The teaching of English for specific purposes

VOLUME 1
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THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH
FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

The field, needs analysis and language issues

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SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

Master’s of Education for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (M. Ed. in TESOL)

MODULE

The teaching of English for specific purposes

VOLUME 1
THE FIELD, NEEDS ANALYSIS AND LANGUAGE ISSUES

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE MODULE

AIM

The aim of this module is to develop a working awareness of the principal issues involved in the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In so doing, it integrates expertise from various subfields of applied linguistics and ESOL, such as course design and evaluation, text analysis and assessment and testing. It also brings in developments from the area of adult education, which has been recently acknowledged as a domain of direct relevance to many aspects of the ESP field.

In particular, the module aims to cover the following broad areas:

- the evolution of ESP both globally and in Greece
- trends in English for Academic Purposes and Business English
- needs analysis issues
- discourse, register and genre analyses
- course design, implementation and evaluation
- current methodologies in teaching adults
- assessment and testing in ESP
- the pedagogical roles of the adult/teacher trainer.

MODULE OUTLINE

The module consists of eight chapters. **Chapter 1** aims to delineate the ESP framework, classifying and defining its various sub-domains. It then offers a comprehensive historical orientation of the ESP “movement” and distinguishes its development into five distinct phases, each dealing with a particularly salient feature of ESP that also characterised the development of the whole of ELT. Current trends in ESP research are also discussed and the chapter ends with a brief but comprehensive chronology of the development of ESP (which is also very closely linked with that of ELT) in Greece.

**Chapter 2** integrates research from adult education to inform your awareness of ESP learners’ characteristics and the concomitant pedagogical techniques to be followed by the ESP practitioner (such as, for example, the importance of establishing a learning contract at the very outset of the teaching/learning process). Then, in **Chapter 3**, all the phases involved in the different approaches to needs analysis over the past forty years are described at some length, starting from early needs analysis concerns and the predominant, in the 1970s and 1980s, Target Situation Analysis, to the critical approaches of the ’00s. A large part of the chapter is concerned with a
presentation of the various data collection techniques and an extensive discussion of a number of methods of collecting data in needs analysis projects, as well as a comprehensive orientation of the construction, administering and processing of questionnaires and structured interviews for ESP needs analysis (and not only!).

Chapter 4 presents an in-depth account of the various language and text analysis issues raised in the ESP domain over the years. It discusses discourse and register analysis and goes on to describe the genre analysis perspective in more depth. It further raises your awareness of the analysis and teaching of grammar and vocabulary in ESP and ends with an overview of corpus analysis instruments. Then, in Chapter 5, the teaching of the four language skills is explored in detail, focusing on many different approaches adopted in the areas of academic and technical English. The overall discussion is aimed at helping you form a working awareness of specific skills and sub-skills (e.g., reporting, attending lectures, making presentations, etc) and their function in different sub-domains of ESP.

Chapter 6 focuses on ESP course and materials design, development and evaluation. The chapter integrates your current knowledge of general-purpose course designing with ESP-oriented concerns, such as distinguishing between intensive and extensive specific-purpose courses, meeting (adult) learners’ delayed and immediate needs, providing tailor-made pre-experience or in-parallel-with-experience learning episodes, etc. It provides a comprehensive picture of what is involved in ESP course designing in a step-by-step way and goes on to discuss ways of evaluating an ESP course. Issues related to learner motivation, subject specificity and authenticity are raised and the importance of appropriately creating, selecting and evaluating ESP materials is discussed. This is supplemented by an in-depth discussion of ESP teaching methodology and the chapter ends with an extensive presentation of an ESP course design case study.

Chapter 7 presents the case for the teaching of English for Business Purposes (EBP). The domain of business English is defined and its importance is discussed with reference to issues of communication and discourse. An EBP case study is further presented aiming to raise your awareness of practical issues involved in an EBP course. The module ends with a brief yet comprehensive account of assessment and testing issues in ESP.

Chapter 8 gives you the basic tools that you need for developing, selecting and evaluating tests for different ESP situations and discusses issues related to feedback, operationalisation, piloting and revising ESP tests.

PRE-READING

It would be very useful for your study to consult the following books. They will be frequently referred to in various stages of this module and will help you form a
comprehensive idea of most of the key issues raised. From this point of view, it would be a good idea to purchase those titles that you find more useful, especially if you are thinking about writing your M.Ed. dissertation in one of the ESP domains.


**INPUT READING**

Throughout your study of the module you will be referred to a number of articles that will be provided for you in electronic form in one of the forums creating especially for this purpose. Please follow your tutor’s advice as to how these resources will be accessed, as they are extremely important for your study of this material and, it goes without saying, for the preparation of the written assignments.
STUDYING AT A DISTANCE

You must by now be quite familiar with distance learning methodology. The same framework followed in the previous modules is adopted in this module too. As far as content is concerned, we, the three authors of this material, have done our very best to bring our material up to date with current research and, whenever possible, align our chapters with appropriate backwards and forwards referencing. However, it is to be expected that slight differences in opinion would be present in a work of such depth. It is up to you to reflect on all the issues raised and work out your own conclusions with reference to both the theoretical background presented and your own experience and interests. In fact, the written assignments ask you to do just that!

From the perspective of form, we have done our best to provide Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) that are both structurally and thematically varied and at times demanding. We have tried to provide comprehensive answers to most of these SAQs — please refer to the SAQ key only once you have provided the answer yourself or have carefully thought about it (usually by writing down your reflections in your notebook). At all times, it is useful to remember that responding to SAQs is the best way to prepare for both the written assignments and the final examinations. In a nutshell, SAQs are constructed to help you in the following areas of your study:

- orientation of issues whose discussion follows — certain activities raise your awareness of issues prior to their fuller discussion (this is achieved by asking you to jot down your thoughts and experiences on certain issues);
- input reading — certain activities are paired with your input reading and aim to help you make notes and appreciate the content of articles, chapters, extracts from coursebooks, and so on; it should be noted that an attempt has been made to structurally distinguish Input Readings from SAQs, so that you know exactly what you’re expected to do at each stage of your study;
- content application — other activities help you check your own understanding of the issues raised, by asking you, for example, to apply or extract criteria for the evaluation of materials; in this case, SAQs are more structured (e.g., in the form of tables) and their key is provided either at the end of the chapter or in the text that immediately follows the SAQ rubric; and
- assignment preparation — although most activities can be used, to a more or less extent, in the preparation of your assignments, certain activities make clear reference to the ‘actions’ you should be performing (e.g., making notes, taking decisions, structuring, etc.) at each stage of your reading.

In certain cases, reading a particular article is necessary (e.g., in Chapter 3). In that case, please follow the instructions in the “Input Reading” boxes and consult
the articles (that will be provided in electronic form—see above). In most cases, you will find more information on certain topics in the Further Reading section at the end of chapters.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND FINAL EXAMINATION

As with the other modules, you will be expected to submit four written assignments and sit a final written examination for this module. You will find the rubrics for the assignments and information on the examination on the relevant HOU forum—please consult your tutor for more information.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

Throughout your study of the module and related readings, you have to be aware of the following:

• Although this module concentrates on the ESP situation only, the study guide takes special care to ‘involve’ students who teach at all levels. This is especially so regarding assignments, where the ‘target ESP situation’ is either your own (if you’re already teaching ESP) or the teaching situation that you’re observing. Furthermore, although it concentrates on the teaching of English for specific purposes, it should be borne in mind that the research reviewed in all aspects of ESP (from needs and language analysis to classroom methodology and assessment/testing) can be directly related to the teaching of any language for specific purposes (i.e., LSP).

• According to the distance learning methodology, maximum study ‘results’ are achieved if one first consults the study guide and then refers to any other reading material. Also, make sure you have an empty notebook where you can scribble down your thoughts—there are special instructions on how best to go about making these notes in the study guide.

• If your teaching situation is not ESP-related, you will need to select an ESP class to work with for the purposes of the assignments. Do this as early as possible. Your own teaching situation may not be strictly speaking ESP, but it may be a class of adult students (operating at post-high school level). This module is geared to both ESP and adult teaching situations.

Good luck with your study!

N. Sifakis