

Ensuring Equity in Language Teaching: Implementing English for Specific Purposes for Domain Specific Learners of Tertiary Level

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Abstract: Teaching English language to the learners of different academic areas (multi-disciplinary or domain specific) of tertiary level with same general language planning and materials is an approach to ensure equality. On the other hand, teaching every particular group with specific goal-oriented and subject-related tailor made course is congruent with the concept of equity. English language teaching ought to be needs-based. Needs vary from one profession to another. Communicative skill of a lawyer is different from that of a scientist or an engineer. To ensure equity, teachers need to implement ESP, which has necessarily been introduced to meet the rising demand of the academic and professional learners. In ESP, to specify the learners' needs (includes necessities, lacks and wants), intensive observation and research are carried out. In this practice, other subsequent steps like syllabus design, materials development, teaching and evaluation are also integrated. The same teacher does everything, so there is a wonderful harmony among the steps of language teaching. This paper shares the experience of a series of action research that were carried out to develop four ESP courses entitled Business English, English for Lawyers, English language for the students of Computer Science and Engineering and English language for the students of the Health Science area on the basis of intensive needs analysis of 200 learners (50 students of health science area, 50 students of Computer Science and Engineering, 50 students of Business Administration and 50 students of Law) of tertiary level from both public and private universities of Bangladesh. This series of action research evaluates the prospect and effectiveness of ESP courses for ensuring equity among different groups of academic and professional learners.

Keywords: Needs analysis, syllabus design, materials development, teaching and evaluation

Introduction

The essence of effective teaching revolves round the maxim 'reaching before teaching'. When the teacher cannot reach to the learners to influence them or cannot motivate them to learn, his/her teaching will never be impactful. The teacher must be resourceful with specific domain-based and goal-oriented materials and attractive teaching approach to teach English language at tertiary level. The learners of tertiary level are deemed as would be professionals like doctors, engineers, lawyers, businessmen. When at tertiary level, they are taught with general English language materials, they would not be motivated. Under these circumstances, specific courses, considering their needs for academic life as well as future professional life, can be designed. Moreover, if the contents are obtained from their area of study, they may be able to explore the gap between their area of study and English language proficiency. ESP harmonizes both the areas to bridge the gap.

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From twenty years of teaching experience at tertiary level, the researcher found that in English language classes, the learners were conscious about the proper use of subject-verb agreement but when they attempted to answer an area paper, they would write “ the pie chart show that ” instead of “shows”. Similarly, regarding the form of active and passive voice, while defining some concepts, they wrote call/calls /called instead of is/are called. The observation is they cannot bridge their English language proficiency with area of study. Due to these sorts of inadequacies, they become dependent on memorization. They cannot achieve proper understanding and show poor performance in listening, speaking, reading and writing and thus fail to receive domain based knowledge provided through English. Thus, learners of tertiary level are inevitably influenced by the nature and the pattern of their specific domain. To be successful professionals, they need to be equipped with the psychological orientation with their area of study and related academic practices.

ESP has necessarily arisen to fulfil the lack of English language proficiencies among the academic and professional learners. Learners of tertiary level have already had twelve years of acquaintance with English language education in the context of Bangladesh. Naturally, learners are expected to perform proficiently in English language. If even someone cannot achieve sound proficiency, intensive teaching is required. ESP focuses on research-orientated organization of syllabus and materials after analyzing authentic needs. Moreover, intensive teaching, and evaluation have made ESP effective and popular among all domain specific academic and professional learners. In addition to these, a single teacher identifies, analyzes and designs the entire procedure of teaching harmoniously and effectively.

Why ESP

English language teaching at tertiary level should really be domain specific and needs-based. As needs vary from profession to profession, it is essential to specify the exact necessities of the learners. After surveying the professional needs by visiting the work places of successful professionals and assessing the current level of learners, the course designer can set the goals. The next step is to design a syllabus. The process of designing syllabus depends largely on the analysis of uses of the language in the learners’ target area. Even in the process, the syllabus designers bring learners’ opinions into consideration. The next challenging level is to develop materials based on the area of study (for academic learners) or job (for professional learners) of the learners. Learners’ current levels of knowledge usually vary from group to group, individual to individual. For this reason, specially designed tailor-made ESP courses for an individual group are appropriate and effective. In the present study, some of the vital concepts of designing tailor-made English language courses are shown below:

- 1. The Concept of Special Language: Register Analysis:** English language used by the bankers is different from that of doctors. There are specific vocabulary, terms, jargons, nature of expressions etc. (known as register). Every domain specific tailor made course is an individual arrangement in ESP to teach English language to them. Proper emphasis should be put upon these focused lexicons. This is considered as the first step in designing ESP course.

2. **Beyond the Sentence: Rhetorical or Discourse Analysis:** In language learning process, it is required to go beyond the sentence level. Proper emphasis should be put on specific discourse analysis and the contexts to understand the meaning of sentence. Furthermore, it includes non-verbal cues, social and cultural setting of the language etc. As second step of ESP course designing, discourse analysis is important.
3. **Target Situation Analysis:** Outcomes of an ESP language teaching program are fixed on the basis of close observation regarding the nature of language used in the possible job places by the successful professionals. An ESP teacher is expected to visit the probable workplaces before course designing. Gradually to make the learners eligible with the identified features, a tailor made ESP syllabus is designed.
4. **Skills and Strategies:** Since language learning is skill based, the teacher needs to determine how many skills are essential for the learners. If all the four skills are required, teacher's focus will be to equip them with four skills to meet the challenges of their target situation. If the learners need only two skills, customized syllabus should be designed for the learners. In its place of generalizing, ESP goes to fulfil learners' specific needs and demands.
5. **Learning-centered approach:** Instead of focusing on teacher-centered approach or learners-centered approach, ESP highlights learning-centered approach. This is a significant feature of ESP course designing. Thus, the practitioners of ESP claim that it ensures language learning for a specific group of learners or professionals.
6. **Detecting Learners' Lacks:** After target situation analysis, the ESP teacher has to identify the existing language proficiency of his/her learners. After analyzing data collected through interviews and questionnaire, s/he can diagnose the current status of language proficiency of the learners. From the gap between the current level and target level of learners, the teacher maps the lacks of his/her learners.
7. **Entertaining Learners' Wants:** In the practice of ESP, the opinions or expectations (known as wants) of the learners are asked for integrating those into the syllabus. This will inspire the learners as a motivational factor. Finally, 'it is possible for a thoughtful ESP teacher to combine the 'necessities' with the 'wants' of the learners' (Sharmin, 2016).

Research Question

On the basis of the above scenario, the focus revolves round the following question:

How can we teach English language effectively to the domain specific learners of tertiary level?

Rationale of the Study

There is a mandatory English language course for all the newly admitted Bangladeshi students of under-graduate level. The usual practice is to teach all of these domain specific learners with the same General English language course which is not a sound way to equip them with necessary proficiencies. When the teachers use the same English language materials they study during

their intermediate level, they really do not have enough motivation to learn. Thus, an assumption is, a tailor-made ESP course can bridge the gap between their current knowledge and their expected work place or job required proficiency of language.” (Sharmin, L. 2011). On the basis of the information of data, collected from one preset questionnaire, the process of needs analysis and syllabus designing was conducted obtaining vocabulary, contents and examples from the contexts (Sharmin, L. 2016). It is evident from all four individual action research projects that classes taken with these syllabuses were found to be more effective and interesting especially due to the domain specific materials.

Literature Review

English for Specific Purposes is the most effective area to teach English to the domain specific learners where the contents as well as the method to impart those among learners are based on their academic and professional needs and demands. It is indispensable to conduct an intensive needs analysis for specifying the motives for language learning (Hutchinson, and Waters, 1987) as well as to determine precisely the pattern of English language the learners need to achieve (Robinson 1991). As per the opinion of David Nunan, the essential approach and process to collect students’ demand to be embedded in syllabus design is needs analysis (Nunan, 1988: 13). Specifically speaking, needs analysis is the procedure to assess the requirements of English language learning proficiencies of the learners on the basis of their academic or professional priority (Richards, and Platt, 1992:242). Following this process, skills and strategies are to be specified. As the tertiary level of academic learners need all the four skills of English language proficiency, a syllabus to be designed for equipping the domain specific learners with specific skills. Basturkmen and Bocanegra-Valle (2018) have focused on the point that besides teaching, ESP teachers need to conduct a huge variety of teaching-promoting actions and roles. For specifying learners’ actual needs and for discovering the individual discourse, they justify their roles as researchers. In addition to that, they need to be involved in developing in-house, tailored-made or authentic teaching materials along with proper content-based instruction. According to Basturkmen and Bocanegra-Valle (2018), ESP teachers are responsible for designing materials appropriate for the learners. It is considered as an expected practice in ESP as “materials that undergo this evaluative review and revision process are likely to serve student and teacher audiences more effectively than materials that do not.” (Stoller et al., 2006, p.175). Next comes the issue of the dynamic teaching with these tailor-made materials. As teacher does everything about the teaching project, s/he can blend everything harmoniously for effective teaching. Moreover, continuous evaluation takes place during and end of the project based on students’ level of acceptance. Barnard and Zemach (2003) have suggested the ESP teachers to continuously interact with teachers teaching other courses in order to gain an insight into the requirements imposed on students attending those courses. This is to make sure the compliance between the ESP course objectives and students’ real needs.

Objectives

Keeping these observations in mind, the researcher conducted four different action researches to formulate four domain based tailor made courses:

- a. English for the Lawyers (By bridging English language and its use in law profession)
- b. Business English (By bridging English language and its use in business profession)

- c. English for Health Science (By bridging English language and its use in health science profession)
- d. English for Science, Technology and Engineering (By English language and its use in science, technology and engineering profession)

Methodology

From the experience of designing tailor-made courses and implementing those among the learners successfully, the researcher intended to share the ideas with the teachers of English language for inspiring them to teach every domain specific learner with particular ESP course. The current study accommodates the findings from a series of action research that were conducted to develop four tailor-made ESP courses entitled Business English, English for Lawyers, English language for the students of Computer Science and Engineering and English language for the students of the Health Science area. In the individual research setting, data were collected from 50 students of health science area, 50 students of Computer Science and Engineering domain, 50 students of Business Administration area and 50 students of Law domain of tertiary level from both public and private universities in Bangladesh. As the action research is concerned, the researcher did not design the courses only, rather implemented those among the learners through teaching and evaluating. The direct feedbacks received from the learners during teaching in the classroom were integrated in the courses. However, each of the four research projects assimilated the following stages:

- a. Intensive needs analysis
- b. Thoughtful formulation of goals and objectives
- c. Tailor made syllabus design
- d. Area specific materials development
- e. Effective teaching
- f. Meticulous evaluation

The processes were not similar rather diversified. The versatile experiences helped the researcher to enrich each of the courses simultaneously. In fact, swift development in the area of ESP is appreciable. After the emergence of ESP in 1960s, the approach has experienced numerous modifications. Since the pattern of life and that of lifestyle have become transformed, ESP has transformed its arrangements. The planning techniques of the current research is visible in the flowchart below:

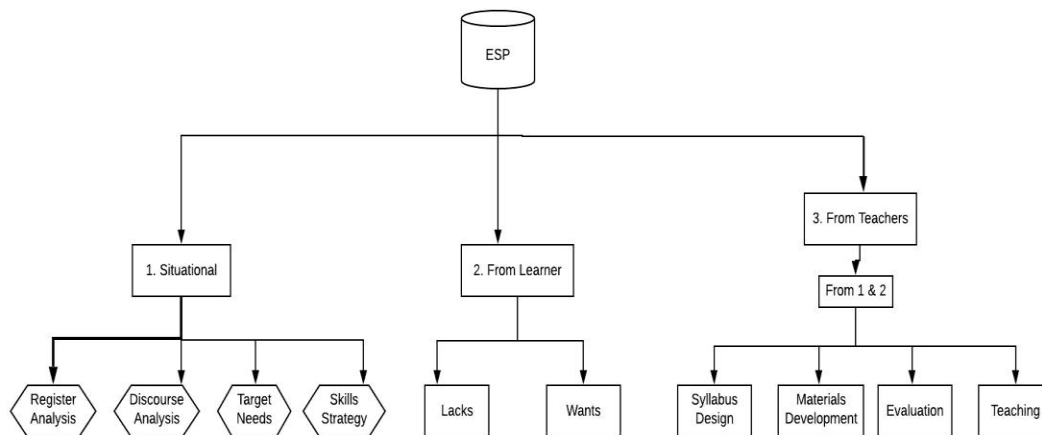


Figure- 1: Course Planning Techniques

Expected Outcomes

Domain specific tailor made courses followed by the abovementioned steps are unique to ensure equity among learners of different academic areas of tertiary level. If once the learners can be equipped with a strong proficiency of English, they can achieve subjective knowledge successfully during their study and establish themselves with name and fame in professional life.

This study covers domain specific academic areas with a special focus on the future professional uses of English language as well. The focuses are:

- a. Students of the Department of Law and (would be) lawyers
- b. Medical students and (would be) doctors
- c. Engineering students and (would be) engineers
- d. Students of the Department of Business Administration and (would be) business professionals.

Needs Analysis

In identifying intensive needs for domain specific learners, the researcher visited a few workplaces of successful professionals to observe the use of English language in the professional settings. Commonly used vocabulary, terms and jargons were taken note of. Moreover the pattern of projected utterances, gestures and body languages were keenly observed. The initiative was taken so that the proficiencies of academic learners can be developed by keeping pace with the future professional requirements. This research highlights the observations of four areas (Table -1).

Formulation of Goals and Objectives:

After due consideration, instances of language use were categorized on the basis of skills and micro-skills. The following chart shows how the activities were placed under different skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing (**Table 2**).

Domain/ Necessities	Performance	Nature of Language Uses
Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Professional lawyers may have interest in different new and complex cases. -They need to prepare investigation reports. -They need to fight with challenging crime issues and identify solutions. -At professional setting, they sometimes need to interact with foreign clients as well as experts through English. - Furthermore, during professional activities, to receive or give advice, instructions and for consultation, they need to know English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Argumentation -Logical sentences -Bold expression -Persuasive statement -Convincing words
Health science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sound and bold communication is a lifeline for the professionals of healthcare service. -They need to gain reliability among the patients and guardians. -They require to achieve intelligibility. -They have to maintain cohesion in speech, logic and argumentation to meet real life challenges. -Effective communication influences patients' safety and satisfaction. -In public health area, sound communication helps them to face challenges to meet various expectations and growing medical complexities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Empathetic expression -Listening patiently -Trustworthy expression -Exact and logical explanation -Pacifying and emotional words
Science, Technology and Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Engineers need to cooperate and communicate with various people from various parts of the world. -For programming, software designing, and coding, English language is needed. -For understanding and coordinating with the colleagues and accomplishing different projects engineers need to know English. -Engineers' graphs, architectural designs, and planning etc. are marked in English. -Scientific papers, research result, project documents all are written in English. To understand all those and contribute in the abovementioned areas, Engineers need English language proficiencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Narrative processing -Interpreting engineers' graphs -Passive expression in - describing with professional jargons
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Efficiency in English language skills is an asset for business correspondence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Persuasive language -Convincing approach

	-A weak presentation can terminate the possibility of a valuable product. -Smart presentation skills help winning any business deal. -Attractive and persuasive language of an advertisement is the main source of its sales. -Intelligible and convincing selling technique or even a marketing policy is the core of business.	-Smart expression -Presentable language -Exaggerated and attractive expression
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Table 1: Needs Analysis (Reflection from academic and probable future workplace)

Necessities of English for Domain Specific Learners	Lawyers	Doctors	Engineers	Businessmen
To comprehend class lectures, to attend seminars, and conference etc. by the teachers as well as colleagues from country and abroad. To understand the utterances of professionals during job or higher studies abroad.	Listening	Listening	Listening	Listening
To be communicatively competent in both personal setting and professional areas.	Speaking	Speaking	Speaking	Speaking
To comprehend a wide range of texts, reference book, literature, reports, manuals, updated information from internet world and so on.	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading
To answer in the exam scripts, research paper, documents, applications, reports, articles, etc.	Writing	Writing	Writing	Writing

Table 2: Formulation of Goals and Objectives

Domain/ Skills	Law	Health Science	Science, Technology and Engineering	Business
Listening Speaking	1.1. Domain oriented dialogue for role playing (on intellectual property)	1.2. Domain oriented dialogue for role playing (on doctor - patient)	1.3. Domain oriented dialogue for role playing (on IT quiz contest)	1.4. Domain oriented dialogue for role playing (on mortgage process)
	2.1. Asking	2.2. Asking	2.3. Asking specific	2.4. Asking

	specific questions	specific questions	questions	specific questions
Reading Writing	4.1. Reading comprehension (Constitution of Bangladesh)	4.2. Reading comprehension (Science brain drain)	4.3. Reading comprehension (Cloud technology)	4.4. Reading comprehension (Money-matters)
	5.1. Application (On claiming justice for taking undue price)	5.2. Application (On requesting to set up a blood bank)	5.3. Application (On seeking fund for joining ICPC)	5.4. Application (On opening LC for dealing with a multinational buying company)
	6.1. Writing paragraph (On Parole)	6.2. Writing paragraph (On AIDS)	6.3. Writing paragraph (On Robot)	6.4. Writing paragraph (On Currency)

Table 3: Materials Development

Syllabus Design

The researcher combined the above-mentioned factors to design tailor-made syllabuses. This intended to familiarize the learners with area-related terminology, to prepare them to be able to comprehend and convey all the basic terms and discourse-based and meaningful expressions in both academic and professional arena. More specifically, the focus was to make the learners communicatively competent in real life scenario with classmates, teachers, colleagues, delegates, clients, supervisor and employees of the present and future target situations. The researcher treasured intensive analysis of needs and thoughtful formation of goals and objectives for designing the syllabuses.

Sample Contents:

Preface

- Chapter-1 Asking questions (performance-based practice of context-oriented examples)
- Chapter-2 Dialogues for role playing (obtained from real life setting)
- Chapter-3 Parts of speech (formation of parts of speech for increasing vocabulary)
- Chapter-4 Vocabulary (commonly used vocabulary with application into sentence)
- Chapter-5 Tense system (with context related examples)
- Chapter-6 Modals (with real life oriented examples)
- Chapter-7 Reading comprehensions (extracted area related topic for practicing four skills)
- Chapter-8 Developing thoughts on area related topics (for speaking and writing)
- Chapter-9 Writing summary (for summarizing profession based role playing and case study)
- Chapter-10 Application writing
- Chapter-11 Illustration of some professional practice based quotes and maxims

Materials Development

In a language teaching program, materials play a significant role. A piece of material is anything that is used to facilitate language learning. Materials designed for the tailor-made courses in the series of action research are needs-based as well as relevant to the learners' area of study and/or profession. These are furnished with area related terms, vocabulary and jargons. Special focus is given on the specific discourses. Materials are integrated with instructions of classroom activities for making the classes highly participatory. Three potential ways were adopted to furnish teaching materials. These are selection from existing materials known as materials evaluation, writing own materials in term of materials development and modification from existing materials in terms of materials adaptation (Table 3).

The suitability of materials depends on the existing language level, familiarity with the contexts, cultural information as well as the interest of the learners. While developing materials for the course entitled English for the Lawyers, topics like outlaw, adulterated food, prison cell, convict, intellectual property, eve-teasing, parole, deterrence, accessory, witness, abettor were selected for model paragraphs. Topics like basic human rights, the duties of the lawyers, family law, intellectual property, capital punishment were set as the topics of dialogue for role playing. 'The Bet', a story of Anton Chekhov is included for summarizing. Abridged form of William Shakespeare's Drama *Merchant of Venice* is furnished for translating into mother tongue. More than three hundred commonly used words in their perspectives were collected and presented with synonyms and application of familiar forms of sentences. The initiative is to bridge area-related vocabulary and sequences in English to initiate proper practice of English language.

Teaching

It is obvious that an ESP teacher with his/her research-oriented arrangements can motivate and engage learners more actively. With special focus on learners and diversified activities, s/he can justify the learners with the fact that the course is essentially designed for them and will help them to secure sound academic and professional performance if they are attentive to achieve from classroom setting and outside the classroom. Teacher's brainstorming assessment on the area of learners' interest is the most significant part of this type of courses. Moreover, teacher's visits to the probable future job places give practical ideas, observations and experiences to the teacher to equip them with professional knowledge, skills and attitudes. On the basis of assessment, the teacher will develop their language teaching materials keeping pace with professional vocabulary, jargons and context related expression. The teacher creates a pseudo occupational setting where learners are given different roles to play and to communicate in English. Besides merely conveying the contents, the teacher has a great complete planning for effective learning.

Both the learners and the teachers need to be engaged before starting of the language program. Needs analysis, known as the first step, is determined after analyzing the necessities, lacks and wants of the learners. ESP Syllabus is based on the skills they need to develop. Materials are chosen and used in the classroom in a very creative way. So from the beginning to the end, it is an engaging arrangement for both the teacher and learners.

Evaluation

Evaluation in any language teaching program is rewarding. Through this process, a teacher evaluates his or her performance as well as how much s/he can equip his/ her learners. In ESP, evaluation is more intensive. It can be both implicit and explicit. While implicit evaluation is carried out all through the semester by their grades, presentation, performance and participation, explicit evaluation takes place at the end of the semester. In the current study, the students were evaluated through their engagement, active participation, spontaneity in performance and contribution in helping others' to learn. At the end of the course, the learners' views were collected through questionnaires and oral interviews. All four groups of learners showed very positive attitude towards the contents, instructional methods, activities, teacher's role and finally the effectiveness of the courses. The teacher, in the evaluation process, was very impartial, neutral, and open-minded in receiving and reviewing learners' feelings and observations.

Conclusion

Learners of tertiary level today are the future professionals of their specific domains tomorrow. The learners' patterns of academic practice and career planning are closely connected to the same area. Focus of the use of language is individual and specific. Thus, teaching English language to the learners of different academic areas of tertiary level with the same general language planning and materials is not justifiable. The communicative skill of a lawyer is different from that of a scientist or an engineer. To ensure equity (in place of equality), the teachers need to implement ESP, which has necessarily been emerged to meet the rising demands of the academic and professional learners. In this current study, it is obviously shown that tailor-made courses for domain specific learners can enhance language learning. It addresses the necessities, lacks and wants of the specific group of learners. Intensive observation and research are carried out in the process of syllabus design, materials development, teaching and evaluation. Thus this study demonstrates the success story of ESP courses in achieving effective outcomes in language learning for domain specific learners.

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