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**An Inductive Approach to Curriculum Design: English for Occupational Purposes**

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English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is English language teaching that is designed to meet specific needs of learners by making use of the methodology and activities of the area it targets. Therefore, the content not only covers the language itself, but it also covers the skills, discourses and genres which are appropriate for those activities (Dudley-Evans, 2001). English for Specific Purposes is subdivided into English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). The use of English as an international language has become more widespread as a result of globalization. This makes ESP even more important, as more people are using English in different occupational contexts.

Graves (2000) suggests a framework to develop a course which includes many components: needs assessment in order to set course objectives, determining content, materials, and teaching method and evaluation, as seen from the figure below.

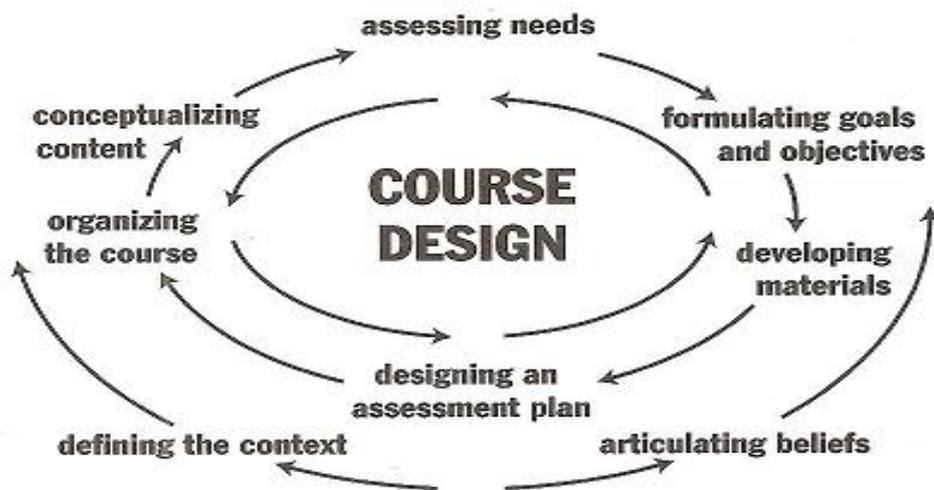


Figure 1. A framework of course development processes (Graves, 2000: 3)

In the framework, she also includes defining the context which involves obtaining necessary information such as the level of the students, the length of the course, where and when the course is taking place, available resources, the nature of the course (e.g., whether it is mandatory, open enrollment, etc.), and stakeholder identity. The context is referred to as learning needs by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). This information can facilitate in making better decisions and evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of the course. Another aspect which is included in Grave's framework—as a foundation for course design as defining context—is articulating beliefs about language, the social context of language, learning and learners, and teaching because beliefs influence decisions teachers make.

Needs analysis is suggested as a part of a course design process for ESP (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1988; Graves, 2000). Needs can be analysed from different sources as seen from the compilation of methods used in needs analysis by Long (2005). They include non-expert institutions; expert practitioner institutions; unstructured interviews; structured interviews; surveys and questionnaires; language audits; ethnographic methods; participant observation; non-participant observation; and classroom observation. Additional sources can be diaries, journals and logs; role-plays, simulations; content analysis; discourse analysis; register/rhetorical analysis; computer-aided corpus analysis; genre analysis; task-based, criterion-referenced performance tests; and triangulated methods. From these methods, we can see that needs can be reported/demonstrated by involved students, administrators, teachers, and stakeholders. Needs can also be found by analysing language used in target situations. The data derived from those methods contribute to syllabus types which are selected for the course. The syllabus may focus on knowledge transmission when it involves 'conformity', 'grammatical rule' and 'prescribed canons of correctness' (White et al., 1991). Because the focus of this syllabus is encouraging learners to receive knowledge, the syllabus is rather static and imposed (Candlin, 1984 cited in Kenny, 1996). The syllabus which is predetermined by the information from the needs analysis focusing on the target language or language audits, register/rhetorical analysis or genre analysis or those focusing on the needs reporting by people involved is normally a knowledge transmission syllabus.

Examples of this type of syllabus are structural syllabus which focuses on how the language is structured covering the knowledge of grammar, pronunciation and lexicon at sentence level; genre-based syllabus which focuses on the understanding and analysis of texts at lexico-grammatical level; situational syllabus which focuses on interaction which happens in a certain situation, or topical syllabus which focuses on the language used to talk or write about.

The other type of syllabus which focuses on the experiences people have, their thoughts and their discussions with others, is called experiential syllabus (Kenny, 1996). It focuses on learners' growth and self-realisation (White et al, 1991). The learners in this syllabus are expected to explore ways of knowing and interpreting knowledge. Therefore, it is more 'dynamic and negotiated' (Candlin, 1984: 33 cited in Kenny, 1996: 450). This syllabus is not predetermined by needs analysis. Rather, students induce their learning from the language and learning process they are exposed to.

The problems of the former syllabus are predetermined objectives, lack of flexibility and not being learner-centred. The linearity of the content can be seen from the teaching of genre by introducing moves and steps and then key language to be used in each move.

It does not mean that we should not conduct needs analysis before designing the syllabus, but that we should consider the needs and make the syllabus more inductive by having students themselves identify their learning objectives through exposure to various kinds of language, and not just being introduced to language predetermined by teachers.

In order to use an inductive approach in the syllabus design, I would like to give an example of the syllabus of our postgraduate programme. At the School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT), we offer a Master's Degree Programme in English for International and Professional Communication. It is a two-year programme. We designed the programme by first articulating our beliefs and defining our context, as Grave (2000) said that this process is the foundation for other processes constituting course design. A needs analysis was then conducted with experts, stakeholders and prospective students to find out about skills and language used in the target situations (as done in other needs analyses) as well as other learning needs such as suitable time for study, etc. We then outlined the objectives of the programmes; they aim at producing graduates who can communicate effectively in their workplace, use technology at work, and can be aware of any miscommunication which may be caused by cross-cultural communication. The syllabus of the programme thus focuses on enabling the learners to develop English language knowledge obtained from the needs analysis by integrating aspects of language analysis in various communication contexts and aspects; i.e., lexis, grammatical structure, genre, communication; doing small-scale research using concordances of the language so that students can analyse and learn how language works; and how language forms are used in different contexts. Because the students come from different backgrounds, it is difficult to pre-set objectives and language. Examples of how the learners will learn the language by examining and investigating how the language is used in various contexts can be seen from the following compulsory courses: Language Skills for Academic Studies allows participants to

investigate writing and speaking conventions in the field and how discourse is organized in spoken and written texts; Principles of Communication and Language Use focuses on authentic use of language as identified through concordances and elements of conversation analysis; English as an International Language investigates how technology has influenced language use in professional settings; Spoken Discourse for Professional Communication considers variations of language across face-to-face and distance communication where the learners are expected to describe the features of spoken discourse at the workplace and analyze its purpose and appropriacy; Written Discourse for Professional Communication encourages the learners to examine levels of formality focusing on formal writing, modes and genre of written communication—both paper-based and computer-based mails.

From the courses, it can be seen that students do not learn step by step from the predetermined language; however, they become more aware of salient language use derived from their analysis of the language at different levels and from different situations. The use of data-driven language learning through their own research on how language works can help students know about the language, rather than learning from the teacher who is regarded as an ‘expert.’

To acquire technology skills which is a part of learning needs, the courses are delivered by various means of technology including blended learning by using both online materials and face-to-face teaching, video conferencing which will be conducted so that learners are more familiar with the technology and discussion with teachers via emails, which not only saves time but also helps learners to be more aware of netiquettes and miscommunication which may occur due to differences between space and time of the two parties.

It may be arguable that an inductive approach can be easily adopted in postgraduate studies because its aims are to enable graduates to be critical and analytical, to develop mature students and to keep the nature of the study rather open. Teaching ESP to undergraduate students with a lower proficiency needs predetermined language especially when we want to introduce the target language to the students. The following example demonstrates how an inductive approach is used in an undergraduate course for engineering and science students. The course ‘English for Employment’ aims at preparing fourth-year engineering and science students for job application; this includes writing a letter of application and a resume, filling in an application form, and preparing for a job interview. I will show one lesson on how to help the students learn how to write a letter of application. From the target situation analysis, the students have to know the format of the letter of application, and deliver an appropriate content; they have to know how to sell themselves with real information, and their letter should respond to the job advertisement they chose. Generally, teaching how to write a letter of application in a course like this is done by presenting a sample letter and the students replacing the sample letter with their own information such as qualifications. However, I chose an inductive approach to equip the students with this knowledge by first presenting five letters of application with different formats; these letters were collected from those written by students in previous years; therefore, the level of language use is not too advanced for the students. In order to help the students analyse both the format and the content, scaffolding is given; e.g., questions that help draw their attention to each format and each part, a summary at the end of the exercise to help the students know each part of

the format, and questions that prompt the students to show their reasons. Classroom discussion to share their ideas is also used to involve the students in a discussion about the appropriate content of the letter of application. The language which is salient in the five letters is analysed by the students by choosing the language they want to use, and analyzing how it is used (I also asked them to use grammar books in order to help them understand the concept). Then, the students present their chosen language point to the class.

Because they are not English major students, I do not use concordances as a tool for them to analyse the language, but introduce it as one of the tools they can use to understand how the language is used. When the students write their own letter, they do not have to use the expressions as presented in the sample letters that they analysed; they are able to choose the language they want to use in order to write their own letter. After the students were involved in this learning process, they perceived how to write a letter of application as a dynamic process and context-specific in that they have to study the advertisement carefully and also know about the company they apply for so that they can choose the format and the content suitable for that company. With widespread content in the Internet, it is easy for students to find information about an application letter, but how to instill the concept of writing a good application letter is difficult especially when we are dealing with non-English major students like engineering and science students.

I also used an inductive approach and the concept of 'lack' from needs analysis in this course. The students were taught how to prepare for a job interview through role play; the interviewers and interviewees asked and answered questions according to the areas set by the teacher. The questions in each area were formulated by the students, and then they took turns asking and answering the questions. They had to evaluate if their friends' answer was good enough for the questions they ask. The job interview assessment was done by having an individual student interview with two teachers for the job she chose. The interview was video-recorded and then played to each of the teachers to identify what she did not do satisfactorily. Again, scaffolding such as questions and hints were given by the teacher in case students could not analyse their own performance. The discussion on how to perform better and/or the problems was focused. By analyzing their own performance, they could see their weaknesses and be better prepared for their real job interview.

The above examples of an EOP course show that the more learner-centred inductive approach can be implemented in various ways depending on level of the course and the students' language proficiency. The advantages of the course designed inductively through having students research the language are that they can develop a deeper level of understanding of the subject, their critical thinking skills can be developed by evaluating the information, and they can know how to use other sources of information in addition to that presented by the teacher (Killen, 1988).

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