English for Specific Purposes: Review of Literature

Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is often underestimated because of teachers' attitudes which are often characterized either by condescension or reluctance. This is manifested in the belief that often prevails among teachers that ESP is for those who cannot teach the "real" language. A good example of this situation is "English in other departments" or "The Language Unit" at university where teaching this component of the students' program of studies is generally the responsibility of junior members of staff and where it is a "slot-filling" subject in the teachers' time-tables. This underestimation may be due to the fact many language teachers are not aware of what it means to be an ESP teacher, and what it takes to be successful in this practice.

The situation in the Saudi context is even more complicated as there is not even a separation between ESP and English for General Purposes (EGP) when it comes to syllabuses and methodology, and who is better trained to teach what. Needs assessment, which is a major component of ESP, never exists, and, if does, it is never systematic, but rather based on teachers' intuitions. Moreover, the methodology adopted in teaching never differs. That is, a teacher would enter a class with the same kind of methodology in mind regardless of the aims of each program. Unfortunately, programs are always put "in the same basket" and are always simply labeled as programs for "Teaching English". As a matter of fact, English is not always just English for there are particularities that ought to be taken into consideration when designing syllabuses and practicing teaching depending on the objectives set for each situation.

The aim of this paper is to shed light on some of the major aspects of ESP discussed in the literature to reach a better understanding of this kind of English teaching. The first section draws a distinction between ESP and EGP in terms of theory and practice. The second section discusses in detail what is meant by ESP and
presents researchers' views of ESP regarding its absolute and variable characteristics. Then, the paper explains the reasons that led to the emergence of ESP highlighting the historical points that gave rise to this kind of English teaching. This is followed by a discussion of the three different types of ESP; namely, English as a Restricted Language, English for Academic and Occupational Purposes (EAOP), and English with Specific Topics. In the fifth and last section, the paper focuses on the applied aspects of ESP through explaining the five principles of ESP that have been frequently addressed in the literature. These five principles or conceptions are: authenticity, research-base, language/text, need and learning/methodology.

1. The Difference between ESP and EGP

The question of the difference between ESP and EGP has been addressed in the literature in terms of theory and practice. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) state that there is no difference between the two in theory; however, there is a great deal of difference in practice. ESP differs from EGP in the sense that the words and sentences learned and the subject matter discussed are all relevant to a particular field or discipline. The design of syllabuses for ESP is directed towards serving the needs of learners seeking for or developing themselves in a particular occupation or specializing in a specific academic field. ESP courses make use of vocabulary tasks related to the field such as negotiation skills and effective techniques for oral presentations. A balance is created between educational theory and practical considerations. ESP also increases learners' skills in using English.

A deeper investigation, however, of the difference between the two is required. English for General Purposes (EGP) is essentially the English language education in junior and senior high schools. Learners are introduced to the sounds and symbols of English, as well as to the lexical/grammatical/rhetorical elements that compose spoken and written discourse. There is no particular situation targeted in this kind of language learning. Rather, it focuses on applications in general situations: appropriate dialogue with restaurant staff, bank tellers, postal clerks, telephone operators, English teachers, and party guests as well as lessons on how to read and write the English typically found in textbooks, newspapers, magazines, etc. EGP curriculums also include cultural aspects of the second language. EGP conducted in English-speaking
countries is typically called ESL, and EGP conducted in non-English-speaking countries is normally called EFL. EGP is typically viewed as a level that precedes higher-level instruction in ESP if ESP programs are to yield satisfactory results.

English for Specific Purposes, however, is that kind of English teaching that builds upon what has been acquired earlier in EGP with a more restricted focus. It aims at acquainting learners with the kind of language needed in a particular domain, vocation, or occupation. In other words, its main objective is to meet specific needs of the learners. Of course, this indicates that there is no fixed methodology of ESP that can be applicable in all situations, but rather each situation and particular needs of learners belonging to a particular domain impose a certain methodology of teaching.

Thus, ESP is centered on the language appropriate to the activities of a given discipline. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987:19), "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning." In this connection, Dudley-Evans (1998) explains that ESP may not always focus on the language for one specific discipline or occupation, such as English for Law or English for Engineering. University instruction that introduces students to common features of academic discourse in the sciences or humanities, frequently called English for Academic Purposes (EAP), is equally ESP.

2. ESP Characteristics

The dust has not settled yet in the area of ESP and no one would expect the ESP community to have a clear idea about what ESP means. Some scholars in this field have simply described it as the teaching of English for any purpose that could be specified. Others, however, were more precise, describing it as the teaching of English for academic studies or the teaching of English for vocational or occupational purposes.

Anthony (1997) refers to the considerable recent debate on the meaning of ESP despite the fact that it is an approach which has been widely used over the last three decades. However, Strevens (1988) distinguishes between four absolute and two
variable characteristics of ESP in his definition. In terms of absolute characteristics, ESP consists of English language teaching which is (i) designed to meet specified needs of the learner, (ii) related in content (i.e. in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities, (ii) centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, etc., and analysis of this discourse, and (iv) in contrast with General English. In terms of variable characteristics, ESP may be, but is not necessarily, (i) restricted as to the language skills to be learned (e.g. reading only), and (ii) not taught according to any pre-ordained methodology.

Dudley-Evans (1997) offered a modified definition for ESP. The revised definition Dudley-Evans and St. John postulate is the extension of the definition proposed by Strevens (1988) in terms of absolute and variable characteristics. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John, in terms of absolute characteristics, ESP (i) is defined to meet specific needs of the learner, (ii) makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves, and (iii) is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities. In terms of the variable characteristics, ESP (i) may be related to or designed for specific disciplines, (ii) may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English, (iii) is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation, and could also be for learners at secondary school level, (iv) is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students, (v) assume some basic knowledge of the language system, and (vi) can be used with beginners.

A comparison of this latter definition with that of Strevens reveals that Dudley-Evans and St. John have removed the absolute characteristic that "ESP is in contrast with General English" and added more variable characteristics. They assert that ESP is not necessarily related to a specific discipline. Furthermore, ESP is likely to be used with adult learners although it could be used with young adults in a secondary school setting. The definition Dudley-Evans offered is clearly influenced by that of Strevens (1988), although he has improved it substantially by removing the absolute
characteristic that ESP is "in contrast with 'General English'" (Johns and Dudley-Evans, 1991: 298), and has included more variable characteristics.

The division of ESP into absolute and variable characteristics, in particular, is very helpful in resolving arguments about what is and is not ESP. From Dudley-Evans' definition, one can see that ESP can be (though not necessarily so) concerned with a specific discipline, nor does it have to be aimed at a certain age group or ability range. ESP should be seen simply as an 'approach' to teaching, or what Dudley-Evans describes as an attitude of mind. This is a similar conclusion to that made by Hutchinson and Waters (1987:19) who state, "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning."

A broader definition of ESP is that provided by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) who theorize ESP as an approach to language teaching which takes into account the learners' reasons for learning in making decisions related to content and method. Commenting on this definition, Anthony (1997) states that it is not clear where GPA fends and ESP starts. Numerous non-specialist ESL instructors use an ESP approach in that their syllabuses are based on analysis of learner needs and their own personal specialist knowledge of using English for real communication.

Perren (1974) noted that the terms "special language" and "specialized aim" are confused although they refer to entirely different notions. Mackay and Mountford (1978) explain that the only practical way in which we can understand the notion of "special language" is as a restricted repertoire of words and expressions selected from the whole language because that restricted repertoire covers every requirement within a well-defined context, task or vocation. On the other hand, a "specialized aim" refers to the purpose for which learners learn a language, not the nature of the language they learn. Consequently, the focus of the word "special" in ESP is on the purpose for which learners learn and not on the specific jargon or registers they learn. As such, all instances of language learning might be considered ESP.
3. Reasons for the Emergence of ESP

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) identified three key reasons they believe are common to the emergence of all ESP: the demands of a Brave New World, a revolution in linguistics, and focus on the learner. As to the first reason, they explain that two historical periods played an important role that led to the creation of ESP; the end of World War II and the Oil Crisis in the 70s. On the one hand, the end of the Second World War declared an era of expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity world-wide. The role of international language fell obviously to English because of the economic expansion of the United States in the post-war world. On the other hand, the Oil Crisis of the early 1970s resulted in Western money and knowledge flowing into the oil-rich countries. The language of this knowledge became English. This led consequently to exerting pressure on the language teaching profession, which boosted in this part of the world, to deliver the required goods. English now became subject to the wishes, needs, and demands of people other than language teachers.

The second very important reason that had a tremendous impact on the emergence of ESP was a revolution in linguistics. Most of the work of linguists in the 60s and 70s of the past century focused on the ways in which language is used in real communication contrary to the works of traditional linguists who set out to describe the features of language. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) point out that one significant discovery was in the ways that spoken and written English vary. In other words, a particular context in which English is used would impose, in a way or another, the variant of English. This idea was taken one step further. If language in different situations varies, then tailoring language instruction to meet the needs of learners in specific contexts is also possible. Hence, in the late 1960s and the early 1970s there were many attempts to describe English for Science and Technology (EST).

The final reason that Hutchinson and Waters (1987) mention to have influenced the emergence of ESP has more to do with psychology than linguistics. More attention was given in the 70s of the past century to the means through which a learner acquires a language and ways in which it is learnt. Hence, there was a shift of focus from methods of language learning to the different learning strategies, different
skills, different learning schemata and different motivating needs and interests that are employed by different learners. This consequently led to a focus on learners' need and designing specific courses to better meet individual needs. The result of this was a natural extension of "learner-centered" or "learning-centered" perspectives on ESP.

4. ESP Types

Carver (1983) identifies three types of ESP: *English as a Restricted Language, English for Academic and Occupational Purposes (EAOP)*, and *English with Specific Topics*. A discussion of each will be presented in the following.

4.1. English as a Restricted Language

Language used by air traffic controllers or by waiters are examples of English as a restricted language. Mackay and Mountford (1978: 4-5) clearly illustrate the difference between restricted language and language with this statement:

"… the language of international air-traffic control could be regarded as 'special', in the sense that the repertoire required by the controller is strictly limited and can be accurately determined situationally, as might be the linguistic needs of a dining-room waiter or air-hostess. However, such restricted repertoires are not languages, just as a tourist phrase book is not grammar. Knowing a restricted 'language' would not allow the speaker to communicate effectively in novel situation, or in contexts outside the vocational environment."

4.2. English for Academic and Occupational Purposes

The second type of ESP is English for Academic and Occupational Purposes. Carver (1983) indicates that this English should be at the heart of ESP although he refrains from developing it any further. Hutchinson and Waters (1987), on the other hand, have developed a "Tree of ELT" in which the subdivisions of ESP are clearly illustrated. ESP is broken down into three branches: English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics (EBE), and English for
Social Studies (ESS). Each of these subject areas is further divided into two branches: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP).

An example of EOP for the EST branch is "English for Technicians" whereas an example of EAP for the EST branch is "English for Medical Studies."

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) do note that there is not a clear-cut distinction between EAP and EOP on the basis of the considerations that (i) people can work and study simultaneously, and that (ii) the language learnt in a teaching setting for academic purposes can be useful and employed by the learner in the occupational environment when he/she takes up, or returns to, a job. This may explain why EAP and EOP have been categorized under the same type of ESP. The end of both types seems to be similar: employment. However, this shall not lead to the conclusion that the means through which the same end is achieved are also identical. They are very different indeed.

4.3. English with Specific Topics

This is the third and final type of ESP. It differs from other types of ESP in the sense that focus shifts from purpose to topic. That is, the focus is on topics that are in
agreement with the anticipated future English needs of learners such as scientists requiring English for postgraduate reading studies, attending conferences or working in foreign institutions. It has been argued, however, that this type should not be viewed as a separate type of ESP but rather an integral component of ESP courses or programs with focus on situational language. This situational language has been determined based on the interpretation of results from needs analysis of authentic language used in target workplace settings.

In brief, there are three features common to ESP: (a) authentic materials, (b) purpose-related orientation, and (c) self-direction. These features are indeed useful in attempting to formulate one’s own understanding of ESP. Revisiting Dudley-Evans' (1997) claim that ESP should be offered at an intermediate or advanced level, one would conclude that the use of authentic learning materials is entirely feasible. The use of authentic content materials, modified or unmodified in form, is indeed a feature of ESP, particularly in self-directed study and research tasks. Purpose-related orientation, on the other hand, refers to the simulation of communicative tasks required of the target setting, for example, student simulation of a conference, involving the preparation of papers, reading, note taking, and writing. Finally, self-direction is characteristic of ESP courses in that the point of including self-direction is that ESP is concerned with turning learners into users. In order for self-direction to occur, the learners must have a certain degree of freedom to decide when, what, and how they will study. There must also be a systematic attempt by teachers to teach the learners how to learn by teaching them about learning strategies (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans, 1997 and 1998; Shohamy, 1995; Douglas, 2000).

5. The Basic Conceptions/Principles of ESP

Five conceptions are considered to be the foundations, essential features or basic principles of ESP. Swale (1990) uses the term 'enduring conceptions' to refer to them. These five conceptions are: authenticity, research-base, language/text, need and learning/methodology. These five conceptions originate from both the real world (the 'target situation' of the ESP) and ESP pedagogy. It is therefore crucial to discuss each of them in an attempt to survey the development and directions of ESP. As a matter of
fact, each of the conceptions will identify a focus-based approach to ESP and serves as a contribution to the concept of ESP itself.

5.1. Authenticity

The earliest concept to emerge from the development of ESP was that of authenticity. The first generation of ESP materials that appeared in the mid-1960s took skills as their principal means of selection (Close, 1992). The underlying concept is that ESP teachers would need to establish the skills priorities of students in order to develop appropriate ESP teaching materials. As Close (1992) argues, the conception of authenticity was central to the approach taken to the reading skill.

As discussed above, the main objective of ESP is usually developing communicative competence. This could only be achieved through an adoption of authentic materials that serve the needs of learners in different fields such as aviation, business, technology, etc. Some courses prepare learners for various academic programs. Others prepare learners for work in the fields such as law, medicine, engineering, etc. The problem that frequently arises with such ESP courses is the teachers' dependence on published textbooks available. These textbooks rarely include authentic materials in their design. A trained teacher should, therefore, resort to supplementary material that compensate for the lack of authenticity in textbooks.

Skills-based approaches to ESP have enlarged the conception of authenticity in two principal ways. First, authenticity of text was broadened as to include texts other than the ones that are in textbooks, and, at the same time, was narrowed in the sense that in each skill a distinction is made between different types of texts generated by a given skill. Reading, for example, may be sub-divided into reading reports, reading technical journals, reading instruction manuals, etc. Secondly, the conception of authenticity was enlarged to include authenticity of task. In effect, this meant designing tasks requiring students to process texts as they would in the real world. In other words, ESP learners were required to use ESP materials which employed the same skills and strategies as would be required in the target situation (Morrow, 1980).
5.2. Research Base

Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens (1964) were the first scholars who pointed to the importance of, and the need for, a research base for ESP, set out in one of the earliest discussions of ESP. This was a call for a program of research into ESP registers which was taken up by several early ESP materials writers, such as Herbert (1965) or Ewer and Latorre (1969), who analyzed large corpora of specialist texts in order to establish the statistical contours of different registers. The principal limitation of this approach was not its research base but its conception of text as register, restricting the analysis to the word and sentence levels as register was invariably defined in these terms. The procedure adopted for the analysis was twofold. The main structural words and non-structural vocabulary were identified by visual scanning. For the main sentence patterns, a small representative-sample count was made.

5.3. Language/Text

In the 1990s, there has been a number of ESP projects which were triggered by concerns over international safety and security. The first of these was SEASPEAK. It was a practical project in applied linguistics and language engineering. According to Strevens and Johnson (1983), SEASPEAK, which was published in 1987-1988, was the establishment for the first time of an International Maritime English. They explain that other ESP projects were published later as a result of the success of the first project. These projects included AIRSPEAK (1988) and POLICESPEAK (1994), with RAILSPEAK in preparation. Each of these projects involved a substantial research phase with linguists and technical specialists cooperating. The NEWSPEAK research shared the large-scale base of the register-analysis approach but the principal advance was that it was now applied to a more sophisticated, four-level concept of text: purposes of maritime communication, operational routines, topics of maritime communication, and discourse procedures. Although register analysis remains small-scale and restricted to native-speaker encounters, later research demonstrated the gap between ESP materials designers’ intuitions about language and the language actually used in ESP situations (Williams, 1988; Mason, 1989; Lynch and Anderson, 1991; Jones, 1990).
The reaction against register analysis in the early 1970s concentrated on the communicative values of discourse rather than the lexical and grammatical properties of register. The approach was clearly set out by two of its principal advocates, Allen and Widdowson (1974). They specifically argued that one might usefully distinguish two kinds of ability which an English course at ESP level should aim at developing. The first is the ability to recognize how sentences are used in the performance of acts of communication, or the ability to understand the rhetorical functioning of language in use. The second is the ability to recognize and manipulate the formal devices which are used to combine sentences to create continuous passages of prose. One might say that the first has to do with rhetorical coherence of discourse, the second with the grammatical cohesion of text.

In practice, however, the discourse-analysis approach tended to concentrate on 'how sentences are used in the performance of acts of communication' and to generate materials based on functions. The main shortcoming of the approach was that its treatment remained fragmentary, identifying the functional units of which discourse was composed at sentence/utterance level but offering limited guidance on how functions and sentences/utterances fit together to form text.

As an offspring of discourse analysis, the genre-analysis approach seeks to see text as a whole rather than as a collection of isolated units. According to Johnson (1995), this is achieved by seeking to identify the overall pattern of the text through a series of phases or 'moves'. The major difference between discourse analysis and genre analysis is that, while discourse analysis identifies the functional components of text, genre analysis enables the materials writer to sequence these functions into a series to capture the overall structure of such texts. The limitation of genre analysis has been a disappointing lack of application of research to pedagogy. There are few examples of teaching materials based on genre-analysis research.

### 5.4. Learning Needs

One of the most important aspects that have been addressed frequently in the literature on ESP is learning needs. This should not be a surprise for each and every
specific domain would impose its own needs, and it goes without saying that the needs required for a specific field and the methodology for serving these needs on the ground do not work with another field which would defiantly dictate its own requirements. All language teaching must be designed for the "specific learning and language use purposes of identified groups of students" (Mackay and Mountford, 1978: 6). Thus, a systematic analysis of these specific learning needs and language use purposes (communication needs) is a pre-requisite for making the content of a language program relevant to the learners' needs.

The definition of purposes is essentially a decision that should lead to a situation where ESP assumes a valued place in the school/university curriculum, particularly if the target population (learners who will be taught ESP) are aware of the ways in which this component of the language teaching program is likely to help them achieve immediate learning needs and potential professional needs. Such definition should also yield a more systematic approach, among teachers, to syllabus design, methodology of teaching and assessment practices. A general approach that is oriented towards integrating language and the content of students' disciplines of specialization is likely to produce course content and a methodology of teaching that emphasize the needs of learners and that provide ample opportunities to use the language in meaningful situations.

A question, in the context of needs assessment that is often asked with respect to ESP, concerns who should be involved in the definition of such needs. Obviously, the teachers themselves are the most concerned in this process. But, for the definition of needs to be as reliable as necessary, it seems essential that both the learners and their potential employers are given an opportunity to voice their own views in the matter. In this way, we may talk about "real" perceived needs. However, the problem that exists in the Arab World in general, and Saudi context in particular, is that there is not yet a realization, neither by institutions nor by learners, of the importance of such a definition and assessment of needs. This is evident in the fact that such analyses are rare, and, if conducted, they are not taken seriously by both parties (i.e. institutions and learners). One reason for this carelessness could be cultural. Compared to the West, people in the Arab World are not used to articulating what they want; if they
ever know what they really want. The result would be designing syllabuses and methodologies based on teachers' or employers' intuitions that do not directly address the real needs of the learners.

Before beginning a needs analysis one must first answer the following crucial question: "Will the students use English at university or in their jobs after graduation?" If the answer is no, then ESP is not a reasonable option for the university's English language program. The university will have to justify its existence and improve the program via other means. If the answer is yes, however, then ESP is probably the most intelligent option for the university curriculum. ESP begins with some basic questions to survey what will be needed. Will students use English at university or in their jobs after graduation? In what situations? For what purposes? What language skills will be required (reading, writing, listening, speaking)? What are the significant characteristics of the language in these situations (lexicon, grammar, spoken scripts, written texts, other characteristics)? What extralinguistic knowledge of academia, specific disciplines, specific vocations, or specific professions is required for successful English usage in these areas?

Needs analysis was firmly established in the mid-1970s as course designers came to see learners' purposes rather than specialist language as the driving force behind ESP. Early instruments, notably Munby’s (1978) model, established needs by investigating the target situation for which learners were being prepared. Munby’s model clearly established the place of needs as central to ESP, indeed the necessary starting point in materials or course design. However, his model has been widely criticized for two apparently conflicting reasons: (i) its over-fullness in design, and (ii) what it fails to take into account (that is, socio-political considerations, logistical considerations, administrative considerations, psycho-pedagogic, and methodological considerations).

To counter the shortcomings of target-situation needs analysis, various forms of pedagogic needs have been identified to give more information about the learner and the educational environment. These forms of needs analysis should be seen as
complementing target-situation needs analysis and each other, rather than being alternatives. They include deficiency analysis, strategy analysis, and means analysis. Deficiency analysis gives us information about what the learners' learning needs are (i.e., which of their target-situation needs they lack or feel they lack). This view of needs analysis gains momentum when we consider that the question of priorities is ignored by standard needs analysis. In discussing learners' perceptions of their needs, deficiency analysis takes into account lacks and wants, as well as objective needs of the learners (Allwright, 1982). Strategy analysis seeks to establish how the learners wish to learn rather than what they need to learn. By investigating learners' preferred learning styles and strategies, strategy analysis provides a picture of the learner's conception of learning. Means analysis, on the other hand, investigates precisely those considerations that Munby excluded. These relate to the educational environment in which the ESP course is to take place. (Swales, 1989).

5.5. Learning/Methodology

As a result of the attention given to strategy analysis, a new generation of ESP materials was founded. This new generation of materials is based on conceptions of language or conception of need. The concern was with language learning rather than language use. It was no longer simply assumed that describing and exemplifying what people do with language would enable someone to learn it. A truly valid approach to ESP would be based on an understanding of the processes of language learning. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) called this approach the learning-centered approach and stressed the importance of a lively, interesting and relevant teaching/learning style in ESP materials. The first ESP materials to adopt a conscious model of learning were probably those of the Malaysian UMESPP project in the late 1970s, but the approach has received its widest circulation in the papers and materials of Hutchinson and Waters, and, more recently, Waters and Waters (1992).

In the context of a language program that emphasizes the needs of the learners, anything but a learner/learning-centered syllabus and methodology is bound to create contradictions that will negatively affect students' perceptions of the program. As advocated in the literature on communicative language teaching, content and teaching-learning procedures must take into account the interests and concerns of the
learners, as well as the socio-economic and cultural context in which the language program is to be implemented.

A syllabus normally refers to "what is to be learnt with some indication of the order in which the items should be learnt" and "the interpretations that it is put to" (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:81).

In this case, the main orientation of such a syllabus is determined by the needs of the learners as discussed above, with an indication of how the content may be most effectively used to cater for these needs. As mentioned earlier, and in conformity with the interdisciplinary advocated for an ESP program, the syllabus will also incorporate aspects of the students' discipline of study which will reinforce their motivation and the usefulness of the language to be learnt.

"Learner-learning centered", "task-based", "activity-based" and "problem-solving" are all attributes which are generally associated with an effectively communicative-oriented approach. And, as may be deduced from the recent literature on ESP, this orientation is characteristic of special purpose language teaching in general and ESP in particular. Such an approach aims, among other things, at helping learners develop the skills associated with language learning, as well as skills related to their own discipline of study. Examples of such skills are "information", "mental", "social" and "action" skills.

However, in order for an ESP program to be successful, it would not be sufficient to identify learners' needs, and create syllabuses and adopt methodologies that serve these needs; that is not the whole picture. One very important issue in the context of ESP is program assessment. Assessment involves an evaluation of the learners' ability to communicate effectively using the target language, as well as their ability to participate fully in the target discourse communities which have been initially defined as relevant to their needs.
The formative purpose of such assessment is reflected in the possibility for the learners to use it as feedback on how they can improve their performance, and for the teacher on how s/he can adapt his/her teaching to better fit with the needs of the learners.

Finally, an ESP program that aims to meet the ever-changing needs of the learners will include an on-going system of evaluation, aiming to provide information on how the program itself can be improved through the introduction of changes that are deemed necessary.

Conclusion

Since the end of World War II, ESP has received much attention amongst educational and applied linguists. This attention is justified due to the dominance of English in the fields of economics, politics, media, technology and medicine. Each of these fields, as well as others, requires its unique way of teaching based on the needs of their learners. Teaching language in general, and English, in particular, is no longer just a matter of application that serves all needs through any kind of syllabus and methodology. Rather, it is a regulated application that deals with each situation or given discipline independent of the other. And unless language teachers are trained enough to handle such situations and realize the idiosyncrasies of ESP, fruitful outcomes would never be reached.

All researchers interested in assessing the progress of ESP as a component of ELT agree that one of the most constraining factors to this progress is the lack of "specialized teacher-training" (Swales, 1985: 214). This situation applies even more emphatically in Saudi Arabia where, to this date, very little attention has been given to the training (pre or in-service) needs of teachers, quite a number of whom have ended up teaching in contexts where they are required to demonstrate skills which are normally available only to practitioners trained to teach ESP.
REFERENCES


