

ESP: English for What Purposes and How?

By

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Abstract

In ELT (English Language Teaching) business, ESP (English for Special/Specific Purposes) has always been a crucial matter as for instructing the technical terminology to adult students for various purposes. In this paper, ESP is studied to make necessary changes in the ELT syllabus in regard to implementing technical English syllabus into the curriculum for freshmen year university students. So in order to serve the purpose in ELT, the new ESP syllabus, survey studies, a profound needs analysis and research done to find out necessary data in implementing technical English at the university level are going to be the basic issues.

Besides, after deciding on the items to be implemented and used in the syllabus, a very preliminary study of a book will be discussed. As part of the survey on ESP at the university, the immediate and crucially important data collected from the use of the ESP book called CEMENTA (Civil Engineering Mastery of English for Necessary Terminology Achievement) will be assessed and the findings are going to be shared with the audience having the same ESP instructional issues in their career as well.

In fact, this study is to be considered as the implementation of a preliminary ESP syllabus at the university level. Mainly the paper discusses the issue: "ESP is for what purposes." Unless the EFL learners and their expectations from ESP studies are taken into consideration closely, no doubt, it is not easy to fill all the gaps in the learners' minds. That is to say, ESP does not seem to correspond with the following such as 'English for *Specific / Science / Social / Special / Syllabus or Several Purposes*'. In other words 'English for What Purposes?'

INTRODUCTION

For the last four decades ESP has grown to become one of the most prominent fields of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching today. With the increase in demand in international business market, many institutions as well as universities have tried to set up ESP courses to educate their staff. *Communicative competence* in ESP has become very important for the university graduates to maintain technological and international developments in their field of study. So to meet these communication needs, institutions such as universities have tried to design new ESP syllabuses on the highly specific academic and professional fields. These may include engineering, medicine, law, tourism, business etc. For this purpose, ESP programs have emerged into the national ELT (English Language Teaching) curriculum of the countries. Most of these programs have been tailor-made and the contents have been so designed that it could meet the ESP learners' needs. Most well-trained university graduates are expected to be capable of establishing successful communication except for General English Language Teaching (GELT).

Taking place in essence and as its name suggests, the teaching of *English for Specific/Special Purposes* is done within the framework of such variations as *English for Occupational Purposes*, *English for Academic Purposes* and other similar areas as well. The detail of these variations is covered in the following part of this paper.

As for the reason why ESP has become the hottest word for the last three or four decades can be explained that English has become a necessary tool in order to get a job or to move further ahead in a career or to get promoted and perform the ELT strategies in the professional world.

That is why this study focuses on the ESP syllabus designed for the Civil Engineering (CE) freshman year students in order to help them have a clear command of English in their professional lives. The detail of the syllabus is to be discussed in the further part of this paper.

BACKGROUND

Purpose of the Study

English for General Purposes (EGP) has been done for almost four decades in the universities in Turkey for various purposes. The underlying factor why EGP has been done for such a long time in the schools in Turkey including universities has been to furnish students with a good command of a

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foreign language, namely English recently, in their professional life. In most cases, this has been achieved to a certain extent. However, it is not the same for ESP as far as professional aspect of English is concerned. Most university graduates (graduates of English Medium universities) are able to perform the communication skills of the foreign language. Due to some reasons, those graduates are not good enough to perform the foreign language in the job-specific or job-related tasks. This, of course, causes failure in pursuing the career-related communication skills.

Bearing this in mind for the specific purposes, it was decided to design a special syllabus for the CE students in order to enable them to use English for professional purposes. The rationale behind this study may be explained as furnishing the students with necessary technical terminology through the use of authentic relevant texts chosen for this purpose.

Rationale behind the Study

Teaching general English at the university level to young adults are thought to be challenging for some cases, but this does not lead us to ignore other areas of English teaching for various purposes. Other than general English topics and course books in ELT, there is another fast growing interest in teaching English for Special/Specific Purposes. The ESP has always been considered as part of general English syllabus design, but this might not mean and satisfy what we have been searching in the ELT business. ESP is, in general, a very distinctive aspect of English Language Teaching because recently in almost every part of professional life as Hutchinson & Waters (1987) note that “there are three reasons common to the emergence of all ESP: the demands of a Brave New World, a revolution in linguistics, and focus on the learner.” The recent developments in social and political lives of the countries were to exert a positive pressure on the ELT and English has become subject to the wishes, needs and demands of people other than language teachers (Hutchinson & Waters 1987: 7 in Gatehouse 2001).

In the late 1960s and the early 1970s there was a growing interest on the English for Science and Technology (EST) which is also considered the part of ESP taxonomy to be mentioned in the following part of the study. Besides, within the framework of ESP, the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) takes place in essence, because for the university students it has become very crucial for getting a professional job in such a fast growing technology. The reason for its increasing relevance is due to the fact that English has changed from simply being a foreign language into a universal form of communication tool in all aspects of life all around the world.

Within the ESP context emerges English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) which Dominguez and Rokowski (2003) note that it is “a reaction against the conventional humanistic approach wherein both teachers and students abide by the academic objective of knowing everything about language being studied instead of concentrating attention on those skills most relevant within the workplace in the time allotted in the educational environment.”

The learners of ESP need to obtain information they will be able to apply outside the academic world and in a more accurate way the use of authentic material in the course format may enable them to have link between worlds, the academic and the professional, in a sense. So in this study, the underlying purpose is to encourage students to use what they have learned from the ESP syllabus and help them carry out professional life orders into success by the help of EOP.

In this new millennium, the need to understand and communicate in the professional world has become rather essential, and to meet these communication needs, many university students are seeking to improve their professional language ability through ESP namely EOP or EAP. Most ESP programs at any institution basically focus on communicative competence of the learner in a specific field such as engineering, science, business and technology. For this reason this paper will also discuss the course book designed as EAP for the CE students who are expected to master the necessary technical terminology.

RESEARCH

The need for such ESP book has been an issue for the universities in most non-native countries. To a certain extend this requirement was compensated through some technical reading

texts used in the English courses. Such a need for the ESP has also been requested by the university students was proved after the research and individual surveys done in the university. It was thought that something was missing in the overall syllabus and the GELT course books cannot enhance the missing point. So after teaching in the freshman year for a couple of times we did some surveys with the instructors and the students as well. The results of these randomly done researches were collected and a very short workshop was conducted in order to determine the syllabus content in ESP. During the research period, which is almost 6 months, various internet resources and civil engineering books written in English were searched carefully and some supplementary texts were fed into computer.

Method

The method that helped us to carry out the research was on the data collection stage. So it may be named as data-collecting method and first the need for ESP was determined and then the type of syllabus was set finally the main body of the syllabus was drawn out of the study which is given in the following part of this paper. The so-called method could also be explained as a tailor-made process of the syllabus preparation which is expected to suit the needs of the overall body of the ELT curriculum at the university.

Procedure

After the data collection process in the field of the study, all data were classified and fed into computer in order to be used in the syllabus. The procedure to be followed was to determine what should be included in the body of the whole study. Since this is going to be an ESP syllabus in a specific field which is quite different from GELT syllabuses, the materials were chosen carefully and the topics were thought to be very closely related to the Civil Engineering students' field of study. The course format designed in process was specifically chosen to help the freshman year students to be familiar with the topics in their own fields of the study. So the procedure followed is that all the date should be designed in such a syllabus so that it can make all the learners learn and practice the necessary technical terminology throughout their professional life.

Needs Analysis

Needs Analysis (NA) in ESP has been the most distinguishing feature of course design and is also a time-consuming process. It needs certain amount of time because a control group should be established and prior to this process, the needs of the prospective ESP learners should be worked on with an utmost care for the purpose of having actual taxonomy of the needs. The control group can be established as a pilot study group beforehand and their needs should be determined in advance. Depending on the course type and ESP syllabus, NA can be modified and various questionnaires can be given to the prospective learners of ESP. As mentioned earlier in this study, those who want to master ESP for various purposes are expected to have, at least, intermediate level of general English. That is to say, the suggested ESP syllabus is to be designed at the intermediate level and so is the course material and the content. The most determining factor in NA is the type of ESP to be implemented. However, the learners' professional and ELT background play a very crucial role in determining the actual needs of the learners, the ESP content and the ELT method to be put in action while conducting the suggested ESP courses.

The ESP experts, the ELT program coordinators and the syllabus designers are all the affective and specialized components of the ESP syllabus in the whole ELT curriculum. So not only the needs analysis but the reports from the experts should be determining factors in the decoding of the learners' NA prior to designing the actual syllabus as well. The following needs analysis process (Lyons 2001) which seems to be fundamental to an ESP, EAP and EOP course design and teaching will help us what procedure is needed in NA:

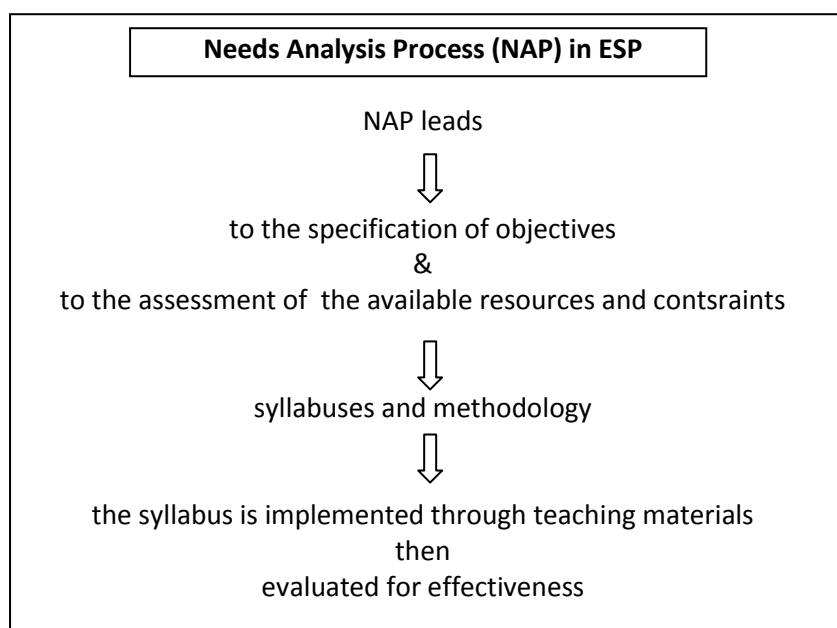


Figure 2: Needs Analysis Process in ESP (*partly adapted from Lyons 2001:127*)

As is shown in the above process, needs analysis help the program designer to specify the objectives and assess the available data processed. The next stage is the syllabus and methodology to be followed. Finally the syllabus is implemented and the overall syllabus outcomes are evaluated for effective implementation of the syllabus.

What lies beyond the needs analysis is also another major concern in this study. No doubt NA and syllabus designed accordingly are interwovenly related to each other. Evans (2001) explains what is beyond the needs analysis as in the following. So NA provides information about the target situation but

- **Target Situation Analysis** (Chambers 1980) is a next stage involving the most detailed analysis (objective needs).
- **Learning Situation Analysis** is an investigation of subjectively felt needs.
- **Present Situation Analysis** is the investigation of learners' weaknesses or lacks.
- **Means Analysis** (Holliday & Cooke 1982) is an analysis of the learning situation within the teaching institution or company.

Figure 3: Beyond Needs Analysis (*adapted from Evans 2001*)

The target situation also meaning objective needs, the needs felt by the individuals, the weaknesses and /or lacks of the target learners and where most probably the learning takes place are other determining factors which lie behind the rationale considered for NA.

WHAT IS ESP?

A Brief Review of Literature

The term ESP (cited in Tuncay, 2003:79) refers to English-teaching situations in which the range of language which is taught is restricted or specialized in various ways. For example engineering students in university courses may need English only for reading their textbooks. In the 1960s ESP has emerged into the ELT curriculum. Since then, it has been dealt with utmost care by the ELT experts in order to meet the professional needs emerged in the development of business world and international relations. At the very beginning, as Johns (1991: 67-68) notes "ESP researchers and

teachers concentrated on the sentence-level characteristics of the types of English identified as useful to their students. Researchers completed extensive analyses of the lexical and grammatical features of academic and professional registers such as the language of electrical engineering and the language of the law.” The ESP is considered as a curriculum to a profound needs analysis in order to satisfy the adults’/ young adults’ language need in their professional life.

The ESP syllabuses are mostly based on authentic texts related to a specific professional or academic area. However, “one of the most famous of the published volumes to appear during this period was Swales’s *Writing Scientific English* (1971), where chapters are based principally upon the grammatical forms most commonly found in the scientific English register” (Johns 1991: 68). The core point in an ESP syllabus is to have a very precise frame of ELT objectives along with a detailed needs analysis and surveys to be carried out with a control group or an actual groups of students for whom the syllabus designed. So in such a case, the full content and the teaching method to be implemented should play a very crucial role in applying the ESP syllabus to the control groups or subgroups of the study.

There are two absolute components of ESP: *needs assessment* and *discourse analysis* (Johns & Dudley-Evans 1991). The ESP needs analysis will be covered extensively in the subsequent part of this study. However, ESP materials designers and practitioners continue in their efforts to improve and expand their collection and analysis techniques. Nevertheless, the needs analysis has been the most crucial part in the ESP studies.

The second closely related component is discourse analysis. The discourse analysis in ESP may change according to the method in the syllabus to be implemented. But in most cases, the notions and functions of the language used in the ESP syllabus content may tell us the notions and functions of the Target Language (TL). Recently communicative notions have been employed “three different methods to identify nearly 200 different linguistic devices to signal frequency in academic texts” (Kennedy 1987; Johns & Dudley-Evans 1991).

When considered the term ‘specific’ in ESP, it may imply the functions of the language as well as being a distinctive feature identifying the content of the syllabus. Because the systematic analysis of the target situations has led them to discuss the components of the TL in regard to communicative aspect of the language and in this case, the spoken English has been made central in the implementation of the ‘notional-functional’ curriculum (Johns 1991.70). Apart from the curriculum, the ESP practitioner, namely the EFL teacher, is expected to assume the following five key roles in ESP (Dudley-Evans & St. John 1998):

- teacher
- course designer and materials provider
- collaborator
- researcher
- evaluator

More specific characteristics and the perspective of ESP can be given as follows with a summary of effective components. So, that is to say, ESP

- developed in the 1960s in response to demands for courses geared to practical and functional rather than educational and cultural ends.
- addresses learners with a common reason for learning.
- starts with a needs analysis
- has the following defining features:
 - needs analysis,
 - adult learners,
 - duration of courses,
 - materials designed,
 - course format & the syllabus

Types and Characteristics of ESP

Do the words 'specific/special' in ESP really make the English Language Teaching special/specific as the words define? It is obvious that it is English Language Teaching for individual, professional, institutional and/or academic purposes. The syllabus makes the instruction special or specific. Besides, it is rather different from GELT (as commonly called in the ELT profession) courses, because (a) the words and sentences learned, the subject matter discussed and the authentic topic are all related to a particular field or discipline; (b) all the materials to be used during the courses are designed to meet needs of a specific group of learners, usually young adults (university students) and adults; (c) it is mostly build up on the General English Language knowledge and ability.

Following are the major characteristics of ESP modified and given by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 4-5):

I. Absolute Characteristics

- ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learner;
- ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;
- ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

II. Variable Characteristics

- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
- ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level;
- ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students;
- Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

As it can clearly be seen in the above characteristics, ESP is significantly modified version of English but quite different from GELT and it is also emphasized by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) that "ESP is in contrast with General English." Hutchinson and Waters (1987:19), on the theoretical basis, stress that "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning." This is absolutely crucial because all the learners at the university preparatory classes are trained to have the full mastery of English so that they could use TL for their professional purposes. In this study, we are going to discuss why this ESP coursebook entitled **CEMENTA (Civil Engineering Mastery of English for Necessary Terminology Achievement)** has been designed and what purpose it should serve in order to satisfy the full needs of the freshman year young adults at the very beginning of their university education. Besides, the specific characteristics and the content of the syllabus, the design process will be studied.

In general, ESP has been broken down into three branches (Hutchinson and Waters 1987): a) English for Science and Technology (EST), b) English for Business and Economics (EBE), and c) English for Social Studies (ESS). And each of these subject areas is further divided into two branches: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). Besides the following taxonomy of ESP (Strevens 1977: 90-93) will sure help us on what purposes the English language is designed globally after implementing the GELT syllabus into the curriculum academically:

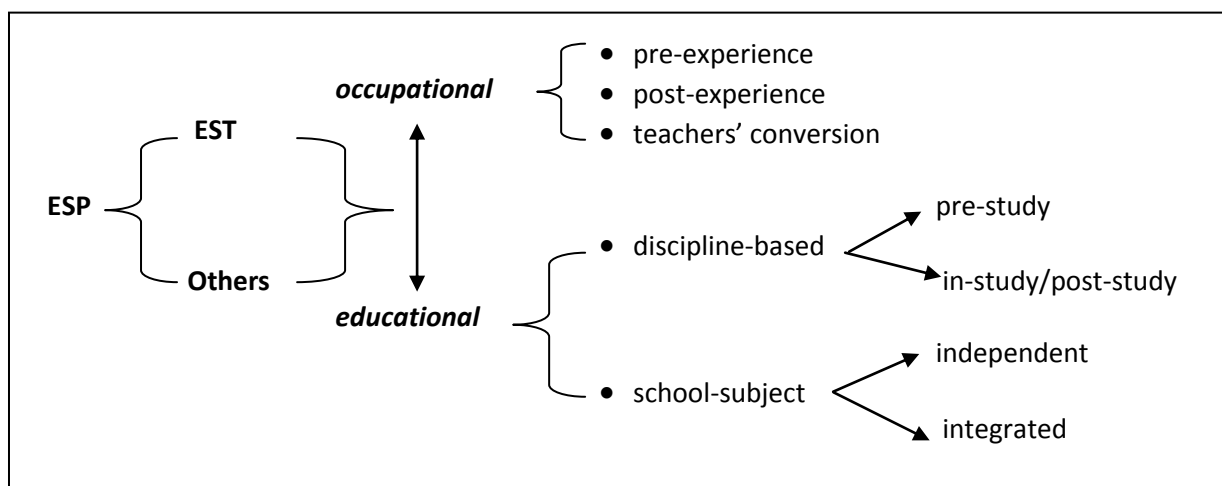


Figure 1: Taxonomy of ESP Courses

ESP, in a more specific sense, should be studied as a branch of ELT, but it should be considered rather distinctive from a GELT syllabus, and requires some expertise on design of the course and the implementation of curriculum. The syllabus designer should be trained on the ESP syllabus design and testing and evaluation in ESP should also be considered quite distinctively from the GELT evaluation procedures. The most important issue can be proposed as what to teach and how much to teach along with how to evaluate. A good ESP syllabus, however, can only be designed after a very profound needs analysis and surveys conducted with different control groups.

AN EAP SYLLABUS: CEMENTA

A reading-based ESP syllabus for Civil Engineering Students

This is a text-based ESP course book designed to supplement English for Academic Purposes (EAP) for the Civil Engineering freshman year students at the university level. The book has been designed after a careful investigation of the texts and selection of them. I purposefully coined the title CEMENTA for the book so that it should signify the cement which is said the main element of the civil engineering and it should also remind the name of a witch in a TV serial. This is thought to be a very original name for a book and the letter A in the end of the title is always written italic. So the name of the book was thought to be specific to the CE students' profession as well. This is an ESP book specifically designed to help the learners of English language for academic purposes. The extracts from the Civil Engineering (CE) field have been chosen with utmost care yet the students are expected to acquire the CE terms and expressions they might need in their professional lives. The following is the outline of the syllabus designed in the book:

- I. Before Reading Activities - *discussions related to the topic studied*
- II. While Reading Activities - *comprehension questions*
- III. Comprehension Practice - *vocabulary studies*
- IV. After Reading Activities- *exercises such as matching, true or false etc.*
- V. Translation – *topic related text to be translated*
- VI. Writing Task - *paraphrasing, note-taking, essay writing, etc.*

Figure 4: Sample outline of a unit in the book called CEMENTA (Tuncay, 2002)

A unit in the book covers the major parts mentioned above (fig. 4). Almost each unit is designed identical with some minor changes. Stage I: Before *Reading Activities* is the stage to get the students into discussion as a warm-up activity. At this phase of the book students are expected to discuss the topics related to the reading to be studied in the unit such as

Discuss the following questions in pairs or in groups and give a brief written account of safety on construction sites.

- What makes the civil engineers different from other disciplines?
- Can you summarize the development of civil engineering?
- What related disciplines does civil engineering have?
- Discuss the past, the present and the future of the civil engineering
- Discipline in your country?
- What qualifications are required for professional civil engineers?

After the discussion of those topics above, the students are asked to read/scan the text in the stage 2: *while reading activities* and following this student are asked to answer the questions related to the text. Depending on the text type studied, the questions may be multiple choice or comprehension type. Various charts such as the graphic organizers are given to support the text comprehension more easily. In the stage 3: *comprehension practice*- students are to practice vocabulary pertaining to the text and do the corresponding comprehension questions with vocabulary. Stage 4 - *After Reading Activities*- this part of the syllabus covers *true or false, matching the vocabulary items* and *vocabulary completion exercises*. The purpose of this part of the book is to supply the students more comprehension practice exercises and activities. See the samples of the *matching exercise* and the *true or false* questions below:

- A. Match the following pairs of sentences in column A with the ones in column B and put the letters in the boxes provided. Do not refer back to the text

-A-		-B-	
a	Using technical and management skills,		<i>to make sure work is done properly.</i>
b	Structural engineers also plan and design, and visit project sites		<i>by improving traffic control and mass transit systems.</i>
c	Environmental engineers are called upon		<i>civil Engineering has always provided enduring monuments and lasting legacies.</i>

- B. Say if the following statements are True (T) or False (F). Do not refer back to the text

1. Civil Engineering has always provided enduring monuments and their contributions to civilization are indisputable. (.....)
2. Permanent habitats in space could be established before the end of the 21st century through not using only existing materials and technology. (.....)
3. Civil engineering skills will not be needed so much throughout the world as the technological revolution expands, as the world's population increases, and as environmental concerns mount. (.....)
4. Due to concerning all environmental infrastructure projects, engineers with geotechnical and environmental engineering expertise remain in strong demand. (.....)

Stage 5- *Translation* is the most difficult task for the students to do. The students are asked to translate the given (see the sample below) text related to the reading text being studied into their First Language (L1). The texts are considered difficult to translate but it is always good for the ESP students to practice the technical sentence structures and their comprehension.

Storm-water management is an issue of enormous proportions, but it's an unusual issue in the sense that it can be solved only through a combination of sweeping action and small, focused efforts. Why is storm-water management such an intractable problem? In the early 1970s, the environmental movement succeeded in securing the passage of significant legislation that charged many public and private entities with the responsibility for cleaning up pollution. With respect to storm water, the most notable legislation assumed the form of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA). Directed primarily at sanitation treatment, the dumping of pollutants into waterways, and waterborne pollutants resulting from operations and maintenance, the CWA barely addressed storm-water issues.

Writing Task is the last part (stage 6) in the book and designed to practice writing in ESP. All the writing tasks and topics are related to CE texts and issues studied in the unit. The range of writing is said to be from paragraph writing to essay writing as well as outlining (see the samples taken from the book CEMENTA below):

Write a 100-150 word article about "the history of civil engineering (CE) in your country".

Include the following points in your article:

- ✓ chronological development of CE
- ✓ educational aspects of CE
- ✓ technology and materials development
- ✓ CE as a profession
- ✓ areas that civil engineers to be employed

(extracted from CEMENTA Unit 1)

Task 1: *Workout the outline of the main passage.*

Task 2: *Find out information on some high rise buildings in Turkey and write an article about their construction, structure and materials used.*

Take the following items into consideration; stick to the following steps :

- ✓ classify the information you collected into note cards.
- ✓ make an outline.
- ✓ write your article with particular attention on the

language and the format.

(extracted from CEMENTA Unit 2)

The ESP book in all contains some necessary CE terms and expressions but some other supplementary glossary material is given to the students because they sure need the terms in their other course rather than English language study. In most cases the terms and special expressions are given with English definitions.

As mentioned earlier, the ESP book- CEMENTA could be accepted as a preliminary study to the ESP courses at the university level for the freshman year students. This preliminary study is to be developed with some other version of the books based on the necessary terminology that most engineering student ever need throughout their professional lives. So syllabus designers and course book teachers and the professional experts in the field should work hand in hand to design an ESP syllabus. In the book CEMENTA, the English Language Teaching method implemented is text-based reading method aiming at improving the students reading comprehension skills in ESP. Since most activities are tailor-made, the Eclectic Approach is thought to be the most suitable method in designing the content of the book as well.

Conclusion and Implications

In this paper, we have given a brief description of what ESP is and its technical and linguistic specifications are also discussed in regard to needs analysis. Needs analysis is regarded as the core matter to any syllabus design. Besides, needs analysis has been taken as the starting point prior to ESP syllabus and course design. After giving specifications and characteristics of the needs analysis in ESP, the linguistic description and the syllabus of the book CEMENTA have been discussed. This book is the basis of this study and it aims at giving a sample format of a syllabus in the course book designed ESP at the university level. The conclusion to the study, however, can be summarized as follows:

- requirement of a very detailed needs analysis prior to syllabus design
- assessment of the actual foreign language needs
- determining the target group with utmost care
- implementing a pilot ESP study with a control group for a certain time
- reassessing the pilot syllabus and the target group
- over-viewing the final process of the ESP material
- designing a detailed suggested syllabus
- moving onto the actual syllabus with subtopics
- teacher training on the ESP related field in advance
- a careful taxonomy of the foreign language skills needed by the learners in accordance with target groups' needs analysis results
- modifying the linguistic skills to be implemented in the book in accordance with the ESP course format
- a need of a very objective and comprehensive assessment process

Some other issues can also be taken into account when dealing with the ESP course format and the specifications and characteristics of the learners as well as institutional expectations from the ESP-based courses designed.

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