NEED BASED ESP COURSE FOR RECEPTIONISTS OF FIVE STAR HOTELS, LAHORE, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT: *This study presents the process of designing an ESP course for Receptionists of Five Stars Hotels in Lahore, Pakistan. The course design was based on a thorough needs analysis taking into account needs analysis concepts forwarded by Hutchinson & Waters [1] and Dudely-Evans and St. John [2]. To acquire an overall picture of students' needs, data were collected from different sources with the help of triangulated tools. In the beginning a scenario of their English communicative needs was gathered through a questionnaire. To check the validity of the questions the receptionists were spontaneously interviewed. A register analysis through discussion with receptionists was done to explore language functions and forms with regards to their job related communicative activities.*

Key words: ESP, course design, register analysis.

INTRODUCTION

We see the emergence of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) from English Language Teaching (ELT) in 1950's and much faster developments in ESP started in 1970's. This development is precisely due to the fact that the world has become a global village. All countries are transacting business across the world and English serves as a lingua franca. With the globalization of trade and economy and the continuing increase in international communication in various fields, the demand for ESP is expanding especially in countries where English is taught as a foreign language. In Pakistan English is used as a second language and most of the focus is on General English and less on ESP. Though, it is an acknowledged fact that ESP courses are proving very fruitful in training the professionals for their places of work. This study is an attempt to identify a real group of receptionists in various Five Stars Hotels of Lahore, Pakistan for needs analysis and course design. The fresh and young graduates, joining this profession, are facing a lot of difficulty in carrying out most of their professional tasks as they are in English language. These hotels are frequented by foreigners whose medium of communication is English. Even the local elite class also uses English as a medium of communication. So the job has become very challenging for them. Needs analysis and course design plan will be beneficial for them.

Dudley-Evans and ST. John [3] believe that for much of its infancy, ESP was dominated by the Teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Any English teaching with regards to academic study needs is referred to as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Dudley-Evans & St. John, [4]; Robinson, [5]; Hutchinson & Waters, [6].Hutchinson and Waters [7] take ESP as an approach rather than a product. They actually mean that ESP does not include a particular kind of language, teaching material or methodology. For them the basis of ESP includes the learners, the language required and the learning context, which are based on the 'primacy of need in ESP' [8].

Strevens [9] defines ESP by making a distinction between four absolute characteristics and two variable characteristics. The absolute characteristics are that ESP consists of English Language Teaching, which is:

1. designed to meet specified needs of the learners;

2. related in content (that is in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities;

3. centred on language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics and so on, and analysis of the discourse; in contrast with ' General English'.

The variable characteristics are that ESP:

1. may be restricted as to the learning skills to be learned (for example reading only);

2. may not be taught according to any pre-ordained methodology.

Robinson [10] also gives primacy to needs in defining ESP basing on two key defining criteria and a number of characteristics being important aspects for ESP. Her key criteria declare ESP as normally 'goal-directed' and that ESP courses develop from a needs analysis, which aims at specifying as closely as possible what exactly it is that students have to do through the medium of English" (Robinson, [11]. Her characteristics are that ESP courses are generally constrained by a limited time period in which their objectives have to be achieved, and are taught to adults in 'homogeneous classes' in terms of the work or specialist studies that the students are involved in. Robinson [12] believes ESP involves education, training and practice, and drawing upon three major realms of knowledge: language, pedagogy and the students' specialist areas of interest.

Dudley-Evans and St John [13] put forward their definition of ESP. They also use absolute and variable characteristics of ESP as Strevens ([14] does (Dudley-Evans and St John [15].

ABSOLUTE CHARACTERISTICS

1. ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner;

2. ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves;

3. ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres

   appropriate to those activities

VARIABLE CHARACTERISTICS

1. ESP may be related to specific disciplines;

2. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of 'General

   English';

3. ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a

professional work situation. It could, however, be used for learners at secondary school level;

4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. Most ESP courses assume   basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

Dudley-Evans & St John [15], Hutchinson and Waters [16], Munby [17], Robinson [18] all divide ESP into two main branches such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). EAP (English for Academic Purposes) refers to any English teaching that relates to academic study needs (Dudley-Evans & St. John, [19]; Robinson, [20]; Hutchinson & Waters, [21]. In the words of Dudley- Evans & St John [22] in EAP, English for Science and Technology (EST) has been the main area, but English for Medical Purposes (EMP) and English for Legal Purposes (ELP) have always had their place. Recently, English for Management, Finance, and Economics (EMFE) has increasingly been important to Master of Business Administration (MBA) courses and they further believe that EOP includes professional purposes in administration, medicine, and law.

Johnson & Johnson [23] defines English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) with the need of language in the workplace environment of a job or profession. Another perspective is of English for Science and Technology, English for Business and Economics and English for Social Science, each with an EAP and EOP division [24]. To Dudley-Evans & St John [25] English for Business Purpose (EBP) is currently the area of greatest activity and growth in ESP.

ESP NEEDS ANALYSIS

To Wright [26] in most instances, the content of any ESP course should only be determined by a comprehensive needs analysis as this first step is seen as being absolutely crucial if ESP practitioners wish to design a course that will maximally benefit their learners.

Munby [27] emphasizes the importance of needs analysis of learners to design ESP courses. To Munby [28], "ESP courses are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learners". Robinson [29] stresses the primacy of needs analysis to design a language course.

Strevens [30] suggests that needs analysis is a first necessary step for specific purposes language teaching; it is more concerned with the nature of scientific discourse. Hutchinson and Waters [31] argue that any language course should be based on needs analysis. Needs analysis is fundamental to an ESP/EAP approach to course design [32]. Needs analysis is the corner stone of ESP and leads to a much focused course (Brown, [33]; Chambers, [34]; Dudley-Evans & St. John, [35]; Ellis & Johnson, [36]; Jordan, [37]; West, [38]. According to Robinson [39], "needs analysis is generally regarded critical to ESP, although ESP is by no means the only educational enterprise which makes use of it"

THE PRESENT STUDY

The group of our present study is Receptionists of Five Stars Hotels of Lahore. They were given no general or specific training for their related English language needs prior to starting their duties. Their internship has just started, and this ESP is meant for their immediate needs. A needs analysis is the first and foremost step to investigate the receptionists'

needs as a basic foundation of ESP program development. Knowing the target populations' needs and their learning background can be helpful in designing and administrating the course more successfully and effectively. Moreover, the ultimate goal is to take all the needs into consideration of designing the ESP program. It is beneficial to the non-English native speaking employees engaged in English learning as well as promotes their quality standard of service. To meet the requirement, a comprehensive needs analysis was done following the standard parameters set by ESP researchers.

TARGET POPULATION

The target population of Needs Analysis of this study is receptionists of five stars hotels of Lahore. For sampling, mode of convenient sampling has been used. For this, receptionists of Pearl Continental, Avari Hotel, Flatties Hotel, Hospitality Inn and Hotel Ambassadors were chosen. Two questionnaire were got filled from each hotel. In this way, there were total 10 questionnaires on whose basis data is analyzed and findings are determined. Their language background is almost the same. They have studied General English. They are normally recruited on the assumption that they are fluent in English and will be able to communicate with customers and cater their needs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

First of all a comprehensive needs analysis was conducted and then an ESP course framework was developed

SOURCES

Both qualitative and quantitive data was collected for this study.To overcome the limitations of a single strategy and confirm the validity of the information triangulated sources were used for data collection as follows:

TOOLS

Following triangulated tools were used for gathering data:

- Questionnaire
- Informal Discussion

The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part attempts to elicit personal information. The second part is a query about language learning priorities for the target samples. While the third part gathers skill wise information about the job, functions and skills needed at their place of job.

Informal Discussion with Senior/ Head Receptionists:

The informal discussion with receptionists and senior receptionists is meant to find out the difficulty they are facing and to strengthen, authenticate and validate the information obtained through questionnaire.

DATA COLLECTION

For the collection of research data the researcher himself approached the participants.

DATA ANALYSIS
QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was given to the receptionists of the hotels mentioned above.

They returned it to the researcher after filling it. Through the questionnaire their educational background and the problems they were facing were determined. Through the questionnaire some questions regarding informal discussion were also constituted. The significant thing is they were graduate and had studied General English.

LANGUAGE LEARNING PRIORITIES
Table 1

The second part of the questionnaire aims at knowing the
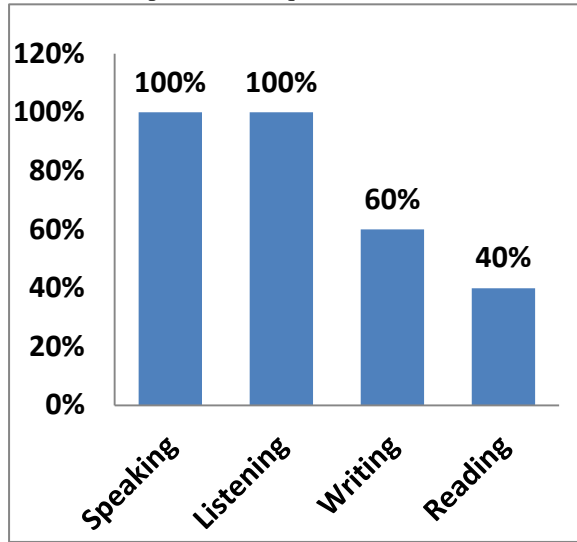
language learning priorities of the learners. The result of the questionnaire shown in table 1 indicates that 100% respondents believe that speaking skills and listening skills are very important while for 60% writing skills and for 40% reading is important.

LISTENING SKILLS

Table No.2

Table number 2 shows that during face to face interaction 10% respondents find it very difficult, 40% difficult, 30%
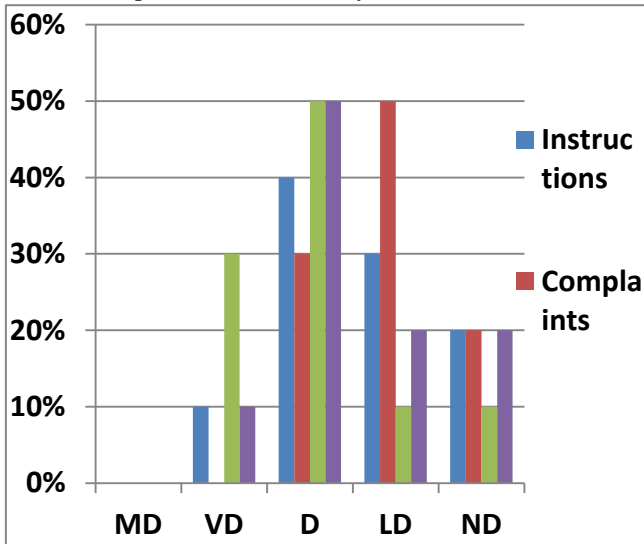

little difficult. 20% respondents do not find it difficult. Whereas 30% find very difficult 50% difficult 10% little difficult and 10% do not find difficult to listen to phone calls. So far instructions are concerned, for 30% it is difficult, for 50% little difficult and for 20% not difficult to listen to complaints of foreign as well as local visitors. Instructions are not exception. For 10% it is very difficult to understand instructions by their seniors. Similarly, 40% respondents find difficult, 30% little difficult and 20% do not find difficult to understand instructions.

READING SKILLS

Table No. 3

Table number 3 shows the analysis of Reading Skills. It shows that reading skills are not very important to discharge
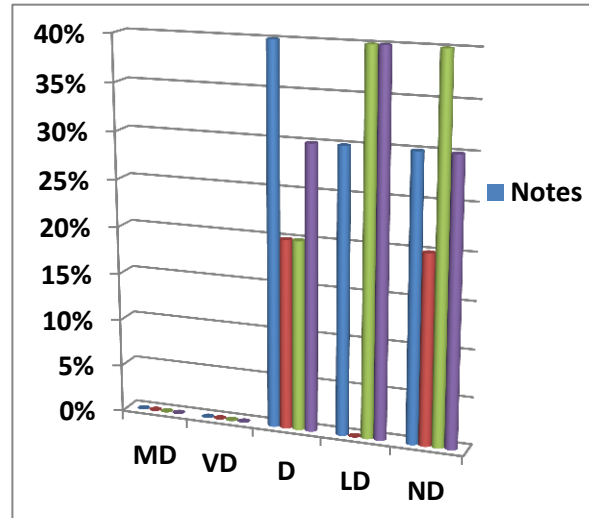
their duties. 40% and 30% find difficult to read notes and handouts respectively. However, majority either find it little difficult or not difficult to read handouts, emails, and notes etc.
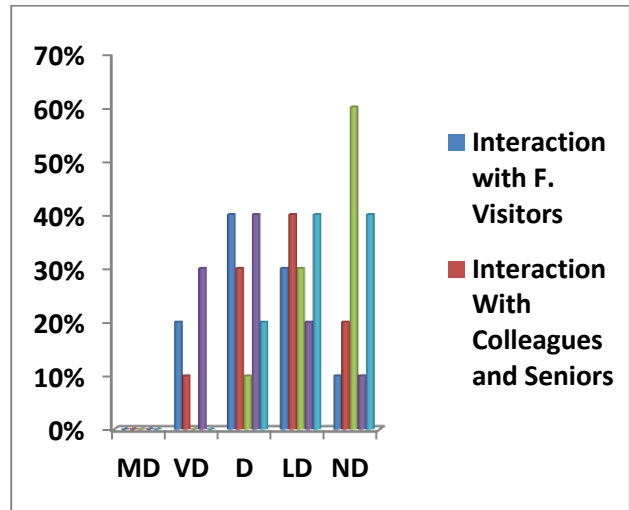
## SPEAKING SKILLS

Table No. 4

Speaking Skills are very important for the receptionists to perform their duties in a befitting way. Here are grey areas for the majority, especially for the green receptionists. This table shows that it is very difficult for 20% respondents to talk to foreign visitors. Similarly, for 40% it is difficult, for 30% it is little difficult and for 10% it is not difficult to talk to foreign visitors. Talking to senior collegue is another problem. For 10% respondents it is very difficult, for 30% difficult, for 40% little difficult and 10% do not find it difficult to talk to their colleagues. As far apology is concerned, it is comparatively easier for them to seek apology in case of any wrong meted out to the visitors. In listening skills, replying phone calls is very problemetic for majority.

30% find very difficult whereas 40% find difficult, 20% little difficult and 10% do not fond difficult to reply phone calls.

WRITING SKILLS

Table No. 5

This table shows that 50% respondents find little difficult and
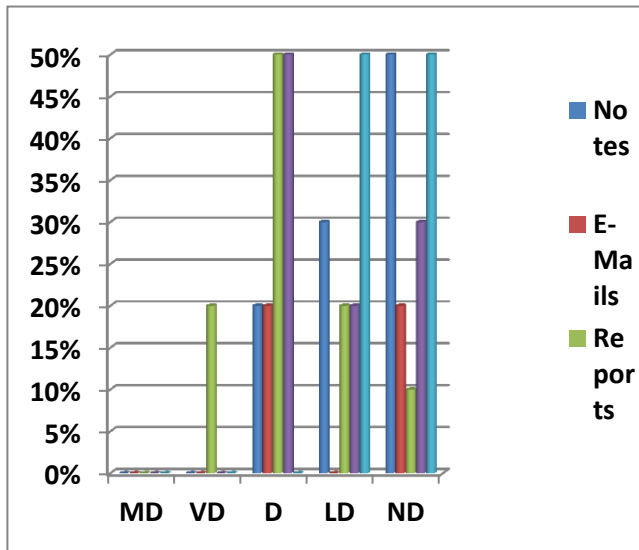
50% do not find difficult to write notes and forms. However, report writing is a grey area for them. For 20% receptionists it is very difficult to write a report. And for 50% report writing and memos writing is difficult. For 20% memos writing and report writing is little difficult. Writing email is of little difficulty for them

ANALYSIS OF INFORMAL DISCUSSION

To strengthen and validate the data obtained through the questionnaire, the researcher had an informal disscussion with receptionists. Through their conversation it is infered that speaking skills and listening skills are very important for their job purposes. However, writing skills and reading skills are not very important. In listening, foreign accent and pronunciation cause problem to them, particularly on receiving and making phone calls and even during face to face interaction. They also lack specific vocabulary. Lack of vocabulay causes to lose confidence. Intonation,pitch and stress are other grey areas which demand a good amount of attention. There are occasional problems of grammar and synatx as well. Tenses are also their short coming.

FINDINGS FOR THE COURSE

Cumulative findings extracted on the basis of questionnaire and informal discussion are the following.

➢ Listening skills and speaking skills are of vital importance to dicharge their duties.

➢ Reading skills are of little significance.

➢ Writing skills are of some importance.

➢ Accent and pronunciation is a grey area for the respondents in listening.

➢ Stress, intonation, and pitch contribute to faulty understanding.

➢ Specific vocabulary results in an impediment in speaking, listening reading handouts and report writing .

➢ Grammar, lexis and syntax serve as an obstacle to write a logical composition.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

At the end of the course the participants are expected to demonstrate the ability to perform their job in an appropriate way. They will overcome the problems they are facing prior to test. They will learn job specific tasks through communicative activities. They will be further able to overcome language barriers in their job. Specified communicative activities and their related language forms worked out of comprehensive needs analysis.

COURSE CONTENT

It is necessary to choose the content of a course before a syllabus could be designed for the course, for "choosing course content" means to consider what the learners should learn, what the course should include or exclude, and how different elements link to one another, given who these learners are, what their needs are and what the course is aimed at, so as for the decisions on syllabus to be made [40]. The content of this course was chosen according to the needs analysis findings, and the course objectives.

CHOOSING COURSE FRAMEWORK

Founded on the designer's own understanding of ESP a learning centered approach and the objective involving both process and product, together with the knowledge accumulated through needs analysis about the learners' target performance a task-based course is settled as Long & Crook [41] believe that tasks work as vehicles of presenting suitable target language models and Richards [42] finds that some theorists on second language acquisition have supported 'task' as a foundation of syllabus design.   Course framework: (see Appendix B)

COURSE MATERIALS

Selecting material, like selecting a partner, involves making choices and decisions (Dudley-Evans & St. John, [43].
Dudley-Evans and St John [44] suggest following initial questions to ask when selecting materials:

a)   Will the materials stimulate and motivate?

b)   To what extent does the material match the stated learning objectives and your learning objectives?

c)   To what extent will the materials support that learning?

TEACHER'S ROLE

Not working as a separate supreme authority but facilitating learning for participants by being part of the class. Hutchinson and Waters [45] stress two roles differ between ΄ESP΄ and ΄General English΄ teacher. Beside the typical duties of classroom teacher, ESP teacher "deals with needs analysis, syllabus design, materials writing or adaption and evaluation," they see "ESP teacher΄s role in one of many parts." (Hutchinson and
Waters, [46]

TEACHING AIDS

White Board, Multimedia, Computer.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Pair work, group work, individual work, motivation, positive feedback,

ATTENDANCE

80% compulsory

ASSESSMENT

Individual presentations with question answer sessions

Situational role plays
Status of the Course
Mandatory for receptionists

CONCLUSION

Such ESP courses are getting fast into trend. The background concerning ESP has been introduced and some characteristic features closely connected with process of ESP learning have also been mentioned.. Special attention has been drawn to organizing ESP course and selecting material as an important phase to fulfill its demands and to achieve satisfying goals in ESP process of learning. Learning centered approach based on learners´ needs, expectations and learners´ way of learning language has been mentioned. They are mainly learners´ needs that must be met rather than teachers´ ones. And it depends on learning strategies and teachers´ attitude to ESP course that is why a motivation was emphasized as a necessary part of a learning process as well.

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