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The Importance of Materials Development in Teaching English for Specific Purposes

Besa Bytyqi^{a*}, South East European University, Macedonia, The Former Yugoslav Republic Of

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Abstract

English for Specific Purposes has become very necessary in the last decades. This research paper aims to show the importance of materials development in English for Specific Purposes, since there is a lack of textbooks for this course aimed for students at the Faculty of Public Administration and Political Sciences at South East European University, Republic of Macedonia. When students graduate they should use written and speaking English language according to protocols and rules related to Public Administration in the country. English Language is a core subject at the university level and students take the ESP course in the third and fourth semester, after they have finished with their Basic English skills. In this research, qualitative and quantitative approaches were used for the data collection. The evidence for the paper was gathered by interviewing the students and preparing the target vocabulary in order to select materials. Students were also given a questionnaire to answer on their preferences where would they prefer to work after they graduate. The University data was also used to show the percentage of the already employed graduate students and according to the results new syllabi and materials were compiled to motivate students, engage and give assignments on topics that will be used on a daily basis. Course readers were designed for both ESP 1 and ESP 2 courses and other additional materials were selected that will prepare students for their future career.

Keywords: materials development; ESP, Public Administration; Political Sciences;

*ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Besa Bytyqi**, South East European University, Macedonia, The Former Yugoslav Republic Of.
E-Mail Address: b.bytyqi@seeu.edu.mk / Tel: +389 44 356 287

1. Introduction

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to university students requires a lot of preparation, it is time consuming, but interesting and very challenging. This applies especially to teaching English for Specific Purposes, since students' language proficiency is very high, they are well-prepared for the classes and want to be challenged. English for Specific Purposes has become very necessary in the last decades, so the lecturers at universities need to pay more attention to these courses and prepare students for their future career, where the employment competition in the country and abroad is very strong and challenging. Hence, it is very important for the teachers to design syllabi, select and develop materials for the courses which meet students' needs and requests. English for Specific Purposes is a core subject at South East European University in Macedonia, which is offered to second and third year students after they complete their Basic English Skills. The research was conducted at South East European University at the beginning of Summer Semester 2014. Our students take English for 4 semesters. The courses offered are either General English or ESP. ESP is offered from the third semester. English for Specific Purposes courses offered at a University Level are: Business English, Legal English, English for Public Administration and Political Sciences, English for Communication and English for Computer Sciences. Since Public Administration is a new branch offered in Macedonia and generally in the Balkans, we often face difficulties with the text books and other materials. Public Administration studies provides the educational requirements to support students begin their professional career path in government, state and local government agencies, municipalities, public institutions, local schools administration, non-profit organizations, universities and corporations. Political Sciences Department provides the educational requirements to support students begin their professional career path in government, state and local government agencies, municipalities, public institutions, political parties, non-profit organizations, universities and corporations. As an ESP lecturer I compile Course Packs for students based on their needs, and each semester I do changes in the course syllabus, add materials according to students' needs. So ESP lecturers have multiple roles since they are course designers, material providers, researchers and collaborators, and at the end they have to be evaluators, as well.

2. Previous Studies

Various writers have different answers to 'What is ESP teaching?' and 'What do you understand by the term ESP teaching?' Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) in defining ESP say: "If ESP has sometimes moved away from trends in general ELT, it has always retained its emphasis on practical outcomes. We will see that the main concerns of ESP have always been, and remain, with needs analysis, text analysis, and preparing learners to communicate effectively in the tasks prescribed by their study or work situation." (1998)

English for Specific Purposes courses are mainly based on communication skills, and thus this fulfills the faculty learning outcomes of the studies. The outcomes of the Public Administration studies in the communication skills are: To be able to use written and speaking Albanian, Macedonian and English languages according to protocols and rules related to Public Administration, to be able to use variety of communication tools and respecting the ethical standards when working with state institutions and public actors, to be able to operate independently and to be able to coordinate with others in order to complete different hierarchical level duties, to explain the interpersonal and inter-organizational roles of an individual within the public service. The learning outcomes of the Political Sciences studies in the communication skills are: To be able to participate in political debates, mediation and negotiation, to ensure argued analysis of political discourses, to be able to possess the skills to write coherent political events and political speeches and to demonstrate skills for professional communication with more actors in the team spirit and an inclusive approach.

There are also many researchers who have shown that preparing questionnaires play a crucial role when designing syllabi for different courses in academia - the people, activities and institutions that are connected with education, especially in colleges and universities. Hutchinson & Waters, see ESP as an approach rather than a product. They suggest that "the foundation of ESP is the simple question: Why does this learner need to learn a foreign language?" (Dudley-Evans & St John, 2003).

3. Types of Syllabi

As far as syllabi are concerned there are many classifications, and one of the classifications is as follows:

3.1 A Structural (Formal) Syllabus - A structural syllabus is a collection of the forms and grammatical structures of the language being taught such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, statements, questions, subordinate clauses, and so on.

3.2 A Notional/Functional Syllabus - A notional/functional syllabus is a collection of the functions or of the notions such as informing, agreeing, apologizing, requesting, and so on.

3.3 A Situational Syllabus - A situational syllabus is a collection of real or imaginary situations in which language occurs or is used. The primary purpose of a situational language teaching syllabus is to teach the language that occurs in the situations such as seeing the dentist, complaining to the landlord, buying a book at the book store, meeting a new student, and so on.

3.4 A Skill-Based Syllabus - A skill-based syllabus is a collection of specific abilities that may play a part in using language. The primary purpose of skill-based instruction is to learn the specific language skills and to develop more general competence in the language.

3.5 A Task-Based Syllabus - A task-based syllabus is a series of complex and purposeful tasks that the students want or need to perform with the language they are learning such as applying for a job, talking with a social worker, getting housing information over the telephone, and so on.

3.6 A Content-Based Syllabus - The primary purpose of this syllabus is to teach some content or information using the language that the students are also learning. An example of content based language teaching is a science class taught in the language the students need or want to learn. While doing this, we also make with linguistic adjustment to make the subject more comprehensible (Dincay, 2010).

4. Needs Analysis

A combination of pre-course, mid-course and post-course analysis is conducted in order to see what students need to learn and improve upon through this course. The following table shows the structure of the needs analysis:

Table 1. The structure of the Needs Analysis

	Students' Questionnaires
Pre-course Needs Analysis	Informal Discussions with students
	Feedback from learners' performance and assignments
Mid-course Needs Analysis	The Project Results
Post-course Needs Analysis	Final Exam and Final Grade Results

5. Methods

The methods that I used for this research are of scientific overall statistical methods, where the data is presented in quantitative ways given in statistical tables. I prepared a questionnaire with the following questions:

1. Which language skills would you like to practice more?
 - a) Reading
 - b) Writing
 - c) Speaking through debates

- d) Listening

2. Where would you prefer to work after you graduate?

- a) Municipality
- b) Government
- c) Embassy
- d) Private Company

I also gathered data to design a new syllabus and to select materials by interviewing the students and preparing the target vocabulary for ESP 1 and ESP 2, and the scope and sequence of the course. At last, I used the data obtained from University's Career Center to show the percentage of the already employed graduate students, and according to that new syllabi and materials were selected to motivate students, engage and give assignments on topics that they will use on a daily basis.

6. Participants and Procedure

The participants in this study were the students studying at the Faculty of Public Administration and Political Sciences. Forty students studying in both Campuses of South East European University in Tetovo and Skopje participated in the research. Twenty-two students were attending ESP 1 course and eighteen students attending ESP 2 course. The survey was done at the beginning of Summer Semester 2014.

7. The Results and Discussion

The results for question 1; "*Which language skills would you like to practice more?*", is given in the following Figure 1., which shows that 63% of the students, most of them studying Political Sciences would rather practice their speaking skills through debates. 22% were more interested to write a project, and practice and enhance their writing skills, and 14 % of students would rather prefer to read more authentic texts. The listening skills were avoided by students, as seen in the table just 1% would like to practice listening. The question in fact was whether they would prefer listening to CDs on different topics. This resulted in a low level because the listening is more practiced in General English Basic Skill courses, offered before the students take ESP.



Figure 1: Results from question 1

The results of question 2 are shown in Figure 2. Nearly half of the second and third year students, 47%, who filled in the questionnaire answered that they would prefer to work in the Government after they

graduate. With government it means that they would either work in the government or in one of the 15 existing ministries within the government of the Republic of Macedonia. (www.vlada.mk)

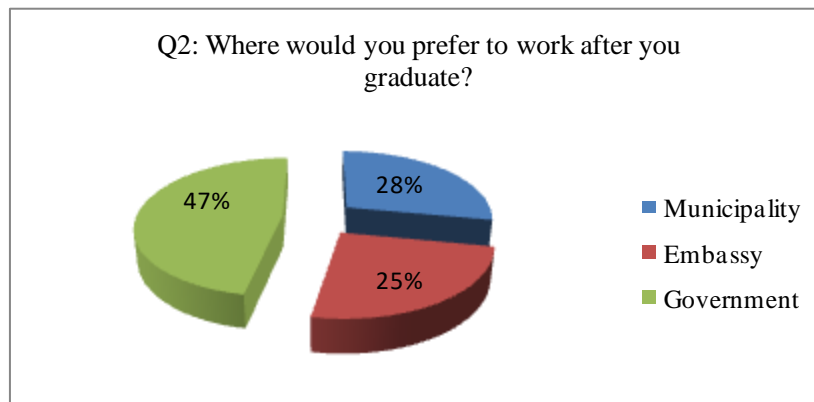


Figure 2: Results from question 2

The following Tables 2 and 3 show the results that were conducted with students on target vocabulary. The last columns in both tables show the target vocabulary, whereas the goals, objectives, topics, assignments and materials were selected and developed according to target vocabulary.

Table 2. The Target Vocabulary for English for Specific Purposes 1

Course Level	Goals	Objectives SWBAT	Topics	Assignments	Materials	Target Vocabulary
ESP 1	Become competent in oral and written work in the communicative arts skills	Express oneself extensively and fluently @ topics in public administration; Build and use vocabulary effectively; State an opinion without anyone's help; Apply communication skills in oral and written work	Public Administration -what is it? Familiarity with citizenship; Political rights; Constitutional rights; Democracy, What government does	Debate Group Oral presentation project	Constitutional rights materials, such as Citizenship book: "We the people" The Citizens and the Constitution Author: Centre for Civic Education Date of publication; 2003	Policy Social work Issue Democracy Constitution Politics Government Citizenship Discrimination Freedom of expression

Table 3. The Target Vocabulary for English for Specific Purposes 2

Course Level	Goals	Objectives SWBAT	Topics	Assignments	Materials	Target Vocabulary
ESP2	Become competent in oral and written work in the communicative arts skills	Describe the basic principles of participatory democracy; Write a research paper that incorporates APA	Similar topics to course I but HOW to use the knowledge of these topics; Public Administration	Written Project Formal group presentation; Brief	Story of Stuff video: www.storyofstuff.com Chapters in: Sharfritz, J. M. & Russell, E.	Ministries Bureaucracy Administration Executive Branch Management Public Interest Public Policy

style; organization, + logical arguments; work effectively and responsibly in small group by communicating, sharing and presenting equally; defend a position and opinion	in Macedonia; Bureaucracy in Macedonia and how to banish it; Political reasoning ability	individual presentation on a ministry in Macedonia ; Reflection paper? Video analysis?	W. (1999, 2 nd ed). <i>Introducing Public Administration</i> . Addison- Wesley- Longman.	Regulation Lobby Implementation Municipality Bureau Bureaucracy Bureaucrat Bureaucratic Expertise Centralization Decentralization Department Hierarchy Independent Agency Local Government Ombudsman Civil Service Career Service
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7.1 SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2014

According to University's Career Service survey conducted in 2014, 38.83 % of graduates with an undergraduate degree in Public Administration and Political Sciences (PAPS) have found employment in government, while 19.41% of them are in Trade, followed by other 12.62% in Education and Services with 10.67%, Media with 3.88%, Banking 2.91% and IT 0.97%. This survey from the South East European University's Career Center was of great help, since the results from the questionnaire that I did with students and the survey of the Career Center with Alumni was nearly the same, with the slight difference on percentage. Almost most of these faculty students are already employed in the government sector, and most of my students would like to get employed in the government.

8. Conclusion

After gathering the data and the results from the questionnaire that was conducted with students at the beginning of the summer semester 2014, and having a clear scope and sequence of the course, I designed new ESP 1 and ESP 2 syllabi. The results from the questionnaire and the data from the SEEU Alumni survey helped me to select materials from the topics that students would prefer to work on. Since there is a lack of text books for teaching English for Specific Purposes to Public Administration and Political Sciences students, I also compiled course packs. The course packs have materials taken from different ELT Books, different websites, pod casts, etc. and are designed for both ESP 1 and ESP 2 courses that will prepare students for their future career. Since English is a world language, nowadays in Macedonia it is used as a Lingua Franca among politicians, business groups, diplomats, state administrators, government advisors in different symposiums, conferences, political institutions, mediations and negotiations. Thus I hope that these materials will be of great help to Public Administration and Political Sciences students and will prepare them for their future career.

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