MATESOL Students' Reflections and Perceptions of an ESP Course in the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract: This paper relates the experiences of the writer designing and teaching a graduate English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teacher-based course to a group of MATESOL students at a private university in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It details the participants' backgrounds and aspirations, course objectives, course contents, the students' perceptions of the whole course, the textbook used, the assigned tasks and activities and the staging and administration of the course. The participants' reflections show positive attitudes towards the course and the way it was administered and managed. The paper concludes with some pedagogical implications for prospective ESP teacher educators, ESP course designers and ESP course implementation.

Keywords: ESP Course Design, ESP Textbook Evaluation, ESP Teachers' Qualifications

INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of the year 2011 the researcher was approached by the MATESOL Program Coordinator and the Chair of the English Department at a private university in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and was requested to design and later teach an elective introductoryESP graduate course to a group ofMATESOL students in the Summer Semester of the year 2012. The course was intended to introduce the students to the ESP field in the Gulf region and open more job opportunities for them. Gholami and Osalu (2011:170) point out that the world wide increasing popularity of ESP courses calls for "qualified teachers with knowledge in different areas of ESP". According to Tsao (2011:129) "the ESP instructor has as many as five key roles to perform: teacher, course designer and material provider, collaborator, researcher, and evaluator". Tsao also argues that before teachingany ESP course, instructors need to determine the course content, the teaching methodology, and select teaching materials right after formulating the course objectives.Furthermore, Tsaonotes that instructors "should evaluate their course regularly to identify students' learning problems and to make proper adjustments" (p. 129). After all, as pointed by Tsao, developing an ESP course is an on-going process and instructors as evaluators need to evaluate their courses from time to time.Therefore, course instructors need to conduct "reflection-in-action" and/or "reflection-on action" (Schn, 1991) or both to probe into their teaching effectiveness and examine whether the course learning outcomes have materialized or not. One tool to carry out the latter is through asking stakeholders their opinions of course contents,the textbook used, the assigned tasks and activities and the administration of the course. Such feedback will, for reflective practitioners, enable them to ponder on their teaching practices and know what went well and what did not go well (David, Ponnamperuma & Ker, 2009; Gunn, 2010; Scheja, 2006; Yassaei, 2011, etc.). The outcomes of these reflections may result in practitioners either modifying their

teaching methods or modifying and changing course contents or both. Students can also benefit from being reflective learners and having to critically assess and evaluate overall course effectiveness.

PRE-COURSE PLANNING STAGE

Five months before teaching the course I was unsure what materials to use for the course, what kind of ESP knowledge students needed to be equipped with, what their educational backgrounds and aspirations were, what textbook should be used, what assignments they should be given and in what sequence the assignments should be presented.In pursuit of answers to the above, Istarted an academic search journey through the internet and several ESP focused journals; such as the English for Specific Purposes Journal, The English for Academic Purposes Journal, The Asian ESP Journal and the online free access ESP World Journal. I also examined various ESP titles for possible selection of a textbook for the course.After a long search, the course syllabus (see appendix1 for excerpts) was finalized and a decision was made to use Basturkmen`s (2010) book: Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes, as the main textbook for the course. This title was used for the following reasons:

1- It uses reader friendly ESP terminology; away from theoretical technicalities and jargon.
2- It presents the three stages of designing ESP courses, starting from the process of the needs analysis, its tools and problems associated with data collection ethnographic techniques to investigating specialist discourse and ends with the course design. The rest of the book is a collection of exampleESP case studies designed for specific learners under specific conditions.

Each chapter requires users of the book to use the tools mentioned in them and know their merits and demerits to be able to design and produce ESP courses as well as evaluate and assess ESP textbooks. This course planning stage is important for instructors and learners, since it functions as a roadmap for both of them. It helps the ESP instructor to be well prepared by planning things ahead and to have clear objectives throughout the entire course. Besides, instructors who plan lessons and courses prior to class will consider suitable and appropriate activities for lesson contents and enjoy what Senior (2006: 101) terms "high levels of self-confidence". Furthermore, the course activities are based on real world task-based ESP teaching and learning activities. In this regard, Robinson (2001) notes that:

> …adopting tasks as the unit of analysis helps to ensure a high degree of real-world relevance, since they are based on a needs analysis of target performance objectives, thereby most likely increasing student interest and motivation in classroom pedagogic activities, and the possibility of direct transfer of the abilities developed in classrooms to similar situational contexts (p. 292).

THE NEED OF THE STUDY

The results of this study are expected to inform and guide any future changes in the ESP course contents.The results will also reveal if there are any mismatches between the course instructor's perceptions of the course's relevance and the students' reception of the course. The outcome will be of importance because when students perceive course contents as relevant to some future career, this makes them "become motivated to think about the material and may retain the information for longer periods" (Muddiman & Frymier 2009:132). Keller and Suzuki (2004) argue that relevance was effective when course materials were related to students' intrinsic goals and needs. The study is alsoa response to Sherkatolabasi's (2012:170) statement that "ESP practitioners are in need of information on how to design an ESP course and how professional ESP teachers set about developing courses". This study is also a response to Johns and Dudley-Evans' (1991) contention that there have been virtually no studies testing the effectiveness of ESP courses.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study reports on the MATESOL students' reflections-on-action and perceptions of the entire ESP course they attended. It aims to make available a body of knowledge on practical steps and hands-ondesigning and evaluating ESP instructors training courses.

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DATA COLLECTION TOOL & PROCEDURES

For the purposes of this research, an anonymous survey was used. The survey items covered questions and statements on the whole course, the course textbook, the course contents and their staging, the course assignments and activities and their sequence. Besides, a five-point Likert Scale was used to make the students rank some statements on the course contents, from strongly agree (5) to stronglydisagree (1). The survey also contained some open-ended questions covering overall responses to the course and ways of improvement. Data were also gleaned from end of semester course evaluations; a reflection on course tool that all students have to fill in for any course they study. Using these tools, according to Long and Norris (2000), will provide details on the course participants' perceptions of the ESP course contents, the sequence of the pedagogic tasks, the implementation of the syllabus, appropriateness of the methodologies and the pedagogies used and the participants' overall achievement using task-based performance activities.

As far as informed consent is concerned, all participants in the course were previously informed that their feedback on the course would be used for research purposes. The students' comments have not been edited. They are presented as they were written. Although the evaluations were anonymous, pseudonyms are used here to refer to individual students' opinions.

PARTICIPANTS

During my first class meeting with the nine MATESOL students registered in this MATESOL Program elective course (first day of the course), I asked them to, each, introduce themselves to me. These self-introductions covered their educational background, teaching experiences (if any) and the previous courses they studied in the MATESOL Program. These self-introductions revealed that not all the students have English language degrees; one is a business graduate, another is a computer graduate and the rest (7) are English language specialists, who are graduates of English departments with an English literature concentration. One participant is a secondary school EFL teacher with about 15 years teaching experience, three are adjunct ESL teachers and the rest have no previous EFL/ESL teaching experience. All the participants, in addition to satisfying a 550 and above TOFEL score as an MATESOL entry requirement, have completed more than three courses in the MATESOL Program. All the participants were native speakers of Arabic with the exception of an American student and another from Afghanistan. They all registered for the ESP course in the Summer Semester of the year 2012 and had some vague ideas on ESP courses. Yet, some had aspirations that their study of the course would furnish them with essential ESP knowledge and open future job opportunities for them. One of the important courses that they all finished was ELT510: Research Methodology and Academic Writing, which focuses on graduate academic writing skills. This course represented my entry to the ESP graduate course. After introducing ESP terminologies, ESP, EAP, EPP, EOP, etc.; the students were asked to reflect back on the ELT 510 and assess it in light of its learning objectives as stated in its syllabus and report on what they have gained from it.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION

The following sections present a detailed exposition of the course contents, their staging and qualitative and quantitative analyses of the participants' reactions and perceptions of the entire course.

The ESP Textbook Evaluation Assignment

The course assignments were sequenced in a way that assignment one (1) would prepare and pave the way for two (2) and 1 and 2 would prepare the way for three (3). Put differently, I used an assignment sequence that would guarantee equipping the students with the essential and basic knowledge needed for coming assignments; something similar to a scaffolding approach. More specifically, assignment 1 was an ESP textbook evaluation exercise, where each of the students had to find and choose an ESP textbook used for tertiary education in the region where they reside and write an evaluation of it. This is in line with ESP experts' recommendation (Huh, 2006:10) that "pedagogic tasks should be sequenced gradually according to difficulty and complexity to form a task-based syllabus".

Besides, worth nothing here that each individual student had to choose a different ESP title from the other, which ended up in covering and evaluating different ESP fields. Work on this assignment represented a practical application of ESP information explained and discussed in class. The textbooks chosen covered varied areas of ESP as detailed in table 1 below:

Table 1: ESP Textbooks Covered

English for Business Communication
English in Medicine
English for Visual Arts
English for Academic Writing
English for Dentistry
English for Tourist Guides
English for Cabin Crew
English for Pharmacy
English for Policing

These book evaluations gave students practice in applying classroom ideas and discussions to some existing commercial ESP textbooks. Thisalso made them aware of the fact that some tertiary institutions may prefer to have their own tailored ESP textbooks. Furthermore, students received training in evaluating ESP titles based on authors` perceptions of learners` needs. Besides, they gained first-hand knowledge of organizational factors involved in designing and tailoring ESP textbook; such as sequencing and grading course materials, exercises used (Richards, 2001), etc., which should enable them to carefully select ESP titles for any prospective students that they may teach or, may be, in designing their own textbooks. Below is a comment made by one of the students on this specific exercise:

Laura
We have learnt a lot through this assignment.This first assignment mentally and academically
prepared the students for the second assignment, which required more knowledge of ESP courses.

The ESP Courses Mapping Assignment

This assignment was on mapping ESP courses in the UAE and the Gulf region. Each student had to choose a higher education institution and profile all ESP courses that institution offered. Students were instructed to search the internet for local and regional universities' names, find their website details and email addresses and ask them for permission to conduct the study. Some students were only allowedaccess to course syllabi and instructor's qualification on the institutions premises, but were allowed to take extensive notes. Some institutions refused to cooperate. Upon getting access permission from the institution, the students started paying previously planned and agreed upon visits to the institutions and holding meetings with heads of English departments and some faculty that the head nominated for interviews. They were able to get access to some instructors and course files on condition of anonymity; which was granted. At the end of the data collection, students created a profile for each institution using pseudonymsand removing all identifying content.

For this assignment, the studentswere required to document and do the following:
1. Numbers and types of ESP courses offered
2. Details of ESP textbooks used for each course
3. Course syllabi and match between them and textbook(s) used
4. ESP instructors` qualifications and teaching experience
5. Target institution's students' perceptions of some of these ESP courses

Although this assignment represented a big challenge for the students, it gave them training in using ethnographic tools mentioned in Basturkmen`s book. It also exposed them to situations where they were denied access to course syllabi and instructors' related information. This has sensitized them that

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ethnographic tools are not as easy as they seem to be; they are fraught by many difficulties and challenges. Although the students contacted the persons in charge and made prior appointments with them, it did happen that some of those cancelled the meeting on the pretext that they had to go somewhere else. Later, it was discovered that they were not ESP specialist and were afraid that my students may publish something that may damage their institution`s academic reputation. A big number of my students, if not all, reported that the staff teaching the ESP courses did not know what was required of them because of lack of coordination between university administration, English language specialists and major courses specialists. Regardless of the hurdles my students had been through, this assignment was meant to achieve and address the following learning objectives (see appendix 1 for more):

> 1. To give students practice in using ethnographic data collection tools (interviews, site visits, surveys,   etc.).
> 2. To familiarize students with the ESP market in the UAE and the Gulf region.
> 3. To give the students first-hand knowledgeof how some educational institutions viewESP courses.
> 4. To prove to students that there are many educationalist out there who are not aware of the real nature of ESP courses, their design and do not even know how to make full use of them.
> 5. To open job opportunities for the students. That is, when they visit these institutions the people in charge there may be impressed by the students' knowledge of the ESP field and think, in the future, of offering them a job and letting them take care of ESP courses at their institution.
> 6. To give students the opportunity to link what we talk about in class with what happens in educational institutions (reality).

Here is what two students said regarding this assignment:

Leena's testimony
I have to admit that at the very first day of the ESP course, I thought that this assignment is impossible. Now after completion of this mapping task I would like to thank you for this very fruitful challenge. I did it!

Marble's testimony

Doing this project has tremendously raised my awareness about how ESP courses are really developed and designed in comparison to what Basturkmen discusses. The challenges I faced in contacting the language department gave me the impression that they are not so confident about what they offer and tried to some extent escape my investigation. In one of her emails, the EAP coordinator told me that "it is not usual practice for universities to hand out syllabi.... If we do decide to provide you with such information you will most likely have to sign a document of non-disclosure" although as you have mentioned professor that very reputable universities post their syllabi online. Many of my questions via email were also disregarded by Ms. X.

Through this exercise students were exposed to problems and were asked to address them by suggesting solutions. In other words, they choose any educational institution, identify ESP courses there (if any), research teaching situation, students` levels and perceptions, instructors' qualifications and training, identify problems, evaluate ESP situations and formulate solutions to the problems in the form of suggestions for remedies. Another objective of the assignment was to help the students become not only good textbook evaluators but also efficient ESP textbook developers, if they needed to.One more objective for this was for the students to determine whether the ESP courses were based on a real analysis of students` actualneeds or based on institutions` assumptions of what students should know at this stage of learning. They were also instructed to identify any problems and propose solutions. Some of these could be textbook related, syllabi related, instructors` related or instruction related.This phase of the assignment came at a time when the students had already covered all the ESP course contents and were ready to put into practice the knowledge and experience they had gained.

This profiling exercise demonstrated that some institutions have a clear vision of what they want from their students to be able to do and all ESP courses are made to serve these purposes; whereas, others did not seem to know exactly what they require of their students. Therefore, such institutions focus on ESP courses in the traditional sense; just offering students lists of words/expressions from a specific field and their equivalents in the students' first language (LI); a very elementary understanding of the concept of ESP courses.This corroborates Jiajing's (2007) statement that ESP "… instruction has been limited to ESP-field specialized lexicon and sentence structures, an approach which fundamentally ignores the learners' personal interests. This often leads to low motivation in their English studies and, in turn, poor performance later when they use English in their future profession".

This exercise was beneficial as it provided an accurate reflection of the ESP situation in the surveyed institutions which was based on real practices as opposed to what an institution thinks it is doing. Furthermore, students sharedtheir findings and ideas with other classmates through reporting and presenting in class. In-class presentations of such projects led to sharing ideas and transfer of experiences among students. This has doubled benefits for students, since some problems that were not experienced in some mapping assignments were encountered in another. Thus, students' learning was extended through extensive in-class discussionsof oneanother's mapping experiences.

Research Paper

After the ESP textbook evaluation assignment and the ESP mapping assignment, and two weeks before approaching the end of the ESP course, the students were ready for the course's major assignment on an ESP research topic of their choice. They were not given any topics to choose from, but were encouraged to pick up any topic in the ESP area; they were told that they could choose any of the problematic areas that they might have come across during their work on the previous assignments. Students selected narrowly defined and focused ESP topics which helped them to identify and address specific and manageable ESP topics within the timeframe of the very condensed summer course. Students' in-class presentations of their research results enriched the class and were thought provoking.

Discussion Board

A discussion board was created for all the course participants to share ideas on the course contents and bring into these discussions any ideas from their readings. Each student was required to make a minimum of two quality postings per week per discussion thread. The topics for the threads were derived from the course textbook chapter titles; that is, the threads carried the title of the chapter covered in class. Another thread was created for any questions, queries or clarifications related to the course assignments and activities. This discussion board generated many ideas from the participants' further readings on the ESP field and created more interactions amongst the students and between them and the course instructor. The comments and responses below from the students and the instructor testify to this:

Laura

Your posts are very enriching, and this class is very fruitful indeed. When I first came to class and was asked to introduce myself, I didn't expect how relevant this course would be to me. not knowing that I had 3 different teaching experiences in teaching ESP, as a TOEFL/ IELTS & Business in English instructor a year ago. The more I learnt about ESP the more I understood my students' reactions then and realized how important it was to analyze my students' needs from day 1. While reading chapter one I found myself identifying with much of what the author said. I agree with Basturkmen, "Teaching ESP makes additional demands on the teacher" (p. 9) especially that students attend class for a specific purpose and unless the course achieves their 'real world' objective, they would most probably consider their attendance a waste of time no matter how much they may have learnt. I remember my IELTS students would be annoyed if a piece of information is not directly related to the exam. Thus, as Basturkmen mentioned, the teacher should pay particular

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attention to "when, where or why" students need the language whether to pass exam, travel, or improve their work, for example and address each and every specific need.

Marlyn

X has listed the primary differences between ESP and EGP courses. However, I would like to elaborate on one factor related to ESP courses that has helped me understand a puzzling situation that I faced in my class last semester. According to Basturkmen (2010), the aims of a focused ESP course are "clearly defined" and "analysis of the learners' need" determine the course content (p. 3). In other words, learners are very clear about what to expect in the course. For this reason, "the learners can easily become de-motivated by language course content that does not appear directly relevant to their real world objectives" (Basturkmen, 2010, p. 8). I think this is an important factor that should not escape any instructor of an ESP course. It is important that the learners should know that every lesson is a step toward reaching their specific goal.

Sofia

Applying theoretical knowledge to practical situations always facilitates my understanding of the theory. Following this principle, I will comment on my personal experience of taking ELT 510 in the light of my understanding of needs analysis. So from what I know, ELT 510 was designed as a direct response to students' needs. The department realized that the previous learning experiences of the students who enrolled for the graduate program did not equip them with the 'tools' necessary for conducting research. Hence, the TESOL faculty was able to identify a gap and accordingly developed the course ELT 510 to fill this gap. I can state that the course met its objectives. Students were introduced to APA-style of documentation and asked to write personal reflections, summarize articles, write critiques, and do a final research project that includes both primary and secondary research. However, I personally felt that my learning needs were not met or perhaps I had no learning needs for that particular course.

Students' Perceptions of the Course Textbook

The main purpose of this section is to examine whether Basturkmen's textbook: Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes makes a good and an appropriate choice for the ESP course or not. Using textbooks in classroom is important to help students understand the knowledge they are learning and to guide the course instructor. According to Baleghizadeh and Rahimi (2011) "[i]n every teaching context, textbooks play an important role in imparting learning and assisting teachers to fulfill their responsibility." (p. 1009).Along the same lines, Hutchinson and Torres (1994) point out that "No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook" (p. 315). Although these textbooks are important, they need to be evaluated in order to examine whether they are appropriate for the context of ESP courses they are used in or not (Zangani, 2009).

That is why some scholars note that textbooks could work as a disadvantage for the learning process. For instance, Swales (1980) argues that textbooks could reveal problems and be the source of educational failure. Therefore, textbooks need to be evaluated in order to examine their suitability for the learners' level and the course learning objectives, especially ESP courses where textbooks are essential in providing the learners with knowledge after the instructors.Therefore, the students were asked several questions (see appendix 2) whose answers would highlight their perceptions of the textbook used for the course.The outcome is supposed to help in assessing whether the bookused achieved the course objectives and met the learners' needs or not. Several issues were investigated; the organization of the book, language and content. The book evaluation reported on here is retrospective in nature. It could help in determining how to improve a used or a given textbook.

In response to the survey questions on the course textbook, all the studentswith the exceptionof one agreed that the book is appropriate to the course, fulfills its objectives and increases students' knowledge of

ESP. However, 50% pointed out that the book can be used alone without supplementary materials, whereas 37.5% felt neutral and 12.5% agreed that the book could be used without supplementary materials. The studentsagreed that the language used in the book is clear and easy to understand. This is in line with Sherkatolabasi's (2012) remarks in a review of Basturkmen's book that the "strengths of the book include its organization in such a way thatreaders can easily find the information they need in developing ESP courses and the clearwriting style" (p. 173).Content wise, 62.5% of the students agreed that the book provides clear and reader-friendly explanationsof ESP theoretical background, discussions at the end of each chapter that promote students' understanding and a content that satisfies their needs. 87.5% of the students agreed that the book provides clear steps of ESP course development, presents case studies that are related to the course and are culturally appropriate; the rest were undecided. All the students agreed that the case studies presented in the book are realistic and can be applied in other relevant teaching contexts. Yet, some reported that these case studies, although very useful and enlightening, are very culture specific. This lends support to Sherkatolabasi's statement that "… readers … expect more than four case studies so that many more aspects of ESP course development could have been represented. Also, 12.5% of the participants reported the need for more case studies that are related to international readers' cultures . This supports Gholami and Osalu's (2011:172) contention that "the number of case studies … does not seem sufficient to cover the areas and their sub-branches mentioned in the introduction". This is also in line with Yigitoglu's (2011) suggestion that the book could be used with other books such as Belcher's edited collection English for specific purposes in theory and practice (2009).

However, the index,as one student described it, is horrible! She wrote: "I tried to look up things I remembered reading and either there was no entry listed or sometimes the page numbers were even wrong." Furthermore, another participant said "there was not enough information about discourse analysis and that is one of the most interesting parts of ESP." Investigating specialist discourse gives the learner in depth knowledge about the importance of investigating the specialist discourse analysis.

In response to the question of whether to use the same book again for the ESP course or replace it with another one, 62.5% of the participants agreed that the book could be used again for several reasons. One reason was because the book is well organized and clear. Another reason is that the book adopts a user-friendly hands-on-designing ESP courses. One participant noted that the book "is a really good introductory book and can definitely be used again in an ESP course." One more reason is the simplicity of the book. As one participant put it, "the book uses simple language and authentic materials just the right choice for ESP practitioners." However, 37.5% of the participants agreed with a condition. This condition was to use supplementary materials along with the book. As one participant put it, "the book can be used with the current articles selected by the instructor for key aspects". As far as the contents of the book are concerned, all the participants agreed that the book provides clear explanations of ESP and course development. This corresponds with what Sherkatolabasi (2012) mentions in her article that "Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes provides not only information on the previous literature of ESP, but also guidance on the real practice of ESP through the case studies." (p. 173). Also, Yigitoglu (2011) and Gholami and Osalu's (2011:1) add that this book has remarkably provided information about ESP literature, case studies and guidance on the use and actual practice of ESP. Overall, the participants found the book useful.

Overall Responses to the Course Contents

All the respondents perceive the overall course contents as interesting, relevant and eye opening. Being new to the ESP field, the students showed special interest in the course and were keen to gain more and more in the field of teaching English for specific purposes. Here is a testimony from one of the students:

> Allow me to thank you professor for the very interesting course. I believe that what made the course interesting is your hard work and dedication for teaching us, indeed! I would like to thank you for this very rewarding course! I am so inspired by your passion for teaching. Now after taking this course, I am looking forward to join the ESP for Business field in the future and apply what I have learned.

The findings also revealed that the majority of the students have positive attitudes about the effect of the course on their ESP knowledge. For instance, they all agreed that the course helped a lot in building their

knowledge of the ESP field. The outcomes of the study also highlighted different topics which most of the students seemed to like including: (1) ESP as a whole, (2) discourse analysis, (3) the relation between an ESP course and the concepts of teaching methodologies and curriculum design, and (4) the analysis of specialist discourse.The students' opinions of whether to move the ESP course to the list of core courses, instead of being an elective course, were positive. All students, with the exception of two who mainly thought of the course as an extra special area and not the main focus of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), reported that the course should be among the required courses. One student said that the course "is a very essential part because it has made us aware of a new field in ELT." Another reported that the course is important because the "ESP market is flourishing and there is great demand for ESP teachers in the region."

The statements and comments in the following sectionare from the end of course evaluations as given in the students' own words:

Zimba's testimony

Coming from a Business educational background, the ESP course has provided me with fundamental ways of approaching many areas in the ESP field. I believe that taking this course very much prepared me to become an ESP teacher in the future especially that I have always wanted to become a teacher of Business English. From the assigned readings and practical assignments, I became more aware of the importance of addressing students' needs and how to deal with them. Through the term, I have benefited from the very interesting yet challenging assignments (ESP mapping assignment, ESP book evaluation, and final research paper). Moreover, I have personally benefited from the detailed feedback given on our assignments. I also found the online threads created for assignment queries very beneficial especially the professor's prompt responses to our queries. Moreover, I have benefited from the class lectures and online discussions especially that we were given an opportunity to learn from each other. Honestly, I was very surprised with the instructors' commitment to online discussions, that itself encouraged and motivated us to share more quality posts. Overall, I have genuinely benefited from this course in many ways. The course contains many solid teaching and learning ideas to those who want to join the ESP field. I personally saw a clear relationship between the course objectives and my needs as a prospective ESP teacher. From the assignments given, now I have a broader outlook to possible teaching and learning aspects in the ESP field such as how to evaluate an ESP textbook, what qualifications are needed to teach ESP effectively, and how to conduct needs analysis in an ESP context. I am glad that I made the right choice by registering for this course in summer.

Laura's testimony

This 6 week course has not only helped me develop on the academic level, but on the personal level as well. It taught me how to become more professional and efficient in life. Thank you for being strict about deadlines, it made me realize the value of every minute before the clock ticks 11:59. What we learnt within six weeks was beyond what I could have imagined and I appreciate every minute of it. I believe that no student in the program should miss taking any of this course's rich classes, and I really don't think it could have been taught more successfully. Your method of teaching, selection of materials, the way you led the discussion board and the engaging assignments you required us to do, professor, could not have been more enriching and meaningful to our learning. The mapping assignment was a live example of the value of learning in practice and the trouble we went through was all worth it. This intensive course has me made experience the true joy in learning despite the pressure of time.

CONCLUSIONS

This course has not only equipped the students with ESP knowledge, but also has availed them challenging opportunities to apply classroom knowledge to the field and has enabled them to reflect on the work they did and reflect onother courses that they had studied before this ESP course. The ESP course has equipped them with the tools for assessments; needs analysis; and therefore,prepared the students to bebetter able to assess their own learning in light of course learning objectives. This means that the students' ESP knowledge has empowered them to engage in real life situations and link theory to practice. It could be revealing if the trained participants in this study are followed up, if a situation arises for them to teach ESP courses, to check whether they will use the ESP knowledge they have gained from this course in their prospective teaching of ESP courses. The results obtained from this study confirm that students' course evaluations should be carefully subjected to scrutiny so as to use the outcome in modifying and improving the course functionality. This suggests that end users should have their input into the course updating procedures. Therefore, it is of extreme importance that students be encouraged to respond to course evaluations as these are the only available formal channels for faculty and course designers to know what students think of and how they feel about course contents. Without their feedback, faculty and course designers will build course contents on the needs they perceive students as needing. In this regard, Graves (2000:12) aptly argues that knowing others' reactions "…will help you become clear about your own beliefs about what is important for your course". Along the same lines, Ramsden (1992:102) states that:

> "Effective teaching refuses to take its effect on students for granted. It sees the relation between teaching and learning as problematic, uncertain and relative. Good teaching is open to change: it involves constantly trying to find out what the effects of instruction are on learning, and modifying the instruction in the light of the evidence collected."

Although the course required a great deal of work from the students and myself, the end result was a group of trained ESP instructors who could practically identify and determine needs, investigate relevant discourse and decide on course contents and teaching activities and assessment tools. The time I spent searching for and selecting relevant articles from ESP, EAP, ESP World, Asian ESP Journal, Internet TESOL Journal and reading through a big collection of ESPtextbooks in search of suitable complimentary materials was well spent. Hopefully, this study has provided the participants with training in the five roles that Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) ascribe to the ESP instructor: teacher, course designer, collaborator, researcherand evaluator. Designing ESP courses requires instructors to carefully consider sequencing the course tasks and activities in a way that early assignments guarantee grounding the to-be- ESP instructors in knowledge and experience needed for subsequent assignments. In future, I will ask course participants to profile ESP courses in colleges and departments within educational institutions. Based on the outcomes, they will be asked to take practical steps and design lacking ESP courses in consultations with these institution under my supervision.

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APPENDIX 1

Excerpts from the ESP Course Syllabus

Course Description

Covers design of ESP courses and programs in an area of specialization such as business, engineering, health, aviation, and related professions. Provides hands on practice in ESP covering needs analysis, instructional strategies, materials adaptation and development, and evaluation.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:
- Demonstrate an understanding of the factors that led to the emergence of ESP and the forces, both theoretical and applied, that have shaped its subsequent development
- Conduct needs analysis and genre analyses for specific groups of learners
- Create ESP materials for a chosen profession
- Adapt authentic ESP materials for a chosen profession
- Critically evaluate currently available materials, both print and digital
- Develop and utilize assessment procedures appropriate for ESP; apply this knowledge in developing course and lesson evaluation plans for a specific profession
- Design a syllabus, including sample lesson and assessment strategies based on students' needs and genre analyses.

Assessment	Marks	Description	Word Limit	Submission Date
Research Project	35	You choose any related ESP topic, prepare a research proposal, discuss it with me, and if approved, proceed with the research. (Ideas for research topics can be obtained from the ESP journal listed in the sources for further readings below).	Minimum 2000 words	17th July, 2012
Class Participation	10	Active participation in class discussions is a requirement in addition to reading assigned chapters and articles before class.		
ESP Book Evaluation	20	You choose any ESP textbook, and if approved, you evaluate it according to the criteria provided at the end of this syllabus.	2000 words	26th June, 2012
Discussion Board	10	Active participation in initiating online discussion threads. Participants will be expected to contribute to an online discussion on iLearn at least two times each week. Suggestions for discussion topics will be given and each participant will have the option of starting new discussion threads. This is demonstrated through a minimum of two weekly meaningful and thoughtful posts on the discussion board. Posts can be in the form of questions, answers, opinions, suggestions, etc. Posts such as, "Great idea", "I agree" etc without any follow up are not counted toward the minimum requirements.	. At least two postings to the discussion board per week	
Mapping ESP Courses in Gulf Countries	25	You form groups of two, if the number of students registered in the course allows, to survey ESP courses offered in private and public universities in Gulf States (i.e., United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar). The purpose is to make available data on the ESP movement in the Gulf Region and the type(s) of ESP courses offered. This project, if properly implemented, could result in our publication of an ESP book on Gulf States. (Contents and layout of project are given at the end of this syllabus).	No limit	7th July, 2012

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APPENDIX 2

The objective of this survey is to uncover your perceptions of the textbook, *Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes,* by Helen Basturkmen. This information is for academic use only.
 Thank you for your participation.
Section 1:

❖ Please choose one of the following options:

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The book is appropriate for the course					
The book fulfils the course objectives					
The book increases students' knowledge and understanding of ESP courses					
The book provides a clear explanation of ESP theoretical knowledge					
The ESP course development section is clearly presented					
The case studies used in the book are related to the course, topics and are appealing					
The case studies are realistic and can be applied to other relevant contexts.					
The discussions used at the end of each chapter promote students' understanding of the chapter contents					
The book cover is attractive					
The book size is appropriate					
Diagrams, graphs and tables are clear, readable and easy to understand					
The book is organized in a way that helps students find information easily					
The language of the book is clear and easy to understand					
The book uses authentic ESP materials					
The book is culturally appropriate					

The margin in the book provides the students with enough space to make notes					
The book can stand by itself and does not need any supplementary materials					

Section 2:

- Which of the following parts in the book you liked to have been more elaborated on? Why? (choose one answer)
1. Introduction
2. Analyzing needs
3. Investigating specialist discourse
4. Developing the curriculum
5. Case studies in ESP course development

_____

- Which of the following parts did you find useful and effective? Why?
1. Introduction
2. Analyzing needs
3. Investigating specialist discourse
4. Developing the curriculum
5. Case studies in ESP course development

_____

- Would you recommend that the professor use the same textbook next time the course is offered or use another book and why?