الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
يونيرسيتي إسلام انتارابغسا ملايسيا

# ESP COURSE DESIGN FOR STUDENTS OF HISTORY IN IIUM

BY

WAFA ISMAIL SAUD

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
MALAYSIA

APRIL 2001

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WAFA ISMAIL SAUD

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF HUMAN SCIENCES IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

KULLIYYAH OF ISLAMIC REVEALED KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN SCIENCES
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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# ABSTRACT

This study aimed to contribute to a different orientation in designing an English language course for students of History in the International Islamic University, Malaysia, that is an ESP (English for specific purpose) course. This course addresses issues of immediate interest to students as well as their future professional needs because of its relevancy to their specializations. Therefore, an ethnographic study was conducted on a sample of 126 undergraduate students with five lecturers from the department of History. This ethnography aimed to provide an accurate and holistic description of the teaching/learning situations, as well as to explore the English language needs of the students of History to provide a framework capable of satisfying these needs. A variety of tools were employed for eliciting information: Questionnaires were distributed for students and lecturers, authentic History written texts were analyzed, and class observations were conducted alongside with interviews with students.

The data obtained by the different tools were analyzed and transferred into a suggested framework from which the History language course could be produced. This framework consists of the following components: Objectives that determine the outcomes of this ESP course, and the areas of language content such as, the kinds of English language skills and sub-skills needed, the important linguistic elements, the subject specific input, the method suitable for teaching the course, and finally the order and sequence for presenting activities in the course.

Modules of an ESP course were provided for students of History. These modules represented the actual production of some units in the English language course and serve as samples for developing a complete ESP course design.

# خلاصة البحث

استهدفت هذه الدراسة المساهمة في مدخل مختلف في تصميم منهج لغة إنجليزية لطلاب قسم التاريخ في الجامعة الإسلامية العالميه في ماليزيا، ألا وهو منهج اللغة الإنجليزيه لأغراض خاصة. يناقش هذا المنهج موضوعات ذات أهمية حاليهة لدى الطلاب وكذلك يلبي احتياجاتهم المهنية المستقبلية بسبب علاقته بتخصصاتهم. أُجريت دراسة إثنوغرافية على عينة من مائة وست وعشرون طالبا" جامعيا" مع خمسة محاضرين من قسم التاريخ. كان هدف الإثنوغرافي إعطاء وصف دقيق وشامل لظروف التدريس والتعليم واكتشاف حاجات اللغة الانجليزية لطلاب التاريخ حتى يتم تشكيل إطارٍ قادرٍ على تلبية هذه الحاجات. أُستخدمت العديد من الوسائل لاستخلاص المعلومات، فقد وُزعت الإستبيانات على الطلاب والمحاضرين وحُللت نصوص تاريخية أصلية مكتوبة وتمت مراقبة الفصول و مقابلات مع الطلاب.

حُللت المعلومات التي حُصل عليها من الوسائل المختلفة وحُولت إلى إطار مقترح ليتم منه تأليف منهج اللغة الإنجليزية لقسم التاريخ. يحتوي هذا الإطار على الأجزاء التالية: الأهداف التي تُحدد نتائج منهج الأغراض خاصة ومحتواه اللغوي مثل أنواع المهارات الرئيسية والفرعية المطلوبة، والعناصر اللغوية الهامة، والمادة المطلوبة، والطريقة المناسبة لتدريس المنهج، وترتيب عرض النشاطات في المنهج وتسلسلها فيه.

صُممت وحدات لمنهج اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض خاصة لطلاب قسم التاريخ. هذه الوحدات تُمثل بعض الوحدات الحقيقية في منهج اللغة الإنجليزية وتُعتبر عينات لتطوير منهج كامل للغة الإنجليزية لأغراض خاصة.

# APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in English as a Second Language.

Adrian E. Hare
Supervisor
Date: 2-4-2001

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in English as a Second Language.

G. Subramaniam
Examiner
Date: 2-4-2001

This thesis was submitted to the Department of English Language and Literature and is accepted as partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in English as a Second Language.

Nor Faridah Abd. Manaf
Head, Department of English Language and Literature
Date: 2/4/01

This thesis was submitted to the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Science and is accepted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in English as a Second Language.

Mohd. Aris Hj. Othman
Dean, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences
Date: 3/4/2001

# DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references and a bibliography is appended.

Name: Wafa Ismail Saud

Signature: Wafa S Date: 2/4/2001

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise be to Allah, *Subhanahu wa ta'ala*, for the completion of this study. I am extremely grateful to my respected supervisor, Dr. Adrian E. Hare for his precious time devoted to examine the drafts. My sincere thanks for his useful suggestions and encouragement. I also wish to acknowledge the valuable comments of the second reader, Dr. G. Subramaniam.

I want to express my deepest thanks to the lecturers and students in the History department for their co-operation and willing help in particular, Dr.Arshad Islam, Dr. Mohsen Moh'd, Dr. Ahmad Elyas Hussein, Dr. Ataullah Bogdan Kopanski, and Dr. Ali Ugur, all of whom have in one way or the other helped in the completion of this thesis; without their help this thesis would not have been possible.

I would also like to express my particular appreciation to Dr. Nor Faridah Abd. Manaf, the Head of the Department of English Language and Literature and to all of my lecturers in the English department. I extend heartfelt thanks to the International Islamic University for giving me a chance to further my studies.

My thanks and gratitude are too conveyed to my husband and children for their patience and support throughout the period of my study.

To all of you, my unlimited gratitude.

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

English is seen today as the language of the world. It is the language of global communication, the language of technology, business and science. This situation has helped in the emergence of an international movement in English language teaching- that is, English for Specific Purposes which has great strength in research and teaching in many parts of the world. This shift in the aims of teaching from being teacher-centred to learner-centred has brought with it great changes in syllabus, methodology, and teacher training. The focus of this study will be on designing an ESP course for History students and the procedures that are involved such as identifying the students' needs which determine the construction of the syllabus, selecting materials and presenting them according to the most effective method of learning.

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP is an approach to language teaching which aims to meet the needs of particular learners. Mackay & Mountford (1978) similarly define ESP as a pragmatic response where the reasons for learning English are made amenable to more systematic description in order to provide relevant and more effective materials. On the other hand, Widdowson (1983:6) differentiates between English for specific purposes (ESP) courses and General Purpose English (GPE) courses. He says that these two types are specific and purposeful but they differ in the way in which purpose is defined and the manner of its implementation. In ESP, purpose refers to the " eventual practical use to which the language will be put in achieving occupational and academic aims". In GPE, purpose refers to the development of general capacity for language use. So ESP is successful as it

establishes as precisely as possible what learners need the language for. It is concerned with the characteristics of the English language that students need to cope with a specified set of tasks and in order to ensure that students meet their competence requirements, there should be empirical, accurate and systematic measures of their needs. Chambers & McDonough (1981:17) state that ESP is concerned with teaching a programme based on "rigorous analysis of both the purpose for which the language is being used and the language itself." Similarly, Robinson (1980:13) says that ESP is based on " a rigorous analysis of students need".

However, there are differing definitions of what "needs" are. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) state that "needs" can be divided into two types: First, 'target needs' which are concerned with the learner's required degree of competence in the target situation, and this in turn can be divided into three sub-types: 'necessities', 'lacks' and 'wants'. The second main type of "needs" is 'learning needs' which are concerned with strategies and skills that help the learner learn the language. Graves (1996) differentiates between two kinds of needs: 1) 'objective needs' which are derived from factual information about the learners, which include: country, education, age, level of English, and prior experience in academic settings; 2) 'subjective needs', which include the cognitive and affective needs of the learner in the learning situation. Furthermore, Berwick (1989) distinguishes between two types of needs, 'Felt needs' and 'Perceived needs'. 'Felt needs' represent those which learners have, such as 'wants' and 'desires'. 'Perceived needs' are those expressed by certified experts and administrators of the programme about the educational gaps in other people's experience.

Once the learners' needs have been identified, 'needs analysis' is necessary. Nunan (1988:45) defines needs analysis as:

> " A set of procedures for specifying the parameters of a course of study. Such parameters include the criteria and rational for grouping learners, the selection and sequencing of course content, methodology, and course length, intensity and duration."

Furthermore, Brindley (1989) divides needs analysis into two types. The first is based on what could be termed the "product-oriented interpretation" of needs where the focus is on the language which the learner has to use in a particular communication situation. So, the concern is on the learner's current and future language use and this is called "target centred". The second interpretation of needs which is called "the process-oriented" aimed at gathering information about the needs of the learner as an individual in the learning situation, such as the learners' attitudes, motivation, awareness, personality, wants, expectations and learning styles and this is called learner-centred.

The next step is to select a type of syllabus which is relevant to the learners for whom it is intended and appropriate to the situation. Nunan (1988:14) defines syllabus as a part of curriculum activity "concerned with the specification and ordering of course content." Similarly, Rodgers (1989) states that syllabus design is the process of selection and organization of the linguistic content such as vocabulary, grammar, notions and functions. In this view, ESP syllabuses can be organized by using several types of criteria, such as "Content", "Method" or "Skill". First, there are content-based syllabuses, which focus on specialist content and branch into four sub-categories, "form", "function", "topic" and "situation". Second, there are Method-

based syllabuses in which the content is selected to activate strategies for learning as the course progresses. This type of syllabus has two sub-categories, "Process" and " Task". Finally, there are skills-based syllabuses that have characteristics of both "Content" and "Method" syllabuses (Robinson 1991).

In developing a syllabus, the final stage is concerned with materials development. Decisions have to be taken whether materials should be selected or innovated, whether they should be authentic or simplified (see Widdowson 1979). Attempts should be made to exploit whatever is available and appropriate for a particular teaching-learning situation, a course, specific learners and specific learning purpose. In general, the syllabus materials should take into account the authenticity, relevance, interest, and motivation of both the materials and the students themselves to improve the effectiveness of learning. Strevens (1988:44) states that ESP teaching materials and activities are these:

1. Shaping the input according to the special purposes of the learners.
2. Encouraging the learner's intention to learn.
3. Managing the learning strategies.
4. Promoting practice and use.

## BACKGROUND TO STUDY

This study was conducted at the International Islamic University in Malaysia, (IIUM) which was established in 1983 as an institution of higher learning. The students, who are from a wide variety of language backgrounds, speak English as a second or foreign language. English is the primary medium of instruction and students from all faculties take compulsory credit-bearing courses to improve their English language.

The Department of History and Civilization will be the focus of this study. The Department offers a degree of Bachelor of Human Science with Honours in History. Students are required to take 130 credit hours of coursework for graduation and about 60-80% (that is, 78-104 credit hours) of their courses are taught in English and the rest in Arabic.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

English is considered by the Malaysian Ministry of Education to be a second language, but it is the primary medium of instruction in IIUM. For this reason English is the primary language that students strive to develop in order to cope with their studies and for their future career. However, the English language courses which undergraduate History students in IIUM study currently are broad and not based on a careful assessment of the language, tasks, and culture of the target situation. Therefore, they need ESP courses which are based on student's actual needs.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

There are two fundamental goals of this study:

1. Identifying the English language needs of undergraduate History students.
2. Designing the framework of an ESP course according to these needs.

Thus this study will answer the following questions:

1. What are the English language needs of undergraduate History students?
2. How can we develop the framework of an ESP course based on these needs?

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Despite the extensive literature on ESP courses such as "English for technology", "English for business", there are few empirical studies that deal with English for students of History. This study will make an important contribution to a basic issue in educational research, as it will provide a description of the English language skills and sub-skills most needed by the students of History in IIUM, the appropriate, relevant materials and the most effective methodology for organization. This ESP course design will address issues of immediate interest to students and their future professional needs because of its relevancy to their specializations. Hutchinson and Waters (1987:8) state "the clear relevance of the English course to student's needs would improve their motivation and thereby learning better and faster." Similarly, Huckin (1988:69) states "the hallmark of ESP instruction is its attempt to appeal more directly to the students' interests outside the English class." Furthermore, this course design can contribute to a great extent to the development of Islamically based English. Although, the students will be introduced to authentic texts from either Muslim or Western sourses, the activities and tasks will help them be aware of the differences, they will be able to analyse and evaluate the world as made and seen by Muslims. Thus, they will be able to appreciate their own culture.

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) present different approaches to ESP such as English for Science and Technology, English for Business and Economics, and, English for Social Sciences. According to Swales (1988) English for Science and Technology (EST) is the senior branch of ESP as it has the longest history, the largest in number of publications and the largest number of practitioners. In addition, Robinson (1991) states that there are a very large number of general business English textbooks available on the market. Thus, English for social sciences has received the least attention. Therefore, there are few books on English for Social Science disciplines. In order to develop ESP courses for social science and especially an ESP course for History students as it is the focus of this study, a comprehensive view is needed of the nature and the process of ESP course design. Providing such a view is the goal of this review. ESP course design is concerned with principles and procedures that comprise needs analysis, formulation of objectives and finally selection and organisation of materials. In subsequent sections the processes are illustrated in more detail.

## NEEDS ANALYSIS

ESP differs from English language teaching in its emphasis upon careful needs' analysis for course design. Jordan (1997) points out that needs analysis includes many aspects such as target situation analysis, present situation analysis, deficiency analysis, strategy analysis, means analysis, and language audit and constraints. Hutchinson and Waters (1987:13) summarise the development of needs analysis into five phases such as the following:

**Register Analysis**

In the first phase of ESP history the focus was on the sentence level and called "register analysis" which is defined as " being a characterization of texts in respect of their formal linguistic properties." (Widdowson 1983:28). The syllabuses and teaching materials in this phase were based on the analysis of scientific and technological language. Researchers identified the lexical and grammatical features of academic and professional registers and then organized their courses around the lexical and grammatical features of these registers. So the notion of frequency of syntactic and lexical items was of considerable significance. McDonough (1984) presented a case that lay the foundations of ESP in terms of frequency and selection. The pioneers were Ewer and Latorre who took a large sample of different types of text from ten main areas of science, comprising over three million words in all. Then they carried out a frequency count to the items under each of the three following categories to develop materials for specific educational context.

1. Sentence patterns, such as passive, simple present tense, simple past tense, etc.
2. Non-structured Lexis, such as the common core vocabulary.
3. Function words and phrases. Such as, prepositions adverbs of degree, etc.

Furthermore, Swales (1971) used a sentence level analysis of English registers to design his book "Writing Scientific English" which is based upon grammatical forms. From another perspective, Strevens (1988) discussed the similarities and differences between scientific technological and technical English, partly in terms of grammar and Lexis.

The shortcomings of such an approach are discussed by Widdonson (1983:28) who

says that the register analysis is an inadequate device for determining content as the results reveal the aspects of the language system and accompany certain activities but not their communicative function and how language is used in the discourse process as he states, " linguistic forms do not reliably signal their pragmatic value in particular contexts of use."

**Rhetorical or Discourse Analysis**

In the second phase of ESP history, the focus shifted from sentence level to rhetorical or discourse analysis. Robinson (1981: 53) defines the term "discourse analysis" as: "The study of stretches of language, whether spoken or written" to help students process, utter and write more than single sentences when they encounter real discourse and have to create it in their actual job or study situations.

The early approach to discourse analysis was popularised because of the ESP textbooks, the "English in Focus" series and the "Reading and Thinking" series. Here the focus was on the grammatical features of discourse, particularly with such devices of cohesion as reference items and connectives and with vocabulary. The texts studied were short and the rhetorical functions few in number. (Robinson, 1981).

Furthermore, Tarone et al. (1981) developed the use of register analysis as they integrate grammatical forms with rhetorical function in their analysis. In the paper "On the Use of the Passive in two Astrophysics Journal Papers", Tarone et al. (1981) perform a rhetorical analysis to determine the systematic functions of passive and active verbs in two papers and examine the frequency of usage of passive and active voice.

**Target Situation Analysis**

The third shift in ESP was the greatest; as the focus became on systematic analyses of the target situation to identify the features that form the syllabus of the ESP course. Robinson (1991) states that a target situation analysis can be defined in terms of needs analysis that focuses on students' needs at the end of a language course. In addition, the findings of the target situation analysis may relate to both the English language requirements of the training course and of the later job. The dominant figure in this phase was Munby (1978), who presented detailed procedures and the most highly developed model-mechanism for examining the learners' needs which he called " The Communication Needs Processor" as the focus was on the particular communicative needs required by the learner to perform in the target situation. Macky and Bosquet (1981) present the parameteres of Munby's 'communication needs processor', which summarise the operational guidelines for the specification of learner needs in terms of the syllabus specification required to service these needs such as the following:

1. Participant: includes information about the student such as age, sex, language background, etc.
2. Purposive Domain: includes the characterization of the occupationsal or academic discipline for which the target language is required.
3. Setting: includes information concerning the physical and psycho-social settings in which language will be used.
4. Interaction: the relationships obtained in the target language use.
5. Instrumentality: includes the communicative means such as medium, mode, and channel.
6. Dialect: the variety of the target language required.
7. Target level: the dimensions and conditions required in the target level.

8. Communicative Event: the micro and macro activities required in the target language level.
9. Communicative Key: the attitudinal tones the participant has to master.

On the other hand, Hutchinson (1988) mentions some of the limitations of the target situation analysis as he states that needs analysis can tell us a lot about the nature and content of the learner's target language needs, but it can tell us little or nothing about how to attain that target competence and what the learning processes and learning needs are. Furthermore, Chambers (1980) notes that the numerous sources of information such as the student, the student's employer and the teaching organisation, may not agree on the learner's target language needs. So, an ESP teacher has to use an eclectic way that is capable of best determining "needs".

**Skills and Strategies**

The fourth phase of ESP history is called "skills and strategies" as it provides a basis for discovering the underlying thinking processes that help learners cope with the surface forms of the language. Here, the focus shifted from the surface linguistic features of the target situation to the underlying processes of reasoning and interpretation. In English language teaching, the term "strategies" refers to "the ways of managing the complex information that the learner is receiving about the target language" (Richards 1990:45). On the other hand the term "skill" is used in a number of different ways in English language teaching; the traditional language skills refer to the four skills meaning simply reading, writing, speaking and listening. In addition, it has become usual to use the word "skill" to refer to sub-skill or micro-skill which refer to the constituents of the skills. This type is used by Munby as he classifies