Exploring Language Awareness for Social Communication and Specific Objectives in a Library Setting: A Case Study of the Language Course Development at UTM Skudai in Malaysia

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Abstract. This study shows the outcomes of a research project engaged in a Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) course, which targeted to develop students' language proficiency for targeted goals instead of a general English course. The course content development process required several stages, including a requirements analysis, goal and objective setting, content selection and development, and course assessment. The LSP course was executed in a library setting, and the researchers aimed to increase students' social skills through English language learning. The study randomly selected thirty international students using a mixed-method approach to gather data to serve the needs of UTM Skudai's students. The researchers stipulated a comprehensive analysis of the course plan, content, and emphasis areas to clarify how language awareness is integrated into LSP courses. This study provides a clear understanding of how LSP courses deliver language awareness.

Keywords: LSP course design; English language; social skill; ESP; UTM Skudia; Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of English language learning has been discussed, with it being considered the most popular language to learn in contemporary times. People across the world, regardless of whether their first language (L1) or second language (L2) is English, are seeking to acquire proficiency in the language for specific purposes [1]. Claim that individuals should aim to learn at least three different languages, including their L1 for daily routine activities such as in the market or at home, the national language (NL) used throughout the country of residence, and a foreign language (FL), which is increasingly English in non-English speaking countries, to achieve specific benefits such as engaging in international business and multinational companies.

The majority of learners in this domain are adults who possess some familiarity with the language and seek to develop communication skills for professional purposes [2, 3]. When initially acquiring a language, adults often display more significant progress and exert more effort to gain knowledge of the language's morphological, syntactic, and lexical aspects [4]. Further contends that two critical concepts should be considered in language learning: the distinction between English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for General Purposes (EGP) and the importance of the learner and their specific learning needs. At last, the learner's purpose for obtaining the language determines which approach to accept. Thus, recognising the learner's motivation for learning the language is fundamental in selecting the most suitable language instruction approach. It is vital to notice that the distinction between English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) cannot be uniquely based on the language skills taught. As an alternative, the purposefulness of language instruction must be contemplated. EGP and ESP incorporate the four language skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing. However, ESP is modified to meet the

specific needs of the participants and prioritise the language skills deemed focal for their particular purposes. Once these needs have been recognised, ESP syllabuses are proposed to address them accordingly.

For example, suppose students are preparing for a graduate exam in a specific department. In that case, their needs analysis will likely uncover a greater prominence on writing skills than the other language skills. Nonetheless, the role of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) practitioner differs from that of a general English teacher. ESP practitioners possess a teaching background and dedicated knowledge in the particular field for which the language instruction is intended. They can adjust their teaching background and knowledge to identify the specific language needs of the learners. The ESP instructor must first review and construct the course materials before developing proper lessons for the learners in their field of study [5]. Unlike general English instruction, ESP stresses language communication more significantly within specific contexts than grammatical structures. Therefore, not too much attention is paid to grammatical rules, as the language needs of learners differ depending on their fields of study, such as accounting, computer science, tourism, and business management [2]. It is worth noting that the rise of ESP is driven by three distinct motives: the need to meet the demands of a swiftly changing world, improvements in linguistics research, and a focus on the specific needs of learners [6]. These reasons prove that individuals pursue ESP instruction to address specific language needs related to their professional or academic aspirations.

Since 1960, the field of ESP has experienced substantial growth, with numerous respected universities worldwide offering ESP courses such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Business Purposes (EBP), English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), English for Professional Purposes (EPP), and English for Vocational Purposes (EVP). These courses aim to meet learners' specific language needs in diverse professional and academic contexts. This study seeks to investigate the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) requirements of international students at UTM regarding social collaboration and their ability to navigate the library efficiently. Consequently, the researchers aim to devise a course plan that can cater to the identified needs and allow the students to perform optimally in the specific areas highlighted by the needs assessment.

Literature review

The field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has gained substantial consideration from language educators and researchers in recent years due to its shedding light on meeting the specific needs of learners in various contexts. ESP courses are proposed to teach English language skills that are precisely relevant to learners' professional or academic fields, and they are taught using resources and methodologies that are fitted to those specific areas of study.

There are three main motives behind the rise of ESP [7]: the need for a "brave new world" of specialised knowledge, the development of linguistics, and the focus on learners' needs. As a consequence of these motivations, the field of ESP has prolonged to include various subfields, including English for academic purposes (EAP), English for occupational purposes (EOP), English for business purposes (EBP), English for professional purposes (EPP), and English for vocational purposes (EVP).

Up to now, there has been a lot of curiosity in ESP courses proposed to enhance learners' social skills. This has gained significant importance in the setting of foreign students studying at universities in English-speaking countries. International students encounter abundant obstacles when adjusting to a new cultural environment, and developing their social skills in English is a critical component of their victory.

One approach to teaching ESP that has gained approval is the needs analysis approach, primarily used in the domain of ESP. A needs analysis encompasses identifying the specific language needs of learners based on their professional or academic field, as well as their aspirations and objectives. This data is utilised to create customised courses modified to the learners' specific needs, concentrating on obtaining the skills and knowledge directly relevant to their area of study or occupation [8].

It defines ESP as English for specific purposes, an instruction in English tailored to meet learners' expectations in a particular area to meet their demands. According to [6], ESP is an approach to language instruction that aims to enhance the relevance of language instruction to the requirements of learners. The primary objective of ESP is to equip learners with the necessary language skills to function efficiently in their academic or

professional field and to communicate with others about their occupation.

Library is one of the situations where ESP has been implemented. Libraries are good places for social interaction, and they give students access to resources that can be beneficial for them to succeed academically or professionally in their intended field. Recently, there has been a significant increase in ESP courses designed to improve learners' social skills in the library context. These courses aim to help students foster the language skills and strategies they need to function effectively in the library, including using the catalogue, conducting research, and interacting with library staff and other students.

ESP is a worthwhile approach to teaching English language skills relevant to learners' academic or professional fields. The needs analysis approach is an effective way to identify learners' specific language needs and propose courses that are designed to meet those needs. With the growing interest in ESP courses designed to improve learners' social skills, there is a need for further research in this area, chiefly in the context of international students studying in English-speaking countries.

METHODOLOGY

The present study aimed to point out the English language needs of international students at UTM regarding language skills in their social interactions with the UTM library staff. The study employed a quantitative research design for collecting the data. However, a pilot interview was conducted before the main examination to get preliminary information to guide and refine the research questions. This approach is coherent with the framework, which proposes two types of pilot interviews, exploratory and pre-pilot, used to evaluate the adequacy and clarity of research questions and interview procedures. The current study utilised an exploratory pilot interview to ascertain the research objectives and questions were unambiguous [9].

The primary objective of this study was to point out the specific English language requirements of UTM international students, specifically concerning their language skills, while having social interactions with the UTM library's local staff. A quantitative research approach was adopted to accomplish this objective, and a preliminary interview was conducted to provide direction and

understanding in formulating pertinent investigations for the primary research endeavour [10]. There are two types of pilot interviews: exploratory and complete. The former is a preliminary attempt to measure whether the research subject is sufficiently identified through the proposed interview process and question plan. At the same time, the latter involves the small-scale execution of the entire research program, including data collection, evaluation, and overview reporting. In this research, a short interview was conducted with three UTM librarians holding different positions to highlight the challenges and possible problems they encountered while providing library services to international students. The insights gathered from this preliminary interview were used to design the relevant questions for the needs analysis survey. The researcher listed a purposive sample of twenty-eight (n=28) UTM International postgraduate students with varied backgrounds, selected based on their experience using the library and availability within the limited time frame of the study. The data collection occurred on November 14, 2021, at Perpustakaan Sultanah Zanariah, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, where the researchers distributed and gathered the questionnaire on the same day [11].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Explains purposive sampling as a technique in which the researcher selects participants with the knowledge or experience required to provide sufficient information to meet the research objectives [12]. In this study, the researchers applied purposive sampling as they focused on UTM international postgraduate students with experience using the library. The survey encompassed four sections, each with a specific aim - the first section was demographic information collection, while the second section aimed to gather participants' self-analysis. The third section focused on identifying challenges faced by the participants in the library, and the concluding section identified language priorities. The second section of the questionnaire employs a Likert scale to prompt participants to self-assess their proficiency level in English. The third section of the survey is divided into two subsections; the first sub-section asks participants to identify any difficulties they face when expressing themselves in English, while the second sub-section contains a Likert scale where participants rate their experiences with a list of situations. Finally, the fourth section of the

questionnaire triggers participants to select their language priorities from a list of options provided.

The data for the survey questionnaire will be presented in tabular and graphical form. After carefully scrutinising the survey questionnaire, six surveys were considered invalid due to some factors because they did not meet the primary preset criteria. Therefore, only 22 surveys were deemed valid. Demographically, 40.9% of the participants were from the Middle East; the second most significant population was West Africa, which is 27.3%. Then, it was followed by another two population groups, where 18.2% were from Southern Asia, and the remaining 13.6 % were from Eastern Asia.
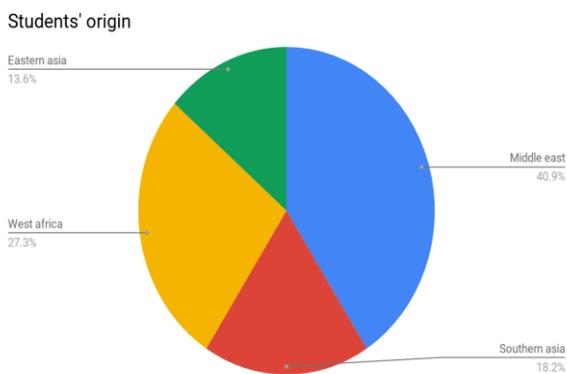

Figure 1

Table 1

English Language Proficiency Level	1	2	3	4	5
Speaking	-	2	8	8	4
Listening	-	1	8	8	5
Pronunciation	-	3	7	11	1
General Vocabulary	-	2	7	8	5

In addition, the next section, Table 1, intends to discover the respondents' English Language proficiency level, which required them to rank their level based on a scale from 1 (not do well) to 5 (do well), semantic differential scales were developed by Osgood in 1957 purposely to rate individual statements on many different dimensions. Hence, the researchers divided the level of proficiency into four distinct categories: 1) speaking, 2) listening, 3) pronunciation, and 4) general vocabulary. Based on the result, the most rated rank was on the scale of '4' for every proficiency skill, and the lowest scale received by the least number of respondents was the scale of '2'. Most respondents

evaluated themselves as an 'almost advanced' level, and only eight ranked on the lowest scale for all four categories. Therefore, it can be said that, in general, the respondents' level of proficiency was at the non-crucial and noncritical levels [13].
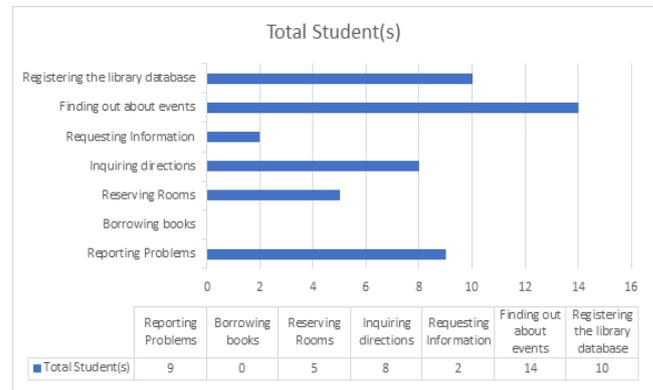

Figure 2

Figure 2, presented in the preceding paragraph, depicts the categories of difficulties experienced by students in the library, as identified by the study participants. The graph shows seven categories, and the participants were allowed to select multiple categories. Notably, the findings reveal that the category with the lowest percentage was the library's primary function, specifically borrowing books. It is interesting to note that none of the participants selected this category. One possible explanation could be that borrowing books is a common and traditional practice in most educational settings, and the participants might have perceived this activity as straightforward and unproblematic. Alternatively, it could be that the participants do not borrow books from the library as much anymore due to the prevalence of online resources and the ease of accessing information through digital means.

The next least ticked item was requesting information about the library operation hours and reserving study or discussion rooms. Only a small number of participants came upon the difficulties in these situations, and it could be that the information was already presented in the entrance section or had been explained during the library orientation day. Then, it is followed by inquiring about the directions of places or book sections and reporting problems in the library, marked off eight times and nine times, respectively. Moreover, registering the library online database or resources was recorded as relatively high, whereby 10 participants encountered this problem in the

library. Last but not least, the highest recorded category was finding out about exhibitions and other public events at the library; it was marked off 14 times by the participants. It shows that the participants were interested in inquiring about the information relating to any social functions or

occasions executed at the library. Hence, the study's general findings have shown that there is a need to develop specialised courses in English for specific purposes that address the language needs of students in their target discipline, which focuses on the social skills of the library.

Table 2

Theme	Situations	Most Scales Selected
Level of Self-Confidence	Avoid talking to the local staff because you feel uncomfortable.	Never / Rarely / Sometimes
Fluency	Have you had to repeat yourself because your listener(s) did not understand?	Often / Sometimes
Language Proficiency	Struggle to find the correct word or expression in the English language? Translate from your native language to the English language when speaking. Do you feel like you are speaking in English too slowly? Have difficulty understanding English language speakers? Feel "lost" in an English conversation?	Rarely / Never

Meanwhile, the following text revealed the results of three distinct categories of problems experienced by the respondents concerning 1) level of self-confidence, 2) fluency, and 3) language proficiency. Based on the findings, most respondents rated 'sometimes' in avoiding talking to the local staff because they feel uncomfortable. Thus, it has shed a positive light on the fact that the attitude of not keeping out of the way of someone who speaks English does not always happen. This indicates that the respondents of this study possessed a good level of self-confidence in communicating in English. On the other hand, the following category has disclosed the intensity of their trouble, where most of them frequently have to repeat themselves because their listener(s) did not understand their utterances. This may be related to one's fluency through articulation skills and the quality of being facile in speech. Then, as evidenced by the table below, all of the situations specified underneath the category of language proficiency in the survey questionnaire were rated as 'rarely' to 'never' by 70% of them. The remaining 30% of the respondents rated 'often' on the following situations presented by the researchers in the survey questionnaires.

Last but not least, the previous part aims to determine the language priorities preferred by the respondents of this study. The researchers purposely presented five distinct priorities to unveil

the respondents' predisposition. The result exhibits a considerable gap between the 'not important' scale and 'very important.'

Table 3

Language Priorities	Not Important	Important	Very Important
To become a more fluent speaker	1	5	16
To become a more accurate speaker	1	7	14
To expand my general vocabulary	1	9	13
To improve my listening	4	9	9
To improve my pronunciation	2	7	13

There is a massive difference between these two categories; most respondents ranked 'very important' on every language priority, while only a tiny number considered the priorities 'not important at all.' Based on the researcher's knowledge and observation, one respondent rated 'unimportant' for every priority. This depicted that, by chance, they have mastered the language or vice versa; it may depend on one's

motivation. However, it can be concluded that everyone has the awareness to improve and facilitate their language proficiency and competency to be better English speakers and users.

Goals and objectives. Goals are more generic and comprehensive than aims and objectives, which tend to be more focused and long-term. Traditionally, dreams are considered crucial, short- to medium-term goals that include specific aims. The present study aims to develop a curriculum for an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course for international students at UTM Skudai [14]. The course focuses on using English as a social skill in a library setting. In line with the goals above and aims, the objectives of the proposed ESP course for UTM Skudai's international students are as follows:

1. To enhance the speaking skills of international students in the English language through various communicative activities and exercises that focus on developing fluency, accuracy, and confidence in speaking.

2. To improve the student's knowledge and application of English grammar and vocabulary through explicit instruction and practice activities that cover various language forms and functions relevant to social interactions in a library context.

3. To heighten the students' communicative skills by providing them with opportunities to engage in authentic communicative tasks and interactions in the library setting, such as seeking and giving information, making requests, and expressing opinions.

The following language course aims to achieve the following learning goals for students:

1. Engage in interactions with individuals who communicate in the target language for a range of purposes associated with public services in the library.

2. Articulate and inquire about various topics related to social skills in the library using the target language.

Course material. The material design in this ESP course is the production of in-house materials. These tailor-made materials result from needs analysis, which is believed to account for the learner's needs more than a general textbook can. Following the steps suggested by [4]. The relevant resource that deals with the task's communication scenario precisely in which the circumstance occurs in the learners' actual cases was found. This is done methodically after finding the correct input and looking at the language and content to create activities that leverage the language elements and the content. Using the appropriate resources in this course includes regular language features, abilities, and content. The right pedagogical tasks must then be used for learning focused on language, skills, and content to be engaged by completing the activities.

When designing the sample material for the lesson to be delivered (see Appendix A), a macro-task had already been decided: requesting information about events at the library. In this course syllabus, the emphasis is placed on speaking ability. Each lesson unit is designed to teach the students how to conduct a complete conversation in the target language for various purposes concerning public service in the library. Thus, the lesson includes introducing the basic conversation cycle as a basis for the students to perceive communicative skills slowly. In the process of conversation, there are five stages which are: 1) opening, which usually involves some greeting; 2) feedforward, which functions to open the channels of communication and to preview future messages; 3) business, as the focus of the conversation; 4) feedback, which is the ability to reflect on the conversation; and 5) closing, to signal the intention to end access.

Below is a sample of the cycle of conversation related to the topic of the lesson:

Opening (greet)	Feedforward	Business	Feedback	Closing
Excuse me Hello I'm sorry for disturbing you. Good morning/afternoon	I would like to ask something about the events	Could you please help me with information regarding events at the library? Would you mind sharing any information about upcoming events in the library with me? May I know if the library is organising any events anytime soon?	Okay That sounds nice I got that	Thank you Appreciate it so much Bye

To improve the student's knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, the researchers have incorporated the technical grammar and language focus as part of the lesson. The lesson mainly focused on how to use modal verbs in English to make polite requests. Below are the phrases employed to make polite requests in English, categorised by modal verbs.

1. Can I/you...?
2. Could I/you...?
3. I would like to..., please.
4. Could I/you possibly...?
5. May I...?
6. Do you mind if I...?
7. Would you mind...?
8. I'd be very grateful if you could...
9. Would it be possible for me to...?
10. I was hoping you could... (for me).

Besides that, the students will receive instruction on practising the appropriate sentence structures when enquiring about particular details, such as the time, date, and place.

1. Prepositions of place: at, on, under, in, behind, besides, around, outside, inside, next to.

2. Days of the week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

3. Adverbs of time: before, after, at the moment, anytime soon, around the corner, in the future, now.

CONCLUSIONS

The English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course development should be considered comprehensive, rigorous, and flexible. In this stage, it is essential to consistently assess the critical elements in language acquisition and consider the learner's needs. The curriculum and materials must be appropriately adjusted to the learners' level, skills, and preferences to ensure their practical use for the learner. The requirements analysis technique is an essential component of this process. It enables a precise assessment of the student's English language skills and specific challenges within their intended application context. Creating an ESP program necessitates a continual cycle of planning, plan implementation, negotiation of differences, reflection on past efforts, and development of new strategies. The ultimate aim of the course is to furnish students with the required background information and practical experience to effectively use language in their future academic, professional, or vocational endeavours.

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APPENDIX - COURSE CONTENT AND SYLLABUS DESIGN

Unit 1: Requesting information about events at the library

In this lesson, students are going to learn how to:
- ask what are the events at the library
- ask when the event will take place
- ask/say how long the event lasts
- use *where*…? to ask where the event is
- ask/say precisely where places are located inside buildings using the prepositions

and students will revise the following:
- the use of the simple present with time references
- using prepositions like at, on, and in to make exact time references
- using adverbs of time in sentence construction
- position/located

DIALOGUE PRACTICE

Situation: Anne is enquiring to a librarian about upcoming events at the library

Anne: Good afternoon.
Librarian: Good afternoon. How can I help you?
Anne: Yes, I would like to know if there are any events at the library soon.
Librarian: Well, there is no event at the moment.
Anne: May I know if any event is happening soon?
Librarian: Yes, there is.
The library will have a cultural exhibition.

Anne:	That sounds great!
	When is that?
Librarian:	Next week on September 21.
Anne:	How long will the exhibition last?
Librarian:	About three weeks.
Anne:	Where in the library exactly?
Librarian:	It's behind the reading room.
	It's easy to find.
Anne:	Okay, I got it.
	Thank you so much.
Librarian:	No problem.

Instruction:
Listen and repeat.
Listen and take the part of Anne.
Listen and take the part of the other character.

LANGUAGE FOCUS

	Yes / No questions
Present	Is there any event happening now? - Yes, there is. / No, there isn't.
	Are there any events happening now? - Yes, there are. / No, there aren't.
Future	Will there be an event happening soon? - Yes, there will.

Instruction:
Study the table.
We use there is (singular) and there are (plural) to express existence in the present. We use will to express existence in the future.

EXACT AND GENERAL TIME REFERENCES:

at	10.00 am		
on	Monday	not until	Monday
in	September	sometime before	September
on	September 21	sometime after	September 21
on	Thursday, September 21	not before	Thursday, September 21

| Anne: | When's the next event? |
| Librarian: | It's sometime before September. |

Instruction:
Study the table.
Look at the mini dialogue.
Listen and repeat.
Continue practising the dialogue by yourself using the other time references.

POINTS OF TIME

Future	
tomorrow	the day after tomorrow
next week	the week after next
next month	the month after the next

Anne: When will the exhibition take place?
Librarian: The week after next.

Instruction:
Study the table.
Look at the mini dialogue.
Listen and repeat.
Continue practising the dialogue by yourself, giving different time references.

Position: at, in, and on
Librarian: There's a free health talk at the library.
Anne: Where in the library exactly?
Librarian: It's on the first floor, next to the seminar room.

Instruction:
Look at the mini dialogue.
Listen and repeat.
Continue practising the dialogue by yourself.
- When we want to talk about the location of something, we generally use *at*.
- The preposition *in* is not exact. It means 'somewhere inside'. We have to use another preposition to give an exact location.
Improvisation: Invent similar dialogue referring to general and exact locations of places you know.