

# **OPTIMIZING "KNOW HOW " AND "HOW KNOW" IN COMPLIMENTARY ESP TRAINING COURSES: A REANALYSIS OF ESP PRACTICES IN IRAN**

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## **ABSTRACT**

English For Specific Purposes(ESP) is a learner-centered approach to teaching English as a foreign or second language and is designed to meet the needs of most adult learners who need to learn a foreign language for their specific fields; moreover, is specifically tailored for academic learning in situ ( Ann M. Johns & Donna Price-Machado) ESP courses are recommended for graduate students and foreign or second language professionals whom must pass complimentary English course in the workplace and it is proposed that these courses should be developed using the following guidelines:

- a) The developing of a needs assessment and genre analysis for specific groups of learners
- b) The providing of guidelines to adopt or create authentic ESP materials in a chosen professional or occupational field
- c) To develop assessment procedures appropriate for ESP and the applying of this knowledge in the developing of course and lesson evaluation plans

This paper aims at briefly highlighting the defects that exist in current post college ESP practices and policies both in Academic Institutions and Complimentary Training Centers associated with various Ministries in Iran and the providing of an applicable ESP framework on the basis of the SCAN Report (US department of Labor 1975) in which two levels of Criteria for Workplace skills will be presented and Authenticity Issues discussed. The paper will present an argument for an Integrated approach (Nunan 1989) for the developing of a Task- based syllabus incorporating both reproductive , creative and pedagogical tasks with further suggestions for revising current practices in Iran.

## **INTRODUCTION**

*“Tell me and I forget; Teach me and I remember; Involve me and I learn”*  
*Benjamin Franklin*

Teaching English to non-native students in academic settings such as universities and colleges throughout Iran is generally done with “a view to the context rather than only to the language” ( Liz Hamp-Lyons 1987) and albeit defined as ESP courses they fail to provide the learners with adequate practical skills which can be applied by the learner in their work environments , thus failing to meet the definition of English For Specific Purposes(ESP) as being a learner-centered approach to teaching English as a foreign or second language which is designed to meet the needs of most adult learners who need to

learn a foreign language for their specific fields and, is specifically tailored for academic learning in situ ( Ann M. Johns & Donna Price-Machado 1991)

A more recent trend is the defining of these courses as EAP courses in which more focus is placed on reading and writing and emphasis is placed on the learner and situation. The texts designed for EAP learners basically follow the precedents set by Strevens in his article *Special- Purpose Language Teaching: A Perspective*, 1977. Yet these fail to meet Strevens (1977) requirement that the teaching of EAP will provide a “practical command of the language” and that “ the teaching of the language should be matched to the needs and purposes of the language learner.”

## **BACKGROUND**

Using the results of the SCAN Report (US department of Labor 1975) as the basis of the current study, a similar survey was carried out on a population of over a hundred and fifty graduate students with various EAP/ESP backgrounds( i.e Mechanical Engineering, Hydrology, Metrology, Civil Engineering, Power, Metallurgy etc.)within The Ministry of Energy, The Ministry of Mining and Industry and The National Iranian Drilling Company( NIDC) within the Khuzistan Province. The reasons for selecting the Khuzistan Province as the basis for the study is the fact that currently more than %60 of the national industries exist in this Province and over %72 of the Agriculture and agricultural related industries exist in the province hence providing one with a smaller version of the industrial environment of Iran.

The students had all recently graduated from various Colleges and Academic Institutions throughout the country with average GPAs and were in positions which they had to communicate with foreign engineers and consultants both verbally and in writing( i.e correspondence, reports etc.). Although knowledgeable of the terminology and jargon of their related fields and capable of reading and translating technical texts related to their field in a rudimentary fashion, these graduate engineers were totally incapable of applying the language in situ ; thus showing that the ESP/EAP courses provided at University level fail to meet the objectives delineated for these types of syllabuses.

## **RESEARCH**

In order to facilitate course design and teaching for Complimentary Training Courses within these various industries, a needs analysis was carried out using the standard needs analysis form provided by the British Council and the results were analyzed using both a target situation analysis ( Chambers 1980) and a means analysis(Holliday and Cooke 1982). Based on the results obtained a complimentary course was designed and an EOP teaching syllabus consisting of in- house materials and study skill practice ( listening to lectures, seminar skills, academic writing, correspondence both for e-mails follow ups and traditional types of business letters, etc.) was developed with specific attention given to the language used in the specific disciplinary context(Liz Hamp Lyons 1987) .Special attention was particularly given to:

- Registrar: lexical and grammatical/structural features ( as defined in Ewer and Lattore 1969)

- Discourse (as defined by Widdowson 1980) especially the relationship between text/discourse and its speakers/hearers/writers/readers
- Genre analysis

and the limitations and constraints imposed upon the course defined.

In order to present a course content which would vary from the common ESAP or CBI syllabus( as defined by Tony Dudley-Evans and Mary Jane St. John 1988) it was proposed that an Integrated approach (Nunan TESOL JOURNAL, 6,(1),) for the developing of a Task- based syllabus incorporating both reproductive , creative and pedagogical tasks be taken into account. This was done using the guidelines set down by Nunan in his *Syllabus Design* 1988 and Nunan and Lamb in *Managing The Learning Process* ( as printed in Hall and Hewing 2001).

A pilot study was carried with the staff of The Khuzistan water and Power Authority in which a homogeneous group in terms of Grade Point Averages was selected. The trainees were trained using their existing knowledge (their “ Know How”) and the experienced gleaned on the job in tandem with the tasks provided( the How Know component) and it was observed that in a period of 80 study hours ( three days a week for a period of 3 months) the pilot group were able to use English moderately well and use the inputted language as a basis for further independent development.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The obtained results indicate that it is possible to use Complimentary Training in EOP/ESP using an Integrative syllabus for graduates in Iran within work environments due to the existing interaction between their “Know How” and the“ How Know” acquired from their environment which once fused with the developed syllabus will facilitate learning.

## REFERENCES

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