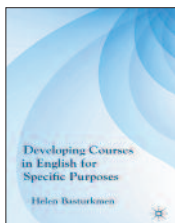


Reseñas/Book Reviews



Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes

Helen Basturkmen.

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 157 pages. ISBN: 978-0-230-22798-9.

It is not uncommon for English language teachers to have to design and deliver English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses as part of their teaching duties, without the necessary prior knowledge on subjects as diverse as Business, Law, Health Care, Tourism, Engineering, etc. Practitioners in this situation will find Basturkmen's volume a valuable resource, since it provides guidelines and theoretical support on developing and teaching ESP courses, as well as several case studies which will prove quite useful for the novice ESP course designers.

Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes is divided into two main parts, with a total of nine chapters: an introduction, main theoretical considerations in ESP course development (three chapters), case studies in ESP course development (4 chapters) and a conclusion. The author achieves a good balance between theory and practice, with the theoretical part focusing on three key areas in ESP course design (needs analysis, investigation of specialist discourse and curriculum planning) and the practical part providing examples from a variety of ESP courses.

The introductory chapter offers different definitions of ESP and a categorization of the main areas in the field (English for Academic Purposes, English for Professional Purposes and English for Occupational Purposes). It also discusses the work of ESP practitioners, reflecting on the particular demands of teaching and course design, and finally considers ideas about the effectiveness of ESP courses in view of the empirical evidence provided by research.

The second chapter emphasizes the importance of analysing needs in ESP, describing the types of needs and the role of needs analysis in course design.

This is a key component in ESP courses for the successful implementation of a new programme.

In the third chapter the author explores how to obtain information about language use in a specialist area, paying particular attention to three approaches: ethnography, “in-depth and situated investigations, generally focusing on a specific setting such as one programme” (page 43); genre analysis, which “aims to identify features common to [genre] samples and to investigate the context of use” (page 45) and corpus analysis, which “allow[s] investigators to identify patterns in a body of data of language use” (page 46).

Chapter 4 focuses on considerations in course design and materials development that are most relevant in Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP), narrowing it down to the special characteristics of curriculum development in ESP and presenting dual concepts related to this: wide- and narrow-angled course design; real and carrier content; and authentic and non-authentic texts.

The second part introduces the reader to four case studies in different contexts of ESP (English for the Police, English for Medical Doctors, Academic Literacies in Visual Communication and English for Thesis writing), following the structure set up in the first part of the course: context, investigating needs, investigating specialist discourse, designing the course and materials; with a final part which responds to the difficulties and constraints encountered in each case.

Chapter 5, “English for the Police”, aims to show how a course is developed in response to a given situation and the particular characteristics of a professional group, in this case new police recruits in Auckland, New Zealand. Chapter 6 shifts the attention to another professional group in need of very particular communicative skills: Medical doctors interested in acquiring the necessary language vocabulary and structures for patient-centred medical consultation. Chapter 7 moves away from the workplace and shows an example of language needs for study purposes, more concretely in the area of English for Visual Arts, with the aim of providing disciplinary content as well as language content. Chapter 8 offers the final case study, an example of EAP (English for Academic Purposes), concerned with a set of workshops developed for students who needed to improve their English in order to write up their theses and dissertations. It coincides with chapter 6 in the sense that students had to be prepared for a specific communicative

situation, although it has a strong focus on a single skill: written production. Chapter 9, the conclusion, revisits the main aspects dealt with throughout the book, with a visual representation of ESP course development, and considers future trends in the field.

The main strength of this volume is the balance between theory and practice, the clear structure of the book, and it is also particularly welcome to find a discussion part at the end of each chapter, which rounds up the section and fosters pro-active reading, since it includes useful ideas and “food for thought” for ESP practitioners and course developers.

This book will be valuable for linguists interested ESP and LSP in general, a very worthy volume which could easily become a reference manual for any course on curriculum design and materials development in ESP, with a sound theoretical framework and realistic examples of its practical application.

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