

EXPLORING ESP TEXTBOOKS FOR COMMERCE AND MEDICINE: AN ANALYSIS OF SKILLS AND TYPES OF INSTRUCTION

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Abstract. *The present study explores the communicative potential of two ESP textbooks. It examines a sample of activities of English for Commerce and English for Medicine textbooks with an instrument of analysis consisting of three parts: (1) a section for the metadata of the activities, (2) a checklist which assesses the presence and distribution of language skills and systems, and (3) a scale devised by Criado (2016) which measures the weight of meaning-focused and form-focused instruction found in activities. To study these elements, a framework describing and illustrating each component was designed. Inter-rater reliability tests were carried out to ensure the validity of the results. The findings of the study suggest that these textbooks are mainly meaning-focused, although some differences as regards the extent to which each of these elements is promoted can be found. Moreover, several methodological issues are raised in order to improve future research concerning materials analysis.*

Key words: *ESP textbooks, materials analysis, language skills, language systems, type of instruction*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Williams (2014), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has gained so much presence that it seems to be the most widely spread form of English Language Teaching (ELT) nowadays. Indeed, the current flow of people travelling worldwide for professional and academic purposes has situated ESP programmes as the key to successful communication. This reality is mirrored in the thriving market of commercially produced teaching materials which seek to meet the specific needs of each context. Considering the widespread adoption of these materials and the fact that they constitute the core of most teaching programmes and are the most visible representation of what occurs in the classroom (Almagro, 2002; Harwood, 2014; Tomlinson, 2012) it becomes paramount to assess the extent to which they are meeting the needs of the target situation. In fact, as Hyland and Wong (2019) aptly point out, this is essential in that there is a risk of not doing what is really necessary for learners to develop their communicative competence for the corresponding target situation, especially in the increasingly demanding and ever-changing scenarios.

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Besides English for Academic Purposes, nowadays Business English and Medical English are the most representative branches of ESP (Anthony, 2018). On the one hand, most economic and business transactions among different countries are carried out in English even if it is not the mother tongue of any of the participants. As a result, the industry of Business English has developed exponentially, resulting in the publication of a myriad of textbooks aimed at meeting the needs of a growing audience. On the other hand, with the current flow of people freely travelling worldwide, health professionals are faced with the challenge of providing medical care in English. Accordingly, these professionals need to be trained to communicate effectively in English.

Despite the fact that ESP is characterised by the use of specialised vocabulary, it is now widely accepted that ESP is not about lists of vocabulary and language functions. On the contrary, it is an approach to language teaching where students' communicative needs are foregrounded (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). These needs are used as the unifying thread that provides students with the basic and specialised language that they will be using in their target situation in terms of grammar, vocabulary or functions. This approach is chiefly communicative, meaning that fluency is prioritised over accuracy and that language forms are studied in context.

Despite the numerous studies addressing ESP materials evaluation in terms of the various teaching aspects mentioned above, to our knowledge, there are not any particularly examining their communicative potential, i.e. the extent to which language skills and systems are promoted. Therefore, the purpose of this study is twofold. Firstly, it aims to analyse the extent to which meaning-focused and form-focused instruction are promoted in ESP textbooks for commerce and medicine by means of Criado's (2016) scale. Secondly, it purports to examine the distribution of language skills. To do so, an instrument of analysis designed ad hoc will be used.

2. ELT MATERIALS EVALUATION

Nowadays, the pervasiveness of textbooks as the main teaching material in ELT contexts is unquestionable. Consequently, in the last few years there has been an increase in the number of studies evaluating materials to verify whether these meet learners' needs. Materials evaluation, therefore, is considered any procedure that involves measuring the value of a material (Tomlinson, 2003) or the appropriateness of such a material for a particular purpose (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Ellis (1997) differentiates two types of materials evaluation: *predictive evaluation* and *retrospective evaluation*, which can be equated to *pre-use* and *post-use* evaluations, respectively. Predictive evaluation is carried out to assess the potential performance of materials and make a decision as to which materials should be used, whereas retrospective evaluation seeks to examine materials that have already been used in order to establish the extent to which they meet the specified needs (McDonough and Shaw 2003). A brief review of the literature on materials evaluation reveals that, to date, research has primarily focused on predictive evaluation (Sari, Ülgü & Ünal, 2014). However, considering that most teachers use already published materials, retrospective evaluation becomes an essential element of the learning-teaching process for it provides teachers with invaluable information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the syllabus and activities contained in those materials.

Numerous attempts have been made in order to systematise materials evaluation. Nonetheless, the ever-changing needs of the teaching-learning situation have proved it impossible. In line with this, most of the research on materials evaluation is of a theoretical nature, debating conceptual or methodological issues of such an enterprise (Benesch, 2001; Brindley, 1989; Brown 2016; Gollin-Kies et al., 2015; Huhta et al., 2013; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, to name a few). However, if we have a look at the studies that have actually conducted in-depth analyses of materials (of one or more aspects), the number of publications is more limited. Among these studies, we can observe that in the last decade a number of areas have especially attracted the attention of researchers worldwide, namely vocabulary, type of instruction, critical thinking, affective factors, and EFL.

In the field of vocabulary, frequency and functionality have been explored (Alcaraz-Mármol 2009, 2011, 2015; Destiani, Andayani & Rohmadi 2018; Sakata 2019). Other aspects such as dispersion and variation have been considered a focus of study (Matsuoka & Hirsh 2012; Alcaraz-Mármol 2015; Nordlund 2016). As regards type of instruction, particularly relevant are the works by Criado, Sánchez and Pascual (2010) and Criado (2016), although these studies are predominantly concerned with methodological issues in that they seek the validation of a scale that can objectively measure the loads of explicit and implicit instruction of textbook activities.

As far as critical thinking is concerned, Talebinezhad and Matou (2012) examine how frequently and to what extent critical thinking is promoted in EFL reading comprehension textbooks at university level. Following the philosophy-based language teaching approach, Baleghizadeh and Javidanmehr (2017) analyse ELT textbooks to examine how philosophical dialogue and group achievement and cooperation is fostered. Khodadady and Karami (2017) explored the relationships between inference and deduction abilities as two aspects of critical thinking.

Regarding affective factors, Işık (2018) conducts a questionnaire-based study to analyse aspects such as topics, layouts, instructions, repertoire of activities, and visuals. Within the EFL framework, Syrbe and Rose (2016) look into how English as a global language is presented in ELT textbooks. They examine how these materials present the owners of English, target interlocutors, models and norms of English in the audios, the issue of culture, and concepts related to the global use of English. Finally, of a more comprehensive nature is the study by Dülger (2016), who uses Mukundan and Nimehchisalem's (2012) checklist to examine syllabus and curriculum, methodology, suitability to learners, layout and visuals, outlay of supplementary materials, content, and some features of reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation activities.

3. ESP MATERIALS EVALUATION

Almagro (2001) explains that the main differences between ESP and General English (henceforth GE) may be established in terms of specificity, the student's profile, the context, time, the teacher's profile, and the skill focus. Firstly, ESP focuses on learner need, whereas the needs in GE are established according to more general parameters enabling the students to communicate in society. Secondly, ESP is usually targeted at adult learners with some basic knowledge of the language, whereas GE is targeted at any type of student, regardless of their age or previous knowledge of the language. Thirdly, in ESP courses there is a direct connection between the academic context and the target

context, whereas GE is characterised by the lack thereof. Moreover, ESP courses tend to be taught in a more limited time span. Additionally, ESP teachers need to be acquainted with the target situation in order to know the communicative needs and develop or adapt materials accordingly). Finally, whereas ESP courses may favour some skills over others considering the target needs, GE seeks to develop all skills homogeneously. Yet, it is important to mention that the line dividing GE and ESP is not clear-cut, for GE is part of ESP in that there are inherent linguistic relationships and ESP learners may need general skills and competences (Wales, 1993). For this reason, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) suggest that the whole ELT spectrum be presented on a continuum that runs from clearly definable GE courses to very specific ESP courses.

As far as teaching materials are concerned, numerous authors agree that nowadays ESP is the most widely spread form of ELT. Accordingly, there is a myriad of specific materials in most of the areas of expertise. However, there still appears to be insufficient research when it comes to ESP materials evaluation, especially when compared to its GE counterpart.

Baleghizadeh and Rahimi (2011) study English for Social Sciences in Iran. They use questionnaires to evaluate course objectives, language skills, the variety of tasks and activities, and the layout of materials in general. Al Fraidan (2012) examines Business English materials in terms of the skills promoted and the authenticity and appropriateness of the activities. Danaye and Haghghi (2014) look into English for Computer Engineering in Iran. They use qualitative and quantitative interview-based methods to evaluate a textbook in terms of aims and approaches, design and organisation, skills and strategies, topics, illustrations, language content and exercises. Shooshtari, Bordbar and Banari (2017) use qualitative methods to study how pragmatic competence (specifically politeness) is developed in two English for Academic Purposes textbooks in the Iranian context. Karimnia and Jafari (2017) examine an English for Visual Arts textbook in Iran. They use qualitative methods to evaluate the list of contents and the skills promoted.

More currently, Ou (2019) conducts a corpus-assisted evaluation of three ESP textbooks in China to obtain insights into the development of vocabulary, resorting to concordances, wordlists and keyword lists. Purwanti (2019) evaluates a textbook for vocational training for the hotel industry in Indonesia. Using the qualitative checklist-based method, this study explores language form and function, and patterns of communicative interactions. Elizondo, Pilgrim and Sánchez (2019) examine the impact of task-based language teaching (TBLT) on the promotion of vocabulary and grammar in ESP textbooks in Costa Rica. Finally, Carrasco-Flores (2019) evaluates the only commercially available material of a new and flourishing branch of ESP (namely English for Translation and Interpreting) in terms of skills, competences and type of instruction.

Much of the research above has been approached from a qualitative perspective following impressionistic methods. Moreover, these studies have predominantly focused on specific dimensions of communicative competence, but none seem to have examined the communicative potential of these materials, or the presence and distribution of language skills and systems. Accordingly, there appears to be a void in terms of in-depth empirical investigations addressing ESP materials evaluation (see Carrasco-Flores 2019).

Finally, although ESP has permeated most education levels, research on NA seems to be somewhat scarce. Considering the wide range of techniques that can be used for gathering information for NA, and how time-consuming this enterprise is, it comes as no surprise that numerous textbooks may have been developed solely resorting to some questionnaires and interviews with some of the stakeholders involved in the ESP context.

This scarcity of studies is evidently mirrored in the areas selected for this study. In the field of health professionals, Mitra (2014) mentions that the aspects of language that students are mostly concerned about are speaking and vocabulary, closely followed by reading. In terms of language functions, students report on the need for learning to give instructions, request information from patients, and offer help and treatments. In the realm of Business English, Benabdallah (2014) concludes that students are particularly interested in learning specific vocabulary and developing language skills in this order of importance: speaking, listening, writing and reading.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Materials

Following the results in Anthony (2018), one textbook of each of the business and health disciplines have been selected: *Commerce 1* by Hobbs and Starr (2010) and *Medicine 1* by McCarter (2013). They specifically target professionals in two particular areas of expertise who study English as a foreign language. These two textbooks belong to a specific editorial line of Oxford University Press called Oxford English for Careers. It is a special section within a wide range of materials and resources offered by Oxford for English teaching. This section comprehends several ESP textbooks for different professions, among which we can find the ones selected here but also others such as engineering, finance or tourism. This kind of teaching material is used in the degrees of several Spanish universities in order to offer their students a more specific and accurate training in English.

Commerce 1 and *Medicine 1* pursue the achievement of B1 level according to the CEFR (2018). The former is structured in 15 teaching units and the latter contains 12. Nonetheless, and despite the different number of units, both have the same structure. The units in the two textbooks contain three types of content. The first one is related to career skills and knowledge. This is observed, for instance, in terms of business know-how and customers in the case of *Commerce 1*, and as regards patient care in *Medicine 1*. The second type of content that can be found in these textbooks focuses on language skills, i.e. listening, reading, speaking and writing. Finally, there is a third type of content which deals with what is called language knowledge, which comprehends functions, vocabulary and pronunciation.

In order to obtain a representative picture of the textbooks, circa one third of each textbook is analysed. For *Commerce 1* (henceforth textbook A), units 1, 6, 10, 12 and 14 are selected, whereas in the case of *Medicine 1* (henceforth textbook B), the units to be analysed are 1, 5 and 9. The units in commerce contained fewer activities than medicine, so more units were necessary to find the balance between the two books.

4.2. Instruments and procedure

McGrath (2016) distinguishes three basic methods of textbook evaluation, namely the impressionistic method, the in-depth method and the checklist method. In our study, data compilation and analysis are checklist-based. Mukundan et al. (2011, p. 21) consider checklists a “more sophisticated evaluation of the textbook in reference to a set of generalizable evaluative criteria”. Likewise, McGrath (2016) advocates the use of this type of instrument, which has been proved “systematic, comprehensive, reliable and cost- and time-effective method for materials evaluation” (Carrasco-Flores 2019, p. 7).

The study is based on textbook content analysis, not consumption analysis, i.e. only what is contained in the textbook is considered. The potential use that the teacher may make of the material is not taken into account. The unit of analysis is the activity, specifically its instructions. Doyle (1986, p. 398) defines activity as the “basic unit of classroom organisation”. Criado (2008, p. 15), however, elaborates on the concept by specifying that it is “a unit of action in the classroom or teaching materials, involving goals, contents and strategies as an integrated construct”. We are aware of the fact that there is much controversy surrounding the concept of activity, for it can be examined in varying degrees. For instance, Tomlinson (2003) uses the term *staging* to refer to steps within a particular activity on its own, and Carrasco-Flores (2019) puts forward the concept of *multi-componentiality* whereby the different outcomes found within activities are considered as independent activities. On these bases, for the purposes of this study, we will adopt the concept of activity used by Criado (2008) whereby activities are signalled by a number, a letter, or otherwise in the layout of the textbook. Besides, we will only analyze activities where an outcome is required. For instance, let us consider a listening section divided into two activities, the second of which simply asks students to listen to the recording again to check their answers. This type of activities will not be quantified as real activities in that they do not entail a different outcome or other means to achieve such an outcome. On the contrary, they simply involve the repetition of the activity, which could have been conveniently included in the first activity.

In the present study, our instrument of analysis is composed of three parts. The first part corresponds to the metadata of each activity, which is assigned a code indicating the textbook, the page and the number of the activity. Then, its instructions are registered. The second part consists of a checklist assessing the language skills and systems put forward by the CEFR (2018). Finally, the third part of our instrument compiles the results of the analysis carried out with the Criado’s (2016) scale, which yields the results concerning FFI and MFI. Table A in the appendix section shows a framework describing and exemplifying how these language skills, language systems and types of instruction are treated in this study.

It is important to highlight that the analysis hinges on the product of the activities rather than the means. That is to say, activities are analysed on the basis of their results, not on the way through which this result has been achieved. For instance, in an activity where students are asked to write a cover letter, students might use some resources such as a dictionary. However, if this is not specified in the instruction of the activity, its use is not taken into consideration for our analysis, as it is a particular learning strategy which can vary from student to student.

Criado’s (2016) scale relies upon the constructs of declarative (DEC) and procedural (PRO) knowledge. In broad terms, whereas the former can be verbalized and implies awareness, the latter develops automatically in an unconscious way. An important part of research on second language acquisition has resorted to these two constructs in order to explain language learning in analogy to other skills. Consequently, a dearth of studies has focused their attention on how DEC and PRO may contribute to second language teaching (Carrasco-Flores 2019; Criado 2016; Criado, Sánchez & Cantos 2010; DeKeyser 2007; Dörnyei 2009; Ellis 2005; Schmidt 1995). They particularly investigate the interrelation between these two constructs and how they complement each other, DEC turning into PRO, and PRO improving through DEC. These two concepts are on the ground of some teaching approaches such as the one suggested by Criado (2016), who distinguishes between form-focused instruction (FFI) and meaning-focused instruction (MFI). While FFI favours DEC as

it deals with language forms, MFI favours meaning and it is therefore linked to PRO. Despite the fact that it has been widely used in GE materials analysis, to the best of our knowledge, it is the first time this scale is applied to the analysis of ESP materials.

Criado, Sánchez and Cantos (2010), and later Criado (2016) warns that activities cannot normally be ascribed to FFI or MFI, given the continuum that these two aspects constitute. Accordingly, they should not be measured in absolute terms. The scale is designed upon explicitness as opposed to implicitness in the learning-teaching process. Thus, Criado's scale suggests eight different items accounting for FFI to be measured in terms of presence or absence: use of metalanguage; language analysis; formal accuracy favoured; controlled input- or output-based use of the language; mechanical repetition; L1 use; individual work of the language; language use for a non-communicative purpose. Therefore, the absence of these items corresponds to MFI. By means of this scale, Criado aims to go beyond the dichotomy observed in previous studies, acknowledging the blurred line which separates DEC and PRO and the continuum-like character of FFI and MFI. Table 1 illustrates the data compilation process and their analysis:

Table 1 Sample analysis.

ID act	Instructions	L	R	SP	SI	WP	WI	OM	WM	G	V	P	FFI	MFI
23755	Listen to a doctor checking the chart with a colleague and complete the missing information in the chart	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,5	7,5

4.3. Data analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistic techniques were carried out. As for descriptive, the percentages of presence of each skill plus those of FFI and MFI were calculated. In order to know whether there were significant differences between the two textbooks, the inferential analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run. The inter-rater reliability test through Kappa coefficient was calculated as a way to assess agreement on the results of the activity analysis. Thus, evaluator A analysed the activities of one unit in textbook B (the one previously examined by evaluator B), whereas evaluator B analysed another set of activities of a unit in textbook A (the one previously examined by evaluator A). The analysis was carried out in the least time possible so that the time factor was not determinant for the results. The Kappa analysis revealed a moderate to high agreement between the two evaluators, with more than 0.70 in most cases and reaching over 0.90 or even 1, meaning complete agreement in some of the aspects analysed (see Table 2).

Table 2 Kappa coefficient for the inter-rater reliability test.

Textbook	L	R	SP	SI	WP	WI	OM	WM	G	V	P	Type of inst.
Commerce	1	0.86	0.62	0.90	1	1	1	1	0.86	0.36	1	0.30
Medicine	1	0.32	0.61	0.55	0.64	1	1	1	0.77	0.72	1	0.48

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Skills and type of instruction

Table 3 shows the percentages of each skill for both textbooks. As can be observed, speaking interaction holds the highest presence with 32.6% -i.e. 43 activities- in *Commerce 1* and 19% -i.e. 23 activities- in *Medicine 1*, where there is also 19% for reading. The weight of reading in *Commerce 1* is remarkable as well, with 23%, which amounts to 30 out of the 133 activities analysed. This is followed by listening (17%) and grammar (12.1%). Those with less presence in *Commerce 1* are speaking production (9.8%), writing production (6.8%), vocabulary (5.3%) and pronunciation (4.5%). Aspects such as writing interaction and oral and written mediation are very scarce or even absent in the case of the last two. As for the *Medicine 1* textbook, vocabulary constitutes 17%, and grammar and speaking production represent 16% of all the analysed activities. In this case, the number of pronunciation and mediation activities is also very low.

These results contrast with other studies on ESP, where the main interest seems to be found in oral skills (Benabdallah, 2014) and vocabulary (Mitra, 2014). As stated above, the number of reading activities is prominent in both textbooks, whereas it is one of the last aspects to be considered in the needs analyses carried out by Benabdallah (2014) and Mitra (2014). Furthermore, even though there is no specific mention of language for specific purposes in the CEFR, the last version of this document (2018) states the importance of mediation in the development of communicative competence. In fact, some studies such as Dendrinos (2006) and Chovancová (2018) highlight the special role of mediation in ESP, as one of the most important skills needed by professionals.

Table 3 Presence of skills in the textbooks (%).

Textbook	L	R	SP	SI	WP	WI	WM	OM	G	V	P
Commerce t=132	17	23	9.8	32.6	6.8	0.76	0	0	12.1	5.3	4.5
Medicine t=122	11	19	16	19	3.3	0	0	1.6	16	17	3.3

As regards the communicative value of the units analysed, both the *Commerce 1* and the *Medicine 1* textbook contain a higher number of activities where MFI is predominant (see Table 4). The predominance of meaning-focused instruction is found in 69.17% of commerce activities and in up to 81.14% of activities in the medicine textbook. We can also find activities where there is a balance between form and meaning instruction, but these cases are only around 10% in the commerce units, and hardly 5% in the medicine units. These results are in line with the recommendations of the CEFR (2018, p. 23) in terms of communicative competence, broadening “the perspective of language education

[...] co-constructing meaning”, for communicative language teaching primarily serves a communicative and meaning-focused goal (Lowie, 2012).

Table 4 Presence of type of instruction in the textbooks

Textbook	FFI		MFI		Balanced	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Commerce	27	20.30	92	69.17	14	10.52
Medicine	17	13.93	99	81.14	6	4.91

5.2. Comparison between the *Commerce 1* textbook and the *Medicine 1* textbook

In order to find out whether there are differences between the two textbooks, ANOVA analyses were run for the categories *skills* and *type of instruction*. Table 4 contains the results of the analyses of variance regarding skills in both textbooks. As stated above, some skills such as those of mediation and writing interaction are hardly representative. Therefore, they

Table 5 Results from the ANOVA of skills

Skill	Test	Sum of squares	df	Quadratic mean	F	Sig.
L	Inter-groups	0.21	1	0.21	1.73	0.18
	Intra-groups	31.41	253	0.12		
	Total	31.63	254			
R	Inter-groups	0.08	1	0.08	0.52	0.46
	Intra-groups	41.89	253	0.16		
	Total	41.98	254			
SP	Inter-groups	0.27	1	0.27	2.47	0.11
	Intra-groups	28.45	253	0.11		
	Total	28.72	254			
SI	Inter-groups	1.15	1	1.15	6.12	0.01
	Intra-groups	47.76	253	0.18		
	Total	48.91	254			
WP	Inter-groups	0.07	1	0.07	1.59	0.20
	Intra-groups	12.25	253	0.04		
	Total	12.33	254			
G	Inter-groups	0.07	1	0.07	0.67	0.41
	Intra-groups	30.11	253	0.11		
	Total	30.19	254			
V	Inter-groups	0.90	1	0.90	9.57	0.00
	Intra-groups	24.01	253	0.09		
	Total	24.92	254			
P	Inter-groups	0.00	1	0.00	0.25	0.61
	Intra-groups	9.59	253	0.03		
	Total	9.60	254			

were not objects of analysis. We can observe that the critical level associated to F is higher than .05 only in two cases, namely speaking interaction (.01) and vocabulary (.00). In other words, no significant differences were found between the two books in most of the skills analysed. This suggests that the null hypothesis that the means are equal cannot be rejected, with the exception of speaking interaction and vocabulary. A possible explanation for these significant differences in speaking interaction and vocabulary is the subject of knowledge of each textbook. In other words, in the field of *Commerce 1*, speaking interaction is one of the most important skills, as professionals in this area constantly require oral interaction for business. In the case of *Medicine 1*, a higher number of activities dealing with vocabulary is expected to be found, for this area relies on a wider range of specialised vocabulary.

As for type of instruction, the ANOVA in Table 5 indicates that both textbooks are similar, as the critical level associated with F (.65) is higher than .05. Therefore, no significant differences can be found in the type of instruction promoted by both textbooks, where there is a clear prevalence of meaning-focused instruction.

Table 6 Results from the ANOVA of type of instruction

Type of inst.	Test	Sum of squares	df	Quadratic mean	F	Sig.
FFI	Inter-groups	1.40	1	1.40	0.20	0.65
	Intra-groups	1775.02	253	7.01		
	Total	1776.43	254			
MFI	Inter-groups	1.40	1	1.40	0.20	0.65
	Intra-groups	1775.02	253	7.01		
	Total	1776.43	254			

We have to take into account that the textbooks belong to a low level of proficiency (A2-B1). This means that despite the predominance of meaning-focused instruction, the level of scaffolding is high, so numerous activities aim at controlled output-based use of language. As an example, the following activity in *Commerce 1* is classified as a speaking interaction activity since students are asked to discuss in pairs the ideas presented in a previous activity. However, it becomes a highly controlled output activity as it shows some example sentences on which the learners will presumably base the discussion, given their low level of proficiency.

- (1) *Work in pairs. Think about your own culture. Discuss the ideas in exercise 1. (Commerce textbook)*

Examples:

The host normally starts a business discussion in my country, too.

Unlike Germany, you don't have to use titles.

We have a rule, but it's different from China.

It is also important to remark that some of the activities have been classified attending to more than one skill, as two or more skills appeared integrated. The following two activities serve as examples of this:

- (2) *Choose a country or region where you work or would like to work. Go online and find out how to behave in a business environment. Write a short report giving advice to people working there. (Commerce textbook)*
- (3) *Work in groups. Discuss the question of compliance among patients in your country by answering questions 1-7 in 1, by comparing the statistics at the top of page 41 with those for your own country, if they are available. (Medicine textbook)*

As can be observed, in the first one, reading and writing production are required as students are asked to read some information and write a short report based on it. In the second one, reading and speaking interaction are developed as students read a text and then have to discuss in pairs.

Regarding Criado's (2016) scale, although its comprehensiveness and utility must be duly acknowledged, this study has identified a number of methodological issues worth addressing. Despite the fact that the scale appears to be validated, this study provides evidence that: 1) not all parameters ought to have the same weight, for some of them clearly represent a higher load of form-focused instruction; 2) some of them remain somewhat vague and thus may yield differing results; 3) some descriptors may exhibit characteristics of both FFI and MFI simultaneously; and 4) activities asking students to work in pairs and produce different outcomes are not contemplated. In line with this, the descriptors that have been found particularly problematic are 'involves L1 use', 'involves individual work on the language', and 'aims at controlled input/output-based use of the language'.

Thanks to the contributions of pedagogical translation in current accounts of communicative competence, the use of the L1 is no longer seen as a solely form-focused type of instruction. On the contrary, there are numerous studies that show that the L1 may be used to raise language awareness in an attempt to promote communicative competence. Even though the contrast of language forms may be at the core of the activity, its goal may be to communicate, and not necessarily to produce accurate language forms (Pintado, 2018). Accordingly, this descriptor, as is formulated, may account for both form-focused and meaning-focused instruction.

Individual work has long been ascribed to form-focused activities (Swain, 2001). The emergence of more communicative methods and approaches in which students began to take a more active role and communicate between themselves reinforced this idea, suggesting that real communication is achieved through interaction and that individual work should be reserved for activities focusing on accuracy. However, nowadays there are manifold writing and reading activities that are genuinely communicative in that they focus on the message being transmitted. It is true that the negotiation of meaning that usually derives from interactions is a stereotypical form of meaning-focused instruction. Yet, this does not mean that individual tasks cannot be completely communicative or that all the activities asking students to work in pairs are irrefutably communicative.

The descriptor that alludes to controlled input/output-based use of language appears somewhat controversial when it comes to receptive skills. Whereas it is clear when activities ask students to produce either controlled or free output, it is not so clear when activities address input. As a rule, in an L2 classroom, input is controlled in the sense that it usually serves as an excuse to work on language forms, provides appropriate examples of language use, or acts as a pre-text to produce a more or less controlled output. This may not be the case for summative evaluation where students may have to show their

communicative competence in random scenarios. Therefore, we assume that whenever students have to complete a reading or listening activity in an instruction, input will always be - to a greater or lesser extent - controlled. It is also worth mentioning that the degree of freedom in students' outcome will depend on the level they are at. In other words, at an A level, students' output will always be more controlled than those at a C2 level, which does not mean that A-level students produce a freer, more communicative outcome.

To illustrate these issues, let us consider the following activity:

(4) *Read the article and decide if the statements are true (T) or false (F).*

1. *You can stand close to an American when you speak to him or her.*
2. *It is normal to shake hands briefly when you meet for the first time.*
3. *Most Americans smile and look at each other when they greet.*
4. *It is offensive to wink in America.*
5. *It is not unusual for an American to ask a stranger about their job.*

Firstly, the results of the type of instruction are 2.5 FFI and 7.5 MFI. Criado's (2016) scale assigns 25% of the activity to FFI simply because the input is controlled and students work individually. Consequently, this activity could not be treated as completely communicative. Nonetheless, as can be observed, it is an example of a chiefly communicative and meaning-focused activity.

Secondly, as can be observed from Table 3, both textbooks present a higher load of MFI, the percentage of MFI in *Medicine 1* being higher. However, table 1 shows that the number of activities devoted to language systems (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) is higher in *Medicine 1*, which somehow contradicts the previous finding. This could be the result of the limitations of the scale we have addressed, which does not seem to accurately contemplate the actual weight of FFI and MFI.

Finally, as we advanced earlier, we believe that not all the descriptors should be assigned the same weight in the scale. For instance, 'involves the use of metalanguage', 'involves analyzing language', 'favours formal accuracy' and 'requires using the language for non-communicative purposes' appear to be clearer instances of explicit instruction. Nonetheless, perhaps the latter could be left out in that it encompasses the whole nature of the activity under scrutiny and is analysed through other descriptors. Thus, although we are aware of the methodological complexities that these changes would entail, these limitations suggest that the scale should be revisited.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study has explored the communicative potential of two ESP textbooks. More specifically, it has examined the loads of FFI and MFI and the extent to which each language skill and system is promoted. The results point to a similar pattern in both textbooks as regards skills and type of instruction, which is predominantly meaning-focused. The most widely promoted skills are speaking interaction and reading in both textbooks. The number of vocabulary activities is especially significant in *Medicine 1*. Yet, it is comparatively scarce in *Commerce 1*. Moreover, the presence of mediation is very limited or even non-existent.

The pedagogical implications of these results point to the need for complementary materials considering the needs of each target situation. Accordingly, both contexts should include a larger number of writing and mediation activities. After all, the latter has been proved an essential skill in the current internationalised world where intercultural communication is the norm.

In order to carry out our analysis, Criado's scale (2016) together with a checklist for skills and systems have been used. While the value of the scale is acknowledged, various limitations have been found as regards its operationalisation. Some of the items accounting for form-focused instruction are assumed to indicate a low communicative potential of activities. Yet, this assumption does not always correspond to reality. The use of the dichotomic values to indicate the presence or absence of the parameters in the scale contributes to the viability of the methodology. Nevertheless, those parameters should be revised from a qualitative perspective - both in nature and formulation - to achieve a more accurate analysis, for some of them do not appear to report a low communicative potential. Thus, it seems that the context of use cannot be ignored, and some other elements beyond the activities themselves are to be considered, namely the student's output and activity sequencing, i.e. what precedes and follows the activity under scrutiny. All in all, these issues render evident the complexity of systematising the analysis of teaching materials by means of this type of scales.

There are some limitations to this study that might be usefully addressed. While we can conclude that the results of the study are in line with the communicative principles of the ESP approach, these results cannot be extrapolated. Only a sample of two branches of ESP have been analysed, and other aspects might well be examined in order to provide other useful insights to this line of research. Yet, it is hoped that the present study serves as a catalyst for future and more in-depth studies concerning ESP materials content analysis, especially those looking into their communicative potential and adequacy to the standards established by the European Union through official documents such as the CEFR.

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APPENDIX

Table A Description and illustration of language skills and systems for materials analysis

Category	Component	Description	Sample activity
Language skills	Reading	Students read a text to understand its message.	<i>All of the statements below are true. Find information in the text to support each statement.</i>
	Listening	Students listen to a piece of information to understand its message.	<i>Listen to five people stating where they are having a problem. Which part of the body are they referring to?</i>
	Writing (production)	Students compose a stretch of language with a communicative purpose.	<i>Complete two clinical incident reporting forms from the notes below. In each case it was a 'near miss' incident.</i>
	Writing (interaction)	Students compose a stretch of language in response to another written text.	<i>A friend is looking for a job in your field. Complete the following email. explain to him/her about you job (you can choose one), the company you work for, and the essential qualities needed for the job.</i>
	Speaking (production)	Students transmit a message orally.	<i>How important are accurate patient records? Give reasons.</i>
	Speaking (interaction)	Students interact with a partner.	<i>Work in pairs. Discuss these questions.</i>
	Oral mediation	Students facilitate access to knowledge in an oral form.	<i>In groups, discuss what the body language in I would mean in your own culture.</i>
	Written mediation	Students facilitate access to knowledge in a written form.	<i>Same as oral mediation but the output is provided in the written form.</i>
Language systems	Grammar	Students focus explicitly on grammatical aspects.	<i>Work in pairs. Complete the sentences below with the correct form of the verb. If more than one tense is possible, explain the difference.</i>
	Vocabulary	Students focus explicitly on vocabulary.	<i>Complete each sentence below with an adjective from I.</i>
	Pronunciation	Students focus explicitly on pronunciation aspects.	<i>Cover the stress patterns in I. Take turns saying a word to your partner, who will then identify a stress pattern 1-4.</i>