Correlation between ESP syllabus design and material adaptation based on needs analysis: A review of literature

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to review the development of ESP Syllabus design theory and material adaptation based on the need's analysis of the students. Besides, it explores and presents the references on the relationship between ESP syllabus design and material adaptation. ESP syllabus design deals with the kinds and importance of a syllabus. The materials in it discuss authenticity, material evaluation, and material writing. Need analysis covers the meaning, type, practice, and register of an analysis.

1. Introduction

English for Specific Purpose begins in the early 1960s (Hutchinson & Waters, 2006: 43). Reports tell that there is a growing dissatisfaction with the current language teaching practice, in that the learners were educated with literature, ignoring their aims, needs, or interests (McDonough, 2014: 4). Strevens in Khalik (2014) pointed out that literary training is irrelevant to learners who use English in their job. Further, Wingard in Khalik (2014) stated that students were frustrated by learning inappropriate English, leading him to establish a relevant program in the university context.

The experiences indicate that designing an ESP course, especially the materials and the syllabus, needs to consider the students' necessities and interests. When the students' needs are abandoned, they will fail to learn, and the learning goals will never be achieved.

At present, ESP has been discussed in the literature of English Language Teaching (Robinson, 2009: 1). English for a specific purpose is required for those who use English in their job, such as pilots, bankers, and so on. In a school context, ESP is necessary for vocational high schools, helping students learn with specific goals. Consequently, learning objectives should be related to academic studies (Mackay and Mountford, 1978).

2. Syllabus Design for ESP

A syllabus is a work plan intended for teachers as a guideline in doing classroom activities. Sometimes, teachers can show the syllabus to the students, giving them a "route map" of the course (Robinson, 2009: 34). Therefore, a syllabus is a document about what to learn in a classroom (Hutchinson and Waters, 2007: 80).

A well-designed syllabus is one of the key factors in a language program, from the teachers' and students' point of view. For the former, it guides them in terms of scope, sequence, and pacing of the classroom activities. For the latter, it lets them see at a glance the profile of the semester's work and thus they have their expectation to reach their success in learning.

In general, the ESP syllabus design should complete three aspects: language description, learning theories, and needs analysis. It is shown in the following chart.
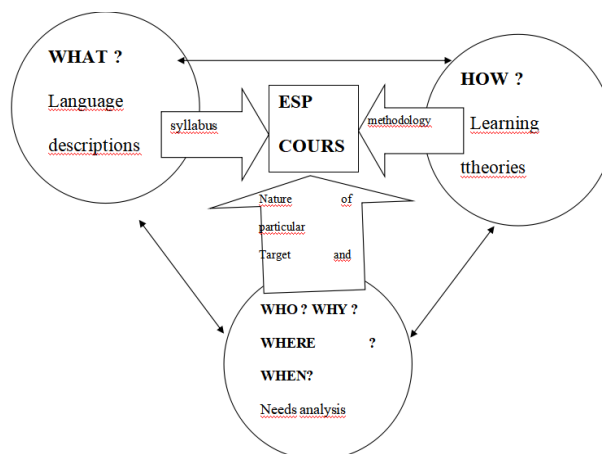

Fig. 1.ESP course design

2.1. Kinds of Syllabus and Why should we need a syllabus?

Wello and Nur (2002: 57-58) argue that seven different kinds of the syllabus are commonly used in the current ESP courses and materials. Structural syllabus, focusing on the grammatical form; situational syllabus on context and situations where the language is used; topical syllabus, which is organized by themes; functional syllabus based on the language functions; notional syllabus a conceptual category of a general notion; skills-based syllabus based on materials; and task-based or activity-based syllabus on different types of tasks required from the students.

Robinson (2009: 36-39) suggested that they can be combined in several models. Some of them are in the following.

1) Content-based syllabuses: language form, language notion, language function
2) Content-based syllabuses: situation, topic.
3) Skill-based syllabuses: listening, speaking, writing, reading

Swan, in Robinson (2009: 41) explained that the matter is not the kind of the syllabus. Instead, it is the way to integrate them to be used in a sensible teaching program. The selected type is based on the students' needs and learning objectives. The latter forms part of the ESP course and should be considered next.

Hutchinson and Waters (2007: 83-84) mentioned that the syllabus plays an important role for several reasons:

1) Language is a complex entity and cannot be completed at one time. There will be a series of procedures that are divided into several manageable units.
2) A syllabus is a kind of moral support for the   teachers and students, in that it helps them to manage the learning materials.
3) A syllabus has a cosmetic role, in that teachers and the sponsors are ensured that the invested money and time are worth the learning process.
4) A syllabus is a statement of a projected route.
5) A syllabus is an implicit statement of the characteristics of language and learning.
6) A syllabus provides a range of criteria of which eachers can use to select the materials.
7) A syllabus is one of the ways to achieve standardization.
8) A syllabus provides a visible basis for testing

2.2. Materials for ESP

'Choice' and 'synthesis' are the main terms in the discussion of designing a teaching and learning material. McDonough (2014: 75) mentioned some possible sources to use, such as from published materials (textbooks, journals, and magazines) and speeches (lectures, broadcasts, seminars, and conversation). Besides, they can also be from written works, simplified and adapted from these two kinds of sources.

1) Authenticity

Robinson (2009: 54) explains that in the communicative approach, authenticity is significant. It refers to the use of printed materials, audios, and videos, which is produced to facilitate language learning. Similarly, Elis and Johnson (2016: 157) mentioned that authentic material is the one taken from the real world which is not specifically intended for language learning. It can be any text, visuals, audios, tickets, menus, maps, or timetables. Objects can also be used in this context.

Swales (2000: 107) suggested two major ways of approaching an authentic text to be used in the classroom. It can be a repository of natural language use and a stimulus for a variety of communication skills. The former deals with explicating text, extracting the information; while the latter developing the skills to transfer a message, such as note-taking.

2) Reasons for Authentic Materials

Wello and Nur (2002: 19) elaborated on the idea that authentic material is highly recommended because they are specific to a particular terminology and jargon, competed with organizational features or sentence patterns. Authentic material contains information about real-life situations or events. In this case, the content, rather than the language used, of the materials are more useful to the teachers and learners. The information provided tends to be more accurate, highly credible, and up-to-date, leading to being more relevant to the students' interest.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 96) propose three possible ways of getting the actual teaching materials proposed three possible means to deliver authentic teaching materials

   a) Material evaluation, which is selecting the available materials;

   b) Materials development/ writing, which is to write new materials

   c) Materials adaptation, which is modifying the available materials

The first two options will be discussed in the present study, while the last is the combination of the other two.

3) Materials Evaluation

Evaluation does not mean determining whether a material is good or bad. Instead, it is judging the appropriateness of the material for a particular purpose of learning. In other words, evaluation is to decide the degree of appropriateness of the materials based on the results of need analysis.

Recently, a great diversity of commercial textbooks are available to support any kind of programs in English for Specific Purposes. Commercial textbooks become popular because of several factors, such as the following (Richard, 2003: 19).

   a) Practicality in that it is cost benefits and facilitates the overload tasks of teachers.

   b) Ideology, where the materials are made in such a way to cover the learning content efficiently

   c) Completeness, meaning that a textbook is available for the students for a full course

However, commercial textbooks often exhibit: Nevertheless, this kind of textbook has several drawbacks. It cannot cover all the specific needs of the students; do not consider the cultural and geographical diversity of the students; and there is a kind of unreasonable attribution of excellence, authority, and validity.

Sheldon in Lawrence (2011) presents more detail accounts on the likely problems with commercial textbooks:

"Practical problems include such recurring faults as the failure to describe adequately the language levels of target learners (the discriminate use of terms like 'beginner' and 'intermediate' abounds); the production of workbooks or exercise pages that demand microscopic handwriting; the omission of course rationales stating exactly, who the book is intended for, or how material is

selected and sequenced; a surrender to the economic pressures that demand a maximum textual density on each page; and the production of teacher's books that are little more than student editions with inserted answer keys. The purchaser is also confronted with terminological looseness (for example, 'communicative', 'authentic', 'notional! functional', 'lexical syllabus', etc.) that makes meaningful comparisons of textbooks difficult.

In conducting a textbook selection, Hardley in Noori and Mazdayasna (2015) suggested several considerations: contextualized language-practice activities, creative activities that encourage students to participate, suggestion for group work, authentic language in exercise, readings, and dialogues, functional/national concepts, clear grammatical explanations, appealing topics, themes, readings and activities that responds to the students' needs and interests, and cultural materials integrated with language practice activities.
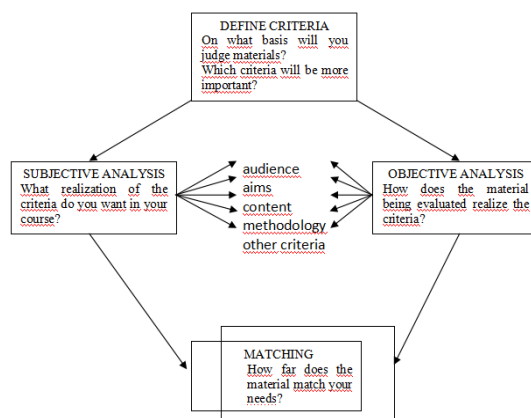

Fig. 2. Material Adaption

4) Material Writing

Hutchinson and Waters (2007:106) state that materials writing is one of the most characteristic features of ESP in practice. There are some reasons why materials writing is important explained that material writing is a unique characteristic of ESP, due to several factors. Materials appropriate for a specific subject for a particular learner may not be available commercially. Besides, the available materials are unaffordable and restricted in particular areas. Further, material writing has additional benefits, in that it can be used for non-educational reasons.

To support the idea, Moore in Jordan (1997) proposed six criteria to write an ESP material: purpose (the purpose is clearly defined), type (effectively and economically accomplish the purpose), content (the ratio of the material and the tasks are equally economical; the instructions are clear), interest, authentic (the tasks are meaningful and challenging), and level of difficulties.

Similarly, Hutchinson and Waters (2007: 107) suggest the following principles as a guide to material writing in ESP. Similarly, Hutchinson and Waters (2007: 107) suggested several principles write ESP material. It should stimulate and encourage learning. The materials should help teachers organize teaching activities to ensure meaningful learning. The materials represent the nature of language learning, reflect the nature of learning tasks, broaden the basis of training by introducing new techniques, as well as providing a model of appropriate language use. The following figure shows the designing of a material that integrates diverse aspects of learning.
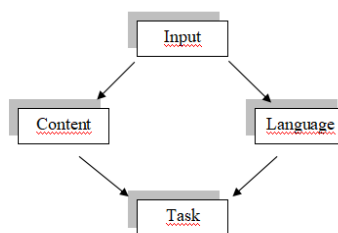

Fig. 3. Material design model

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Input can be a text, dialogue, video-recording, or diagram, depending on the results of need analysis. It provides several things, such as encouraging materials, language items, models of language use, topics for communication, and practice. Meanwhile, content focus refers to the non-linguistic one that helps generate meaningful interaction. Language focus allows the learners to analyze the language they are learning, while tasks are designed to encourage students to use the language in communication.

2.3. Needs Analysis

Needs analysis is significant in language learning, especially in learning English for a specific purpose. ESP is an approach to course design, questioning the students of their goals in attending the learning process. Hutchinson and Waters (2007:53) claimed that ESP is different from general English, in that the former deals with an awareness of the need and the target. If the needs analysis has been fulfilled, the content of a language course can be determined to optimize the learners' potentials. In short, needs refer to the ability to comprehend the linguistic features of the target situation. Needs analysis deals with activities to gather information, enabling the teachers to develop an appropriate curriculum for a particular group of students. Need analysis can be stated in terms of goals and objectives underlying the development of tests, materials, activities, evaluation, and reevaluation.

Analyzing a learners' language needs is similar to that carried out in English for Specific Purpose; learners are the heart of a teaching program. Therefore, a need analysis helps to establish a particular profile with a coherent objective and subsequent decisions (McDonough, 2014: 24). Similarly, Andrews Gregory, A.F. (2000: 25-26) mentioned that learners should be able to identify their needs, allowing them to use the language, to express their ideas, and communicate their thought. Besides, they may be able to specify the necessary performance criteria.

More specifically, needs analysis is very important in any ESP course because of the following reasons More specifically, needs analysis helps to develop an ESP course because of several reasons. First, it serves as the base for developing the materials, syllabus, tests, teaching methods, and evaluation. Second, it is to identify the learners' present situation, needs, and target needs. Third, it helps motivate the students in learning. The following figure shows the roles of a need analysis in an ESP program.
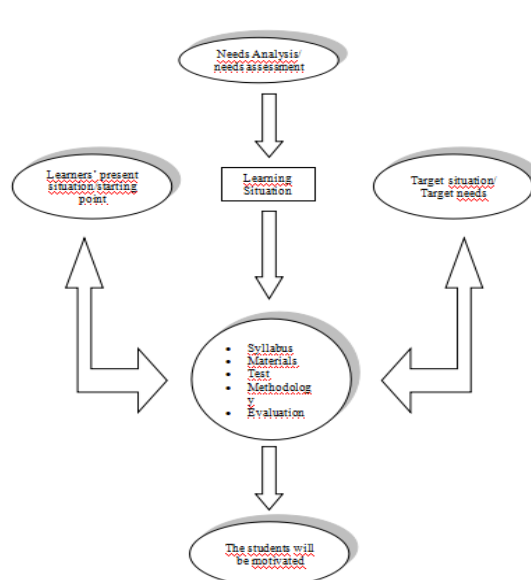

Fig. 4. The roles need analysis

The present situation means the condition of the students at the beginning of a language course, such as their strengths and weaknesses. Learning situation means the starting point of the learning process, while target situations refer to the learners' need at the end of the course.

2.4. Correlation between Needs Analysis and Syllabus Design

Need analysis refers to a series of processes to gather information about the learners to design an appropriate syllabus. Syllabus means a set of learning plans made for teachers, serving to guide

them. The syllabus may be shown to the learners, allowing them to give them a path to follow in the learning process.

An ESP syllabus requires the combination of the learners' needs and the development of learners' ability to transfer the language in a particular context. It is necessary to carry out an initial pre-course need analysis to establish the structure and the content of the course. Needs analysis is a complex process followed by a series of activities related to the syllabus design, such as selecting the course materials, deciding a suitable teaching method, and planning for the evaluation. Teachers need to be aware of the students' needs, because, sometimes, they cannot identify their needs, willingness, and weaknesses. Successful learning can be achieved by adjusting the syllabus to the learners' needs; thereby, an ongoing needs analysis is necessary. An initial pre-course needs analysis refers to a conventional approach to teach a language to novice learners. The term "need" refers to the ability of an individual. In a linguistic context, different meaning of "need" varied from one expert to another. If it is defined as a specific requirement in learning a foreign language, it does not exist in most learners. They tend to follow what is written in the syllabus, which is mostly about an exam, a real need of the learners (Dickinson as cited in Umam, 2016)

3. Conclusion

A course for English for Specific Purposes should be preceded by conducting a need analysis of the students' needs in learning, which helps teachers to arrange the syllabus and select the materials. The existing materials offered in the market cannot fully meet the learners' needs. The most suitable syllabus is the one integrating the topics, skills, and language structures. Therefore, it is expected that a course syllabus will encourage learners to develop their language skills and vocabulary mastery common to their studies.

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