English for Specific Purposes in Iraq

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Introduction
ESP (English for Specific Purpose)

ESP is a linguistic material specially designed for people who are learning English so that they will be able to use it in practical situations. Munby (1978: 2) states that ESP courses are "those courses where syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of communication needs of the learner".

ESP is the name generally given to programmes developed in response to specific social needs, language materials used, at various colleges of the Islamic University, can be considered as an example of such materials.

Section One
1-1 Definition of ESP:

English for specific purposes (ESP) is a broad and divers field of English Language Teaching. The term (ESP) "describes language programmes designed for groups or individuals who are learning with an identifiable purpose and clearly specifiable needs" (Encyclopedia Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, 1999: 105).

ESP is a subfield which seeks to serve the language needs of learners who need language in order to carry out specific roles, and who need to acquire content and real world skills of a second and foreign language rather than to master its grammar and pronunciation (i.e., language for its own sake) (Richard and Roger, 2001: 207).

It is difficult to provide a definition and a delineating definition for ESP as a recognizable activity within the broader professional framework of English language teaching. This is because this field branches into several other subfields. There is an interwoven relationship between the main field and the subfields such as English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), English for Science and Technology (EST) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), etc.

But initially, it may be divided into two main sub-fields or branches: English for Academic Purposes, dealing with the use of English in study settings (particularly but not exclusively) in higher education where the main goal of language learning is the ability to cope in the student's chosen academic purposes; and English for Occupational Purposes where the language is needed in the workplace environment of a job or profession. Each of these main divisions can be further sub-classified into specific disciplines or professions.

Robinson (1991: 2-4) specifies certain features that he considers to be factors of criteria common to all ESP programmes, as well as, on the other hand, characteristics that in quantitative terms are likely to occur:

1- ESP is goal-directed: Students are not learning English language as an end in itself, but because they need to use English. So English language is seen here as a 'service' rather than a subject studied for its own sake.

2- ESP courses are based on the analysis of learners' needs.

3- ESP learners tend to be adults rather than children.

4- Often, there is a very clearly specified period for the course.

1-2 The Scope of ESP:

ESP does not mean that the English language that is used in certain specialization is special. The special thing is the restricted information that are included (words, and propositions) which have specific use in this specialization, and which are selected from the whole repertoire of English language (Makey and Mountford, 1978: 4). Then, ESP is a restricted kind of language where the vocabulary items may often have their specialized character, and the grammar may usually be limited in range and may have unusual distribution (Wilkins, 1976: 73)]. Moreover, forms that are used frequently in general language,

for instance, may be less used or partly used in the specific use of language in certain specialization (ibid). This means that notions of specific use are frequently used in ESP.

Thus the main concern of ESP is the specific communicative needs of the learners, i.e., the ultimate aim of teaching ESP is to enable the learners to communicate efficiently in the fields of their specialization.

Special purpose language teaching occurs wherever the contents and the aims of teaching are determined by the requirements of the learner rather than by external factors such as general educational criteria (Strevens, 1978: 186).

It is believed that specific courses of language teaching that are specifically designed for learners who have specific communicative needs are more effective than general courses that are usually designed for achieving general educational end (Flavey, 1977: 8).

It should be noted that the learners who want to begin with ESP courses, should have an experience in the target language, i.e., they should have "a threshold level of communicative competence" (ibid, P.11). This is achieved by learning English in the school system for six years.

1-3 The Development of ESP:

From its early beginnings in 1960s, ESP has undergone five main phases of development. It has developed at different speeds in different countries, and that its approaches (phases) can be found operating somewhere in the world at the present time (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 9).

1-3-1 Register Analysis:

This stage can be traced back to the beginning of the 1960s and early 1970s. It was associated with the works of Strevens, Halliday, McIntosh (1964), and Ewer (1971). This was a reaction against the literary tradition in language teaching. This is indicated by Strevens' landmark paper, "Alternative to Daffodils" (1971), in which he argues for a more pragmatic view of course design and methodology rooted in the learners' own goal and realities (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, 1999: 9).

Register analysis was based on the principle that the English, for instance, of electrical engineering constituted a specific register which is different from that of, say, biology or of general English. The aim of the analysis was to identify the grammatical and lexical features of these registers. These linguistic features, then, were taken to design syllabus such as "A Course in Basic Scientific English" by Ewer and Latorre (1969).

The main motive behind register analysis was the pedagogic one of making the ESP course more relevant to the learner's needs. The aim was to produce a syllabus which gave high priority to language forms that students would meet in their science studies and in turn would give low priority to forms that they would not meet.

Applied linguists made several comparisons between the language of school textbooks and the language of the texts their science students had to read. They found that school textbooks neglected some of the language forms commonly found in science texts (e.g., compound nouns, passives, conditionals, etc). So, they concluded that the ESP course should, therefore, give priority to these forms (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 10).

1-3-2 Rhetorical or Discourse Analysis:

With the development in linguistics, the register analysis as a research procedure was rapidly developed. The focus of ESP shifted attention from the level of the sentence to level above the level of the sentence which is text as ESP became closely involved with the emerging field of discourse or historical analysis. The work in this stage is associated with Henry Widdowson (ibid).

The basic hypothesis of this stage is that the difficulties that students face arise, not from a defective knowledge of the system of English language, but from their inability to use language to communicate with others (Widdowson, 1978: 3).

Widdowson and some other linguists believe that ESP courses should be designed with reference to use rather than to usage. By use, it is intended to develop the communicative knowledge of learners. But this communicative knowledge is not effectively achieved unless based on a good linguistic competence (usage) (ibid, P.19).

Attention, then, was shifted to the understanding of how sentences were combined in discourse to produce meaning. The main concern of research, therefore, was to identify the organizational patterns in texts and to specify the linguistic means by which these patterns are signalled. These patterns would then form the syllabus of the ESP course (Encyclopedia Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, 1999: 10-11).

1-3-3 Target Situation Analysis (Need Analysis)

The concept of need analysis became most fully discussed and explored from the mid of 1970s.

This stage didn't really add anything new to the range of knowledge about ESP (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 12) which aimed at talking the existing knowledge and setting it on a more scientific basis by

establishing procedures for relating language analysis more closely to the reasons behind learner's learning of the language.

Since the aim of ESP course is to enable learners to use language to communicate effectively in the situations they face in the fields of their specialization, then the ESP course design process should proceed by identifying the target situation and then carrying out a vigorous analysis of the linguistic features of that situation. This process is called 'need analysis'.

The definition of 'need' is the basis of any need analysis (or need assessment), but unfortunately an operational definition must be constructed each time for each assessment. This is because the need's elements will change according to the influential constituents of an educational system. Need can be described as a "gab" that need to be fulfilled. Need analysis is then, the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners require the language and organizing them according to priority (Brumfit, 1984: 91).

Munby's model, Communicative Syllabus Design 1978 is one of the most important models that studied need analysis. (This mode will be discussed later in this paper).

1-3-4 Skills and Strategies:

The principal idea of this skill-centered approach is that; underlying all language use, there are common reasoning and interpreting processes which, regardless of the surface forms, enable us to extract meaning from discourse. The focus should be on the underlying interpretive strategies which enable the learner to cope with the surface forms (i.e. understanding the meaning from context) by using visual layout to determine the type of the text, exploiting cognates, … etc. (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 13).

The focus of this approach was on listening and reading strategies. The learner should reflect and analyze how meaning is produced in and retrieved from written and spoken discourse.

1-3-5 A Learning-Centered Approach:

All the preceding stages of ESP are based on the description of language use. The concern is with describing what people do with language. But learning-centered approach is concerned with language learning although language use will help to define the course objectives.

> This concentration on language learning is due to the fact that describing and exemplifying what people do with language may not enable one to learn it. If that were so, learning a language would be so easy in that one can read a book of grammar and a dictionary in order to learn a language. A truly valid approach to ESP must be based on an understanding of the processes of language learning (ibid, P.14).

This brief survey of the history of ESP shows the major shifts in the development of ESP both in theory and practice. All the stages are concerned with the linguistic aspect of ESP, they are all essentially language-centered approach (ibid).

Hutchinson and Waters state that ESP is an approach to language learning. It is not a particular kind of language or methodology, nor does it consist of a particular type of teaching material. It is an approach which is based on the learner need. Why does he want to learn a foreign language? Is it something related to the nature of language, the given contexts? This is all based on the identified need for learning a language. It is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning.

All the branches or sub-fields of ESP have one common thing which is all the sub-fields are concerned with communication and learning.

1-4 Syllabus Design:

A syllabus is a document which says (or at least) what should be learnt (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 80). A syllabus is the specification of content for a single course or subject. It is a working document that can be used flexibly and appropriately to maximize the aims and processes of learning.

A syllabus is also defined as a statement of the plan for any part of the curriculum excluding the element of curriculum evaluation.

Designing a syllabus is a matter of asking certain questions. These questions are:

1- Why does the learner need to learn?
2- Who are the people that are involved in the process? This will cover students, teachers, inspectors, etc.
3- Where is the learning to take place?, what does the place provide?, and what limitations does it involve?
4- When is the learning to take place?, how much time is available?, and how will it be distributed?
5- What does the learner need to know or learn? What aspects of language will be needed and how will they be described? What levels of proficiency must be achieved? And what topic areas will be covered?...etc.
6- How will the learning be achieved? What learning theory will underlie the course? And what kind of methodology will be employed?

There are three main factors that affect the syllabus design. They are: language description, learning theories, and need analysis. These will be discussed in detail:

a- Language Descriptions: These represent the way in which language system is analyzed and described for the purpose of learning. They covers the domains of questions within number (5) 'What'? There were different schools of linguistics that studied language and analyzed it. But describing and analyzing of language has nothing to do with how language is to be taught.

It is the job of the applied linguist to mediate the findings of these schools of linguistics and the different theories (linguistic theories) since it is not easy for teachers to know which findings are applicable and which are not.

b- Learning Theories: There is the learning theories that provides the basis for the methodology, by helping us to understand how people learn. Learning theories provide us with the psychological processes that lie behind language use and language learning. They also tell us how to achieve learning, what learning theory is involved or underlies in a course, and what methods of teaching are to be used.

Although there are different theories of language learning, and each one has a relevance to ESP course, no one theory can be considered the only one that completely fits ESP course. The behaviourist theory, for instance, can be used in teaching pronunciation, and the cognitive theory for teaching grammar (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 51).

3- Need Analysis:

Researchers of the ESP syllabus design insist that the communicative needs of the learners should be specified before any other step because it is believed that these needs are the key phrases to any further work, i.e. right from the beginning, an ESP objectives should be specified as accurately as possible (Mackey and Mountford, 1978: 10). Knowing these needs enable the course planner to narrow down the area of use and usage.

For a syllabus to be at least communicative in its essence, its design must begin with considerations of the specific communicative needs of the learners, why a learner needs to learn. We should first know the purpose of the course. Then depending on this purpose, one may outline the ways that achieve that purpose, (i.e. the materials). This is done by an adequate research into the language that is actually used by the learners in their practical life.

The most wide known work on need analysis is John Munby's Communicative Syllabus Design, 1978. Procedures that are used to assess the learner's needs are questionnaire, interviews, observations, data collection, informal consultations of sponsors, gathering texts, etc. If a questionnaire is used, the questions should be prepared in such a way that can elicit the required information. There should be many questions so as to avoid any gab in the resulting information (ibid).

Munby presents a highly detailed set of procedures for discovering target situation needs (i.e., the need to use language at a specific situation, for example, a waitress in a restaurant needs to know what to say in intention, directing someone, or prohibition). Munby calls this set of procedures "The Communicative Needs Processor" (CNP). It consists of a range of questions about key communication variables (topics, participant, medium, settings, etc) which can be used to identify the target language needs of any group of learners. These categories are eight and they are investigated by proposing detailed questions within each variable or category in order to specify the relevant information (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 54).

If we take the category of participant, for example, the questions that will be asked concerning his age, identity, language, sex, nationality and level of education whether he is zero beginner (i.e. the learner has no English at all), knows some English (vocabulary and letters) he may be considered here as false beginner because what he knows is not sufficient for him to use English.

The learner may have intermediate level or advanced. This information help the course designer to decide on the type of the ESP course according to the level of the learner.

What Munby does in his analysis of the learners needs is to observe the situation and decide what micro-functions the learner needs and the language to fulfill, then he analyses the linguistic features-discoursal, functional, structural, lexical-which are commonly used in the situations identified (ibid, P.55).

The eventual output of Munby's analysis is a detailed list of syllabus content in terms of skills and language items. Thus, the data are gathered on reasons for learning, place and time of anticipated target use, others with whom the users will interact, content areas and skills required (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, 1999: 228-31).

It should be noted that Munby's model is a systematic model for the analysis of the learners needs. It has sharpened the scholars understanding of a crucial element in programme design as well as providing a comprehensive checklist of questions for carrying needs analysis (ibid).

However, there are a number of areas which are not taken into account in need analysis (or Target Situation Analysis). The most important areas are:

1- Munby considers 'participants' as sterotype. He does not think of the language learner as the one who has expectations, demands, and wishes which are changeable within the programme itself that is focused on final objectives. Learners will have perceptions on their own needs which will over time as learning goals are reset, and they become clearer about their own developing proficiency. For example, a postgraduate arriving in Britain may initially be more concerned with social interaction and establishing a personal living framework than with his future academic needs; a professional person may be preoccupied with novel aspects of the methodology

of the language in relation to previous learning experiences (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, 1999: 229-31).

2- Other learners have their own perceptions of needs in a particular context (for example, working in companies and government agencies), the institutions in which the language programme takes place, and the language teachers themselves, the resources and other environmental factors. All are in a process of change.

3- Munby's model doesn't concentrate on these things directly but he considers them to be 'constraints' that are to be attended to at the syllabus implementation stage and after establishing the needs profile.

4- It is improbable that a language course can consist only of a series of replication derived from the target situation. Such teaching by objectives ignores the reality of learning situation and also of a process of acquiring language itself (ibid, P.230).

Section Two

English for Academic Purposes

2-1 Definition of EAP:

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is a branch of ESP in that the teaching content is matched to the requirements of the learners. It is considered to be ESP if we take Robinson's (1991: 2-5) features which are usually thought of as being criterial to ESP courses.

1- EAP students are usually current higher Education students or they are hoping to go on to higher education after their EAP courses. They need to learn English in order to succeed in their academic careers.

2- One important feature of EAP courses is the close attention that is paid to students' aims and what they plan to study. The first stage in

any EAP and ESP is to find exactly why the students are learning English and therefore, what language and skills they will need.

3- Often there is a very specified period for the course. Most EAP students are doing fixed term courses in preparation for an academic course.

4- Most EAP students are over 18 years and they will have made a difficult decision to study in an English medium university.

5- In some cases, a very high level of proficiency is not required, as long as students can succeed in their aims. Students need to be able to get good marks for assignments. So, the job of EAP lecturers is to find the ways to enable them to do this. For example, getting their present tenses correct may not be as important as the overall structure of the essay.

2-2 EAP and Study-Skills:

It is necessary to distinguish between these two terms. They are not the same thing. General language skills are not concerned with language, while language study skills form part of an EAP course. There are many study skills books available for native-speakers and they usually concentrate on matters like: where to study, when to study, time management, remembering, developing study habits, etc. Although they often deal with aspects of study skills that involve language such as planning essays and so on. These general study skills are obviously important to students in higher education, but they are not usually the main objective of EAP courses. The language study skills will form an essential component of the EAP skill classes.

2-3 Components of EAP:

Each language skill has a course that mainly concentrates on it. These courses are:

a- Academic Writing Classes:

For many students, this is probably the most important as it is the way in which most of their work is assessed.

The aim of an academic writing class is to prepare students for academic writing tasks. These tasks vary very much from writing short answers in exams to writing dissertations and theses. Important components of EAP writing class are accurate grammar, punctuation, and language use, along with specific teaching of the formal language required. This will involve teaching of different text types, linking words, signposting expressions, introductions, and conclusions. And teaching the conventions of writing that are used in the country in which the student is taking the course.

EAP lecturers concentrate on the process of writing-planning, organizing, presenting, re-writing, etc. The most important skill of these is organization. Writing classes are task-based and project work allows students to work in their own field. Students will have opportunity to develop the right kind of approach to studying in UK or USA. They will develop the ability to think logically and independently, to be reflective and critical and to be creative, etc.

b- Academic Listening Classes:

Many students are initially very worried about listening skills. Academic listening usually involves the non-native speaker of English trying to follow a lecture or a discussion in English and write adequate notes on it. As with ESP classes, the students are often faced with listening or language problems. There is a need to make the students aware of the way lectures are organized, the particular language that is used in lectures, and making that they know the language, particularly the pronunciation of familiar words of their own subjects. The main skill would be to learn to recognize the structure of the lecture- the main points and subsidiary points.

So, a typical syllabus would include:

1- Taking notes.

2- Recognizing lecture structure: understanding relations with the sentence whether simple or complex, etc.

3- Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words and words groups, etc.

C- Academic Speaking Skills Course:

This is increasingly becoming important as teaching methods change to involve more group work, joint projects and group marks. Academic speaking classes try to help the students to be more aware of what is involved in seminar or group activity and to supply them with some of the interactional language that is used.

One difficulty that faces specialists is that how to obtain good data from which they can analyze the language involved. In general, group work exercises are necessary as well as teaching the language used. Students will be given practice in making presentations, taking part in discussions on academic topics and so on.

Such a course might include:

1- The purpose of seminar.

2- Making a presentation.

3- Controlling the discussion: i.e. leading the discussion, changing the subject, moving on, speeding up things and coming to a conclusion.

4- Participating in a discussion: interrupting politely, asking questions- asking for more information, clarification, etc.

d- Academic Reading Course:

The big difficulty with reading is the amount involved. These classes therefore, aim to assess the non-native speaker of English studying in the medium of English at tertiary level to use a wide range of reading strategies in order to receive more benefit from the course. Many students still rely on slow word by word reading. It soon becomes clear to them that they cannot read every word in the library. General efficient reading strategies such as scanning to find books or chapter, skimming to get the gist and careful reading of important passages (Wallace, 1980: 9-10).

An academic course could include:

1- Understanding meaning: deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words and word group relations within the simple and complex sentences, information not explicitly stated, conceptual meaning, etc.

2- Understanding relations in texts, text structure and the communicative value of sentence relations between the parts of the text.

3- Understanding the main ideas of the text, recognizing details and unsupporting claims from those supported by evidence.

4- Reading efficiently: surveying the text, chapter/article, paragraphs, skimming for gist/general impression, scanning to locate specifically required information and reading quickly.

5- Note-taking.

2-4 Suggestions and Recommendations:

Islamic University includes much different specialization in legal and humanitarian sciences, therefore the ELT course to be designed for the students should be as follows:

1- Intensive ESP courses since English is to be used by students for academic and occupational purposes, it is recommended that English should be a standing course to be taken by college students all over the four years of study at the university.

2- The courses should be pre-planned, designed and written by a group of specialists consisting of an education, a subject specialist, a linguist and an ESP expert.

3- The course should consist of four stages; each stage material should contain no less than twelve short, carefully-arranged teaching units with authentic reading passages, oral work, notes on pronunciation, basic English structures, guided composition and written homework.

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المستخلص

الـESP هو مادة لغوية مصححه خصيصا للناس الذين يتعلمون اللغة الانكليزية لكي يكونوا قادرين على استخدام اللغة في مواقف عمليه. حدد مونبي مناهج الـESP على أنهى المناهج حيث المادة تحدد في كل أصولها بواسطة تحليلها السابق لحاجات التواصل اللغوي للمتعلمين.

ESP هو الاسم إلى يطلق بشكل عام على البرامج المطورة في ظل الحاجات الاجتماعية المحددة, أدوات اللغة المستخدمة, لمختلف طلاب الجامعة الاسلامية, يمكن ان تعتبر كمثال على مثل هذه الأدوات.