ORIGINAL ARTICLE

DESIGNING AN ESP PROGRAM IN BUSSINESS ENGLISH: A NEEDS-BASED APPROACH FOR UNDERGRADUATE BUSSINESS STUDENTS

Khavva Ashirova
Asia International University

Abstract: This article presents the design of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program tailored for senior undergraduate Business Administration students. Grounded in needs analysis, the program integrates Content-Based Instruction (CBI), the case-study method, and task-based assessment to develop productive skills, domain-specific vocabulary, and academic literacy. Course materials include authentic texts and multimedia resources aligned with business communication demands. Insights from ESP literature highlight the significance of triangulated needs analysis, stakeholder collaboration, and genre-based pedagogy. The article concludes with reflections on improving practitioner expertise and ensuring alignment between instructional practices and workplace communicative requirements.

Key words: English for Specific Purposes, Needs analysis, Triangulation, Course design.

Introduction

The selected ESP context for this project is Business English. This choice is grounded in the increasing demand for effective communication competence and domain-specific interactional skills. Since the target learners aim to develop and enhance their business discourse proficiency, the program is designed to meet their communicative needs in the field.

English for Lawyers by Jill Northcott (Woodrow, 2018) was selected as the model due to its focus on productive skills, learner confidence, and contextualized grammar and vocabulary. The framework provides essential principles for developing an effective ESP program.

Participant Profile

The program participants are senior undergraduate students majoring in Business Administration at a private university in Bukhara. Their general proficiency corresponds to **B2 CEFR**, with **C1-level reading and listening** but **B2-level speaking and writing**. The learners require improvement in productive skills, business-related vocabulary, presentation skills, critical thinking, and communicative competence. They also need greater familiarity with business genres and discourse conventions relevant to their future professional community.

Needs Analysis
Context identification

Identifying learners' communicative needs in the target situation forms the foundation of ESP course design (Viana et al., 2019). ESP instruction must be grounded in contextual demands rather than abstract societal expectations.

Surveys

Surveys are essential for gathering stakeholder perspectives and revealing specific learner needs prior to course implementation.

Stakeholder collaboration

Instructors often lack deep domain knowledge; therefore, collaboration with subject-matter experts helps refine course objectives and improve material selection (Woodrow, 2018). Johns and Dudley-Evans (1991) emphasize that ESP course goals must align with learners' actual professional needs.

Methodological considerations

Selecting effective methods for needs analysis and course delivery is essential, as methodology directly shapes course outcomes.

Diagnostic testing and triangulation

Because learners may be unable to articulate their own linguistic gaps, diagnostic tests help reveal deficiencies in both general and domain-specific language (Chan, 2018). Triangulation enhances the validity of the needs analysis.

Approach to course design

The program relies on pedagogical approaches that enhance workplace communication, domain-specific knowledge, and soft skills. Two methods underpin the syllabus:

Case-study method

The case-study method simulates authentic business scenarios, enabling learners to collaborate, solve problems, and rehearse real-world interactions. This learner-centered approach also develops communicative competence, reasoning, and problem-solving skills (Woodrow, 2018).

Content-based Instruction (Adjunct CBI Model)

Learners require both linguistic and content-based development, making the adjunct CBI model appropriate. It integrates domain-specific vocabulary, functional language, grammar, and subject matter. CBI fosters contextualized language use and immersion, promoting mastery of business discourse (Arno-Macia & Mancho-Bares, 2015).

Course Aims:

The program seeks to:

1. Develop productive skills, including presentations, discussions, conference communication, report writing, and email writing.
2. Enhance context-specific communicative competence and use of business vocabulary and functional language.
3. Improve teamwork, decision-making, and problem-solving through case studies.
4. Foster learner autonomy and critical thinking.
5. Integrate content and language learning through the adjunct CBI model.
6. Build academic literacy relevant to professional business communication.

Assessment Framework

Diagnostic Assessment

Administered at course onset to identify learners' existing knowledge and linguistic gaps. This includes both general and professional language, acknowledging their interdependence (O'Sullivan, 2012).

Formative Assessment

Implemented continuously to provide feedback and support learning improvement (Woodrow, 2018).

Summative Assessment

Evaluates the extent to which learners have met course objectives. Performance criteria are defined by ESP standards and course specifications (Arno-Maciá, 2012).

Course Materials

Coursebook

Cotton, D., Falvey, D., & Kent, S. (2010). Market Leader: Intermediate Business English (3rd ed.). Used selectively during class and extensively for at-home independent work.

Online business English blog

English Radar blog provides genre-based business writing input, supporting pragmatic, lexical, and grammatical competence.

Video materials

Video resources from BBC Learning English enhance listening comprehension, discourse awareness, and vocabulary in context while serving as input for contextualized tasks.

Audio Materials

Authentic recordings of meetings, presentations, and negotiations expose learners to professional spoken discourse.

Authentic Articles

Texts from Bloomberg Businessweek support reading comprehension, vocabulary development, debates, and presentations, bridging receptive and productive skills.

Reflection and insights from ESP Theory

The ESP course provided valuable insights into needs analysis, stakeholder collaboration, triangulation methods (Chan, 2018), and genre-based instruction. Case-study and CLIL approaches were particularly effective in the Business English context, reinforcing leadership skills and language proficiency (Woodrow, 2018).

Academic literacy emerged as a crucial component, requiring learners to analyze their target discourse community and develop genre awareness. Belcher (2006) stressed teaching genre learning strategies rather than focusing solely on genre structure.

The course further highlighted the need for ESP practitioners to adopt a flexible, exploratory mindset and collaborate closely with learners and field experts to ensure effective instruction.

Conclusion

The primary goal of ESP practitioners is to enhance learners' mastery of domain-specific discourse by collaborating with students, employers, and subject-matter experts. Effective ESP instruction requires integrating authentic materials, developing both receptive and productive skills, and accurately aligning content with learners' needs. Through careful needs analysis, appropriate methodology, and authentic course materials, the program aims to prepare learners for successful communication in their target professional environment.

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