?

1.1.2.1 If discipline-based, will it be pre-study or in-study ESP?

1.1.2.2 If school subject, will it be independent or integrated ESP?

1.2 Occupational purpose

1.2.1 Specific occupation

State the occupation for which English is required.

1.2.2 Central duty

Identify the central duty of that occupation (if it different from 1.2.1).

1.2.3 Other duties

Identify other known duties, if any, for which English is needed.

1.2.4 Occupational classification

Using the framework provided by Munby, for more details see inventories and schedules in (Munby, 1978, 154-167),classify the occupation by matching, as appropriate, the type worker on the vertical axis with the field of work on the horizontal axis (e.g. technical officer in industry).

1.3 *Educational purposes*

1.3.1 Specific discipline

State the specific discipline or subject for which English is required.

1.3.2 Central area of study

Identify the central area of study in which the participants will be engaged.

1.3.3 Academic discipline classification

Select, as appropriate, from the following: mathematic/physical science/humanities/social science/biological science/medicine/engineering/education.

2. Setting - the time and place.

2.1 Physical setting: spatial

2.1.1 Location

2.1.1.1 Country

In which country does the participant need to use English?

2.1.1.2 Town

In which town does the participant need to use English?

2.1.1.3 En route

If English is required while en route, specify the appropriate setting:

In flight/on board ship/in train/on bus/in car.

2.1.2 Place of work (occupational)

In which occupational premise will the participant need English?

Specify, as appropriate, from the following list, supplying the item where necessary (hotel, restaurant, café, department store, shop, market, factory, workshop, power station, laboratory, company office, government office, school, university, research institute, conference room, hospital, law court, police institutions, bank….

2.1.3 Place of study and study setting

Give the name and type of the educational institution where the participant needs English and academic study setting is English required:

e.g. English University - lecture rooms, tutorials, seminars, library, laboratories, art rooms, examinations.

2.2 Physical setting: temporal

2.2.1 Point of time

Where is English required most?

2.2.2 Duration

For approximately how many hours per day/week is English required?

2.2.3 Frequency

Is English required regularly/often/occupationally/seldom?

3. Interaction - the roles in which the participants will find themselves in terms of status, age group, social relationships etc.

3.1 Position

State the participant's position (i.e. in which he enacts a particular role)

3.2 Role-set

Identify the target language role-set (i.e. the different people with whom he will interact in English, by virtue of his `position`), taking account of the physical setting, especially location and place of work/study.

3.3 Role-set identity

Identity particulars for each member/group of the target language role-set in terms of the following:

Number

Select as appropriate from: individual/small group/large group/mass

Age –group

Select as appropriate, modifying for degree or quantity if necessary, from: elderly/adult/adolescent /child/ mixed

3.3.3 Sex

State: male/female/mixed, modifying if necessary (e.g. mostly male)

Nationality

State nationality, modifying if necessary (e.g. mainly British)

3.4 Social relationships

e.g. role: student

relationships: student-student, student-lecturer/tutor/technician

4. Instrumentality

a. medium of communication.

e.g. spoken - receptive and productive

Written - receptive and productive.

b. channel of communication.

e.g. face to face, print

5. Dialect – taking account the relevant variables, what dialects of English are required by the participant?

e.g. Standard British accents and dialects.

6. Target level - level of linguistic proficiency, different skills may be different.

e.g. ELTS 7 for Law, JMB grade 3 etc.

7. Communicative event - what the learner will have to do with English.

e.g. attend lectures, take part in seminars, etc

8. Communicative key - the manner in which communication needs to be carried out.

e.g. Formal/informal plus range of attitudes.

9. Profile - what the student needs to be able to do.

> The model implies that a needs analysis should progress from an identification of learners' target language needs, to an analysis of the communicative activities they will need to perform in order to achieve those goals, and the linguistic forms by which these activities will be realized (Tudor, 1996: 72).

Needs Analysis and Syllabus Design

It has been shown that learners have their own, internal needs in addition to the external demands imposed by the teaching institutions, which complicate the issue of interrelated needs, wants and lacks. Teachers are not authorized to prolong or shorten the scheduled courses, but they can foster

their students' language skills by employing more effective techniques and encouraging learners to plan their learning by setting realistic aims.

For successful ESP learning, the incorporation of learners' future needs – what is known as 'real world' needs – and the development of learner ability to transfer language knowledge to novel situations, together with the usage of acquired skills in real life communication are considered to be vital parts of ESP syllabus. This is why needs analysis has focused for the last thirty years on learners' communicative needs. It has generally been accepted that an initial pre-course needs analysis can aim at establishing the structure and content of a language course.

On the whole, needs analysis is a complex process which is usually followed by syllabus design, selection of course materials, teaching/learning a course, and its evaluation. Learners often find it difficult to define what language needs they have and cannot distinguish between needs, wants and lacks. Although these three concepts are interrelated, it is important for teachers to be aware of their impetus on successful learning. Another stimulus for successful learning is adjusting the course to the changes in learners' needs. This implies the significance of ongoing needs analysis.

An initial pre-course needs analysis is a conventional classroom approach to start teaching a new language course to novice learners. The common word "need" describes an item or an ability which is important to a person, but which he does not have or is not very good at. In a linguistic context, different authors define the term "needs" diversely, and thus different meanings are implied. If needs are 'understood as specific requirements for the foreign language, then the vast majority of learners do not have any. They are deemed to require what the syllabus offers them, and the syllabus is likely to be closely related to the examination, which is a highly realistic "need" for the majority of learners' (Dickinson, 1991: 88).

The conceptions of "target needs" and "learning needs" have been widely used in the literature. Target needs are understood as 'what the learner needs to do in the target situation; whereas learning needs are what the learner needs to do in order to learn. The analysis of target needs involves identifying the linguistic features of the target situation or learners necessities (what is

English needed for), lacks (what learner does not know), and wants (what learner feels s/he needs) (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 55).

Obviously, the analysis of target situation needs is concerned with the important area of language use, while learning needs cover circumstances of language learning, i.e. why learners take course – optional or compulsory, what they seek to achieve, what their attitude towards the course, etc. (ibid. 62).

Contemporary attitudes to needs analysis pose the requirements that it must be 'interrelated with course design, materials, teaching/learning, assessment /evaluation' and on-going (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998: 121). Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998: 125) offer a comprehensive description of needs analysis as presented in the following areas:

A. target situation analysis & objective needs

B. wants, means, subjective needs

C. present situation analysis

D. learners' lacks

E. learning needs

F. linguistic and discourse analysis

G. what is wanted from the course

H. means analysis

According to Dudley-Evans & St. John, the interpretation of these points can be outlined as follows:

> A includes professional information about learners: what they will be using English for; B includes personal information about learners: attitude to English, previous experiences. C includes English language information about learners: their current skills and experiences in language use; D defines the gap between C and A; E includes language learning information: effective ways of learning the skills and the language; H includes

> information about the environment in which the course will be run. (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998: 125)

The main data collection methods for needs analysis are questionnaires, discussions, interviews, observations, and assessments (ibid. 132). In other words, the main sources for needs analysis are the learners themselves. However, relevant documentation and information received from colleagues are also important.

Questionnaires are thought to be the least consuming ways of collecting information, and this is why learners' needs are usually specified through questionnaires which enable researchers to determine long-term aims and short-term objectives. Questionnaires can generally be used for quantitative presentation of collected data. Small amount of data may be easily analyzed by a simple tally system, while large scale needs analysis requires statistical approach and use of computer software.

Another important aspect of needs analysis is concerned with learning styles and strategies. A learner-centered approach is considered to be a cornerstone for successful learning. The current trend in teaching is to take into account learners wants: they might want or need to carry out a variety of communicative tasks in the target language. For this reason, information on the ways in which learners prefer to learn must be obtained through the needs analysis.

Initially obtained data on needs analysis allow researchers to set course objectives and determine scientific approach to teaching. Ongoing needs analysis allows to revise objectives and to modify teaching techniques and materials. In ongoing needs analysis the conclusions drawn in the initial analysis have to be constantly checked and re-assessed (ibid. 140).

Consequently, a final evaluation allows the placing of future activities. At this stage, learners must be given feedback which is good for Public Relations and for the quantity and quality of future cooperation (ibid. 139).

ESP Syllabus Design

Generally seen as indispensable units of second language programmes, institutional curricula and syllabi can take various forms, represent various theories of learning, and be realized in various ways. Before reviewing language-syllabus design, it is necessary to address the confusion in the literature between the terms 'curriculum' and 'syllabus', since these can at times be very close in meaning, depending on the context in which they are used (Nunan, 1988: 3).

Taba (1962) makes a distinction between goals, aims and objectives. Goals are very general and broad. Aims are more specific, and are long-termed. These are what Bell (1981: 50) refers to as 'key objectives'. Conventionally, objectives are the short-to-medium-term goals that are 'critical' or have 'specific' objectives. Both aims and objectives are generally regarded as important because, without aims to provide direction, it is possible to become lost in the attempt to satisfy a range of short term objectives. Hooper (1971: 202) neatly summarizes the distinction between aims through the following analogy: 'The satisfaction of hunger may be an aim. A plate of steak might be the correlated objective'. A similar distinction is drawn by Widdowson (1983: 7) in his distinction of EGP and ESP when he contrasts them in terms of the place of aims in type of course.

ESP	specification of objectives: Equivalent to aims	**training**: development of restricted competence
EGP	specification of objectives: Leads to aims	**education**: development of general capacity

By 'objectives', Widdowson means 'the pedagogic intentions of a particular course of study to be achieved within the period of that course, which is measurable by some assessment device at the end of the course. By 'aims' he means 'the purposes to which learning will be put after the end of the course (Widdowson, 1983: 6-7).

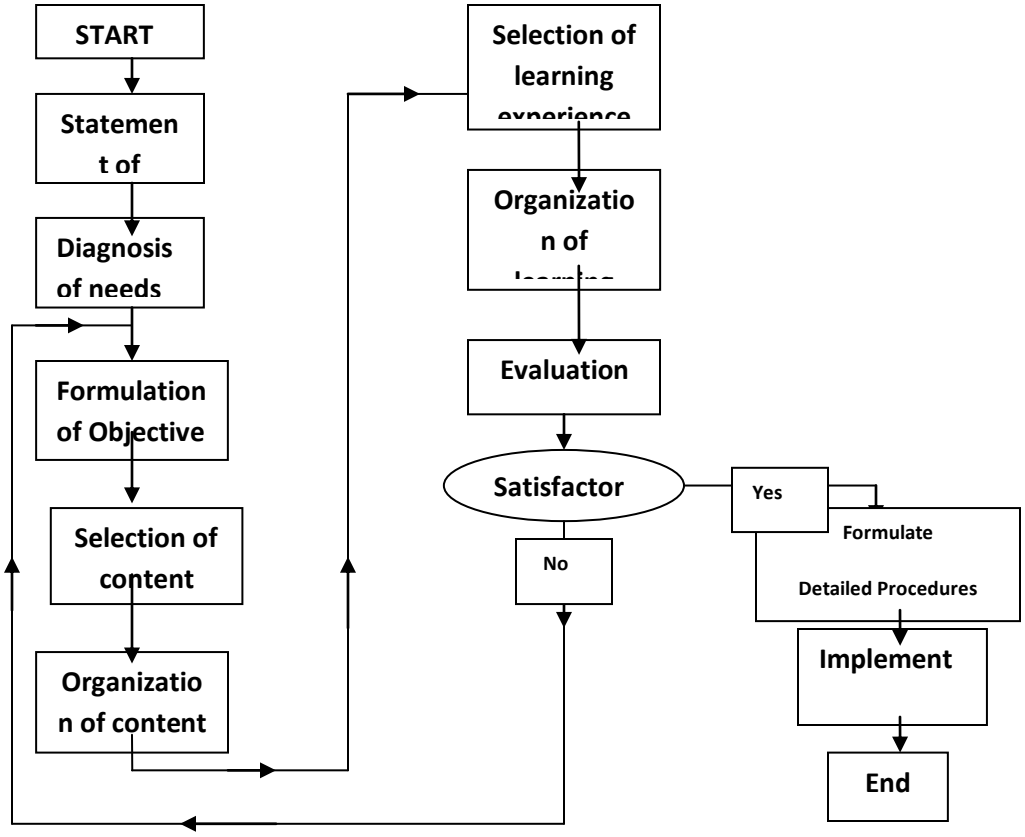


Figure 4: *Curriculum development Model,Taba (1962)*

The Terms: Curriculum and Syllabus

The concept of 'curriculum' has been important in second-language programmes throughout the history of EFL/ESL, though 'curriculum theory' as a field of educational studies is fairly new (Stern, 1983: 434). As with other generally accepted and widely-used terms (e.g. 'autonomy', 'communicative'), there is little general agreement on their actual form and function, though interpretations do fall into two main camps. In the first of these, the term 'curriculum' refers to the substance of a study-programme of an educational system. Stenhouse (1975: 17) describes curriculum as "an attempt to communicate the essential properties and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice". Allen (1984) proposes:

> ... [a] clear distinction, similar to that which has been prevalent in Europe, the curriculum being concerned with planning, implementation, evaluation, management, and administration of education programmes, and the syllabus focusing more narrowly on the selection and grading of content. (ibid. 61)

In the second (and more recent) meaning, 'curriculum' includes the entire teaching/learning process, including materials, equipment, examinations, and the training of teachers. In this view, curriculum is concerned with what can and should be taught, to whom, when, and how. Nunan (1988: 14) adds to his curriculum those elements that are designated by the term **syllabus**, along with considerations of methodology and evaluation. Similarly, White (1988: 19) sees curriculum to be concerned with objectives and methods as well as content. Such a definition involves consideration of the philosophical, social and administrative factors of a Programme.

Definitions of 'syllabus' vary between very general definitions that are similar to some of the definitions of 'curriculum' already mentioned to very specific ones. One of the first types of definitions is that of Breen's who sees in a syllabus:

> the meeting point of a perspective upon language itself, upon using language, and upon teaching and learning which is a contemporary and commonly accepted interpretation of the harmonious links between theory, research, and classroom practice. (Breen, 1987: 83)

On the opposite pole is Prabhu's more specific definition of syllabus as the "specification of what is to be learnt" (1987: 89). Likewise, for Allen, the syllabus is "that subpart of curriculum which is concerned with a specification of what units will be taught" (Allen, 1984: 61), whereas for Yalden (1987: 26), it is primarily a teacher's statement about objectives and content. Nunan (1988: 6) takes a wider, non-specific view of "a framework within which activities can be carried out: a teaching device to facilitate learning", and Prabhu (1987:

86) proposes "a form of support for the teaching activity that is planned in the classroom and a form of guidance in the construction of appropriate teaching materials". In contrast, Kumaravadivelu (1994: 72) sees the syllabus as "a pre-planned, pre-ordained, pre-sequenced inventory of linguistic specifications imposed in most cases on teachers and learners", and claims that this is a "widely recognized" perspective.

Since different educational theories and approaches differ on syllabus goals and functions, a universal definition for "syllabus" seems impractical. What can be said is that syllabi tend to be representations, reflecting the originator's ideas about language learning: every syllabus is a particular representation of knowledge and capabilities. And this representation will be shaped by the designer's views concerning the nature of language, how the language may be most appropriately taught or presented to learners, and how the language may be productively worked upon during learning (Breen, 1987a: 83). As far as the researcher is concerned, the two terms under discussion will be used interchangeably since it is always the case that when one talks about a curriculum the suggestion is that one is also talking about syllabus (Richards et al, 1992: 94).

Regardless of such diversity, there appears to be a consensus as to the general characteristics of curriculum, along the following dimensions:

1. Curriculum specifies the work of a particular department in a college or school, organized in subsections, defining the work of a particular group or class.

2. It is linked to time, specifying a starting point and an ultimate goal.

3. It specifies some kind of sequencing either in accordance with a theory of language learning, or with the structure of specifiable material relatable to language acquisition.

4. The mode of sequencing above is constrained by administrative needs such as materials.

1. As a document of administrative convenience, it is both negotiable and adjustable.

2. It can only specify what is taught, rather than organizing what is learnt.
3. As a public document, it is an expression of accountability (Brumfit, 1984 cited in White, 1988: 3).

Breen sees every syllabus to be subject to six universal requirements, which require the designer to: i) focus upon; ii) select; iii) subdivide; and iv) sequence the appropriate outcome of language learning (Breen, 1987: 83):

1. provision of an accessible framework of required knowledge and skills;
2. provision of continuity for its users;
3. ability to give a retrospective account of what has been achieved;
4. evaluation - provision of accountability to colleagues, to learners, and to the wider institution and society;
5. precision of purpose, so that it may be assessed for appropriateness through implementation;
6. Sensitivity to the environment for which the plan is intended. (cf. Breen, 1987: 82).

Generally speaking, ESP syllabus design should cover the three factors of: i) language description, ii) learning theories, and iii) needs analysis:

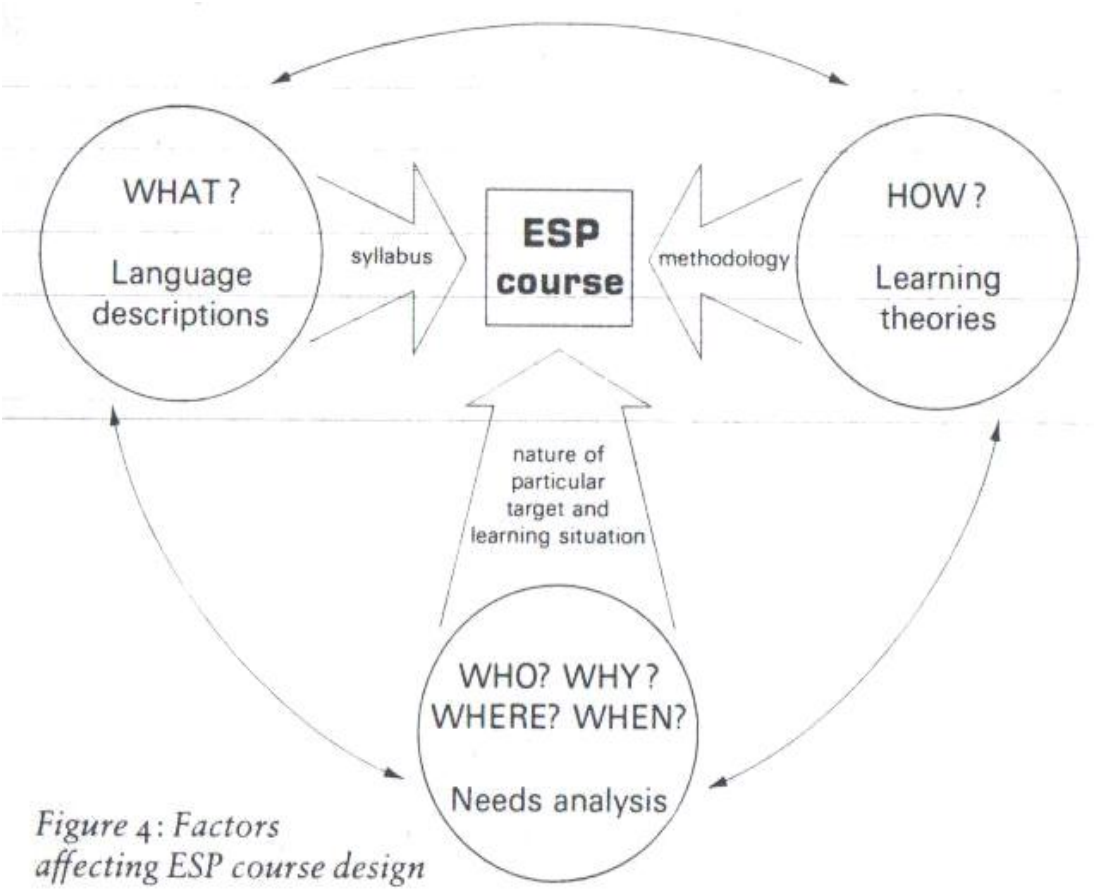


Figure 4: Factors affecting ESP course design

Key Issues in ESP Syllabus Design

In this section, key issues in ESP syllabus design for ESL contexts are examined. Cummins (1979) has theorized a dichotomy between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The former refers to the language skills used in the everyday informal language used with friends, family and co-workers. The latter refers to a language proficiency required to make sense of academic language and its use. Situations in which individuals use BICS are characterized by contexts that provide relatively easy access to meaning. However, CALP use occurs in contexts that offer fewer contextual clues.

The first ability required in order to successfully communicate in an occupational setting is the ability to use the particular jargon that is characteristic of the specific occupational context. The second is the ability to use a more generalized set of academic skills, such as conducting research and responding to memoranda. With the health science group, this was largely

related to understanding a new culture. The third is the ability to use the language of everyday informal talk to communicate effectively, regardless of occupational context. Examples of this include chatting over coffee with a colleague or responding to an informal email message.

The task for the ESP developer is to ensure that all three of these abilities are integrated into the syllabus. This is a difficult task due to the incredible amount of research required.

Because ESP requires comprehensive needs analysis and because the learning-centered syllabus is not static, it is impossible to expect that the developer be in a position to identify the perfect balance of the abilities noted above for any particular group of learners.

Conclusion

This research has discussed the origins of ESP, addressed key notions about ESP and examined issues in ESP curriculum design. The content of the paper was determined by a need identified based on my experience as an ESL instructor designing and delivering the content-based language program - Language Preparation for Employment in the Iraqi College of Police. The discussion then expands to discuss latest studies of ESP in Iraq. These issues, where possible, have been supported by current and pertinent academic literature. It is my sincerest hope that these observations will lend insight into the challenges facing the ESL instructor acting as ESP curriculum instructor and developer.

Language is an enormous and highly complex phenomenon and that is why it is impossible for any individual to learn even his own language completely. The way in which native speakers maximize their learning resources to combat the problem of achieving competency in their own language is simply to learn what aspects of language they need, when they need it. ESP, the study of a particular aspect of language so as to be able to accomplish certain tasks, is an attempt to mimic the native speaker's way of learning so as to maximize learning resources. In the intensive, accelerated and subject specific

learning contexts of ESP courses, trainees can increase their learning speed, efficiency and effectiveness.

However, the above benefits may only be derived if the ESP course is carried out properly. There are significant drawbacks to using local language schools and existing textbooks as sources of ESP. For the courses to be maximally effective there must be close contact between companies and the ESP supplier. Then, training needs can be assessed thoroughly and exactly, and programmes, courses and practice materials can be designed accordingly. In addition, progress can be assessed. The result is a smooth running, highly effective mechanism for training which is suited directly to company needs (Wright, 1992: 8).

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