

Review research paper

## DESIGN OF ESP COURSE FOR GROUPS OF STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS WITHIN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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**Abstract.** *In today's practice of teaching ESP at the university level, especially at the faculties with a great number of departments, it sometimes happens that the students from different departments are grouped to attend ESP lessons. Such a situation occurs due to different circumstances and conditions, such as a disproportional number of students at individual departments, the number of allocated lessons per week, classroom organization of the teaching process, etc. The paper will present, elaborate and discuss, the design of an ESP course for groups consisting of students from different departments within humanities and social sciences, in the duration of four semesters (four subjects, two academic years), with a special emphasis on the selection and creation of course materials. In doing that, both relevant and current ESP literature and practical experiences will be used. The outcome of the paper will be the creation of a detailed course plan, containing all the components relevant to its practical application.*

**Key words:** *ESP, course, creation, design, humanities, social science, professionally mixed groups*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) plays a significant role in contemporary professional education as English has emerged as a global language, acting as a neutral means of communication between speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, being used for international communication in a variety of domains and is not tied to any specific country or culture. In her study *Introducing Course Design in English for Specific Purposes* (2018), Woodrow gives an overview of the role of English in the world today, as well as a detailed presentation of the historical development, classification, and types of ESP.

Numerous definitions of ESP can be found in the literature. According to Kováčiková (2020: 27), ESP traditionally refers to courses that teach the English language needed for specific academic or occupational contexts. In a wider context, it is used as an umbrella term for English language education offered at non-philological faculties and plays a significant role in tertiary education where students use English for their academic studies. On the other hand, Anthony (2018: 10-11) defines ESP as an approach to language teaching that targets

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learners' current and future academic or occupational needs, focuses on necessary language, genres, and skills, and helps learners meet these needs through general and discipline-specific teaching materials and methods. Tudor (1997: 91) notes that ESP courses deal with domains of knowledge that an average educated native speaker may not be familiar with, which distinguishes it from the teaching of general English, thus contributing to Basturkmen's view of ESP as the subject focusing on when, where, and why learners need the language in study or workplace contexts, with a strong focus on situated language use (2010: 8).

In the context of this paper, the proper definition of English for Special Purposes would be a rather synthetic one, which observes ESP as a subject or set of subjects taught in the form of a course at many universities today and is closely associated with faculties that offer different forms of professional or vocational education and training. The course is designed to provide students with an expanded knowledge of the English language that is specifically tailored to their field of study or work. The main objective of ESP is to prepare future professionals to be able to use English effectively and efficiently in all aspects of their professional communication, including reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Due to that, one of the key and unique aspects of ESP is that it deals with the specific characteristics of vocabulary, grammar, and discourse of a particular professional or vocational field. This approach ensures that students are not only capable of understanding the language of their field but are also able to use it accurately and fluently in a professional context.

## 2. ESP COURSE DESIGN FOR STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS OR STUDY PROGRAMS

### 2.1. General Concepts

In the current practice of teaching ESP at the university level, it is often common for students from different departments or study programs, with different professional or vocational orientations to be grouped for ESP lessons. This can occur due to a variety of reasons, such as an uneven number of students from each department or study program, a limited number of allocated lessons per week, or practical limitations in classroom organization.

The design of an ESP course syllabus for such groups of students is generally a unique challenge for teachers, involving students from different backgrounds and with varying language needs, which have to be taken into account when designing the ESP syllabus.

"Needs analysis, carried out to establish the "what" and the "how" of a course, is the first stage in ESP course development, followed by curriculum design, materials selection, methodology, assessment, and evaluation" (Flowerdew 2013: 325). Within the statement, the term needs analysis "refers to the techniques for collecting and assessing information relevant to course design" (Hyland 2006: 73).

In the case of the ESP course in question, the ideal first step is the assessment of the language needs of each student. This involves determining their level of English proficiency, their professional or vocational field (related primarily to the department or study program, and their specific language needs in that field). The assessment should be conducted at the beginning of the program, and the results should be used to assist in the design of the syllabus. Once the language needs of each student have been assessed, the next step is to design a syllabus that meets the needs of the entire group. This requires balancing the language needs of individual students with the overall needs of the group.

A syllabus that is too focused on one particular field may not be suitable for students from other fields, while a syllabus that is too general may not be effective in meeting the specific needs of any student.

To design an effective ESP syllabus for mixed groups of students, the teacher has to have a thorough understanding of the language demands of each professional or vocational field represented in the class. This will allow the design of activities and tasks that are relevant to each student's needs, while also ensuring that the syllabus is accessible to all students.

The syllabus should also include a mix of activities for the development of language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The activities should be designed to develop the language skills required for effective professional communication in each student's field. This may involve tasks such as reading and analysis of professional texts, different forms of academic and professional writing, participation in simulated professional discussions or presentations, and giving oral presentations. It should also contain exercises in translation from and into English, as well as students' involvement in some forms of digital content creation.

It is also important to consider different learning styles of each student. Some students may prefer hands-on, experiential learning activities, while others may prefer more traditional classroom-based activities. The syllabus should include a combination of activities that cater to different learning styles, allowing all students to participate and engage with the material.

The criteria for evaluation and examination should also be clearly defined and tailored to follow the contents of the syllabus, as well as the objective needs of students concerning their professional or vocational orientation. Concerning that, the examination materials should be carefully planned and created.

The designed ESP syllabus should be regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the students. This can involve regular feedback from students, as well as formal evaluations of the syllabus. If changes are needed, they should be made based on the feedback and evaluations received. By regularly reviewing and evaluating the syllabus, teachers can ensure that the ESP program remains effective and relevant for all students.

To give details regarding the design of an ESP course which is a central topic of this paper, it is necessary to present some general information on the course, within its institutional and educational context.

## **2.2. General Information on the Course**

The planned ESP course is implemented at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of East Sarajevo, and intended for students enrolled in the following study programs: Journalism, Pedagogy, Psychology, General Literature and Theatre Studies, and General Literature and Librarianship.

The total duration of the course is four semesters. It is divided into four subjects (English Language 1, 2, 3, and 4), corresponding to the first two years of study. There are 15 weeks per semester, with two lessons (90 minutes) per week. The subjects are compulsory and form an integral part of the curriculum for students in the mentioned study programs.

The primary focus of the ESP course is to develop students' abilities to communicate effectively in English in a range of professional situations and to help them in acquiring

specific vocabulary, terminology, and skills required for their chosen field. In terms of implementation of the teaching process, it includes language classes in combination with guided workshops, discussions, and other interactive activities that will provide students with opportunities to practice their language skills in context. It implies the use of a variety of methods and tailored and prepared materials for the students to improve their language skills, including, primarily, customized textbooks, but also different audio and video materials, and online resources. Additionally, the course includes assessments and evaluations to track students' progress and provide them with feedback on their performance and final grades.

Finally, a significant part of the course is its online component, created in Moodle LMS, especially relating to homework and other extracurricular activities, but also very useful for students' learning and examination preparation at home and teacher's supervision and monitoring of the work and progress of each student enrolled in the course.

### 3. COURSE DESIGN

#### 3.1. Course Components

The designed ESP course for the groups consisting of students from different departments within humanities and social sciences consists of four subjects: English Language 1, English Language 2, English Language 3, and English Language 4. Since the course, together with all the teaching materials, has to be prepared before the beginning of an academic year, it is not possible to design it after the assessment of the students' language knowledge and needs. Instead, the design is performed based on the teacher's knowledge, research, and experience, and the fact that all students included in the course have been learning English as a foreign language during primary and secondary school. However, the mentioned assessment takes place at the very beginning of the course and serves as a useful guide regarding the ways in which the course and materials should be used and adjusted.

The course focuses on improving students' proficiency in the English language by providing them with a comprehensive syllabus that covers all the core language skills of reading, speaking, listening, and writing. It is designed to be hands-on and interactive, giving students opportunities to engage with relevant textual and audiovisual materials to reinforce their understanding of language.

The work on such an engagement in all four mentioned language skills is an essential part of the teaching process in all four subjects, with the use of appropriate textual and audiovisual materials. In addition to that, English Language 1 and 2 also focus on building and alignment of the students' grammar skills. Namely, due to differences that exist between students in their previous knowledge of the English language, gained during primary and secondary education, students are given an opportunity to review or learn the fundamental rules and structures of the language, primarily regarding morphology and basic syntax, and how to apply them in various contexts. Such an overview of grammar is balanced and implemented on the basis of the initial assessment of students' language skills performed at the beginning of the course. On the other hand, English Language 3 deals with translation, which is an essential skill for students who need to translate between English and their native language for professional or academic purposes. The students learn how to translate written and spoken materials from one language to another accurately and effectively. Finally, English Language 4 builds on the skills developed in the previous subjects and puts emphasis on professional and academic writing, as well as digital content

creation. The students learn how to write different forms of academic and professional documents, and how to create digital content for different platforms and audiences.

Table 1 Course components

COURSE COMPONENTS		
English Language 1	reading, speaking, listening and writing (based on textual and audiovisual materials)	grammar
English Language 2		
English Language 3		translation
English Language 4		writing (professional and academic) content creation

### 3.2. Selection of Textual Materials

Selection of textual materials for the created ESP course is based on the general criterion of authenticity, which means that the texts should be written by native speakers of the English language and reflect real-life language use. This is significant for ensuring that students are exposed to the kind of language they are likely to encounter in real-life situations, such as in the workplace or academic settings. It is also important that the texts are appropriate for the level of the certain subject within the course. To ensure the quality of the materials, the teacher may edit the texts if necessary.

For the subjects English Language 1 and 2, the texts are 500-1000 words in length and at the intermediate or upper intermediate level. This implies that the texts should challenge students' language skills while still being within their knowledge reach. Their content is relevant both to the level of the students' English knowledge and the professional aspect of their study and should provide opportunities for them to practice and improve language skills purposefully.

For English Language 3 and 4, the texts are 1000-1500 words in length and at the upper intermediate or advanced level. These texts require students to have a higher level of language proficiency and provide them with opportunities to apply their language skills to more complex and sophisticated materials.

The sources of the texts are various and include the Internet, professional books, textbooks, articles, journals, magazines, and papers. They have to be carefully selected to ensure that the materials are of high quality and relevant to the students' needs, skills, and knowledge.

Corresponding to the departments the students of which have been included in the course, the specific topic areas for the texts include pedagogy, psychology, literature, theatre, journalism, and librarianship. These topic areas are chosen to reflect professional and academic interests of students and to provide opportunities for students to engage with materials that are relevant to their careers and academic pursuits. On the other hand, the common topic areas that are covered in the materials include education, film, music, art, language, politics, science, environment, technology, and the Internet. Due to their universality and relevance, these topics have been chosen to reflect broader cultural and societal context in which students will use their language skills and provide opportunities for students to engage with a wide range of materials that are relevant to their lives.

Table 2 Selection of textual materials

SELECTION OF TEXTUAL MATERIALS					
Authentic texts written by native speakers, edited if necessary.					
Subject	Length in words	Difficulty	Sources	Topic areas	
				specific	common
English Language 1	500-1000	intermediate/ upper intermediate	Internet books textbooks articles journals magazines papers	pedagogy psychology literature theatre journalism librarianship	education film music art language politics science environment technology internet
English Language 2	500-1000				
English Language 3	1000-1500	upper intermediate/ advanced			
English Language 4	1000-1500				

### 3.3. Selection of Audiovisual Materials

When selecting audiovisual materials for the ESP course it is also necessary that the focus is on materials that are authentic and written and narrated by native speakers. It is also important to ensure that the materials are suitable for the intended student audience and meet the needs of the course.

For the first subject, English Language 1, the materials are up to 7 minutes in length and on the intermediate or upper-intermediate level. Similar criteria apply for English Language 2, too, with the difference that the duration of the materials is up to 10 minutes.

Regarding English Language 3, the materials are up to 15 minutes in length and on the upper-intermediate or advanced level. Finally, the audiovisual materials used for English Language 4 are within the same range of levels and are up to 20 minutes in length.

Possible sources for these materials include audio and video streaming platforms such as Spotify, Google Podcasts, YouTube, and Vimeo. In terms of the specific topic and general topic areas, everything is the same as in the selection of textual materials. Thus, specific topic areas include pedagogy, psychology, literature, theatre, journalism, and librarianship, while common topic areas cover education, film, music, art, language, politics, science, environment, technology, and the Internet. It is important to select materials that are engaging and relevant to the students' interests and needs to enhance their learning experience.

Table 3 Selection of audiovisual materials

SELECTION OF AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS					
Authentic materials written and narrated by native speakers.					
Subject	Length	Difficulty	Sources	Topic areas	
				specific	common
English Language 1	≤ 7 min	intermediate/ upper intermediate	audio and video streaming platforms	pedagogy psychology literature theatre journalism	education film music art language politics science environment technology Internet
English Language 2	≤ 10 min				
English Language 3	≤ 15 min	upper intermediate/ advanced			
English Language 4	≤ 20 min				

### 3.4. Grammar

As it has already been stated, part of the teaching process in the subjects English Language 1 and 2 is focused on building and alignment of the students' grammar knowledge and skills. In that context, the students have the opportunity to review or learn the essential concepts of English grammar (morphology and basic syntax) and how to apply them in different contexts and situations.

In English Language 1, the focus is on several key areas of grammar that are essential for effective communication in English. The primary units covered in this subject include word order in statements, questions and negatives, types of sentences, nouns, verbs and tenses, adjectives and adverbs, articles, conjunctions, prepositions, passive voice, and direct and indirect speech.

The discussion on word order in statements, questions, and negatives focuses on the rules and conventions of English grammar that dictate the order of words in a sentence. This includes the subject-verb-object (SVO) word order in statements, the inversion of the subject and auxiliary verb in questions, and the negative particle placement in negatives. It also covers the four main sentence structures in English, including simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences, as well as sentence punctuation and how it affects meaning in a sentence.

Nouns are presented in terms of their general and specific features, including common and proper nouns, singular and plural nouns, and possessive nouns. Verbs and tenses are observed through conjugation, including past, present, and future tenses, and their proper use. The part on adjectives and adverbs covers roles and functions of these words in a sentence, including their placement and order in relation to other words, while, within the talk about articles, the use of definite and indefinite articles is elaborated. The discussion on conjunctions implies the different types of conjunctions, including coordinating, subordinating, and correlative conjunctions, and how they connect clauses in a sentence, while the prepositions are observed through their functions and the ways in which they indicate relationships between words in a sentence.

Passive voice is demonstrated through its structure and use, while the topic on direct and indirect speech explains the rules and conventions for reporting speech in English, including the changes of tenses and pronouns which happen in indirect speech.

In English Language 2, the covered grammar includes conditional sentences, modal verbs, and verbals. Conditional sentences are observed through their structure and use, including zero, first, second, third, and mixed conditionals. The discussion on modal verbs covers their functions and uses. Finally, verbals (infinitives, gerunds, and participles) are presented through their functions and use, with a special focus on how they act as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs in a sentence.

Table 4 Grammar

English Language 1	English Language 2
GRAMMAR	
word order types of sentences nouns verbs and tenses adjectives and adverbs articles conjunctions prepositions passive voice indirect speech	conditional sentences modal verbs verbals

### **3.5. Translation**

Translation is the crucial component of the teaching process in English Language 3 lessons, and, as such, it deals with several critical concepts and techniques that are essential for an effective translation from and into English.

It begins with an introduction to the concept of terminology, including the definition of terminology and the importance of terminology in the field of translation. This section also covers the basics of terminology management, including the creation, organization, and use of terminology databases.

The next significant section covers the basics of translation from and into English, including steps involved in the translation process, such as analysis of the source text, finding an appropriate equivalent in the target language, and evaluation of the quality of the translated text. It also discusses the importance of cultural adaptation and how it affects the quality of the translated text. Problem solving is also there, implying the various problems that may arise during the translation process and the ways how to solve them effectively, including identification and resolution of linguistic, cultural, and technical problems.

Another section deals with the use of dictionaries in the translation process, including different types of dictionaries and how to use them effectively, with an emphasis on the importance of using specialized dictionaries to achieve quality translations. In the same context, the use of Google Translate in the translation process is mentioned, including its limitations and potential dangers, as well as the use of other Internet resources, including artificial intelligence tools, online dictionaries, translation forums, and machine translation tools.

Finally, the importance of proofreading in the translation process is stated, with advice and instructions on how to proofread a translated text effectively. It includes the identification and correction of grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.

### **3.6. Writing**

Part of the ESP course, within English Language 4, dealing with academic and professional writing is designed to help students improve their writing skills and prepare them for the demands of the professional world. It covers a range of essential components of writing for a professional context, such as job application, CV, biography, request, motivation letter, report, review, overview, interview, essay, abstract, article, and paper. The purpose of each of these types of writing is taught, together with the components that make up each type, and the techniques for writing each of them effectively. Additionally, the focus is also on tone, proofreading, and other important aspects of writing which contribute to the quality of written work. The idea is that the students learn how to communicate effectively in a professional context, developing skills and knowledge, through a combination of theoretical instruction, practical exercises, and group activities.

### **3.7. Digital Content Creation**

Another part of the ESP course, within English Language 4 is dedicated to digital content creation. The term “digital content creation” implies the creation of digital content in different textual and/or multimedia forms and formats that can be used for educational or commercial purposes, and its distribution through the Internet. Within an ESP course it can be beneficial in many different ways and thus contribute to various aspects of language comprehension and knowledge improvement, such as vocabulary, grammar, writing, speaking, overall

communication, and presentation skills. Also, on a higher language use level, by incorporating digital content creation into the ESP syllabus, students can develop a range of practical language skills, such as research and writing skills, presentation skills, and critical thinking skills, as well as technical skills in using digital tools and media.

On the basis of the overall students' needs, capacities, language skills, computer skills, software and hardware availability, the digital content intended to be created includes: PowerPoint presentation, online questionnaire, personal website, blog, video presentation, video tutorial, and podcast. Depending on the format and form of digital content, this can be done individually or in groups.

Table 5 Translation | Writing | Digital content creation

English Language 3	English Language 4
TRANSLATION	WRITING   DIGITAL CONTENT CREATION
Concept of terminology Translation from English Translation into English Problem solving Use of dictionaries Use of Google Translate Use of the Internet resources Proofreading	Job application   Request CV   Biography   Motivation letter Report   Review   Overview   Interview   Essay Abstract   Article   Paper  PowerPoint presentation Questionnaire Personal website   Blog Video presentation/tutorial Podcast

### 3.8. Components of Teaching and Learning Process

All the components and elements mentioned and described in the previous text together participate in the teaching and learning process within an ESP course. The process comprises two components: classroom work and homework. The classroom work in all four subjects includes reading, watching and/or listening, discussion, analysis, and exercises based on textual and/or audiovisual materials, together with subject-specific work on grammar, translation, and writing. Homework is more dedicated to the latter, and, due to the time limitations imposed by the curriculum, provides opportunities for students' more detailed involvement in time-consuming issues such as grammar exercises, exercises based on textual and audiovisual materials, translation, writing, and digital content creation.

Table 6 Components of teaching and learning process

COMPONENTS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS			
Subject	classroom work		homework
English Language 1	Reading Watching and/or listening	Grammar lessons and exercises	Grammar exercises Exercises based on textual and audiovisual materials
English Language 2			
English Language 3	Discussion, analysis and exercises based on textual and/or audiovisual materials	Translation	Translation Exercises based on textual and audiovisual materials
English Language 4		Writing	Writing Digital content creation (individual and/or group) Exercises based on textual and audiovisual materials

### 3.9. Online Component of the Course

The online component of the course is created in Moodle CMS and hosted on the location <https://moodle.etf.ues.rs.ba/>, with individual online courses made for each subject, where all course materials, including the exercises, are both downloadable and directly accessible. All students are registered on the site, instructed, and obliged to complete the exercises and submit all sorts of homework through the appropriate online courses. More details on the creation and the contents of an ESP online course created in Moodle can be found in (Kovačević 2021) and (Kovačević 2022).

### 3.10. Examination and Evaluation Components

In the created ESP course, components for examination and evaluation have been defined based on the objective needs and expected learning outcomes. The components which are common for all four subjects are: attendance, activity during lessons, written tests based on textual and audiovisual materials, oral exams based on textual and audiovisual materials, and homework. Depending on the content of individual subjects within the course, there are also grammar tests (English Language 1 and 2), tests in translation from and into English (English Language 3), and essay writing (English Language 4).

Table 7 Examination and evaluation components

EXAMINATION AND EVALUATION COMPONENTS			
English Language 1	Attendance	Grammar test	Homework
English Language 2	Activity during lessons		
English Language 3	Written test based on textual and audiovisual materials	Translation from English Translation into English	
English Language 4	Oral exam based on textual and audiovisual materials	Essay	

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The design of an ESP course for groups consisting of students from different departments within the Humanities and Social Sciences is a complex and challenging task. However, with careful planning and consideration of various factors, it can be a highly rewarding experience for both students and teacher(s) involved.

The advantages and benefits of such a course include an opportunity for students to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, exposure to new ideas and perspectives, and development of interdisciplinary skills that are highly valued in today's rapidly changing world. Additionally, such a course may contribute to fostering a sense of community and collaboration among students, promoting a more inclusive and diverse academic environment.

However, there are also risks and potential problems associated with the design of such a course. For example, it can be difficult to find common ground between students from different departments, align their knowledge, and ensure that everyone's needs and expectations are met. There may also be challenges in developing a course syllabus that is both comprehensive and accessible to all students.

Despite that, the design of such an ESP course could be an important step in the promotion of interdisciplinary education and the preparation of students for a rapidly changing world. With careful planning and consideration of the advantages, benefits, risks, and potential problems, such a course, as a final design result, presents a useful and efficient tool for a successful and productive implementation of the ESP teaching and learning process.

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