

NEEDS-BASED ESP COURSE DESIGN FOR ENGINEERS IN A MULTINATIONAL TEXTILE COMPANY

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Annotation:

This study examines the communicative needs that should inform the design of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course for engineers working in a multinational textile manufacturing company in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The study focused on eight engineers whose English proficiency was reported at approximately CEFR A2-B1. A two-week needs analysis combined a 20-item learner survey, semi-structured interviews with workplace stakeholders, observations of three project meetings, and analysis of two sets of technical documentation. The survey indicated frequent use of English for progress-update emails (87%), international video calls (75%), technical documentation (62%), and equipment-performance updates (58%). Qualitative evidence further identified recurring difficulties in technical writing, spontaneous oral interaction, professional register, listening comprehension, and the use of engineering-specific vocabulary. On the basis of these findings, five priorities were identified for course design: cohesive technical writing, confident spoken briefings, engineering-specific vocabulary, appropriate professional email register, and listening comprehension in online meetings. The findings support a needs-responsive, task-supported ESP approach in which authentic workplace genres and communicative tasks guide instruction and assessment.

Keywords:

English for Specific Purposes (ESP), engineering English, needs analysis, workplace communication, textile industry, course design

Introduction

English has an important communicative function in multinational engineering workplaces, where professionals may need to prepare technical documentation, participate in virtual meetings, communicate with international suppliers, and report to global clients. In the context examined in this study, engineering expertise did not automatically ensure effective professional communication in English. The target engineers experienced difficulties particularly in genre-specific writing and spontaneous spoken interaction.

ESP course design is most effective when it is grounded in the communicative practices and target situations of a particular learner group. Needs analysis therefore provides a basis for identifying the gap between learners' present abilities and the language competencies required by their professional roles (Flowerdew, 2013; Serafini et al., 2015). In addition, adaptable ESP frameworks can be recontextualized to reflect the functions, genres, and tasks of a specific professional domain rather than being applied as fixed templates (Viana et al., 2019).

The purpose of this study was to identify the English-language communication needs of engineers in a multinational textile company and to use those findings to establish priorities for a needs-based ESP course. The study addressed the following question: What workplace communication needs should guide the design of an ESP course for these engineers?

Methods

The participants were eight engineers employed by a multinational textile production company in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. They were between 25 and 40 years old and represented several national backgrounds, including Uzbekistan, Russia, China, India, Germany, and Turkiye. English functioned as an important language for communication across branches and for international supply-chain, procurement, and client-related activities. Preliminary language assessments and internal supervisor feedback placed the learners approximately at CEFR A2-B1.

A two-week, triangulated needs analysis was used to examine both present and target communication requirements. First, all eight engineers completed a 20-item survey containing scaled and open-ended questions about daily English use, communication challenges, task frequency, and preferred learning modalities. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three department supervisors, one HR manager, and two senior engineers. Third, three project meetings were observed and two sets of written technical documentation were reviewed. Following the source project, the evidence was interpreted through Present Situation Analysis and Target Situation Analysis and was thematically organized to identify recurring workplace communication priorities (Flowerdew, 2013; Serafini et al., 2015).

Results

The survey showed that English was used across several recurring professional tasks. Progress-update emails were reported by 87% of the engineers, participation in video calls with international staff by 75%, technical documentation by 62%, and equipment-performance updates by 58%. Learners also reported substantial anxiety when delivering oral updates in English, particularly when responding to impromptu questions.

The interviews identified recurring workplace problems associated with ambiguous written documentation, delayed responses to international partners caused by language uncertainty, and misunderstandings during safety briefings. Supervisors emphasized the need for clearer summaries, more effective transitions in spoken communication, and more polished language in reports and professional emails.

Workplace observations supported these findings. During meetings, engineers frequently paused in mid-sentence, relied on repetitive vocabulary, and avoided more complex explanations because of concern about grammatical errors. Review of technical documentation revealed problems with structure, tone, and omission of contextual information. Across the three sources of evidence, five core priorities emerged: (1) clear and cohesive technical writing; (2) confident delivery of spoken briefings; (3) engineering-specific vocabulary and phraseology; (4) appropriate formal register in professional email; and (5) improved listening comprehension during online meetings.

Discussion

The findings indicate that an effective ESP course for this group should be organized around authentic professional communication rather than isolated general-English language practice. The identified priorities correspond directly to the engineers' workplace genres and routines, supporting the needs-responsive orientation emphasized in ESP literature (Flowerdew, 2013; Serafini et al., 2015). A task-supported design is particularly appropriate because the learners need to perform observable professional actions in English, including reporting machinery faults, writing technical emails, presenting updates, and participating in safety or project briefings.

The source project proposes a modular course in which authentic input is followed by scaffolded language development and a realistic output task. For example, learners can analyze a maintenance or fault report, focus on relevant vocabulary and structures such as passive voice and sequencing language, and then produce their own technical report and oral update. Such an approach preserves the communicative function of scenario-based instruction while adapting the context, terminology, and expected outcomes to engineering (Viana et al., 2019; Woodrow, 2018).

Assessment should likewise reflect professional performance. Diagnostic technical-email tasks, presentations, vocabulary work, reflective activities, a final technical report, and a

simulated project-status presentation can provide evidence of both linguistic development and the ability to communicate in realistic engineering contexts. The present needs analysis, however, involved only eight engineers in one company and was conducted over a two-week period. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as context-specific course-design evidence rather than as generalizable claims about all engineers or textile workplaces.

Conclusion

This study identified a focused set of English-language needs among engineers working in a multinational textile company in Tashkent. Survey, interview, observation, and document-review evidence converged on five priorities: technical writing, spoken briefings, engineering-specific vocabulary, professional email register, and listening comprehension in online meetings. These findings provide a practical basis for a needs-based ESP course built around authentic engineering genres, workplace scenarios, scaffolded language support, and performance-oriented assessment. Further evaluation should examine learner performance after implementation of the proposed course and determine which components produce the strongest gains in workplace communication.

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