

# Designing an ESP Course for Computer Center Personnel at the University of Costa Rica

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## Abstract

This article refers to the pedagogical aspects that have to be taken into account when designing an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) course. The article includes three sample lessons with their activities and materials designed to teach a group of workers of the Computer Center at the University of Costa Rica. It also presents the evaluation and assessment instruments and rubrics to be used in this course, as well as some recommendations on how to teach an ESP English course.

**Key words:** ESP, needs analysis, materials development, assessment, rubrics, evaluation, course design

## Resumen

Este artículo presenta el diseño de un curso de inglés con propósitos específicos y los aspectos pedagógicos que deben ser tomados en cuenta durante el proceso. Incluye tres lecciones con sus respectivas actividades y materiales diseñados para enseñar inglés con propósitos específicos a un grupo de funcionarios(as) del Centro de Informática de la Universidad de Costa Rica. Además, se presentan los instrumentos y rúbricas para la evaluación continua de los y las estudiantes. También se incluyen algunas recomendaciones por seguir cuando se imparte un curso de inglés con propósitos específicos.

**Palabras claves:** inglés con propósitos específicos, diseño de cursos, análisis de necesidades, desarrollo de materiales, evaluación continua, rúbricas

## Introduction

This article intends to show the importance of designing courses for specific populations and the different aspects, such as proficiency, level of students, materials development, and appropriate evaluation procedures, among others, that must be considered during the process. In this article the authors will a) refer to the importance of needs analysis in ESP courses; b) explain the considerations to be taken into account when designing or choosing materials for such courses; c) describe the methodology, evaluation and assessment used in this course; and d) give some suggestions to English instructors for the design of an ESP course.

The above considerations are taken into account in the specific case of the course intended for the personnel of the Computer Center at the University of Costa Rica. The idea of teaching a course to this population has to do with the need of training these workers in the use of the English language. These workers have to read manuals about the use of different types of equipment in English; they also have to reply to messages in English; they need to give instructions about the services of the Center to users who do not speak any other language, but English; these workers are also required to attend English-speaking visitors, among many other tasks that the Computer Center personnel must carry out in their workplace and that requires the use of English. Because all the previous tasks these workers perform are very specific, an ESP course specially designed for them is going to be very helpful since it will allow the personnel of the Computer Center to perform better and be more competitive in their workplace.

It is important to clarify that these ESP courses are taught only once because, each year, students from the Master's Program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the School of Modern Languages choose to instruct different groups of students from the varied departments and schools at the University of Costa Rica, and this is the reason why teaching the same course to people in the same field of study is a remote possibility.

## Teaching an ESP Course

When teaching a course, any language course, the main goal should be the needs of the target population. As Long (in Belcher, 2009, p. 1) stated, English, or any language, should be taught with specific purposes in mind. However, this does not always happen because there are many times when the language learners' purposes or needs are not taken into account because most courses are not tailored based on students' needs, but to accomplish school curricula or syllabi requirements. Arbor (in Belcher, 2009, p. 1) considered that this could be solved if an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach were implemented. What this approach does is to concentrate on these needs of the learners and provide learner-centered language instruction. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) have defined ESP in its absolute characteristics as

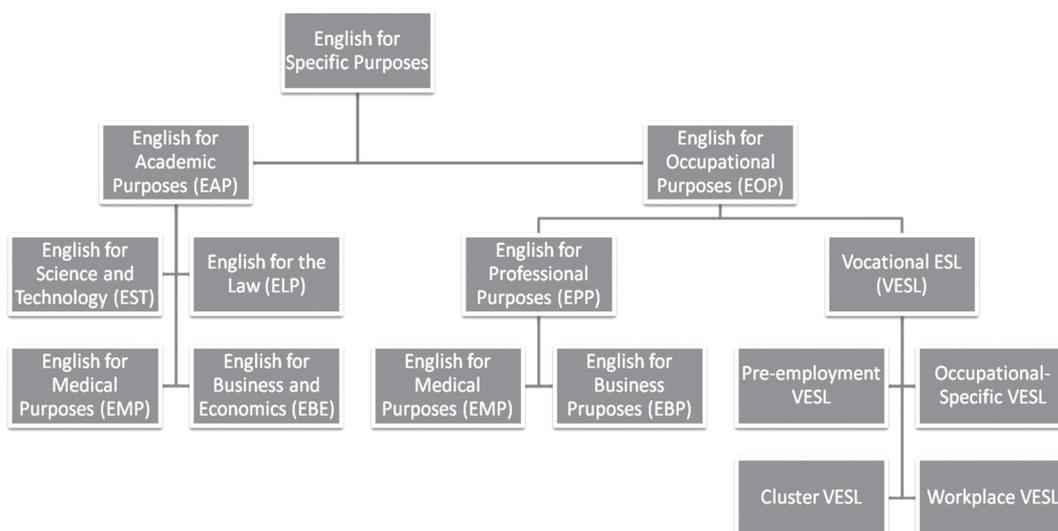
1. to meet specific needs of the learners,
2. to make use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves,
3. to be centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, skills, discourse and genres.

They have also considered some variable characteristics:

1. ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
2. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
3. ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level;
4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students;
5. Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems.

It is also important to mention that there are different categories or branches of ESP. As Belcher (p. 2) states there are as many types of ESP as there are specific learner needs and target communities that learners wish to thrive in. In addition, Johns and Price-Machado (2001, p. 43) also refer to the fact that those who most favor this movement -ESP- are teachers of adults because of their explicit needs within their academic, occupational, or professional settings. Some of these categories or branches are shown in the following figure:

**Figure 1**  
**Classification of ESP Categories**



## Needs Analysis

Dudley-Evans in his article English for Specific Purposes (in Carter and Nunan, 2001, p.131) stated that the most important characteristic of an ESP course is that the way it is going to be taught and its materials are based on the results of a needs analysis. This needs analysis of a particular group of learners will determine the type of ESP course to be taught since it reflects the *what* and *how* of such a course. In other words, the *what* refers to the needs analysis, which is made up of the activities used to collect information about the learning needs, wants, likes, and dislikes of the student population. Even though a needs analysis is the departure point for instructors to begin designing the course, it should be an ongoing process because the learners' needs do not end once it was carried out; on the contrary, they are present throughout the whole course. The *how* is mostly a decision-making process that can be conducted using different resources, among them surveys, questionnaires, interviews, tests. This needs analysis helps instructors to make the necessary adjustments to accomplish the goals stated.

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 125) list the following features or aspects about the learners in the process of needs analysis in ESP:

- Professional information
- Personal information
- English language information
- The learners' lacks
- Language learning information
- Professional communication
- What is wanted from the course
- Information about the environment in which the course will be taught

As pointed out by Dudley-Evans and St John, ESP course designers could use this list of aspects or create their own when they are into the needs analysis process of the course they intend to teach.

## Materials Development for an ESP Course

Designing instructional materials for an ESP course is a challenging process. This is a dynamic procedure in which instructors must not forget that course content and the tasks learners carry out at their workplace should be interrelated. Materials must meet the language needs of the target population through a series of contextualized activities. In regard to the functions of ESP materials, Dudley-Evans and St. John has explained that

ESP materials may therefore seek to provide exposure to the specialized genres and registers of ESP, to support learning through stimulating cognitive processes and providing a structure and progression for learners to

follow, to motivate learners through providing achievable challenges and interesting content, and to provide a resource for self-study outside of the classroom (cited in Richards, 2001, p. 252).

Although there is a wide variety of commercial textbooks (created materials) aimed at assisting ESP populations, original materials should also be created based on authentic samples of oral and/or written discourse. By implementing the use of original materials, instructors will try to meet the learners' specific needs identified in the needs analysis. Within an ESP context, Richards (2001) has indicated that "authentic materials are preferred over created materials because they contain authentic language and reflect real-world uses of language compared with the contrived content of much created material" (p. 252). Additionally, one advantage of using original materials over textbook activities relies on the fact that the first type of resources can be easily modified throughout the course depending on the improvement and progress made by students and on the pacing of the course. On the contrary, the use of a series of lessons taken from textbooks in an ESP course constrains the possibility of making changes in the curriculum.

According to Tomlinson (1998, p. 96), the process of materials development involves:

- a. Identification: new pedagogical materials are produced once specific linguistic needs have been identified.
- b. Exploration: the instructor chooses a given language item that will be taught in order to meet the needs of a target population.
- c. Contextual realization: the instructor carefully evaluates ideas and texts in which new materials will be based on.
- d. Pedagogical realization: activities and/or exercises are written and produced. Clear instructions should be carefully prepared.
- e. Physical production: once activities are prepared, the instructor pays attention to those aspects related to "layout, type size, visuals, reproduction, tape length, etc."

In an ESP context, instructors must constantly evaluate their instructional materials to meet the learners' language needs and how the objectives are accomplished at the end of each lesson. Tomlinson (1998) has considered that this evaluation of materials "forces the teacher/writer to examine whether he or she has or has not met objectives: furthermore, a failure to meet objectives may be related to any or all of the intervening steps between initial identification of need and eventual use" (p. 96-97). If some materials fail at helping students fulfill their language needs, changes should be made to address those gaps.

### **Characteristics of Materials**

Prior to designing materials for an ESP course, instructors should keep in mind the following principles listed by Tomlinson (1998, p. 7-21):

- a. *Materials should achieve impact*: they should be innovative, appealing, and interesting for the target group. In addition, they should take into account the learners' current level of the target language.
- b. *What is being taught should be perceived by learners as relevant and as useful*. In an ESP course, students need to see the applicability and relevance of activities and materials in tasks conducted at the workplace.
- c. *Materials should help students acquire the points being taught*. Learners will acquire linguistic aspects once they are cognitively able to do so.
- d. *Materials should expose the learners to language in authentic use*. Tasks should derive from authentic samples of oral and/or written language.
- e. *Materials should focus on the linguistic features of the input*. If students perform consciousness-raising activities in order to analyze a specific language aspect, this will help them assimilate it and put it into practice.
- f. *Materials should provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes*. Apart from controlled and guided practice, students should interact as much as possible and use language to communicate.
- g. *Materials should show that learners differ in learning styles and affective attitudes*. Instructors should meet the students' learning styles to facilitate acquisition. Affective factors should also be included.
- h. *Materials should provide opportunities for outcome feedback*. Learners must effectively communicate in the target language. Instructors and their materials should primarily evaluate learners' performance in terms of the efficacy of how language was used.

In addition to these principles, Richards (1990, p.15) pointed out that appropriate teaching materials "set out to teach through the process of defining instructional objectives [as well as] setting learning tasks or activities to attain the objectives." That is, materials and tasks derive from course objectives to fulfill students' needs, lacks, and wants in a vocational context. To do so, materials may also be adapted to facilitate students' assimilation. In terms of adapting or simplifying materials and authentic texts, one must keep in mind that, to some extent, this "simplification may result in incorrect content or in texts that are pragmatically inappropriate (Schleppegrell, 1991, p.20)." For this reason, there should be a clear connection between samples of authentic texts and the classroom materials so that students perceive the relevance of content in their professional area of expertise.

Dumitrescu (2000) has explained that before instructors select appropriate instructional materials, they should assess students' background from three perspectives. The first one is the *linguistic background* which directly affects the preparation of activities and the particular language areas to be reinforced. The second perspective is the *conceptual background* that determines the assortment of "specificity or generality of information in the selected materials" which can be based on the trainees' samples of oral and/or written production at the workplace (p.21). The third aspect has to do with the learners' *cultural background*; this

involves the interaction among students and learners. These factors will benefit the effectiveness of instructional materials used in a group of adult learners that need to use the target language (TL) in real-life tasks at the professional or vocational level.

## **Creating an Intermediate English Course for the Computer Center Personnel at the University of Costa Rica**

### **TESOL Practicum at UCR**

Two core courses of the Master's Program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language of the University of Costa Rica are Course Design and Practicum. The importance of these two courses lies on the fact that one depends on the other. During Course Design, student teachers start designing an ESP course for a target group of learners from any university department or school who may be interested in studying English, and consequently, perform better at their workplace.

Being student teachers of the Course Design from the Master's Program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language of the University of Costa Rica, the authors of this article chose to work with the personnel of the UCR Computer Center and teach a course entitled *Intermediate English for the Computer Center Personnel* because this represented a challenging and enriching experience for both instructors since it involved a significant academic and professional growth. This is particularly worth mentioning due to the fact that, in this globalized world, English teachers should have knowledge of different areas of expertise in which the target language can be practiced; as a consequence, they should know how to create courses based on people's specific needs, lacks, and wants as well as implement ESP materials. Also, all the potential students, who work in the same place, are in direct contact with Computer Science and could possibly attend the course on the established class schedule.

According to the authors of this article, the following guidelines should be considered when choosing a target group of ESP learners at the University of Costa Rica. They are:

- a. To contact people from the administration of the office where the course is intended to be taught so that they inform their personnel about the opportunity to take an ESP course.
- b. To consider that although many employees may show interest in registering, one should take into account that very few people will start and eventually finish the course.
- c. To analyze the facilities and the type of equipment available at the workplace. One should take into account the possibility of improvising a classroom from a place aimed at carrying out other activities or duties different from teaching.

- d. To anticipate some possible constraints or unexpected situations that may interfere with the normal development of the course such as time, quality of facilities, absenteeism, and/or possible drop outs.
- e. To monitor the level of motivation, interest, and commitment that those people may show.
- f. To make a list of tasks that employees usually perform in their workplace using the L 2 (e.g. answer phone calls, write e-mail messages, give instructions, assist English-speaking visitors, and the like).
- g. To choose the language skills to be taught; however, the integration of skills is preferable because practicing all the skills may provide learners with more tools to have a better performance in their workplace.
- h. To design a survey questionnaire in the students' L1 to collect personal information and any experience in regard to previous studies on the target language.
- i. To prepare a preliminary list of general goals to be included in the course outline.

### **Target Population and its Characteristics**

The target population for the course *Intermediate English for the Computer Center Personnel* was originally composed of 24 students whose ages ranged from 20 to 54 years old. It was a very heterogeneous group regarding academic background and professions or occupations. Among the students, there were systems engineers, computer and telecommunications technicians, secretaries, and administrative personnel such as receptionists and secretaries. Some of them held graduate degrees (Master's and Ph.D. degrees); others had studied in technical or vocational schools, and some others had only completed high school.

In order to find out the proficiency level of the learners who intended to take the course, a diagnostic test was designed. Besides measuring the proficiency level of the group in the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, this instrument would also help the instructors to establish the level of proficiency of the course.

As Table 1 shows, the test revealed that the level of proficiency of this population was very diverse. Regarding the listening skill, most candidates showed an intermediate or advanced level; in general 21 people reached these two levels. In contrast, 10 potential students had a beginner level in the oral component of the diagnostic test. In relation to the reading skill, 15 individuals had an advanced level; similarly, 11 students showed the same level in the writing section. Finally, the level of the group in terms of grammar was distributed evenly in three levels, being this the situation of eight students in each of the three levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. The data gathered helped the two instructors make decisions on the level of proficiency of the course; as a result, they decided to prepare and teach their ESP course at an intermediate level. Thus, the name of the course was *Intermediate English for the Computer Center*

*Personnel*. It is important to mention that out of 24 people who took the exam, only six learners registered and finished their course.

**Table 1**  
**Proficiency Level of the Target Group**

Level of proficiency according to diagnostic test	Language Skills				
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Grammar
Beginner	3	10	2	7	8
High beginner	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Intermediate	11	4	7	6	8
High intermediate	N/A	4	N/A	N/A	N/A
Advanced	10	4	15	11	8

Source: Diagnostic test

### Course Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation are important issues that course designers need to take into account during the course design process. In regard to this, Douglas (2000, p. 1) has pointed out that language has to be tested in ESP courses. In other words, in an ESP course, it is a requirement to carefully and continuously assess and evaluate the learners' performance in order to collect samples of learning evidence in the target language from students and also to make important decisions regarding the students' *needs* and *wants* as well as preparing, changing, or adapting teaching materials to fulfill their *lacks*.

Based on the results obtained in the diagnostic test mentioned in section B, the instructors considered important to teach and evaluate listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar in order to fulfill the learners' needs. Therefore, it was necessary to design appropriate rubrics to assess and grade students' output and progress throughout the course *Intermediate English for the Computer Center Personnel*, (see Appendices 1 and 2).

Some of the activities implemented to assess and evaluate students are described as follows. In terms of evaluating their oral skills, students participated in group activities in which they exchanged opinions, suggested recommendations, gave advice and/or instructions. While they were communicating orally, data about each learner's performance was collected, and their weaknesses and strengths were recorded on the corresponding scale. With the use of the assessment rubric, instructors analyzed the mistakes made in each component of the Rubric for the Assessment of the Oral Skill (Appendix 1) and determined the number of points obtained and its corresponding interpretation; thus, and as shown in Appendix 1, students were not given a numerical grade; however, it

is important to mention that feedback forms were designed for the students to analyze, correct, and reflect on their own vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation mistakes (see Appendix 3).

In the same way, the students' written production in the target language was evaluated. To assess the writing skill, students carried out tasks which consisted mainly of writing e-mail messages about recommendations on how to buy or use new computer equipment as well as instructions in order to install an equipment. These texts were assessed with the Rubric for the Assessment of the Writing Skill (see Appendix 2), and learners received the corresponding assessment and a feedback form so that they could correct their own mistakes regarding syntax and vocabulary.

To evaluate the reading skill, instructors adapted authentic texts or advertisements taken from computer magazines or books. Likewise, the listening comprehension tests were based on short video clips, interviews, or excerpts from textbooks. To prepare these tests, several types of exercises were implemented such as filling in the blanks, answering content questions, or discriminating between true or false statements, among others.

To sum up, analyzing the data and the results obtained in the evaluation process helped to make important decisions on teaching materials to fulfill the students' *needs, wants* and *lacks*.

### Course Description

Name of the course:	<b><i>Intermediate English for the Computer Center Personnel</i></b>
Type of course:	Team taught
Length:	15 weeks
Hours:	62
Schedule:	Two times a week, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Location:	Computer Center Building, University of Costa Rica

***Intermediate English for the Computer Center Personnel*** is an ESP course designed to meet the needs of a group of workers (systems engineers, computer programmers, computer and telecommunications technicians, secretaries, and administrative workers) from the Computer Center at the University of Costa Rica. It was aimed at helping these workers improve their language skills to perform better in the workplace.

### Course Methodology

This learner-centered ESP course emphasizes the integration of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing along the teaching-learning process. Likewise, it also promotes the students' awareness and application of their

learning strategies to perform better in the acquisition of the target language. The facilitators' role was to promote learning and motivate the students' active participation in class. Students were provided with the appropriate materials and tasks to meet their wants, expectations, and needs at their workplace. The learners were continuously evaluated and assessed in order to keep track of their progress in the TL. For this purpose, they were given short tests, which included the four skills, throughout the course.

### **General Objective**

By the end of this ESP course, learners will have acquired listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in the field of computer science for working purposes.

### **Specific Objectives**

By the end of this ESP course, learners will

- comprehend most of the details of a telephone call related to the field of computer science,
- identify the main ideas of audio-visual materials (short TV segments, recorded interviews, and radio programs) about computer science efficiently,
- provide specific information about the Computer Center services (i.e. getting an account, using computers, having access to the Internet, solving problems related to the system) to English speakers, either personally or on the phone effectively,
- extract main ideas and details from written texts in English (i.e. e-mail messages, reports, letters, articles, instructions, catalogues, advertisements) related to the field of computer science,
- write e-mail messages, instructions and reports to English speakers about different types of equipment related to the field of computer science accurately,
- recognize some similarities and differences between their native culture and the target one,
- use their learning strategies in new situations in and out of their workplace more effectively to reduce anxiety and increase their self confidence.

### **ESP Teaching Materials and Sample Lessons**

#### **Sample lesson 1**

The following sample activities belong to Unit 4: Surfing the Net and the title of the lesson is Crime: Cyber-style. The main objective is to help students'

improve their listening skill, but seeking an integration of skills is also important. Firstly, students were expected to activate their prior knowledge about cyber crime. Then, learners predicted some ideas that may be related to the content of a video clip they watched later on. At this point, all answers were valid. Before watching it, they got acquainted with some new words they listened to. As part of the listening comprehension task, students completed a listening cloze activity; furthermore, they needed to listen again and focus on specific details. The script of this video clip can be found in Appendix 4. The post-listening task helped them check if the predictions made before were correct. Finally, students read and expressed their opinions on a series of statements about cyber crime. After completing each task, students were also expected to share their results and answers as a whole-group discussion. The two instructors collected samples of learners' errors for further analysis and feedback.

## **Crime: Cyber-Style**

### **I. Pre-listening Activities**

#### **I. 1. Brainstorming**

- Get together with a partner. Write as many words and phrases as possible related to the key concept below. You have 5 minutes to do this.

#### **Cybercrime**

- Share your information with the rest of the class.

#### **I. 2. Group Work**

- Discuss the answers to the following questions.

- What is cyber crime?
- What illegal activities can criminals commit using the web?
- What is a hacker?

- Be ready to share your answers with the rest of the class.

#### **I. 3. Predicting**

- Individual work. Based on the title of the video segment "Crime: Cyber-style," what information do you think will be included in it? Write three ideas on the space given.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **I. 4. Useful Vocabulary**

Pair work. The following words and/or phrases will appear in the video segment.

- Read them as they are used in the following sentences and try to write your own definition.

1. We've seen organized groups using technology *to intrude into* various e-commerce systems.

**To intrude into:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. "If you don't pay me a hundred thousand dollars, I'm gonna *disclose* that you've become my victim."

**Disclose:** \_\_\_\_\_

3. We've seen organized groups using technology to intrude into various e-commerce systems so as *to extort* them for money.

**To extort:** \_\_\_\_\_

4. We have approximately two hundred agents in the United States that are conducting computer *intrusion* investigations.

**Intrusion:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Share your answers with the rest of the class.

## II. While-listening Tasks

### II. 1. Listening Cloze

- You will watch a TV segment entitled "Crime: Cyber Style."

- Individual work. The passage below is the introduction to a video segment. Listen to it and fill in the blanks with the missing words.

Louis Freeh (FBI Director): You had a (1) \_\_\_\_\_ who not only had very adept computer (2) \_\_\_\_\_, but also some (3) \_\_\_\_\_ of the medical regime, so he could adversely but not obviously (4) \_\_\_\_\_ the medication that would have killed this particular (5) \_\_\_\_\_.

- Be ready to share your answers with the rest of the class.

### II. 2. Listening for details

#### Cyber Extortion

- Watch a TV segment and write an X next to the fields, organizations, web sites or institutions affected by cyber crime.

1. \_\_\_ hospitals
2. \_\_\_ criminal enterprises
3. \_\_\_ e-commerce systems
4. \_\_\_ Bloomberg (a media company)
5. \_\_\_ Secret Service
6. \_\_\_ FBI
7. \_\_\_ government web sites

- Share your answers with the rest of the class.

### III. Post-listening Tasks

#### III. 1. Checking Your Predictions

- Pair Work. Go back to the **Predicting Section** and check the predictions you wrote before watching the video segment. Were your guesses correct?
- Share your answers with the rest of the class.

#### III. 2. Do you agree or disagree?

- Group work. Discuss the content of the following statements and say if you agree or disagree with them. Give enough reasons to support your decision.
  1. Cyber crime cannot be prevented.
  2. The Computer Center cannot be affected by cyber crime.
  3. Police intervention is necessary if cyber crime takes place at the Computer Center.
- Share your answers with the rest of the class.

### Sample lesson 2

The following activities are aimed at helping students improve the writing skill. These tasks are part of Unit 2: At the Computer Center. This unit, made up of 10 lessons, covers different topics regarding ESP students' duties at the UCR Computer Center. The title of this sample lesson 2 is You Have e-mail. In this lesson, students were given a reading activity which served as a pre-writing task. In the speaking task, they had to discuss the answers to a series of questions about the impact of e-mail on their job. Learners needed to write a sample e-mail message about some duties they carry out at the Computer Center. Learners had approximately 10 minutes to write their message. Then, instructors collected their work so that corrections and feedback were given the next time the class met.

#### You Have e-mail !

**Pre- Writing: Individual Work.** Read the following text.

#### What You Need to Communicate

In the modern world, some companies are finding it more efficient to have certain employees stay at home and do all of their work on their home computers. Then, using telecommunications, they transmit their work over a modem into the office where it is printed and distributed.

Telecommunications are used now for hundreds of different applications. Investors routinely check their stock market holdings, pilots file flight plans and get weather reports, and buyers compare and purchase merchandise on their computers. National and international electronic mail is sent and received with local phone, calls, and electronic bulletin boards are used for everything from selling cars to finding dates.

Telecommunicating is accomplished by linking your computers to telephone lines and contacting someone through a device called a modem. But with whom will you communicate? Of course, you can call up a person who owns a modem and talk to him; but generally, you will communicate with bulletin boards and online services.

Adapted from Remacha, S. (1996). *English for Computes Users*. Cambridge. CUP.)

**Pre-writing: Group work.** Answer the following questions:

- Why do some companies prefer to have their employees work at home?
- How do investors, pilots and buyers use telecommunications?
- Do you send and receive many e-mail messages? From whom?
- What kind of information do you usually send via e-mail?

**Writing Task: Individual Work.** Send an e-mail message to a co-worker in which you inform him or her about a new task that he has to carry out at the UCR Computer Center.

E-mail: _____	Date: _____
To: _____	
Subject: _____	
Message: _____	
_____	
_____	

- When you finish, your instructors will collect this e-mail message. Feedback will be given next class.

### Sample lesson 3

The following activities are aimed at helping students improve their speaking skills. These tasks are part of Unit 3: Computer Technology: Its Applications. This unit consists of 19 lessons. The main focus of the unit is learning and practicing the past tense of English verbs, as well as practicing the pronunciation of regular verbs in the past in order for learners to refer to past events and activities that have recently taken place at their workplace (i.e., meetings or training courses). Some other topics covered are related to chores UCR Computer Center personnel carry out in their workplace such as giving instructions about computer equipment. The title of the sample lesson chosen is *I Worked Extra Hours Last Week*. In this specific lesson, the main task is a speaking activity. To be able to do this, a reading activity is chosen as the pre-task. The objective of the pre-task is to provide students with the vocabulary and structures necessary to carry out the main task. Then, learners give their opinions on a set of statements containing useful language to develop communication strategies. As a post-task, students are asked to write a short paragraph in which they give their opinion about current topics such as computer saboteurs and how they should be punished. Even though the main task has to do with practicing speaking, there is an integration of reading and writing to accomplish the main objective of this lesson.

### Pre-speaking Activity: Reading

#### 1. Matching

- Individual work. Match the following terms with their corresponding definitions or synonyms. Write the number next to each definition.

- |              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. host      | 2. halt       |
| 3. probation | 4. punishment |
| 5. fine      | 6. saboteur   |

- \_\_\_\_\_ a person who commits sabotage  
 \_\_\_\_\_ a penalty for a crime  
 \_\_\_\_\_ a large number  
 \_\_\_\_\_ supervised period in which an offender has to show good conduct  
 \_\_\_\_\_ a temporary suspension  
 \_\_\_\_\_ a sum of money paid as a penalty for an offense or crime

- Share your answers with the rest of the class.  
 - In small groups, give your opinions about the following phrases:

- To punish people who commit sabotage in their workplaces
- To put on probation offenders who bribe authorities
- To denounce saboteurs

You may use some of these expressions in your discussion.

- In my opinion, \_\_\_\_\_  
 I think that is \_\_\_\_\_  
 I don't consider that \_\_\_\_\_.  
 What is your opinion about \_\_\_\_\_?

#### 2. Reading

- Read the following text about computer sabotage.

#### **NSA consultant's son is computer saboteur**

A court heard today how a Cornell University graduate student, Robert T. Morris Jr. (25), infected a host of government and educational computer centers with a computer virus, known as a 'worm', which literally brought all computational activity to a halt in over 6,000 installations. They sentenced Morris, the son of a prominent National Security Agency computer consultant, for his offenses yesterday. As punishment, he was required to spend no time in prison, but instead, serve three years' probation and contribute 400 hours of community service. He also paid a \$10,000 fine along with associated court and probation costs.

Taken from Boeckner, K. and Brown, C. (1993). Computing. Oxford: OUP.

- Underline the words related to computer science and crime in the reading.
- Underline all the verbs in the past tense. Then practice their pronunciation by repeating the verbs after your instructor.
- Share your answers with a partner.

### Speaking Task

- Get in groups. Discuss the following questions based on the reading “NSA consultant’s son is computer saboteur”. Use the useful language below to develop communication strategies.
- Some language you can use in your answers is the following:

I think .....

I believe that .....

I don’t think so. How about you?

I really don’t remember.

Yes, I remember one time when .....

1. What do you think about saboteurs?
2. Was the crime mentioned in the reading serious? Why?
3. Do you know of some event similar to the one mentioned in the reading at the Computer Center? What happened?
4. How can people prevent this type of malicious software in their computers?

#### Post –task

- Individually, write a fifty-word paragraph giving your opinion about the punishment people who sabotage computer systems deserve. You have 15 minutes to do this.

### Students’ Final Project Presentation

At the end of this ESP course, students were required to use the target language to develop and present a project closely related to the field of computer science to a group of English-speaking visitors. Thus, learners had the opportunity to put into practice everything they had learned throughout the ESP course. This project consisted of an oral presentation which lasted approximately two hours and took place in three different departments at the Computer Center. The objectives of the task were (1) to give information about different aspects related to learners’ workplace; (2) to describe their duties at the Computer Center; and (3) to provide instructions to a group of English-speaking visitors in order for them to perform a specific task.

The topic of their choice was *The Paperless Office*. After welcoming their visitors, students had to work in three teams. Each team explained a certain procedure that correlated with a task they performed at the Computer Center

on a daily basis. Thus, Team A fully explained the procedure to install and use a scanner. Team B was in charge of presenting how to use two Web search engines: Netscape and Outlook. Finally, Team C gave details on how to request and provide information from one office to another such as the director's office and the office supplies at the Computer Center. In this case, these two students exchanged digital information on how to purchase a new laptop computer for their department. At the end of each team's presentation, visitors asked questions, and students were able to clarify doubts successfully using the target language.

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

This article has considered the importance of designing ESP courses and the challenges these courses represent. Some sample lessons, recommendations and guidelines are also included that may help future ESP course designers. Therefore, it is recommended for instructors to take into account the following list of suggestions to design an ESP course:

- If another ESP course had previously been taught at the same workplace, it would be important to talk to its former instructors to get useful feedback on the level of commitment, responsibility, and punctuality of their former students. This is crucial before making a decision to teach a follow-up course with the same population.
- A needs analysis must be carried out thoroughly to plan and implement tasks that correlate with students' duties at the workplace. This crucial stage will inform instructors about their potential students' needs, wants, and lacks.
- Instructors should administer a placement test to identify the students' current level of the target language. This may give important insights on the level of difficulty of future lessons and materials.
- ESP materials should contain authentic oral and written texts to provide learners with comprehensible and meaningful input.
- ESP materials should be learner-centered.
- Tasks must integrate the four macro-skills.
- ESP materials should constantly be evaluated and modified if necessary to determine that the general and specific objectives are being achieved throughout the course.
- Within the ESP context, different teaching approaches and methods (i.e., Task-based Instruction, Communicative Approach, among others) should be combined to have a more dynamic and varied methodology that would enrich the course benefitting both instructors and learners.

In order to assess learners' production, appropriate evaluation rubrics and scales should be prepared or adapted for the target population. After the students' production has been evaluated, they must be given the corresponding

feedback so that they can reflect on their progress to make them more responsible for their own learning and more autonomous.

To conclude, paying attention to the previous recommendations is necessary in order to design an ESP course which intends to focus on learners' needs, wants and lacks. As Dudley-Evans explained (in Carter and Nunan, 2001), the point of departure that determines the implementation of an ESP course answers the following set of questions: "What do students need to do with English? Which of the skills do they need to master and how well? Which genres do they need to master, either for comprehension or production purposes?" (p.131). By doing so, language teachers will incorporate those insights into their course syllabus and generate learner-oriented materials to help students perform more efficiently in the workplace. Similarly, assessment plays a central role throughout the learning process with the purpose of reflecting on the impact of materials and the possible changes that should be made to meet the course objectives. In short, designing an ESP course is a challenging and time-consuming task, and this is particularly true when different teaching approaches are combined within the ESP context. However, it is highly rewarding to see the improvement reached by students at the end of the course and their increasing level of motivation. Designing and teaching an ESP course is a highly interesting and meaningful project that will definitely help professionals do a better job in such a competitive English-speaking world.

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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix 1

#### Assessment Rubric for the Assessment of the Speaking Skill

Grading	Pronunciation	Grammar	Fluency	Task: (Vocabulary and content)
Excellent (20-18 pts.)	Meaning is usually conveyed. Very few mistakes with consonant and vowel sounds.	Most syntactic patterns are correctly produced.	No hesitation. Message is clearly conveyed.	Task is carried out in an excellent way. Appropriate ESP language use usually goes beyond the one studied in class.
Very Good (17-15 pts.)	Few consonant and vowel errors. Communication is rarely interrupted.	Many syntactic structures are correctly produced.	Little hesitation. Meaning is generally conveyed.	Task is carried out appropriately. Most ESP language correctly used.
Good (14-12 pts.)	Pronunciation sometimes obscures communication. Some consonant and vowel errors.	Some structure problems are evident.	Some hesitation. Message is sometimes conveyed.	Task is accomplished adequately. Some ESP vocabulary usage.

Fair (11-9 pts.)	Many consonant and vowel errors. Communication is partially reached.	Many structure problems related to subject-verb agreement, subject deletion, and wrong tenses, among others.	Speech is frequently choppy. Difficult to understand.	Task is partially accomplished. Limited ESP vocabulary. Many translation problems.
Needs Improvement (8 pts. and below)	Very strong accent that hinders communication.	Most syntactic utterances are poorly produced due to L1 interference.	Uneven and slow speech. Communication is interrupted.	Task is not accomplished due to L1 interference. Insufficient and inadequate ESP vocabulary.

Unkonwn source. Adapted by authors.

## Appendix 2

### Assessment Rubric for the Assessment of the Writing Skill

Grading	Content	Organization	Syntax	Vocabulary
Excellent	Clear understanding of topic. Total coherence.	All ideas are well organized.	Structures are correctly used (subject-verb agreement, pronouns, verb tenses: present, past, and modal auxiliaries: will, can, should, must.	Use of appropriate ESP vocabulary to perform the task; sometimes beyond the one studied in class.
Very Good	Appropriate understanding of topic. Text is mostly coherent.	Most ideas are logically organized.	Most structures correctly used.	Most of the ESP vocabulary correctly used for the task.
Good	Some understanding of topic; some coherence.	Many ideas are logically organized.	Some structures correctly used.	Some ESP vocabulary for the task.
Fair	Limited understanding of topic; little coherence.	Some ideas are logically organized.	Few structures correctly used.	Limited ESP vocabulary for the task.
Needs Improvement	Lack of understanding of topic; lack of coherence.	Most ideas unrelated to the development of topic.	Little knowledge of structures.	Lack of ESP vocabulary to perform the task.

Designed by authors.

### Appendix 3

#### Feedback Form: Oral Test I

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#### CORRECTING MY OWN MISTAKES

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Instructions:

A. Pair Work. The following statements were taken from your oral test. Read the sentences or phrases carefully. They contain errors related to vocabulary and grammar (subject-verb agreement, word order, and comparative form).

B. Identify the mistakes and correct the ideas.

#### VOCABULARY

1. IBM is an excellent mark.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. It's the true that viruses can destroy data banks.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. I don't know too about this brand.

\_\_\_\_\_

#### GRAMMAR

4. It have many advantages.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. In Costa Rica exist several software companies.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. ...have hard drive more compatible.

\_\_\_\_\_

#### WORD ORDER

7. ...more security offers Inter

\_\_\_\_\_

#### COMPARATIVE FORM

8. more cheaper than

\_\_\_\_\_

9. The smaller printer more capacity.

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Share your answers with the rest of the class.

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Designed by authors.

## Appendix 4

### Crime Cyber-Style Script

**Reporter:** Imagine being in a hospital at the mercy of medical personnel. Your vital information including necessary medications and dosage stored on a computer, a computer that's been hacked by someone who upped the dosage of your medication to a level that would surely kill you: a cyber-head. It's not only possible, it's already happened.

**Louis Freeh (FBI Director):** You had a subject who not only had very adept computer skills, but also some knowledge of the medical regime, so he could adversely but not obviously change the medication that would have killed this particular patient.

**Reporter:** Cyber crime is becoming more lethal and it's not only lone hackers that are preying on victims, but increasingly organized crime groups.

**Mike Vatis (Partmouth College):** It appears that we could have hackers that are working in conjunction with some other more traditional forms of organized crime and that's a very scary prospect because that means there are a lot more resources involved in planning and carrying out this sort of criminal enterprises.

**Reporter:** Organized crime enterprises, especially from Russia and the Ukraine, have been heavily involved in the theft of proprietary information which includes credit cards and personal information, but it's not only individuals who are being threatened; organized crime groups are busily targeting companies—putting a new cyber twist on old fashion extortion.

**Ron Dick (NIPC Director):** We've seen organized groups using technology to intrude into various e-commerce systems so as to extort them for money as opposed to stealing information or using credit card information that was secured for the dotcom. They come back to the business and say: "If you don't pay me a hundred thousand dollars, I'm gonna disclose that you've become a victim to my skin."

**Reporter:** It's not just only companies that are victims, even the media giant Bloomberg, has been a target of cyber extortionists.

**Killi Arena (CNN Justice Correspondent):** A recent survey shows computer security breaches in US businesses and government organizations is rising dramatically. 85% of respondents detected the breaches over the previous year.

**Reporter:** And that has led to increase specialists handling cyber investigations and agencies including: the Secret Service, Customs and the FBI, which houses the National Infrastructure and Protection Center (NIPC).

**Ron Dick (NIPC Director):** So, the mission is to detect, deter, and assess different vulnerabilities down on the area and advise the general public as well as the private sector of what those vulnerabilities are. We have approximately two hundred agents in the United States that are conducting computer intrusion investigations. We have trained in, basically year 2000, over 2000 state, local, federal, and foreign investigators how to conduct cyber crime investigations.

**Reporter:** But that effort is sometimes stymied by a lack of sufficient cyber security at some US businesses.

**Peggy Weigle (CEO, Sactum, Lic.):** E-commerce sites are under a great deal of pressure by senior management often to get the sites up, get them fast, make them sticky, make them easy for the end-users to use. One of the reasons why the sites are so vulnerable is because making them secure very often is very low on the list.

**Reporter:** E-commerce sites, government web sites, hospital computers, they're all vulnerable to hackers with time on their hands and on their sites.

Taken from [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)