# Lecture one: Stages in the ESP Teaching Process

Dudley-Evans and Johns (1998, p121) maintain that “The key stages in ESP are needs analysis, course (and syllabus) design, materials selection (and production), teaching and learning, and evaluation.” ESP course design is the product of a dynamic interaction between these elements which“… are not separated, linearly-related activities, rather, they represent phases which overlap and are interdependent”.

Dudley-Evans and St. Johns illustrate the theory and the reality of the stages in ESP process through these representations:

**Need Analysis Course design Teaching- Learning Assessment Evaluation.**

However, designing effective ESP course is governed by further parameters that have to be examined first. According to Miliani (1994), after his exploration of the Algerian context, stated that four essential points have to be studied and analysed as a pre-design process, which consist of:

1. **Situation analysis**: it envelops the general requirements of both learners and institutions, their profiles and attitudes, also the existing materials.
2. **Setting Aims and Objectives**: the results of learners needs identification and analysis (NIA) lead to setting up general statements and what would be achieved at the end of the courses.
3. **Generating Syllabus Content**: organising the syllabus content “through the sequencing of materials whose layout and presentation should form a continuum”. (Benyelles, 2009,p.58).
4. **Assessment:** gathering data regarding syllabus before or during the course implementation let to readjust the content of the syllabus.

From the quoted descriptions of ESP teaching process, it is viewed that in the first instance, learners’ needs have to be identified and analysed. Therefore, the development of an ESP course should be in line with learners’ requests and wants. Thus, needs outcomes will operate as a guide for the teacher in designing a suitable syllabus, producing course materials as well as teaching and testing methods.

A detailed description of each step follows:

# 1. Needs Identification and Analysis (NIA)

“As in all ESP teaching situations, we must start by considering the needs of the learners and what they have to do in the target situation”(Flook 1993 qtd in Benyelles 2009, p.21) . In general, the term “needs” is defined as the differences between the actual state regarding the group or situation in relation to a specific question and the desired state. They reflect the existence of a certain problem that requires an intervention and must be dealt with.

A needs assessment attempts to identify such problems, to analyse their nature and causes and to establish priorities for future actions. It is a systematic approach to identifying social problems, determining their extent, and accurately defining the target population to be served and the nature of their service needs (Rossi, P. H., Freeman, H. E., & Lipsey, Mark, W. L., 1998).

An NIA answers the questions who, what, when, and where but not how, that is, the target audience (who needs to be trained), the task or content (what needs to be taught) and the context or training environment (where and when the training needs to be conducted) (Clark, 1998).

# 1.1 Rationale for NIA in Pedagogy

Pedagogically, needs are always defined as the learners’ requests in order to communicate efficiently in specific situations. “The idea of analysing the language needs of the learner as a basis for course development has become almost synonymous with ESP”. (Mc.Donough 1984, p. 29). Hence, ESP has its foundation on the exploration and analysis of learners‟ purposes and the set of communicative requirements arising from these purposes.

The analysis of the specific needs serves as the introduction to an ESP course design, “…any course should be based on an analysis of learner need” (Hutchinson & Waters 1987, p 53), because it determine the reasons and procedures that should be used to achieve satisfactory communicative results. “The rationale for needs analysis is that by identifying elements of students' target English situations and using them as the basis of EAP/ ESP instruction, teachers will be able to provide students with the specific language they need to succeed in their courses and future careers”. (Johns, 1991,p.67).

In sum, the reasons for performing NIA, according to Long (2005) are to determine the relevance of the material to the learners situation, to justify the accountability of the material to all the constituents implicated in the situation, to describe and explain learners‟ differences in terms of needs and style and, finally to produce efficient materials that will fulfil learners‟ requirements and needs as wholly as possible.

# 1.2 Types of Needs

ESP specialists (Hutchinson & Waters 1987, Robinson 1980, 1991, West 1993), agree on the fact that the term needs is the learners’ requirements aiming at communicating effectively in the target situation. “An ESP course will not only involve these requirements, but will also consider the different levels of language knowledge of the learners in order to specify the conditions of their learning situation” (Benyelles 2001:26).

Accordingly, this entails that NIA taxonomy may be viewed differently, however two (02) types, i.e.Target Needs‟ and „Learning Needs‟, are the main concepts used by the scholars in ESP literature and practices.

# a-Target Needs

Needs analysis is a complex process which has to take into account what Hutchinson and Waters (1987,p.54) define as “target needs”, what learners need to do in the target situation. In other words, what are the linguistic elements needed to achieve specific communicative purposes.

Robinson presents aspects of the target situation and students' educational backgrounds: “study or job requirements,” “what the user-institution or society at large regards as necessary,” “what the learner needs to do to actually acquire the language,” “what the students themselves would like to gain from the language course,” “what the students do not know or cannot do in English” (Robinson 1991, pp. 7-8).

In this respect, Hutchinson and Waters propose further subdivisions of target needs which are: Necessities, Lacks, and Wants.

## Necessities are the academic or occupational requirements of the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation. Accordingly, needs “are perhaps more appropriately described as objectives” (Robinson, 1991, p.7) to be achieved.

## Lacks are what the learners are deficient in, i.e what they ignore or cannot perform in English. Subsequently, lacks are the gaps between the initial or actual situation of the learners in terms of language proficiency or aptitudes, and the one which is required after the accomplishment of the language training.

## Wants are the learners‟ personal expectations and hopes towards acquiring English, i.e. what they would like to gain from the language course.

In order to design the syllabus content, the ESP practitioners have to take into consideration the learners aims; however, in almost all cases, these contrast with the lacks identified by the teacher or the necessities of the target situation. This divergence leads West (1993) to add “constraints” as fourth type of target needs. “ It involves the non- pedagogic limits that control a course planning process such as the role of the national policy, and financial restrictions, which the analysts need to be aware of once they start the process of NIA”(Benyelles 2001,p.31).

# b-Learning Needs

According to Hutchinson and Waters a relevant needs analysis of the target situation can divulge and reveal “What the learners need to learn”; however, it is not sufficient, in ESP context the question “How will the learners learn” in order to learn, is of central importance to determine the content of the course.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987,p.54) define learning needs as “what learners need to do in order to learn”. In the same vein, Robinson (1991,p. 7) states that learning needs are “…what the learner needs to do to actually acquire the language”. In this sense, learning needs look for data in relation to the learning situation which take into consideration learners’ type, cultural awareness and proficiency level in English, the available materials, the existing resources and all the information that can help the teacher to provide the learners with the appropriate knowledge.

All Wright (1982, qtd in West, 1994) states that “the investigation of learners‟ preferred learning styles and strategies gives us a picture of the learners‟ conception of learning”.

The findings of the gathered data will provide an overview regarding learners‟ feelings and positions to learn a foreign language in specific contexts. For language audit, it is generally used to establish the role assumed by this foreign language in business, industrial or public enterprise, accordingly ESP researchers have to:

* Determine the language skills needed to carry out specific jobs or studies (West, 1993).
* Evaluate the actual proficiency level of the target population in order to compare the different levels of achievement at the end of the course.
* Find out the necessary time volume needed for language instruction.

In sum and regardless of the various approaches recommended to identify students‟ needs, almost all the scholars mentioned above (West, Hutchinson and Waters, Robinson, All Wright) have the same opinion on the collection of the same type of information during the needs analysis stage. The information concerns:

1. **The target situation:** the role of ESP practitioner is to take into consideration the needs of the target situation through the enquiry of the variety, the language forms and the necessary level of performance required in the target language.
2. **Learners:** the researcher has to determine learners‟ language lacks, investigate their wants, and attitudes concerning language course, taking into consideration their current language ability.
3. **The learning situation:** it broadly reveals significant information regarding the learning environment and specifically the teaching situation, the nature of the setting, the available materials and the time volume.

After the identification and analysis of learners‟ needs the ESP teacher can go through the next phase which is syllabus design.

# 2. Syllabus Design

It is not easy to separate the issues concerning syllabus design set up for specific purposes programmes from general language teaching. Designing a syllabus to a specific group in a particular situation is not a simple task for the designers aiming at achieving learners requirements, since the existence of various concepts and basis dealing with syllabus. Thus, it seems of great importance to define “syllabus” in order to have a better understanding of what it actually meant by the term in education.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 80) define “Syllabus” as “... a document which says what will (or at least what should) be learnt”. In the same vein, Robinson (1991, p. 34) states that syllabus is “a plan of work and is, thus, essential for the teacher, as a guideline and context of class content.” The above assertions point out that the syllabus first concerns the teacher, and that it helps him/her plan courses.

Basturkmen (2006, p.20) argues that “in order to specify what language will be taught, items are typically listed and referred to as the syllabus”. She exemplifies the definition by giving a standard view of the syllabus through the figure below.

A syllabus:

1. Consists of a comprehensive list of
   * content items ( words, structures, topics)
   * process items ( tasks, methods)
2. Is ordered ( easier, more essential items first)
3. Has explicit document
4. Is a public document
5. May indicate a time schedule
6. May indicate preferred methodology or approach
7. May recommend materials

**Figure: Characteristics of a syllabus**

Another issue in defining “syllabus” is that it is “an instrument by which the teacher,..., can achieve a certain coincidence between the needs and the aims of the learners, and the activities that will take place in the classroom” (Yalden, 1987, p.86) that is to say that the syllabus is “a teaching device to facilitate learning” (Nunan, 1988, p.6) which organises classroom activities according to learners aims and requirements after the process of needs identification and analysis.

The syllabus is perceived differently in the goals and functions by the literature in the field, because of the existence of different educational approaches, accordingly, various types of syllabi are suggested by the scholars each one being systematically planned according to specific language components.

# 2.1 Conditions to Syllabus Design

Harmer (2001) establishes some rules that should be taken into consideration when designing a syllabus, and states that “every syllabus needs to be developed on the basis of certain criteria” (Harmer, 2001, p.295), which consist of:

1. Learnability: the content should be organised in a gradual manner in order to be more efficient, i.e. from the easier themes to the more complex ones.
2. Frequency: integration of the most frequent items used in target language.
3. Coverage: incorporate the terminology and structures that have wider coverage in the use of the language.
4. Usefulness: set up language forms and skills that are socially useful for the learners.

These criteria are greatly influenced by some environmental factors surrounding the teaching learning situation as the existence of a number of social restrictions that have a great impact on its effectiveness. Benyelles (2009) selected the main constraints as follows:

-The language setting which concerns the role of the language in the community.

-The areas of language use in society (how and where it is used).

-The role of the language in the political life taking into account the country’s economy and technology (Ashworth, 1985 a).

-The attitudes of groups and individuals towards the language. This is determined by the degree of their awareness of the language (Van Leir, 1995).

To summarise, the designer will have to take into consideration the various parameters that can influence the technical and pedagogical criteria in designing appropriate and practical syllabus..

# 3. Material Production

Do ESP textbooks really exist? This is a fundamental question Johns (1990) addresses. One of the core problems he presents is that "ESP teachers find themselves in a situation where they are expected to produce a course that exactly matches the needs of a group of learners, but are expected to do so with no, or very limited, preparation time" (Johns, 1990, p. 91).

“In the real world, ESP developers are not provided with sufficient time for needs analysis, materials research and materials development” (Kristen Gatehouse, 1999). The notion of time in the teaching process is of paramount importance especially in ESP, because the analysis of the target situation and the research of the appropriate materials need adequate time.

Suitable materials in ESP are not generally easy to get “It is likely that a course tailored to the needs of specific group of learners will not be available,” (Hutchinson & Waters 1987,p. 106). For that reason, the ESP teacher has to develop materials which present as clearly as possible useful area of the language so that learners can perceive the relation between the content of the course and their requirements.

The production of such materials and suitable activities is not a simple task because the ESP teacher is neither a materials designer nor a subject specialist; besides, “few teachers have had any training in the skills and techniques of materials writing”. (Hutchinson & Waters‟, 1987 , p.106).

In order to assist and guide ESP teachers in producing adequate materials, Hutchinson and Waters (1987, pp.106-108) identify some defining principles that should be stated as purposeful objectives in designing pedagogical materials:

* + 1. good materials give a stimulus to learning; in other words, they do not teach but, encourage learners to learn, they will, therefore, contain:

-Interesting texts;

-Enjoyable activities which stimulate the learners‟ thinking capacities;

-Opportunities for learners to use their existing knowledge and skills;

-A content which both learner and teacher can cope with.

* + 1. Adequate materials provide a comprehensible and rational unit structure which will conduct both the teacher and the learner through a range of activities in such a way as to maximise the chances of learning. Accordingly, “a materials model must be clear and systematic, but flexible enough to allow for creativity and variety”. (Ibid, 1987, p.107).
    2. Materials should represent a vision of the nature of language and learning, and reflect the teacher considerations and feelings about the learning process.
    3. Materials should reveal the nature of learning tasks and should “create a balance outlook which both reflects the complexity of the task, yet makes it appear manageable.” (Ibid, 1987, p.108).
    4. Materials should introduce the teachers to the use of new and updated teaching techniques.
    5. Materials should supply appropriate and correct representation of language use.

In ESP, the analysis of the target situation provides the basic data that leads the material designer to establish the process through which the course will be presented. By the combination of the different outcomes related to the learners needs, the learning environment and the pedagogical approach, it will be possible to produce the needed ESP course with an appropriate content.

“It has been traditionally supposed that the language presented to learners should be simplified in some way for easy access and acquisition. Nowadays, there are recommendations that the language presented should be authentic.” (Widdowson 1990, p.67).

“Materials writing is one of the most characteristic features of ESP in practice” (Hutchinson & Waters 1987, p. 106).In reality script materials are the major tool mainly used by almost all ESP teachers; however, with the availability of technological supports in academic settings “a great number of teachers, nowadays, use many types of language learning videos accompanied by course books or workbooks solely for instructional purposes” (Baleghizadeh &Oladrostam, 2010) targeting at providing authentic simulated situations, interesting and pleasant activities to the learners.

Therefore, and if videos are considered as technological materials it is recommended, “as one of the main types of authentic materials, be constantly used in order to contextualize language for students” (Baleghizadeh &Oladrostam, 2010). According to Harmer (2001, 2007), there are a number of reasons why videos should be used:

* Seeing language-in-use;
* Cross-cultural awareness;
* The power of creation;
* Motivation.

Moreover, video production can lead to creative and communicative uses of language to the extent that students may remember those exciting moments for relatively extended period of time. Also Brown (2007) argued, that the “students who are right brain dominant rely on images to remember and think, by which one of the sources he surely meant were videos”.

In a sum the role of ESP teachers is to produce and present the language content and the course activities in a various ways to help and motivate the students to learn the target language needed to update their academic or occupational knowledge.

# 4. Teaching

The final aim of designing materials is the performance of the task; hence, with the help of the teacher, the students need to be given activities to achieve this aim. In an ESP situation, the roles of the teacher would be “instructor, facilitator, role-advisor, monitor, co- communicator, classroom manager and consultant”. (Benyelles, 2009, p.42).

However, in almost all cases, the ESP teachers are in front of various problems of different nature. The main one occurs from the fact that they are called upon to carry out new assignment and perhaps with no specific training. In this respect, Strevens (1988, p. 41) describes the ESP teacher as “...a teacher of General English who has, unexpectedly, found him/herself required to teach students with special needs.” Explicitly, the ESP teachers have to adapt and adjust themselves in order to deal with a new situation and environment for which they are not generally well trained and equipped.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.157) states that the ESP teacher’s role is one of many parts. “Swales (1985) prefers... to use the term „ESP practitioner‟ ... It is likely that in addition to the normal functions of a classroom teacher, the ESP teacher will have to deal with needs analysis, syllabus design, materials writing or adaptation and evaluation.” That is to say that the ESP teachers are involved in designing, setting up and administering the ESP course, and teaching.

A further difficulty is facing ESP teachers when dealing with specific situations; it is that of knowledge specialist. In this respect, Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.163) state that “ESP teachers do not need to learn specialist knowledge. They require three things only: a positive attitude towards the ESP content; knowledge of fundamental principles of the subject area; an awareness of how much they probably already know.” In other words, the teachers should have the “ability to ask intelligent questions”.

Accordingly, Robinson (1991) states that flexibility is a key value needed by the ESP teacher, in order to change from being a general language teacher to being a specific purpose teacher, to cope with different groups of learners, and to perform different tasks.

The principle of flexibility implies an eclectic approach to the teaching methods. In this vein, Miliani (1994) stated that “…eclecticism …leaves the door open for any stratagem or technique which could fit in a given situation. It all depends on the teachers‟ know-how and his approach to language teaching”.

As a conclusion the ESP teachers should implement different teaching methods, techniques and materials in order to reach the learners required competence.

# 5. Assessment /Evaluation

Assessment and course evaluation are two important stages in ESP teaching process. Hypothetically, an ESP course is supposed to be successful; it is set up to fulfil particular learners‟ needs and enable them perform specific things with language.

Normally, ESP course has specified objectives, which have to be assessed and measured in terms of how well these objectives have been provided and served. Targeting at helping the ESP practitioners and achieving these stages Hutchinson & Waters (1987) propose a complementary procedure based on two levels:

## Learner Assessment: This procedure main task is to measure the learners‟ performance and level of proficiency, in other words what they actually know in terms of language knowledge at this level of the course achievement. Assessment, also elicits learners‟ linguistic problems and difficulties, and sets other views for pedagogical solutions in the next courses.

## Course Evaluation: ESP course itself needs to be evaluated, whether the sets of objectives designed were achieved or not, to reach the course aims.

Both learner assessment and course evaluation facilitate and help providing the teacher with feedback on the efficiency of the course, the teaching methods and materials, and the improvement of the necessary revisions in the ESP course design.

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