Teaching English for Special Purposes in Iran
Problems and suggestions

A. MAJID HAYATI
Shahid Chamran University, Iran

ABSTRACT
The academic requirement for students majoring in fields other than English to pass English for Special or Specific Purposes (ESP) courses at university level has led to a rapid growth of such classes in Iran. However, despite this growth, not much literature on the practical aspects of these classes is available. The aim of the present article is to throw light on the problems of teaching ESP in Iran, beginning with a discussion of some key notions about the discipline. After evaluating the problems of ESP programs, some practical suggestions for improvement are made.

KEYWORDS authenticity, discourse, EAP, EOP, ESP, general English, skills, translation

PRELIMINARIES
English for Special or Specific Purposes (ESP) is a movement based on the proposition that all language teaching should be tailored to the specific learning needs of identified groups of students. Most practitioners of this movement are teachers of adults, those students whose needs are more readily identified within academic, occupational or professional settings (Johns and Price-Machado, 2001). Accordingly, the purpose of the ESP program is to provide students with the specific English components and skills needed to function in those situations. Although job-related English as a Second Language (ESL) technically falls into this category, ESP programs in the USA have thus far exclusively served students with strong academic skills who are preparing for professional careers.
sequence of instruction is usually situational and includes topics related to such fields as engineering, computer science, architecture, business, and finance (Friedenberg and Bradley, 1984: 3). According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), ESP is a teaching program in which the content to be taught and the wished-for aims of the course are fixed to the particular needs of specific groups of learners, and it contrasts with those English for General Purposes courses which are not related to any specific scientific or non-scientific content and aim to instruct general language proficiency.

From the early 1970s onward, and with the advent of communicative approaches to language pedagogy such as Communicative Language Teaching, paradigms in language teaching were shifting from mechanistic considerations to more meaningful ones. Language learning was no longer viewed as acquiring the four separate skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Rather, all the building blocks of language learning were given priority simultaneously, and with equal significance. An offspring of this revolution in linguistics which stretched to language teaching was ESP, which was then dominated by old-fashioned language teaching methods, though the advocates of this field were presenting a different manifesto. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) note that two key historical periods breathed life into ESP: first, the end of the Second World War; second, the oil crisis of the early 1970s which resulted in western money and knowledge flowing into the oil-rich countries.

BRANCHES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ESP

ESP, like most branches of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and applied linguistics, is divided into various categories. English as a restricted language, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), and English with specific topics are three types of ESP. EAP is related to the English needed in an educational context, usually at universities or even at school level. EOP is more complicated and relates to professional purposes, such as for working doctors, engineers, or business people. The biggest branch of EOP is business English, which ranges from the teaching of general business-related vocabulary to the specific skills that are important in business such as negotiation and meetings skills. Also, other types of ESP that can be identified are English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics, and English for Social Studies (Carter, 1983). Though the term ESP implies limitation, it clearly includes a wide range of topics and issues.

Carter (1983) considers the following as the three features common to ESP courses:
Hayati: Teaching ESP in Iran

1. authentic material
2. purpose-related situations
3. self-direction.

Stevens (1988) states that ESP consists of English language teaching which is:
- designed to meet specific needs of the learner
- related in content to particular disciplines, occupations and activities
- centered on the language appropriate to those activities as regards syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics and so on, and analysis of this discourse
- in contrast with general English.

According to Gatehouse (2001), the first requirement of successful communication in an occupational setting is the ability to use the particular jargon characteristic of that occupational context. The second is the ability to use a more generalized set of academic skills, such as responding to memoranda and conducting research. The third is the ability to use the language of everyday informal talk to communicate effectively, regardless of occupational context. The task for the ESP developer, then, is to ensure that all these features are integrated in the curriculum.

In sum, the absolute characteristics of ESP are as follows.

1. ESP is designed to meet the specific needs of the learner.
2. ESP uses the underlying methodology and activities of the profession or discipline concerned.
3. ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register, etc.), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

APPROACHES TO ESP

During the past few years, two kinds of concern have been expressed regarding the methodology of English teaching. The first is a greater concern with the problems of learners in higher education who need to know the language to continue their specialist studies, especially in the fields of science and technology. The second is the realization that learning the language as a formal system does not necessarily result in the ability to use it as a means of communication. This, too, has to be taught in some way. To meet these two concerns, two kinds of development have been observed. One development has extended from English Language Teaching (ELT) to ESP/EST, and the other has extended from linguistic structures to communicative activities. As Lim (2006: 302) states: ‘More precisely, if linguistic choices are to be closely linked with communicative functions, it is necessary to show how the two constituent steps are related to each other and yet different in terms of specific
rhetorical functions and their associated linguistic features’. In this connection, Dudley-Evans and St John had earlier noted that:

Looking at the pedagogical significance of studying linguistic features in relation to communicative functions, we should first acknowledge the importance of establishing a connection between ESP and General English. Even though ESP is sometimes seen to be in contrast with ‘General English’ (Strevens, 1988), the teaching of ESP should, in a way, be closely linked with linguistic items taught in a course on ‘General Purpose English’. (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998: 303)

Later, as the linguistic pendulum moved toward the idea of discourse analysis, ESP practitioners gave it a try. As a result, ESP was overwhelmed by the linguistic theories of discourse analysis. In other words, ESP and discourse both appeared on the scene of language pedagogy as a result of the shift of attention in linguistics away from the formal features of language structure to the ways in which language is actually used for communication in real situations. So, there is a hand-in-hand kind of relationship between ESP and discourse analysis. Similarly, in recent years, many approaches have been introduced in teaching ESP and its sub-disciplines, foremost among them English for Academic Purposes. Holme and Chalauisaeng (2006) have suggested Participatory Appraisal (PA) as one of the working approaches to ESP. They ‘hypothesised that PA promised a set of techniques that would enhance the development of a learner-centred classroom, create a more positive attitude to language learning, positively affect motivation, and help learners achieve greater self-direction to improve their reading’.

[Participatory Appraisal] techniques involved the students in uncovering and understanding those needs, not simply as their own preconceived perceptions of what they had to learn and how they had to learn it, but as data which they could collect from their educational environment and then analyse. It was hoped that by finding their own needs, the students might themselves help to set the learning targets that such needs produced. This would in turn divert them from the idea of study according to a pre-set pedagogical rhythm. They would realize instead that it was they who had to determine which texts they read, why they read them, and how they would achieve the necessary reading skills. Independence and choice were implicit in the academic reading practice. Learner self-direction, therefore, was not just about learning more effectively, but was both the course’s product and process. (Holme and Chalauisaeng, 2006: 415)

Lee and Swales (2006: 58) presented a corpus-based model of instruction in English for Academic Purposes courses. With the various types of corpora and concordances now available, it seems that such an approach might be utilized with even greater facility, accuracy and comprehensiveness if the right kind of learners had access to the right texts and the right kind of corporist tools in the right kind of environment. Also adopting a corpus-based approach, Nelson (2006) proposed an alternative model, which focuses on semantic associations. He exemplifies the model as follows:

[170]
It was found that certain common words, such as big, which in general English have no notably fixed collocational partners, became more fixed in the business environment. This fixedness is relative – big, for example, still collocates widely, simply not as widely as in general English. Finally, semantic prosody can give students insights into how business people use the language. (Nelson, 2006: 233)

Conversely, in content-based ESL instruction, Song (2006: 421) believes that ‘The major goal of the content-linked language course is to equip students with academic literacy skills across the curriculum and the genre knowledge necessary for them to succeed academically’. She goes on to emphasize that such a model merits continued institutional financial and administrative support, and replication in other large-scale college ESL programs (2006: 435).

The most contemporary approach in the realm of language teaching is genre analysis (Swales, 1990). In this approach, Swales suggests a model that is theoretically outstanding and practically applicable in situations such as the teaching of advanced composition and the teaching of EAP. Many writing teachers, especially those working in the domains of ESP and/or EAP, believe that explicit attention to genre in teaching provides a concrete opportunity for learners to acquire conceptual and cultural frameworks to undertake writing tasks beyond the courses in which such teaching occurs (Cheng, 2006: 77). A rather different approach, called International Teaching Assistants (ITA), was suggested by Gorsuch (2006). In this model, she involves two disciplines: first, the academic departments that seek to help ITAs learn how to teach within their disciplines and, second, a university-wide English as a Second Language program committed to developing ITAs’ classroom communication skills.

Each of the approaches just mentioned entails a variety of techniques which are all worth examining in ESP situations. However, it is noteworthy that these models are not the only ones. In sum, the different stages of ESP research began with the quantitative analysis of ESP texts characteristic of the 1960s, followed by such approaches as register in the 1970s and needs analysis in the 1980s, and then by rhetorical/discourse/genre analysis (also in the 1980s). ESP work has thus always been interested in the structure of discourse and, indeed, has often been at the forefront of applied linguistic research. For the future, as Cheng remarks,

It is hoped that, with more researchers devoting their research energy to conceptualizing learning and to examining how learners, as complex and instantiated agents, operate in ESP genre-based pedagogical contexts, the ESP genre approach to academic literacy will be better able to determine its objectives, clarify its approaches to learning and teaching, measure its effects, and, ultimately, measure up to its promise as a uniquely effective approach to the teaching of specialist varieties of English to L2 users. (Cheng, 2006: 86–7)
An increasing number of ESP practitioners live and work in English-speaking countries, teaching in institutions offering vocational ESL or EOP programs for new immigrant and refugee populations or in contexts emphasizing academic or business language. However, ESP continues to be even more common in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where an increasing number of adult students are eager to learn business English or academic English in order to pursue their careers or study in English-medium educational institutions. One example of the explosion of ESP programs in EFL contexts has taken place in Iranian higher educational centers. For certain reasons, however, this program has been marginalized and less exposed to experts’ criticism and evaluation.

In the Iranian higher education system, students majoring in the different fields offered in universities throughout the country have to pass a two-credit Basic English course followed by a three-credit General English course. They are then required to pass a three-credit (or more) ESP course, depending on their majors. However, most of the students and many teachers are not satisfied with the ESP classes. To clarify the point, a brief description of the ways in which these classes are conducted is presented.

Concerning the accepted, if not really expected, objectives of ESP in Iran, it should be stated that ‘reading for understanding the test items’ and ‘poor translation for the sake of doing the assignments’ are superior to other aims. Most of the students majoring in fields other than English feel the necessity mainly to pass the exams in the second language. Such students believe that they are not able to gain mastery over the English language within a limited course of study. But the procedures followed in ESP classes do not fulfill these students’ needs. That is to say, the classes are teacher-centered, with the exception of students being required to read a few lines from the booklet, one by one, offering the meaning of the words if they are asked. Most of the teachers are busy translating the texts, giving their overall meaning in Persian, while the students are busily writing down the translations offered by the teacher above or under the English words and phrases. Most of the class time is spent on either reading the texts or speaking about the topics, with only slight deviation from the text itself. Bearing in mind the importance of knowledge of grammatical structures in decoding the meaning of a text, there is no discussion of any relevant grammatical points inherent in it. Indeed, the teachers assume that the students have already understood the structures fully.

Accordingly, the tri-partite problem of ESP programs in Iranian universities most often concerns the teacher, the time, and the textbooks. Lack of teachers who are expert in two fields (science and methodology) has greatly influenced ESP
teaching. In this discussion, knowledgeable teachers are those familiar with the English language (form) on the one hand and the technical information (content) on the other. They must also have expertise in the methodology to be applied in a classroom situation. Each of these aspects has its own practical problems. On the one hand, some teachers are fluent in using the code (English) but their knowledge of the specific field they are teaching (e.g. engineering, medicine) is weak. Sometimes ESP teachers are asked to teach texts about the content of which they know next to nothing (see Hutchinson and Waters, 1984). There are, on the other hand, a few teachers who are specialists in certain technical fields but whose English is poor (see Bonyadi, 1996). In either case, the result is not ESP but ESS (English for Specific Semesters). As evidence of this, many students approach other people majoring in English (teachers or friends) and ask them to translate the English texts related to their specific field of study.

From the methodological standpoint, the methods that the teachers use are under question too. They merely insist on the linguistic values – memorizing a series of words and doing a limited range of grammatical exercises – while paying no attention to the communicative aspects of language. Generally, the ESP teachers can be classified in three groups: first, those who work only with the assigned textbook to be taught during the course; second, those who use a few additional technical books as supplementary materials for extra activities; finally, a very small group of teachers who rely on the course textbook, supplementary materials, and books and/or articles about ESP methodology. Even in the last case there is still an important factor missing: that is, use of field-specific discourse in real situations.

OBSERVATIONS

In order to verify the problems of teaching ESP at Iranian universities, I encouraged some of my MA students majoring in English to attend ESP classes offered at different universities in Khuzestan, Iran. This observational study was undertaken during the time my students were studying the ESP course and, in the process, I intended to make the course more practical and tangible. Students, then, attended these ESP classes with the instructors’ permission. After the observation they gave me a report on what they had seen in those classes. The following are some sample reports provided by the observers which, at the same time, are representative.

Report 1

The ESP class which I observed was a course in Geography. The teacher was making use of L2 to teach the content of the lesson although students did not like it. He was
not so knowledgeable in the field. Whatever the teacher taught was just based on the
content, that is, no extra information was provided. The grammatical points were made
clear through English but students failed to understand them. The teacher was an
authority in the classroom and the students were passive: a characteristic of the Grammar
Translation Method. The teacher often used this sentence, ‘Understand what I am
saying?’ and the only word the students could use was ‘Yes’. To check the students’
comprehension, the teacher then pointed to three of them to provide responses to a
question that he raised. They were not even able to translate the question in Persian. No
communicative skills were used during the instruction. The exercises at the end of the
lesson were just done by the teacher and the students were waiting for the class to finish.
The whole instruction was boring to the students. All in all, the class was based on the
reading material presented in the classroom. From time to time, the teacher made an
effort to involve the class in an oral communication, but in return, the students were
trying to pull the teacher’s leg, making fun of him while using English.

Report 2
The case of ESP classes in Iran, I believe, resembles the classes of Grammar Translation
Method. I am talking about the period when language learning was pondered on as a
decontextualized process of memorizing long lists of words and grammatical points.
When the teacher enters the class he steps on a platform which symbolizes his authority,
with students sitting and looking up at him. All the teaching is carried out through
learners’ mother tongue, i.e. Persian, and almost no time is spent using English for
communication in the so-called weekly ninety-minute ESP classes. Iranian ESP
textbooks mainly include a reading text with no advance organizer such as pictures or
pre-reading questions preceding it. At best, there are only some words with their
definitions to make the task of reading easier. Oral communication is something never
heard of in Iranian universities, and even the skill of writing as composition is worked
on once in the blue moon. The teacher-dominated classes of English in Iranian colleges
turn a blind eye to the autonomy of learners.

Report 3
This is a report of an ESP course at [named university]. The students’ major was Psy-
chology. First the teacher read the passage and then translated it into Farsi and the
students wrote those translations. That passage was about psychology. The teacher trans-
lated the text word by word. He gave some examples of the words ‘postpone’ and
‘prepone’. The teacher’s pronunciation was too bad. He pronounced some words
wrongly such as ‘conscience’: he pronounced it the same as ‘science’. All the class time
was spent on reading and translation.

Report 4
What follows is the observation of an English class of the students of Accounting at
[named university]. Having been late for about half an hour, the teacher started with
explaining the reason of his delay. He then asked the students to open their books. The
students, preferring to continue the exercises aimlessly in the same way as the passed fifty
minutes, opened their books on a new lesson which started with a reading passage. The teacher asked one of the students to read the passage. After he finished his poor reading, with bad pronunciation of the words, the teacher asked another one to start reading. Not having much difference from the previous one, this one also finished his reading. I was just waiting for the teacher to start reading the passage himself but he suddenly shifted to the next part which was true/false exercises. After these exercises were finished, he started teaching the grammatical points of the lesson and the students, half way asleep, were happy of the instructions because, as they said, this part was the only part from which they could have something in hand for the final exam. When asked about the objective of the class, most students answered that they just wanted to pass the course. The teacher asked the students whether or not they had any question/problem and he received no reply, seeming that all had learnt what was taught. It was exactly at this time that the teacher took a look at his watch and decided to dismiss the class, asking the students to do the rest of the exercises at home.

Report 5

The students of [named college] in their second year are attending their technical English classes studying the book *Basic English for Science*, Oxford Press. It is almost the end of the term. The general language teacher is going to teach chapter 7 of the book. The first section of the lesson is about one of the language structures, ‘cause and effect’. The teacher gives an explanation and then the students have to answer the why questions and then give reasons about them using different topics, such as electric current flow, magnetic poles, heating, copper wire extend and others which are presented in the lesson. The teacher emphasizes the sentence structure to be accurately organized while the students are having some production. This is a class of 25 Reservoir Engineering students, not all of them participating in answering the questions since there is neither much time nor enough questions for all. The focus of the lesson and the teacher is too much on the structures. Communicative activities and authentic communication in real life are neglected, which is a big problem. Students must be more active using the scientific and technical words along with the every day language conversations or technical discussions. The method of teaching is more like audio-lingual method; even the textbook itself is designed based on structures and drills. Therefore general changes need to be taken place in relation to the book, the activities and the teaching methods for having an authentic ESP class work.

Report 6

The ESP class which I observed was Persian Literature. The teacher made use of L1 most of the time to teach the lesson. He called each student to read the lesson, interrupting the students’ reading to correct their pronunciation mistakes, and asking them to translate the text. The teacher was an authority in the classroom. There were no communicative exercises and, every now and then, he tried to say something in English but the students were not proficient enough to answer in English. Vocabulary and grammar were emphasized through the whole lesson and the teacher asked the students to give Persian equivalents for the target words. One of the negative effects of the teaching process was the monotonous style of the instruction which caused the students
to feel bored with the lesson. After the lesson finished, the students were asked to answer the comprehension questions based on the lesson but they were not completely able to answer them all. So the teacher interrupted and helped the students answer them. Scarcely did the teacher allow them to get engaged in solving the problems. The students only obeyed what the teacher taught and said in class. The text was not an authentic one.

I believe that the teacher is not the only person to blame. When I asked the students about their textbook, they said that it was disgusting and they wished the textbook had not been taught. They were to some extent eager to have the kind of textbook which enabled them to speak English. According to them, speaking was the primary goal of learning English. The others even would rather study English in a language laboratory. When I asked the teacher about the textbook, he said that he was not satisfied with its content because it was written based on the traditional methods. He said, ‘Translation and grammatical explanations are of little use to the students and they cannot learn any English’. And he continued, ‘Of course I have no choice.’ I asked him how he would evaluate his students, and he answered ‘I will ask the students to translate some text and there will be some grammar test for the final exam.’

Report 7
He asks one of the students to read the text aloud. Then that student translates it into Persian.
He emphasizes the new words and encourages the students to give suitable synonyms for them.
He corrects the students’ pronunciation.
He asks the referents of some pronouns.
He translates the difficult phrases himself.
He reads the words with weird pronunciation and difficult translation. Then he asks them to repeat same words after him.
He calls the students by name to take their turn.
He sometimes writes the words or phrases on the white board and elaborates their meaning.
He wants the students to read the text silently and then close their books.
Then he asks comprehension questions and the students have to answer them in English.
He calls the students one by one and asks them questions.
He asks one of the students to define the meaning of some of the words in the passage.
He reads the parts of speech and wants the students to repeat after him.
Then each student reads an exercise providing its answer.
He mentions the grammar point in brief.
He encourages the students who have correct pronunciation.
He provides direct feedback on pronunciation and repeats the correct form two or three times.

Report 8
As I entered the classroom, the class was in the middle of reading a passage in their textbook. This class meets three hours a week on Sundays. Students were assigned to
read the passage and find the Persian definition of the words in advance. The teacher read the text once in order to give the students a chance to become familiar with a good pronunciation. Then, she called in the students and asked them to give the Persian definition of the given words. Each sentence was translated by two or three students. After that, the whole text was translated by the teacher. Then, they were asked to do the comprehension questions for the next session.

DISCUSSION

In the light of the foregoing considerations and observations, it is concluded that the problems of ESP programs in Iran mainly concern three factors: Teacher (T1), Time schedule (T2), and Textbook (T3).

With regard to the first factor – T1, the teachers – a two-sided procedure is proposed: either give enough opportunity to the teachers knowledgeable in the first field to learn English intensively (in a course of about 100 hours), or guide the present ESP teachers to grasp the technical and sub-technical information at a higher level than the textbooks. There are two important reasons for this. First, ESP teachers would be able, in this way, to relate the new materials to the students’ previous knowledge. Second, regarding the second dimension, methodology, they would be able to use more situations in class to teach certain indigestible concepts; moreover, different techniques might be applied in order for the teachers to provide a communicative setting. This, of course, relies on determining the sequence of skills to be taught in ESP programs. Some believe in reading as the only skill to be developed; some others, however, take the four skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing) into account, dividing them into micro- and macro-skills. An initial and continuing focus in ESP has been on the skill of reading. This was for practical and international reasons, for example, many contexts throughout the world required the ability to read English passages. However, subsequent research and practice have taken the other three skills into account. For example, listening is crucial for lecture comprehension in English for Academic Purposes contexts, and speaking is considered important in English for Business Purposes as well as in EAP. Finally, writing is thought of as a necessary skill for non-native students in academic contexts.

Generally speaking, listening comprehension seems to be of a great value in ESP programs. A teacher may, then, use language laboratory drills in order to make the following innovations, among others:

• making for variety in activities
• establishing the previously read materials in the students’ minds
• creating motivation
• making the students interested in the program

Hayati: Teaching ESP in Iran
• helping rid the classroom of boring, manipulative drills and leading students toward a new range of communicative activities
• pushing the students’ minds toward creativity.

In addition, listening comprehension could be held to fulfill the objective of gathering information from foreign radio/TV programs. A gentle claim may be used to refute the ‘sequence of skills’ argument. Receptive skills (listening and reading) need to be activated in an ESP program and, should these skills be paid sufficient attention, the productive skills (speaking and writing) will have to improve since the need for each of them will be felt in certain situations. For instance, in MSc and/or PhD Defense Sessions it is necessary for the candidates to be able to defend their viewpoints (of course, this applies to postgraduate students studying in a country where English is the medium, see Recski, 2005).

The second source of problems is the insufficiency of the time devoted to ESP programs. Currently, this is two hours per week. At present, both students and teachers are condemned to waste these class hours in some way: either spending the time on a single unit of language, such as grammar – which ultimately does not lead to covering the whole textbook by the end of the term – or struggling to teach every point that arises in a very short time: reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and so on. While the latter eliminates the previous problem, of failing to cover the whole book, it leads eventually to students’ bewilderment about the vast, number of separate language units to be learned. Two hours per week, therefore, is not sufficient to work even with E (and SP would remain untouched). Even those expert teachers sent down from the fruitful heaven of methodology will rarely be able to conduct such ESP classes satisfactorily. The key element in ESP course design is, or should be, to devote as much time as it takes to make the students, at least, familiar with the objectives of the course. A five-hour-a-week program, although not yet thought desirable, would seem to be sufficient to handle the requirements of ESP tuition in Iran.

Third, the inefficiency of the textbooks puts another do-it-yourself burden on the shoulders of ESP teachers. Ignoring, for the time being, the spelling, grammatical, lexical and other mistakes existing in some ESP texts, no (or, at least, a very few) signs – that is, communicative aspects of the language – can be found in them. The passages and the exercises that follow the texts (fill-in-the-blank items, parts of speech, synonyms and the like) contribute solely to the ‘usage’ of the materials. In terms of relevance, it could be claimed that each passage is relevant but only to its ‘field of interest’. The passages are, in fact, the English versions of what students have heard/read about in their special field of study. There are, therefore, only a few or no
new words in them. Furthermore, we must note that many ESP textbooks present the specialist material in a boring and/or traditional way, ‘with a minimum of exercises and a plethora of textbook-bound practice material’ (Robinson, 1980: 39).

The textbook, then, is the other significant educational brick; the quality and quantity of the basic materials offered may help careful construction and firm establishment of the pillars of ESP. In the case of the content of ESP textbooks in Iran, therefore, it is suggested that the order of presentation of the materials be changed. That is, instead of starting the lesson with the main passage to be read, students should learn about the new words contained in it – in context, through pictures and diagrams and so on – their pronunciations and, if appropriate, their parts of speech, so that the grammatical pattern (model) may prepare them for the new structure in the coming passage. Reading, not translation, as it was observed in such classes, should be paid greater attention due to the fact that Iranian students will need to refer to academic articles or textbooks. However, according to Bonyadi (1996), reading articles for academic purposes is not the same as reading newspapers, for example. Reading in ESP classes demands a greater degree of concentration, precision and intensity. The following is a schematic representation of the plan.

**FIGURE 1**  Schematic representation of a sample ESP lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-reading stage</th>
<th>Reading stage</th>
<th>Post-reading stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Words (both common and technical) in alphabetical order</td>
<td>The passage</td>
<td>Exercises related to the pre-reading stage guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Grammatical explanations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different types of exercise – such as comprehension questions (factual, interpretive and others), a passage for translation, technical situations and dialogues to be created, a resume of the passage, and the like – rather than more sentences and column completions, would give breath to the text. In any case, it is not enough to study a limited range of passages. Thus, as well as the textbooks, the teacher needs to be armed with additional materials for the use of his/her particular class (Robinson, 1980: 73). ESP texts and articles are marked with abundant use of multi-word units, or collocations. These are pairs or groups of words that co-occur with very high frequency. Teachers might use these collocations as the foundation of teaching since learners can use them in a formulaic and rehearsed way. They are easily stored and

[179]
retrieved as whole chunks; they help ease the students’ frustration and promote motivation and a sense of reading fluency (Decarrico, 2001).

**CONCLUSION**

The present study has shed light on some implications of ESP teaching, as follows.

1. Language teachers cannot isolate themselves from other great educational issues, such as the problem of the culture and discourse of the classroom, which concern them just as much as anyone. They have a great deal to learn from these issues, and also a great deal to contribute to them. With the emergence of communicative language teaching, the focus from teacher-fronted classrooms has changed and instead much emphasis is given to learner-based instruction. As a result, needs analysis has been given considerable attention in making a particular course serve a particular group’s interests (Graves, 1996; Harrison, 1996; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Vorobieva, 1996).

2. With the spread of student-centered approaches and the continued increase in international contacts, much attention has been paid to the design of ESP courses that can prepare students for professional communication. Designing a course that can best serve learners’ interests and needs has been taken into serious consideration.

3. ESP teachers and researchers can have an important role as ‘genre doctors’, advising discipline teachers and professionals on the effectiveness of their communication. A similar type of role for the ESP teacher is envisaged by those who argue that ESP teaching should be concerned with rights analysis as well as needs analysis. Benesch (1999) argues that in collaborative situations, where the ESP teacher is working closely with the subject teacher (either together in the classroom or outside in planning classes), the ESP teacher should not act simply as an interpreter of the way that the subject teacher communicates information to the students in lectures or of his/her priorities in setting assignments or examinations. She suggests that ESP teachers should develop an awareness in their students of how they can assert their rights, by, for example, insisting on questioning points the lecturer has not made clear. In the teaching of ESP, the teacher should take the role of a mediator who, following Vygotsky, will start from the students’ current stage and bring them to the next stage of their development (Sysoyev, 1999).

4. ESP teachers ought not to be too concerned about ‘authenticity in the language classroom’. Let us have more faith and confidence in the
sociolinguistic abilities and educational knowledge and experience of our learners. They are not the empty vessels that many language teachers seem to think, at least when it comes to dealing with questions of pragmatics and discourse and of language use. They can accept the artificiality of the language classroom (Ellis, 1993) if presented with the right kinds of task, to which both they and teachers contribute. Let us not deny our learners their own sense of the reality of the classroom or underestimate their capacity to deal with it and play their role in creating it. It is certainly true that classrooms rely on the expectations, the goals, the roles and the conceptions that participants bring to them, but the notions that language learners in particular bring with them include the sense that the language classroom is for learning language as well as for using materials. They can impose their own authenticity on what goes on there (Candlin, 1993). Let us accept that the language classroom has its own legitimacy and its own authenticity.

5. It can be said that the role of discourse in ESP/EAP courses is vivid. Whether we take a traditional approach of register or text or a discourse approach, the language used in such classes should be of a type confined to the special needs of students, as is implied in ESP, ESP and EST courses, especially in English as a Foreign Language contexts, should specifically deal with the particular formal elements, genres and universes of discourse that are relevant to that discipline. Communication, both oral and written, must be regarded as the end goal of ESP courses. Special textbooks have to be designed with regard to discourse and genre, and ESP teachers should be educated so that students’ needs are met in both a learner-centered and a warm atmosphere.

REFERENCES

Arts and Humanities in Higher Education 7(2)

Biographical Note

A. Majid Hayati, an Associate Professor of Linguistics, holds a doctorate in Linguistics from the University of Newcastle, Australia. He teaches TEFL, Language Testing, Linguistics and Contrastive Analysis at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz. Hayati has published articles in Roshd Magazine (Iran), Reading Matrix (USA), PSICL (Poland), Asian EFL Journal (Korea) and Arts and Humanities in Higher Education. In 2005 he published the second edition of his book Contrastive Analysis: Theory and Practice. He was accepted as an outstanding researcher by the International Biographical Center (IBC), as a result of which his biography was included in the following titles: Outstanding People of the 20th Century (second edition); Outstanding Scholars of the 20th Century; Outstanding People of the 21st Century. Address: Department of English, College of Literature and Humanities, Shahid Chamran University, Ahvaz, Iran. [email: majid_hayati@yahoo.com]