Research

Need Analysis In ESP Context: A Project In English For Specific Purpose: Target Situation Analysis For Science And Islamic Studies (Environment)

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Abstract: This research aims at designing an ESP course for science and Islamic studies (environment). Besides, the goal of this study is to familiarize the students with the features, requirements, and prospects of the Science and Islamic Studies (Environment), the learners will be able to choose, skim, scan and analyze academic reading materials, paraphrase and organize the ideas from reading materials into mediums of presentation specifically posters and to give oral presentations based on the posters. A total class of the second year of undergraduate students from the University of Malaysia was selected as the respondents. A questionnaire, semi-structured interview and document analysis were used as tools of data collection. The findings of this study revealed that the students need speaking skills and reading skills the most to complete their oral presentations coursework, and they need to perform group discussions to decide on topics and to discuss the ideas for the presentations. Furthermore, it was indicated that the students need to consult with the lecturers before preparing and presenting their presentations in poster.

Keywords: Science and Islamic Studies (Environment), English for Specific Purpose (ESP), Task-based Approach, Need Analysis.

Introduction

English is seen as an important tool for education, career and status in Malaysia (Nesamalar et al., 2005). As English is used for many different purposes and in a variety of areas, the forms and functions of the language may have its own identities and characteristics accordingly. Thus, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was introduced as an approach with the
goal to provide language instruction that caters students’ own particular language learning purposes (Hyland, 2002 as cited in Belcher, 2009). However, as the purposes may vary according to different settings, EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) transpired as two distinct components within the concept of ESP (Kucherenko, 2013). EAP will be the focus in this syllabus design as the target community are university students with the purposes related to their tertiary level study requirements.

**Task-Based Approach to Teaching Speaking and Reading**

Spawa & Hassan (2013) stated that Malaysian learners have poor communication proficiency despite their 11 years of learning English in schools regardless the aim of the country to develop citizens who are able to communicate in social and economic situations. Meanwhile, Spawa & Hassan (2013) also found that the students believe that speaking is the most important skill as they need to communicate in English for real life purposes such as to further their studies, to communicate and for job purposes. However, speaking is considered difficult as they have anxiety to use the language and are not confident in presenting their ideas (Darmi, 2013). Thus, the task-based approach is selected in this syllabus design to enable the students to practice speaking and communicating and at the same time, to meet the expectations of their academic tasks.

Naira (2018) defined task-based approach as meaning-based tasks and reported that many second language acquisition researchers have similar opinion that instruction is more effective when it is primarily meaning-based. Richards & Rodgers (2001) also explains that this approach emphasizes on the tasks as something that learners can do using their language, is relevant to learners’ needs, focuses on meaning, focuses on outcomes and promotes the usage of communication strategies and interactional skills. Therefore, for this syllabus design, there will be communicative tasks which are relevant and meaningful for the students. Among the communicative tasks for this approach is enculturation activity where the students need to know the expectations from the faculty for them to complete their study. There will also be activities where the learners need to practice on their oral presentation skills. These different communicative tasks performed by the students are meaningful as the tasks are close to learners’ real-life needs.

Other than that, task-based approach is also applied during reading activities as the students need to find main ideas and supporting details from the academic reading materials given. These tasks are meaningful as the students need to acquire the skimming, scanning, analysing and
paraphrasing skills. These skills are real life skills as they will always use it not only in academic context but also for other real-life purposes.

Besides, according to Naira (2018), there are four main criteria of task-based learning (TBL) for reading that are inculcated in this course which are as follows:

• Focus on meaning which is to convey meaning. The students read texts to find the main ideas and supporting details and convey the meaning through posters.

• It is also in communicative setting as the students need to work in pairs while performing most of the tasks.

• Relationship with the real world. It contains authentic topic and well adapted subject-specific. The topics chosen are related to the Islamic and Science studies (Environment).

• Nonlinguistic outcome. The activities encourage learners’ participation and boost their motivation to complete the tasks.

The task-based approach for teaching speaking and reading is broadly used in English for specific contexts. It is extensively being used especially for communicative purposes. Thus, the approach selected suit the students’ needs.

**Stages in Task-based Approach**

Based on the Task-Based Approach, there are three major stages in a methodological implementation which are pre-task, during task and post-task. Each stage is carried out for different purposes.

**Pre-task**

This stage emphasizes on the general cognitive demands of the task and linguistic factors. In handling cognitive demands, foregrounding activity is done to direct learners to the relevant knowledge of the topic and to activate the students’ prior knowledge and schemata. The tasks are carried out in natural and authentic situation where the students do not need to retrieve knowledge from long-term memory during the task completion. It is more likely as pre-listening or pre-reading stage (Skehan, 1996). Besides that, the students will observe and carry out a task that is similar to the real task. The purpose is to help the students to understand the requirements and the structure of the task. At this stage, teacher can draw the students’ attention to the language which will be used in completing the task. The activities can aim to teach or restructure the language which will help the students to complete the task. It can be done explicitly or implicitly.
McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara (2013) suggested that students should be given a pre-task to introduce the topic and find relevant language.

During task

At this stage, the task given should be at the right level. It should neither be too difficult that requires an excessive mental process nor too easy that leads the learners to become bored. In order to provide the right task, the attentional demands of a task can be manipulated. There are methods of influencing the communicative pressure for task completion that can affect the language production (Skehan, 1996). First, the deadline of the task can be shortened to force learners to use the language that is readily accessed to them. Second, teacher can emphasize on either they want to focus on accuracy or they want the students to use specific language structure. Third, the teacher can vary the number of participants. According to Brumfit (1984, as cited in Skehan, 1996), the greater the number of participants in a task, the greater the pressure on those transacting a task, and the greater that fluency will predominate as a goal over accuracy.

There are also methods of adjusting tasks difficulty during task completion. One way of making the tasks less difficult is by providing visual support. As example, a diagram can be used to help the students to reduce the processing load in completing the tasks. On the other hand, surprise element, which does not match students’ expectation, can be introduced to make tasks more difficult as they do not know of what the task will required.

Post-task

Post-task is where the teacher should consider how activities can be used to promote pedagogic goals. Based on methodological cycle, it incorporates a post-task public performance which is a development of the origin task. It should be done by one of the groups or pairs who have conducted the task. This extension of the initial task would be carried out publicly, in front of an audience. As example, if the group has presented several posters, the post-task can be the justification of the best poster which was produced. The audience can be other students, the teacher, or even a video camera, so that the performance can be played back later. By doing this, the students will concern on the correctness and the complexity of the speech used. So, the students will allocate their attention to the goals of restructuring and accuracy (Skehan, 1996). The teacher can achieve this by reminding the students that fluency is not the only goals during task completion, but that restructuring and accuracy also have importance.
In directing the students’ attention on the tasks conducted, the students can be asked to do reflection on the nature of their performance. This is to raise consciousness after a task is done. The students are encouraged to reflect on the language used, relate the language to the goal and consider alternative ways of expressing meanings which have been used (Skehan, 1996). Reflection will require the students to develop their metacognitive and the emerging structures can be internalized effectively.

**Activities and Tasks in Task-Based Approach**

In this course, there are many activities and tasks planned for the students in order to meet their needs in their studies. The main purpose of this course is to equip and to prepare the students for their oral presentations which is the main task in their courses for this semester. However, before the students are able to do oral presentations, there are others prominent activities that should be carried out to prepare them for this major task such as skimming and scanning reading materials, sorting main ideas, presenting and justifying their ideas.

In the beginning of the course, the students are also asked to find out more information on their Science and Islamic studies (Environment). They have to identify the objectives, goal, tasks, and suitable materials related to their studies from various resources. For that reason, they have to do a small-scale research which require them to read and analyze documents provided by the lecturers, course coordinators and faculty staff, and also to interview their seniors, lecturers or other people who are in charge for their undergraduate program. Similarly, in most of the lessons, the students have to cooperate with their peers in pairs or in groups to complete the tasks given by the teacher. This learning strategy will encourage the students to be actively involved in discussion and indirectly develop their speaking ability as well as boost their confidence when delivering their points and views regarding subject matters.

These activities are meaningful for the students as they learn language and subject content in a form of interaction. It is the element in social development and interaction theory by Vygotsky (1978, as cited in Sanchez, 2004) who asserts that the interactions with the surrounding culture and social agents such as teachers and peers will assist students’ intellectual development.

**Role of the teacher in the Task-Based Approach**

According to Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu (2011), there are three main roles that should be performed by the task-based language teachers which are as the selector and sequencer of tasks, as the people responsible in preparing the learners for tasks and the people responsible for consciousness-raising. Firstly, the teacher is a selector and sequencer of tasks because the teacher
needs to choose, adapt, design and build the tasks according to the learners’ needs, expectations, interests and language skills. The teachers also need to ensure that the tasks reflected real life situations as stated by Naira (2008) that the tasks produced should reflect the real life of the students.

Secondly, the teachers need to prepare the students towards completing the tasks so that the tasks can be accomplished easily. In this case, the teachers prepared the students by breaking the difficulty level of the tasks from easy to complex. This syllabus design starts with the introduction to the course and gradually develop into poster making and oral presentation. Thirdly, the teachers are responsible to raise students’ consciousness by preparing tasks such as skimming and scanning texts, organizing ideas and examining the criteria of good presentation materials and skills during this ESP course. This is supported by Cubillo & Brenes (2009) which stated that teacher should conduct consciousness raising activities that help the students to become aware of, identify and process specific features from the task.

**Assessment**

Assessment is an essential part of curriculum design as it provides information on students’ current knowledge and growth while encouraging students’ participation and contribution (Nation & Macalister, 2010). Deriving from the major types of monitoring and assessment by Nation and Macalister (2010), this course design has selected three suitable assessment types which are Placement Assessment, Short-Term Achievement Assessment and Achievement Assessment.

Placement Assessment will be done in order to identify students’ level so as to ensure that the course level of difficulty will be appropriate for the students (Nation & Macalister, 2010). For this course, as the aim is to equip the students with good presentation skills, the Placement Assessment will be done during the first two lessons where the students need to find information related to their studies and present their findings to the whole class. This task is important in setting the baseline for both the teacher and students on the expectations for the outcome of this EAP course.

Next, Short-Term Achievement Assessment will be done after certain skills in order to examine the progress of the students in certain language item or skill and it is important for the teacher to have clear objectives as the assessment will be done according to the objectives (Nation & Macalister, 2010). For this course, few Short-Term Achievement Assessments will be done after few major stages throughout the course. For example, at the end of the lesson on preparing
presentation materials, the students will be required to build their own presentation materials in order to see their progress for that particular skill set. Other stages where this assessment will be done according to the objectives are the skimming and scanning stage, organizing ideas stage and oral presentation stage.

Finally, Achievement Assessment is a summative assessment at the end of a course assessing on what the students have learnt, to test their achievement and finally, to grade the success of the course (Nation & Macalister, 2010). In this course, the final two lessons will be focusing on this assessment where the students need to choose their own resources, analyze and organize the ideas from their readings into a poster and present the poster to the whole class. The students then are required to give feedbacks on others’ presentations and a feedback on the whole ESP course. This assessment is important in order to see if the students achieve the objectives of the course and to see if the course is effective in improving students’ presentation skills.

Need Analysis

The first step in ESP course is a need analysis procedure. As ESP focuses on learners’ needs, the gap between students’ present and target proficiencies should be analyzed in order to identify their need and want in mastering related language skills to achieve their objectives (Belcher, 2009). As suggested by Nation and Macalister (2010), surveys, interviews, observation, informal discussion with teachers and learners and tests are tools that can be used to collect data on learners’ lacks, necessities and wants to design a syllabus.

Research Objectives

Nation and Macalister (2010) stated that clear objectives is principal in defining the course content, determining the focus of teaching presentation and in regulating the assessment. Thus, these are the objectives that will determine the direction for this course which is to help the students to master oral presentation skills.

By the end of this course, the students will be able to:

a. be familiar with the features, requirements and prospects of the Science and Islamic Studies (Environment).

b. choose, skim, scan and analyze academic reading materials.

c. paraphrase and organize the ideas from reading materials into mediums of presentation specifically posters.

d. give oral presentations based on the posters.
Methodology

Participants

Eleven students of Science and Islamic Studies (Environment) in University of Malaya are the participants of this study as they are the target community for this EAP syllabus design. All of them are in their second semester for this Undergraduate Program. Since they are all successfully enrolled in University Malaya, which is one of the prestigious universities in Malaysia, the students should have at least grade B for their SPM English paper and Band 3 for their MUET test.

Instruments of Data Collection

This Target Situation Analysis research uses questionnaires, semi-structured interview and document analysis as tools to collect the data. The questionnaire consists of three sections with 35 questions. Section A includes three questions on students’ grade for English in SPM, their MUET grade and their opinion of their overall English language proficiency. This section is important to give basic information on students’ English language level and their level of confidence in using the language. Next, Section B consists of 15 questions on students’ views on which elements to be included in an English for Specific Purposes course and Section C consists of 17 questions on students’ problems in English communication. The questions need to be answered using 4-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 with Strongly Disagree to 4 with Strongly Agree.

The semi-structured interview includes 15 questions that aims to identify in depth the problems that the students have in English language skills. These questions are developed from the analysis of the questionnaire responses. Finally, the document analysis involves analyzing students’ current course guidelines and the assignment rubrics. This analysis is done in order to identify the requirements and expectations of the courses from the students in relation to English language skills.

Procedures of Data Collection

A Google Form platform was developed in order to distribute the questionnaire items to the respondents. A link to the questionnaire’s Google Form was then distributed to the respondents via WhatsApp application. The responses were then received when the students fill in the Google Form. From the questionnaire’s responses, a set of questions for semi-structured interviews were developed. Then, the interviews were done with two of the respondents in order to get more information on the problems they have in using English for their courses. Finally, the
documents were retrieved from the students such as their course guidelines and assignment rubrics in order to do the document analysis.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Both questionnaires and interview data analysis showed that English language is very important for the participants. The document analysis from their course guidelines also confirmed that they use English throughout the course for lectures, assignments and group discussions. Thus, they are keen to attend an EAP course in order to complete their study.

Table 5.1: Students’ problems in English communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPEAKING</th>
<th>Strongly Agree – Agree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree – Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Giving Oral Presentations</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Participating effectively in group discussion.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Face to face negotiation with lecturers</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Making polite conversation</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>93.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LISTENING</th>
<th>Strongly Agree – Agree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree – Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Listening for accurate understanding in lectures</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Listening to instructions during lab tasks</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Note taking</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>90.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 shows the excerpts on the findings from Section B of the questionnaires. It shows the top two skills that the students’ viewed to be included in the ESP course. Based on the data, the most important skill is speaking followed by listening and finally writing and reading skills. From the result, it is found that for speaking skill, the students need to master the most in the process of oral presentation. This is in line with the interview findings where the interviewee mentioned that they have problems in speaking and communicating especially when they need to do oral presentation tasks. In addition, he also pointed out that they have no problem in reading
the materials related to their coursework, but they found it difficult to find main ideas for the presentations.

Table 5.2: Reading and Speaking Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree – Agree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree – Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>READING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I have difficulty in understanding written English reports, articles and journals.</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have difficulty in reading English reports and memos at a fast pace</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I have difficulty in understanding written questions in English.</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Average</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>39.43</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPEAKING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I can’t speak English confidently.</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have difficulty in conveying messages in English (Spoken)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I have difficulty in voicing my opinions in English</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I need time to think in my mother tongue before replying in English.</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I don’t know the appropriate words to use while speaking in English.</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I tend to use words from my mother tongue when I speak or write in English.</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Average</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>31.83</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 is an excerpt from the top two skills from Section C on students’ problems in English communication. It shows that the learners are having the highest problem in reading skill especially in understanding written English reports, articles and journals. Meanwhile, the students also agreed that they need time to think in their mother tongue before replying in English, they
do not know the appropriate words to use while speaking in English and they tend to use words from their mother tongue when they speak or write in English. These are the major problems that students pointed out which are among the crucial subskills for excellent oral presentations. Thus, it can be concluded that the students need speaking skills and reading skills the most to complete their oral presentations coursework.

Meanwhile, the documents retrieved emphasized the importance of English especially in reading and speaking skills. To complete their courses for this semester, the students need to do a few presentations in the form of posters as this is the major requirements which carry the highest marks for these courses. As part of the assignments’ rubrics, the students need to do readings to find information. They also need to perform group discussions to decide on topics and to discuss the ideas for the presentations. Meanwhile, they also need to consult the lecturers. Then, the students need to prepare their presentations in the form of posters and finally, they need to present their posters. All of these presentation elements require the students to be excellent in reading and speaking skills of English. Yet, as found from the questionnaires and interviews, these are the main skills that the students are having problems with.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the collected data, it can be concluded that there is a need to design an ESP course for the Science and Islamic studies (environment) which includes all four language skills such as speaking, listening, writing and reading. In this study the reading speaking and presenting the presentations in the form of the poster is emphasized. The base of this ESP course is to raise the students’ awareness of appropriate reading, speaking and presenting the presentations in science and Islamic studies context. Tasks including speaking, reading and presenting should be focused. The language tasks in the ESP course for science and Islamic studies should be designed to serve specific speaking and reading as well as presenting focus. According to Spawa & Hassan (2013), they stated that Malaysian learners have poor communication proficiency despite their 11 years of learning English in schools regardless of the aim of the country to develop citizens who can communicate in social and economic situations. Meanwhile, Spawa& Hassan (2013) also found that the students believe that speaking is the most important skill as they need to communicate in English for real-life purposes such as to further their studies, to communicate and for job purposes.
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Dedication
Not mentioned.

Conflicts of Interest
There are no conflicts to declare.