

A case study: The Significance of the ESP In-session Course at International Burch University

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Abstract

This paper focused on the role of the ESP courses at a private university where the educational process is held in English language. The study identifies the significance of in-course English for Business Purposes (EBP) course. The study was carried at International Burch University (IBU). The focus group was comprised of 47 students (N=47) and 4 (N=4) lecturers at Faculty of Economics, International Burch University during spring semester, 2012 and 2013. The study investigated the need for English for Business Purposes; the way students and lecturers perceive EBP at IBU; the problems students face during the course; the role of the English instructor, and the challenges of the English for Business Purposes courses. A second investigation was done to elucidate the reasons International Burch University replaced the freshman courses with the EBP. The paper can be used as a useful resource for future researches and private institutions.

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The development in communication and business technology throughout the recent years has deeply influenced the field of English language teaching. Therefore, teaching English has become one of the most investigated fields. According to Jones and Davies (1983), “foreign languages have been learned not for their own sake but as vehicles for social and economic contacts and for the transportation of ideas.” Arslan and Akbarov (2012, p.25) mention that nowadays, at every level of teaching English, take it primary school education or tertiary education, the student is at the center. However, when we talk about tertiary education, students’ needs become more specific because they learn English for a specific purpose. All English courses tend to accomplish similar objectives: to set learning objectives, to establish a positive learning environment in the classroom, and to evaluate students’ progress. However, ESP is different than General English in that it identifies the group of the learner including nationality, age, what students already know about English, interests, their socio-cultural background, preferred styles of teaching, and their attitude towards English or the cultures of the English speaking world. The rationale for this study was the fact that General English courses do not take into consideration the tasks and activities for which the class learners are using English; personal information about the learners and his or her needs, previous learning experiences, cultural information; undefined reasons for attending the course and expectations of it; learners' attitude toward English: *wants, means, subjective needs*; learners' current skills and language use, the learners’ deficiencies; effective ways of learning the skills and language in learning needs; knowledge of how language and skills are used in the target situation-linguistic analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis; or information about the environment in which the course will be run. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, General English courses take the main role at the universities.

After completing English Language School (ELS) at International Burch University, where intensive high-quality English Language instruction courses are provided, IBU students are usually not able to fully cope with the faculty programs. Therefore, since the freshman course did not include all the mentioned, it has been replaced by English for Business Purpose course.

This qualitative research study explores a spectrum of problems and challenges students face while learning the second language. The purpose of the study is to investigate the need for EBP; the way students and lecturers perceive EBP at IBU; the problems students face during the course; the role of the English instructor and the challenges of English for Business Purposes courses. The focus group was comprised by 47 students (N=47) and 4 lecturers (N=4) at the Management Department / IBU during spring semester, 2012/2013.

The ESP course at International Burch University is intensive, demanding, and oriented towards learners who have no experience in the field of management upon course entry. The target learners' performance is assessed at the end of the session. It focuses broadly on the four basic language skills of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The course is based on the latest research in the language of business. Less time is spent on learning grammar. The main intent is to provide students with the ability to combine words, many of which they already know, into phrases and expressions that form the basis of business English. The resources used in class focus on a variety of materials in order to explore different international issues. Most resources are from real-life situations due to their relevance in the content-based instruction students receive at university. Course evaluation is done by means of tests, student feedback, teacher self-reports, and documents. The aim of the course is to develop students' English competency in the real context and be able to follow the lecturers at the Department of Management.

Literature Review

Many English instructors and scientists in this field have defined ESP courses in different ways. Wright (1992, p.4) offered a broader definition: "Different human activities require different communication skills, which in turn require mastery of specific linguistic items. ESP is, basically, language learning which has its focus on all aspects of language pertaining to a particular field of human activity, while taking into account the time constraints imposed by learners." Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.16) define English Language teaching as a tree. English Language Teaching is the root of that tree and ESP comes out of that root. And then out of ESP, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) are born. Flowerdew and Peacock (2001, p.11) concur with Hutchinson and Waters stating, "the distinction between the two major branches of ESP is not clear cut." EAP is separated into English for Biology, English for Mathematics, English for Economics, "and EOP branches out into English for Pilots, English for Doctors, English for Bank employees." The slight distinction between EAP and EOP is given by Flowerdew and Peacock (2001, p.11) with the statement that an English course designed to help students read economics textbooks would clearly be EAP, but a course designed to teach learners how to participate in business meetings or take phone calls definitely has an EOP dimension to it. Gatehouse (2001, p.5) places ESP and EOP in the same category under the umbrella term ESP. Carter mentions that "the end purpose of both EAP and EOP are one in the same: employment". English for Business Purposes is clarified as a category within EOP.

In order to clearly define an ESP / EBP course, one must first define the analysis of target needs. The most characteristic feature of ESP course design is the needs analysis. It includes far more than simply identifying the linguistic features of the target situation. There are various methods to complete the need analysis that can be done across different periods. Need analysis answers a lot of questions about our students, such

as who the learners are, why students are taking the course, how they learn, where / when the ESP course will take place and what they already know. The current concept of needs analysis in ESP according to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p.125), includes consideration of the following aspects:

- professional information about the learners
 - the tasks and activities for which learners are/will be using English
 - *target situation analysis* and *objective needs*
- personal information about the learners
- factors which may affect the way they learn
 - previous learning experiences
 - cultural information
 - attitude towards English-*wants, means, subjective needs*
- current skills and language use of English for assessing deficiencies
- language learning information: effective ways of learning the skills and language in learning needs
- professional communication
 - linguistic analysis
 - discourse analysis
 - genre analysis
- goals for the course
- information about the environment in which the course will be conducted.

The target analysis will determine the instructor's method of teaching the course. The results of Needs analysis can be readily used as input for the task-based or content-based course design.

In order to reach the final aim, ESP practitioners should set the target strategies according to Target Situation Analysis. The strategies will

define the way learners will study according to learners' background, the concept of teaching and learning, the methodology that appeals to most students, and sorts of techniques to be used within the course. Robinson (2001) stated that course designers adopting tasks as a unit of analysis helps to ensure a high degree of real-world relevance, since it is based on a needs analysis of target performance objectives.

Formulating goals and objectives for a particular course forces the instructor to develop a clear picture of the course objectives. As Graves (1996) explains, goals are general statements or the final destination, the level students will need to achieve. Objectives express certain ways of achieving the goals. In other words, objectives are teachable chunks, which, as they accumulate, form the essence of the course. Clearly understanding goals and objectives help teachers know what material to teach, and when and how it should be taught. Nunan (1988) describes how one should state objectives upon the Need analysis and the Placement score. The course takes into consideration the specific objectives that were set based on the needs of the students including enhancement of reading and listening comprehension, development of reading and writing strategies in regards to political materials, and the acquisition of speaking and presentation skills. Course might also develop learner autonomy, aural competence, oral fluency, and critical and interpersonal skills help students achieve proficiency in the effective use of language in authentic career-related situations.

After completing the EBP lectures, students should be able to understand, adjust, and acquire all knowledge enhanced within the course. In order to achieve the set goals, students should familiarize themselves with terminology in the field of management and write competently in the target language.

Methodology

Subjects

The study was carried out at the Management Department, International Burch University, a multiethnic and multicultural institution of higher learning. IBU was established in 2008 in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the goal of presenting a unique opportunity to rethink the very idea of a modern university and formulate a blueprint for the future. The focus group was comprised of 47 students (N=47) attending EBP courses and the lecturers (N=4) at the Department of Management during spring semester, 2012/2013.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was designed by the researchers in order to meet the requirements of the research questions and hypothesis stated in the research. The questionnaire consisted of background information questions and 24 questions to be scaled from one to five to probe into students' attitudes. A pilot survey was conducted on students.

Data analysis

Before collecting the data, students agreed to participate in this research. The procedures for the distribution of the questionnaire took place during usual classes and were completed by all the students attending the classes of EBP at IBU.

On the questionnaire, students identified the need for the EBP, the way students and lecturers perceive EBP at IBU, the problems students face during the course, the role of the English professor, and the challenges of the English for Business Purposes courses. Students answered the

questions as they applied to their study of English on a 5-point, Likert scale. SPSS was used to perform the analysis.

Findings and Discussion

The questionnaire was designed in order to get students' and lecturers' attitudes on the Needs Analysis from Q1-Q6. According to Table 1, the lecturers strongly agreed (100%) that the Need analysis must to be done before the EBP course, whereas 54% of students strongly agree with the statement. Both parties are quite consistent in their responses to questions one, two, three, and five. While half of the polled lecturers strongly agree that students understand better when the professor tells them the instructions, only 32.6% of students strongly agree and 54.3% of students merely agree. This might imply that the students are not completely satisfied with the existing EBP course. The questionnaire revealed that most students perceive the lecturers as indecisive (75%) and that lecturers think that students remember things they have heard in class better than things they have read, although the students show the discrepancy of opinions. The questions Q1-Q6 show the most preferred way of learning new vocabulary and instructions.

Table 1. (N=47 for Ss; 4 for Ts)

Items	P	1 ^a	2	3	4	5	M	Std.d.
An English practitioner should ask the students what they need and teach according to students' needs.	S	54.3	34.8	8.7	0.0	2.2	1.61	.812
	T	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.00	
When the practitioner tells students the instructions they understand better.	S	32.6	54.3	8.7	2.2	2.2	1.87	.833
	T	50.0	25.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	1.75	
When English practitioner tells the students how to learn new vocabulary in class, they learn it better.	S	37.0	50.0	10.9	0.0	2.2	1.80	.817
	T	25.0	25.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	2.25	
Students remember things they have heard in class better than things they have read.	S	32.6	32.6	23.9	6.5	4.3	2.17	1.075
	T	0.0	25.0	75.0	0.0	0.0	2.75	
The best way to learn a new vocabulary is from the English Media (TV, English programme, the radio)	S	41.3	47.8	4.3	6.5	0.0	1.76	.866
	T	0.0	50.0	25.0	25.0	0.0	2.75	
Learning vocabulary alone/individually can be better than having the instructions.	S	6.5	32.6	32.6	21.7	6.5	2.89	1.047
	T	0.0	25.0	50.0	25.0	0.0	3.25	

(1 strongly agree; 2 agree; 3 undecided; 4 disagree; 5 strongly disagree)*

Table 2. portrays the way students and lecturers perceive EBP at IBU. Most students at IBU agree or strongly agree (56.5%) that EBP courses help them more than EGP. Whereas, half of lecturers (50%) strongly agree that the EBP is a core feature in learning English. It is obvious that the ESP is superior to EGP (Std.d. 808) in terms of having more specific objectives than EGP. Approaches to EBP are different for they have more specific goals and teaching material. The means of 2.26 for students and 2.50 for teachers imply that EBP courses do motivate students to learn more. The results also indicate that students who do not know the adequate vocabulary will not be successful in the lectures. The lack of general vocabulary can lead to misunderstanding; understanding a content rich article is a necessity for success in management. However, this issue requires more in depth research in terms of EBP toward EGP where the students' final academic achievement is to be measured. The main question in this group is whether the EBP courses should replace EGP and become the mainstream English course at universities. Most lecturers (75%)

disagreed with this proposal whereas the students were indecisive, likely due to being only offered EBP courses. This implies the lecturers argue for both and EGP and EBP courses for freshmen.

Table 2. (N=47 for Ss; 4 for Ts)

Items	P	1 ^a	2	3	4	5	M	Std.d
Business English courses help students more than General English courses.	S	6.5	50.0	37.0	6.5	0.0	2.43	.785
	T	50.0	0.0	25.0	25.0	0.0	2.25	
Business English courses have more specific goals/objectives than General English courses.	S	15.2	54.3	23.9	6.5	0.0	2.22	.808
	T	75.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.25	
Business English should be different from General English courses in its approaches.	S	34.8	52.2	8.7	4.3	0.0	1.83	.756
	T	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.50	
Business English motivates students and they study more.	S	19.6	45.7	23.9	10.09	0.0	2.26	.904
	T	25.0	0.0	75.0	0.0	0.0	2.50	
Business English help students more to achieve their academic success.	S	26	60.9	13.0	0.0	0.0	1.87	.629
	T	75.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.25	
If students don't know the adequate vocabulary, they will not be successful in the lectures.	S	34.8	45.0	15.2	2.2	2.2	1.91	.881
	T	75.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.25	
Business English class is sufficient and can replace General English course.	S	21.7	32.6	32.6	10.9	2.2	2.39	1.163
	T	0.0	0.0	25.0	0.0	75.0	1.25	

Table 3. shows a significant discrepancy between students and teachers in response to the statement that students who are good at English in general are also good at Business English. It again emphasizes that lecturers place more attention on and importance to the EGP as the core of English education. However, most students (73.7%) and the lecturers (75.0%) agree or strongly agree that students who are good at EBP courses are able to achieve more in English lectures. Later on, students might acquire a more professional and communicative competence in English. All lecturers (100%) and the majority of students agree that students should have background and knowledge in fundamental English skills. Both the students and the lecturers agree that EBP is more challenging than EGP with the means of 2.15 for the students and 2.00 for the lecturers.

Table 3. (N=47 for Ss; 4 for Ts)

Items	P	1	2	3	4	5	M	Std.d.
Students, who are good at English in general, are good at Business English.	S	30.4	39.1	15.2	10.9	4.3	2.20	1.157
	T	25.0	0.0	25.0	50.0	0.0	3.00	
Students, who are good at Business English, achieve more in the lectures.	S	21.7	63.0	13.0	2.2	0.0	1.96	.669
	T	25.0	50.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	2.00	
Students should have background knowledge in basic English skills.	S	43.5	47.8	6.5	0.0	2.2	1.7	.776
	T	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.00	
Business English is more challenging than General English.	S	23.9	45.7	23.9	4.3	2.2	2.15	.926
	T	50.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	2.00	

Table 4 indicates that most students are not completely satisfied with the role of the English practitioner providing EBP course at IBU. IBU should employ quality ESP practitioners who act as a course designer, materials provider, collaborator, researcher, and evaluator. The majority of both students and teachers reported that the content and EBP teachers should collaborate and support one another's lessons. For the lecturers (75.9%) an EBP professor must possess content knowledge, teaching competency, experience, and the capability to fulfill students' needs. Team-teaching is a perfect suggestion for this situation. Unfortunately, not only is there a dearth of EBP teachers, students and teachers both responded that an ideal teacher speaks both English and Bosnian or Turkish, creating an even smaller pool of potential professors. Bilingual teaching is very appreciated in the terms of EBP teaching.

Table 4. (N=47 for Ss; 4 for Ts)

Items	P	1	2	3	4	5	M	Std.d.
I am satisfied with the role of the English practitioner.	S	21.7	43.5	32.6	2.2	0.0	2.15	.926
	T	0.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	
English practitioner must teach parallel to the Content teacher/lecturer.	S	23.9	38.7	13.0	0.0	4.3	2.02	.799
	T	50.0	25.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	1.75	
Teaching materials are important for Business English course.	S	34.8	50.0	6.5	0.0	8.7	1.98	.890
	T	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.00	
An English practitioner must possess content knowledge.	S	21.7	13.0	32.6	19.6	13.0	2.39	1.085
	T	75.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.25	
An English practitioner must know Bosnian/Turkish language.	S	21.7	28.3	37.0	8.7	4.3	2.46	1.320
	T	50.0	50.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	1.75	

Table 5. shows that all lecturers think the limited hours of EBP courses constrain students from achieving success. However, the limited hours of instructions are not a barrier for the students with the mean of 2.46. Both parties think that an EBP course should be offered to various majors so that more students can benefit from its instructions.

Table 5. (N=47 for Ss; 4 for Ts)

Items	P	1	2	3	4	5	M	Std.d
Limited hours of Business English courses are problem.	S	21.7	28.3	37.0	8.7	43	2.46	1.069
	T	50.0	50.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	1.75	
ESP course should be offered to students at different departments as well.	S	26.1	43.5	21.7	2.2	6.5	2.20	1.062
	T	75.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.25	

Conclusion

The study investigated the attitudes of students and lecturers in regards to the demand for English for Business Purposes courses. The major findings indicate that the Need analysis needs to be done before the EBP course begin because it has more specific objectives than EGP. Although students are not completely satisfied with the existing EBP courses; the more difficult EBP courses motivate students to learn more than they would in easier EGP classes. Before enrolling in EBP courses, students should possess basic English skills; before teaching an EBP class, the lecturer must possess content knowledge. The findings also argue that EBP courses should replace EGP courses to become the mainstream method of learning English at universities across a variety of majors. However, the EBP curricula evaluating students' constantly changing needs might be a great burden for a teacher.

Although this study was conducted using a limited number of students and professors within one department, the paper itself is unique. In the future, researchers and private institutions may use this study as a resource for instituting EBP courses.

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