



## **ESP textbook design and development: some considerations for language teachers embarking on ESP textbook creation**

*Diseño y desarrollo de libros para ESP: algunas consideraciones para docentes que buscan emprender en esta actividad*

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this work is to provide language educators with a framework of reference of some factors that should be taken into account when initiating the development of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) textbooks. The literature review technique was used to address the seven factors discussed in this work. The results indicate that a thorough understanding of target audience needs is essential for meeting the linguistic demands of diverse professional contexts to foster the strategic integration of authentic resources and real-world activities in ESP textbooks. The integration of multiple methodological models and approaches is suggested to ensure comprehensive language learning and practical skill acquisition in ESP learners. To facilitate effective learning, the structure of units or chapters should contain openers, integrated pedagogical devices, and closers. The incorporation of authentic materials, multimodal elements, and domain-specific vocabulary in ESP textbooks supplies the need for practical application of language skills in real-life professional contexts, and acquisition of domain-specific knowledge and terminology that is crucial for effective communication and task performance in specialized fields. Finally, the assessment of the material developed should encompass text accuracy, appropriateness for learning situations, adherence to needs analysis recommendations, and ongoing feedback from model apprentices. This will ensure alignment with learners' evolving needs over time.

**Keywords:** ESP, textbook development, textbook design

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## RESUMEN

El propósito de este trabajo es facilitar a los profesores de idiomas un marco de referencia de factores que deben considerarse al iniciar el desarrollo de libros de texto para ESP (inglés para fines específicos). Se utilizó la técnica de revisión de literatura para abordar los siete factores discutidos en este trabajo. Los resultados indican que una comprensión profunda de las necesidades del público meta es esencial para satisfacer las demandas lingüísticas de diversos contextos profesionales, para fomentar la integración estratégica de recursos auténticos y actividades del mundo real en los libros de texto de ESP. Se sugiere la integración de múltiples modelos y enfoques metodológicos para garantizar un aprendizaje integral del idioma y la adquisición de habilidades prácticas en los aprendices. Para facilitar un aprendizaje eficaz, la estructura de las unidades o capítulos debe contener elementos de apertura, recursos pedagógicos integrados y cierres. La incorporación de materiales auténticos, elementos multimodales y vocabulario de dominios específicos en los libros de textos de ESP satisface la necesidad de una aplicación práctica de las habilidades lingüísticas en contextos profesionales y la adquisición de conocimientos y terminología de dominios específicos que son cruciales para una comunicación efectiva y correcto desempeño en tareas en campos especializados. Finalmente, la evaluación del material desarrollado debe abarcar la precisión del contenido, idoneidad para situaciones de aprendizaje, el cumplimiento de las recomendaciones del análisis de necesidades y la retroalimentación continua de los aprendices. Esto garantizará la alineación con las necesidades cambiantes de los estudiantes a lo largo del tiempo.

**Palabras clave:** ESP, desarrollo de libros de texto, diseño de libros de texto.

## INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach to teaching languages, designed to match learners' language requirements in particular scholastic and professional situations. In contrast to General English, ESP focuses on the linguistic and interpersonal abilities needed in certain industries such as business, tourism, aviation, medical, and others. ESP's practical approach makes it an important tool for language acquisition. It recognizes that rather than a broad language competency, learners frequently need language abilities relevant to their professional situations. As per the research by Conrad (2019), through relevant language acquisition, this focused learning immediately improves learners' performance as well as communication in the workplace as ESP gives students the specific language and specific topic patterns, they need to communicate in work contexts.

A critical component of ESP courses is the suitability of the teaching materials. In this respect, ESP textbooks are essential tools for the teaching-learning process. They provide a methodical and concentrated approach to language learning, growth, and application in certain settings (Sasabone et al., 2021). Yan & Jie (2014) emphasize that ESP practitioners who lack specialized technical knowledge in the disciplines and research domains of their students sometimes turn to commercially available ready-made textbooks to meet the needs of their classes. Unfortunately, not all commercial textbooks suit the needs of all learning contexts, and this generates the need to create self-developed ESP textbooks. Notwithstanding, this is not a task to be taken lightly. Creating ESP textbooks is a significant undertaking.

The design and development of ESP textbooks involve fundamental considerations, including the analysis of learners' needs and selection of methodological approaches that will guide the teaching-learning process and consequently help target audiences achieve learning goals. Since ESP textbooks connect classroom instruction with practical professional situations, they should incorporate materials particular to the sector, include articles, research studies, manuals, examples of workplace communications, among others (Dafouz, 2021; Rahayu et al., 2020). In addition to this, ESP textbooks should offer contextualized language practice through language activities such as role plays, debates, and recreations of language-use situations (Suherdi, 2019). Considering this, the

design and development of ESP textbooks also involves establishing a structure for the pedagogical elements that will compose the units or chapters and selecting the elements that will be incorporated in the units/chapters of the textbook (Lepionka, 2003 as cited in Soto and Espinosa, 2021).

Finally, the evaluation of the material is a key step in textbook design and development. The evaluation of the material will guarantee correctness, truthfulness, and compliance with accepted language proficiency criteria as well as suitability for achieving the stated goals. In addition, according to Syakur et al. (2020), the evaluation guarantees that ESP textbooks provide real-world information pertinent to students' working environments. This work addresses some considerations for language teachers embarking on ESP textbook creation.

## METHODOLOGY

This work addresses seven factors that language teachers should consider when engaging in textbook elaboration endeavours. The data needed to develop this work was gathered using the literature review technique (Guirao, 2015). The article was prepared by following the stages for the preparation of a review article suggested by Cué, et al. (2008), which include the delimitation of the research topic, elaboration of a work plan, literature search, literature selection and accessing, analysis of the literature, synthesis of the data, and article writing.

The literature search was conducted in Google Scholar. Key terms such as ESP, textbook development, textbook design, needs analysis, teaching approaches, authentic materials, multimodality, domain-specific vocabulary, textbook evaluation, textbook quality, and textbook reliability, were used to obtain the literature needed for the investigation. Twenty-three works (seminal publications and other relevant works) were conveniently selected considering the seven themes that the authors wanted to discuss in this study. The selection of the works was done as the composition of each theme was developed. The information from these works was extracted and synthesized and with this information each theme was crafted.

## RESULTS

### Proposed considerations

#### *Analysis of Target Audience Needs*

The development of ESP textbooks should be based on a study of the needs of target audiences as it facilitates strategic decision-making regarding the type of resources and activities that will be part of a textbook to meet the profession language requirements. By identifying these needs, ESP textbooks developers can integrate appropriate authentic resources and exercises that promote practical language application, and the content is arranged to reflect real-world skill learning progression.

For instance, ESP textbooks in the medical or legal field may allow learners to progress from basic language abilities to being able to communicate in more complex situations where the use of sophisticated medical or legal terminology is required (Hyland, 2019). To achieve this, ESP textbooks for the medical field would incorporate case studies, patient-doctor conversations, as well as simulated scenarios of diagnostic and treatments. Similarly, ESP textbooks for the legal profession may place more emphasis on courtroom exercises, legal thought assessments, and contract drafting exercises to meet the specific language requirements of legal practitioners.

ESP textbooks are much more than just communication resources; they are specially designed tools painstakingly created to meet the unique language requirements within various professional contexts. Through a deep comprehension of the language and cultural requirements of many professional fields, the writers and developers of these materials ensure that these resources provide students with the language skills they need to succeed in the workplace (FIORITO, 2019). In this sense, these resources not only improve language acquisition but also offer insights into the customs, norms, and requirements of the related professional domains.

### ***Language Teaching-Learning Methodological Models and Approaches to Consider for ESP Textbook Design and Development***

Funk (2012) explains the methodological implications of four models of language learning and acquisition in textbook design which are worth reviewing. These models are Willem Levelt’s revisited model, Paul Nation’s four strands model, Merrill Swain’s model of the output hypothesis, and the ACCESS-model of Elizabeth Gattbonton and Norman Segalowitz. The Paul Nation’s four strands model will be addressed in this work along with some promising approaches to ESP teaching-learning and textbook development.

**Paul Nation’s four-strand model:** Paul Nation proposed a language learning model consisting of a balanced distribution of language learning activities within four strands or learning segments (Funk, 2012). Skarpaas and Rødnes (2022) elaborate that this model emphasizes incorporating an equal part of all inputs to language structure and fluency practice. The four strands proposed by Nation are:

- **Meaning-focused input:**  
Learning through listening and reading while focusing on the ideas conveyed.
- **Language-focused learning:**  
Attention to vocabulary, grammar, and other features.
- **Meaning-focused output:**  
Learning through reading and writing and focusing on providing ideas.
- **Fluency development:**  
Focusing on listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and becoming fluent in all these aspects.

For curriculum design and textbook development, this model promotes the inclusion of task-oriented exercises ranging from meaningful input to a combination of output and fluency practice.

**Content-based Approach:** The content-based method combines educational material with language training. This method is used in ESP textbooks to immerse students in real content relevant to their practical sectors. For example, medical students read medical periodicals, while engineering students study technical manuals. This method allows for both language learning and the comprehension of material, leading to a more thorough understanding of the topic and related terminology (Fitria, 2020).

**Genre-based Approach:** The genre-based methodology places a strong emphasis on studying different text kinds and genres within a certain topic. This method is used in ESP textbooks to acquaint students with the linguistic patterns, idioms, and structures found in many genres. According to Hyland (2022), legal experts could, for instance, investigate the unique wording found in agreements, examinations of cases, and legal decisions. By analysing these genres, students gain the language skills needed to read, understand, and write texts that are pertinent to their line of work.

**Task-based Approach:** The goal of the task-oriented method is to teach through exercises and assignments that simulate real-world situations. ESP textbooks created with this perspective include exercises that mimic real-world job duties. Students participate in problem-solving activities, role-plays, and simulations that are relevant to their job duties. This method encourages the use of language in real-world situations while fostering the communication skills necessary for work settings (Fitria, 2020).

**Corpus-based Approach:** The corpus-based method informs language instruction through the examination of language corpora, which are substantial collections of real texts. ESP textbooks that make use of datasets give students a chance to use real language examples from their respective fields of expertise. According to Ali (2020), these examples assist students to interpret language frameworks, conversation patterns, and word use common in particular circumstances; this allows them to successfully replicate as well as comprehend the language.

**Other Approaches:** In addition to the above-described approaches, new proposals for teaching ESP are covered in the literature. One rising approach is using technology to improve student learning through the utilization of virtual and augmented reality (Ali, 2020). Workplace scenarios can be simulated in virtual settings, and learning routes can be personalized by systems that utilize Artificial Intelligence according to a person's requirements. Similarly, gamification features may strengthen learning's interactivity and engagement, motivating and helping students develop their skills. Furthermore, hybrid approaches that incorporate components of various methodologies can demonstrate how ESP instruction can be dynamic to accommodate new trends and the demands of learners.

#### ***Structure of Units / Chapters***

To facilitate learning, the units or chapters that compose a textbook should follow a structural pattern. This pattern enables a harmonious distribution of the content and elements across chapters/units. Regarding this, as cited in Soto and Espinosa (2021), Lepionka (2003) suggests that textbooks should incorporate three components: “openers, integrated pedagogical devices and interior feature strands, and closers” (p. 4). Openers serve to familiarize learners with the topics and objectives of a unit. On the other hand, integrated pedagogical devices and interior feature strands are tools that enhance the learning process by illustrating unit content, emphasizing key points, providing advice, and engaging learners with unit content. Finally, closers would provide students with the opportunity to consolidate all the knowledge acquired throughout a unit and comprehend it in a more significant and practical manner, facilitating the reinforcement and expansion of students' understanding.

#### ***Incorporating Authentic Materials***

Trisyanti (2009) explains that to ensure that classroom content and language meet students' needs and prepare them for real-life situations, teachers often need to incorporate authentic resources into their instruction. Consequently, ESP textbooks should prompt learners to engage with real-life material. Authentic material encourages learners to engage with it because of its utility not only for school but also for real-life application (Basturkmen, 2006). James (2016) explains that contextualized resources enhance student motivation, abilities and engagement in applying linguistics to real-world occupational scenarios. When professions and aspirations are accurately replicated, learners perceive direct practicality, thereby boosting essential motivation to study. Similarly, Belcher (2006) finds that the students exhibit lower confidence when textbook chapters rely on unrealistic scenarios created for the textbook rather than authentic examples.

Krika et al. (2016) explain that it is important to design textbook content around authentic resources to demonstrate to learners how language is used in professional settings. Textbooks should provide learners with opportunities to analyze real-life situations, allowing them to, for example, simulate those events or propose solutions to problems they may encounter in their profession. The inclusion of authentic material in ESP textbooks is widely recognized as significant for improving learning outcomes (Basturkmen, 2006). Content samples that reflect actual professional situations help enhance learners' confidence in applying linguistic features to real-world contexts. Additionally, textbook activities based on authentic materials can help learners develop critical thinking skills, such as comparing ideas and synthesizing information to generate new ones. Consequently, as pointed out by Tymbay (2022), ESP textbooks should include authentic content such as practical manuals, authentic reports, demonstrations, and communications relevant to learners' specialized fields, as they enhance the applicability and social significance of these materials.

#### ***Incorporating multimodal elements and technology in ESP textbooks***

The addition of multimodal elements such as visuals, audio, and video into ESP textbooks has been shown to enhance student engagement and language teaching when applied judiciously (Funk, 2012). Moreover, the integration of multimedia can facilitate L2 attainment by appealing to students through multiple sensory modalities. Findings suggest that combining written text with listening and viewing elements makes content more interactive. Cuestas (2015) explains that well-

integrated multimodal resources cater to different learning styles and facilitate the retention of specific vocabulary and concepts. Lopez's (2022) research indicates that ESP textbooks that neglect multimedia miss an opportunity to assist learners in developing their language skills, as they often rely solely on static written transcripts without leveraging innovative technologies. In this sense, Dos Santos (2019) highlights the necessity for greater incorporation of audiovisual methods in ESP materials to align with the communication modes learners will encounter professionally. Video and audio samples in ESP content may serve as valuable communication resources for students, promoting independent linguistic exploration beyond mere rote memorization. However, optimal integration of multimedia requires careful planning to align with students' needs and occupational contexts.

#### ***Incorporating Domain-Specific Vocabulary***

Karimnia and Mohammad (2017) state that domain-specific vocabulary enables the development of learners' abilities to engage in professional discussions and tasks with confidence. Therefore, it is vital to integrate domain-specific vocabulary activities into ESP textbooks. Introducing new vocabulary through illustrations and contextualized examples from authentic content can facilitate meaningful learning. Other form of presenting vocabulary in ESP textbooks is through graphic organizers. Iranmehr et al. (2011) emphasize that these organizers can enhance learning opportunities and expedite students' learning processes as they can serve to convert data into diagrammatic illustrations of key terms and ideas related to the content under study. Finally, recycling vocabulary through a variety of tasks and content throughout the textbook is a key practice to enhance comprehension and facilitate long-lasting vocabulary learning.

#### ***Evaluating ESP textbooks for quality and reliability***

Textbook quality and reliability encompass ideals addressing text accuracy, appropriateness for projected learning situations, learning stages, and adherence to needs analysis recommendations (Azarnoosh et al., 2018). Fitria (2020) states that to produce high quality and reliable textbooks, close examination is necessary to select and assess language material accurately. Said examination should ensure, for example, that words and grammar sections are challenging but not overly difficult for students to understand as well as the use of real words or sentences from professional situations. In other words, reliable content needs vigilant selection and edition considering apprentices' ability levels and acquaintance with discipline particular genres, methods and settlements. Consequently, as suggested by Azarnoosh et al. (2018), the use of assessment criteria is necessary to evaluate the validity of language samples, exposure of related capabilities, consistency of progression, robustness of resources, flexibility for personalized learning access and user-friendliness.

Both Azarnoosh et al. (2018) and Fitria (2020) highlight the importance of testing the textbooks for quality and reliability. Azarnoosh et al. (2018) states that testing textbooks with model apprentices provides valuable feedback on the clarity, focus, suitability and effectiveness of instructional procedures in meeting learning objectives. According to this author, systemic reviews and amendments based on user practices ensure enduring excellence and alignment with evolving needs over time. Regarding this, Fitria (2020) mentions that feedback tools should be employed to correct errors or unclear parts identified during testing phases, and frequent checks ensure the accuracy of data; listening to comments and making changes as required, especially to adapt to evolving work rules during the textbook examination process, is crucial. Finally, this author also indicates that adhering to standards and guidelines guarantees that ESP textbooks are trustworthy resources that help learners acquire the specialized skills required for their work and career advancement (Fitria, 2020).

Many authors have turned their efforts to generate guidelines and views for the assessment of foreign language learning textbooks. Researchers such as Hutchinson and Waters (2010) elaborate that the rationale for evaluating textbooks lies in how well they align with learners' requirements regarding language purposes, semantic perceptions, and targeted settings. These authors also add that

the evaluation of ESP textbooks should consider issues such as linguistic proficiency, content and organization, as well as significant frameworks for language learning and teaching. Evaluation of material quality as well as the content of chapters is also a must. Therefore, Hutchinson and Waters (2010) propose a framework to evaluate ESP textbooks, which includes: 1) language analysis; 2) analysis of sentence structures; 3) examination of the targeted situation of the sentences; 4) analysis of skills and strategies; and 5) examination of approaches and central ideas of the chapters.

Other authors such as Dudley-Evans and John (1998) suggest examining the content, underlying procedures, and practical implications. These authors highlight the need for an inquiry-driven framework that evaluates materials' relevance based on skills focus, linguistic level, subject material, learner profiles and social elements. Similarly, Ellis (1997) emphasizes the need for a thorough examination of skills attention, practicality, tasks and procedures in learner's textbooks. Additionally, Basturkmen (2006) suggests an analysis of objectives, procedures, language coverage and learner suitability. Finally, Dos Santos (2019) has made an important contribution to ESP textbook evaluation by establishing an assessment checklist for healthcare ESP textbooks in terms of accuracy, practical perspective, and social competence.

## CONCLUSIONS

ESP textbooks intended at specialists need dedicated design and progressive methodologies to associate with apprentices' technical and verbal requirements within their specialized fields. Therefore, a detailed consideration of best practices is necessary for producing consistent and efficient ESP textbooks. The aim of this work was to discuss certain factors that language instructors should consider when beginning the process of creating ESP textbooks. Conclusions drawn from this work are detailed next.

ESP is a relevant approach in foreign language education as it tailors language learning to specific professional contexts, acknowledging that learners often require specialized language skills relevant to their fields. Considering this, the suitability of teaching materials, such as textbooks, is critical for effective ESP instruction. In this regard, ESP textbooks are indispensable tools in ESP courses as they provide a systematic approach to language learning and application in particular settings. Regrettably, commercial textbooks not always meet the needs of all teaching contexts, prompting teachers to use more than one textbook or adapt or create their own materials.

Creating ESP textbooks requires careful consideration of various factors, including analysis of learners' needs, selection of appropriate methodological approaches, incorporation of authentic materials, incorporation of multimodal elements and technology, inclusion of domain-specific vocabulary, and evaluation of textbook quality and reliability. Regarding methodological approaches, we suggest that Paul Nation's four-strand model, content-based approach, genre-based approach, task-based approach, corpus-based approach, and integration of technology, provide frameworks for designing effective ESP textbooks.

In terms of design, ESP textbooks should follow a structured pattern, incorporating pedagogical components such as openers, integrated pedagogical devices, interior feature strands, and closers to facilitate learning. Pedagogical components may include authentic materials, multimedia and technological elements, and domain-specific vocabulary. Authentic materials are essential in ESP textbooks to expose learners to real-life language use in professional settings, enhancing their language acquisition and application skills. Multimedia elements and technology in ESP textbooks can enhance student engagement and facilitate language teaching and learning and domain-specific vocabulary activities helps to develop learners' abilities to engage confidently in professional discussions and tasks.

The creation of an ESP textbook cannot not be complete is its evaluation is skipped. Thorough evaluation of ESP textbooks for quality and reliability is necessary to ensure alignment with learning objectives, linguistic proficiency, content organization, and learner suitability. Various frameworks

and assessment checklists have been proposed by researchers to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of ESP textbooks, considering factors such as language analysis, skills focus, linguistic level, subject material, learner profiles, and social elements.

To sum up, the development of ESP textbooks requires meticulous attention to factors such as learners' needs, methodological approaches, incorporation of authentic materials, utilization of technology, integration of domain-specific vocabulary, and rigorous evaluation to ensure effectiveness and reliability in facilitating language learning within specific professional contexts.

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