

ESP Materials Adaptation: Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice

By: Dr. Abdelkader BENSFAFA
University of Tlemcen/ Algeria

Abstract: Based on the fact that ELT teachers are requested to be more aware of their responsibility towards students; they should keep in mind that they are there to help, guide, supply them with the necessary elements to develop their knowledge, and thus, design courses accordingly. A part from their responsibility is to motivate those ESP students despite all the difficulties encountered. In other words motivation is very important in ESP situations as it represents a critical factor in either pushing students to an ongoing learning or slowing down- and sometimes- stopping that whole process. The aim of this paper is to shed light on one of the vital elements in the ESP methodology, i.e. ESP materials adaptation.

Key Words: ESP, Course Design, Materials Adaptation

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Introduction

From the early 1960's English for specific purposes (ESP) has grown to become one of the most prominent areas of EFL enterprise today. To this end, certainly a great deal about ESP could be written since its development is reflected in the increasing number of universities offering an MA degree in ESP (e.g. the university of Birmingham; and Aston university in the UK) and in the number of ESP courses offered to overseas students in English speaking countries(Anthony, 1997:9)

ESP has had a relatively long time to mature. This is why having a clear idea about what ESP means amongst the ESP practitioners is more than a necessity. In this sense, Dudley Evans (1997) - co-editor- of the ESP journal: “English for specific purpose: an international journal” was very aware of the confusion amongst the ESP community. As it is known, delimiting a subject is the first step to deal with it intelligently; and this , is true with ESP where a very heated debate and clear differences took place in how people interpreted the meaning of ESP could be seen.

Based on insights gained from developing the curriculum for language preparation for professional work place and job market and a review of the literature on ESP, this part is intended to offer theoretical support for EFL instructors developing ESP curricula for not only ESL but also EST contexts.

1. Definition of ESP

As stated previously, Dudley Evans (1997) raised an important point related to what ESP means. This view was also shared with ST John. They clarified the meaning of ESP giving an extended definition of ESP taking into consideration Steven's original one and form their own. But what was Steven's definition of ESP?

Stevens (1988) defined ESP by indentifying its "absolute" and "variable" characteristics. Speaking about the "absolute" characteristics, ESP consists of English language teaching which is: (a) designed to meet specific needs of the learner, (b) related in content (i.e. in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities, and (c) centred on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics...etc, and analysis of this discourse in contrast with general English. While the variable ones, ESP may be, but not necessary, (1) restricted as to the language skills to be learned (e.g. reading only); not taught according to any pre-ordained methodology. (Stevens, 1988, 1-2)

Coming back to the new conceptualization of Dudley Evans and ST John (1998: 4-5); they revised Stevens' definition and postulate it as follows:

ESP with its absolute characteristics is defined to meet specific needs of the learner, it makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves, and it is centred on the language (grammar, lexis; register) skills, discourse and genre appropriate to those activities.

They add also that:

While the variable ones leads ESP to be related to or designed for specific disciplines; it may use; in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of EGP, it is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students, and most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

Both definitions seem to be the same with a nuance that the new given definition emphasises the idea of clarifying the underlying criteria needed to give ESP the status of an approach. The notion of ESP as an approach was clearly stated by Hutchison and Waters (1987:19) who theorize: “*ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning*”

Here, the idea behind why learners need to learn English is a crucial factor contribution in formulating both the content and the method of an ESP course. This idea was accentuated by Anthony (1997 as cited in Gatehouse 2001) who notes that:

It is not clear where ESP course ends and general English one begins; numerous non- specialist ESL instructors use an ESP approach in that, their syllabi are based on analysis of learners needs and their own personal specialist knowledge of using English for real communication.

According to Anthony (1997:9):

Some described it 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 purpose.

Once again, the rationale behind an ESP course is cited based of course on learners’ needs analysis process. In sum, and besides the different definition, ESP is based on the following principle: “*Tell me what do you need English for, I will tell you the English you need*”.

2. ESP Course Design

A part from the existing ESP literature, course design is one of the areas contributing in the enrichment of that literature. This last, refers to the process of interpreting what was learned about learning needs and theories. The desire behind

is developing materials depending on syllabus to enhance the quality and the sustainability of the teaching methodologies. Besides, help establishing evaluation procedures in order to guide learners attain the state of knowledge.

Looking at the status of (ESP) in Algeria, the first remark one can draw is that most ESP courses are still limited to learning specific lexicon and translating texts. This may as it may not meet the growing demands for ESP instructions. With the continued expansion and participation in the international business arena as well as the process of globalization, much attention should be drawn to the design of ESP courses. This can help preparing and training learners to cope with their future professional communication.

3. ESP Material Adaptation

Adaptation denotes that languages teachers while in the ESP situation should look for the best of their classes. To do so, the following forms will be of great deal when opting for the process of materials adaptation. First Modifying the content by adding or deleting some parts to the material be it a textbook, a manuscript, or a recording. Second, reorganizing the content in terms of tasks; either by modifying or extending them according to the needs.

Now, the governing condition of all what has been said above is- as stated by Marand (2011:552 citing Graves 1996) -that abundant factors need to be taken into account while adapting materials. The most pivotal are: effectiveness in achieving the course objectives and appropriateness which encapsulates “student comfort and familiarity with the material, language level, interest and relevance”.

The last point to speak here is a frequent question asked by many ESP teachers or practitioners i.e. what are the ways of materials adaptation? But before, it should be stressed here that any material adaptation is based on an important previous process i.e. material evaluation. This last aims at investigating the deficiencies as well as the lacuna of ELT as to ESP materials. Coming back to the answer of the above question, it is summarised in the following table.

Table 4.5 Ways for Material Adaptation adopted from (Maley, 1998:281. Cited in Tomlinson, 1998)

Way	Description
Omission	The teacher leaves out things deemed inappropriate, offensive, unproductive, etc., for the particular group.
Addition	Where there seems to be inadequate coverage, teachers may decide to add to textbooks, either in the form of texts or exercise material.
Reduction	Where the teacher shortens an activity to give it less weight or emphasis.
Way	Description
Extension	Where an activity is lengthened in order to give it an additional dimension. (For example, a vocabulary activity is extended to draw attention to some syntactic patterning.)
Rewriting/ Modification	Teacher may occasionally decide to rewrite material, especially exercise material, to make it more appropriate, more “communicative”, more demanding, more accessible to their students, etc.
Replacement	Text or exercise material which is considered inadequate, for whatever reason, may be replaced by more suitable material. This is often culled from other resource materials.
Re-ordering	Teachers may decide that the order in which the textbooks are presented is not suitable for their students. They can then decide to plot a different course through the textbooks from the one the writer has laid down
Branching	Teachers may decide to add options to the existing

	activity or to suggest alternative pathways through activities (an experiential route or an analytical route.)
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Conclusion

In sum, one can say that ESP materials adaptation is seen as a result of materials development and evaluation. All of which, is to meet the students needs in their area of specialism. Besides, different materials have different potential areas for adaptation. The whole process of material adaptation is seen where the existing ELT materials: fail or are unable to fulfil the goals and objectives put forward by those engaged in syllabuses or curricula development. Furthermore, the material in hand cannot be finished in the time available, require facilities or equipment or other supporting materials that are not available. The rationale behind all what has been said throughout this paper is to engage the learners' personality, beneficial to the learners' culture, and cater for the learners' interests.

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