

A Study on Implementation Strategies for ESP Textbook Design to Enhance Second Language Acquisition Efficiency

Yang Liu*

School of Foreign Languages, Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology, Haikou 571126, Hainan, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

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Abstract: The purpose of ESP instruction is to improve students' SLA effectiveness. Curriculum is the medium through which teaching and learning take place, the scientific nature and flexibility of a textbook's design determine its effectiveness in terms of ease and quality of acquisition. The current paper aims to investigate the role ESP textbook design plays for effective SLA, clarifying the underlying rationale of ESP textbook design in relation to language acquisition; providing guidelines on ESP textbook design based upon acquisition tendencies, as well as some tangible ways forward from the perspective of text design and use, which can provide a theoretical basis and some practical implications to optimize the ESP textbook designing system, as well as contribute to promote the effective SLA.

Keywords: ESP textbook design; Second language acquisition; Efficiency enhancement; Implementation pathways

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1. Introduction

The ESP pedagogy is primarily concerned about the needs in work-place, while facilitating effective second language learning is what sets it apart from other English courses. The syllabus acts as a link between objectives and tasks: how textbooks should be designed plays an essential role in achieving successful SLA. However, current ESP textbooks often suffer from many drawbacks like inconsistency between textbook's general structure with SLA research, a lack of integration of professional relevancy with language acquisition objectives as well as a lack of progressive content sequencing, all of which greatly hinder the attainment of successful second language learning. Based on the basic principle of second language acquisition and the professional characteristic of ESP pedagogy, this paper will attempt to explain how and why ESP textbook writing may help learners acquire a foreign language successfully: which can provide a new research perspective to optimize and innovate ESP teaching materials.

2. The intrinsic relationship between ESP textbook design and the enhancement of second language acquisition efficiency

2.1. The alignment between goal-oriented textbook design and second language acquisition needs

ESP textbooks' task-based orientation has direct implications for SLA, as it is this orientation that makes textbooks effective or otherwise: its merit resides in the extent to which it can be made closely responsive to acquisition requirements (making textbooks precise vehicles which link professional demand and language learning. The first need of second language students is to learn how to use the target language efficiently for a specific purpose, i.e., work, via effective input and output, not only about learning grammar, but it should be focused on acquiring professional linguistic ability in ESP textbooks' development.

If purpose-built use of teaching materials is divorced from SLA needs, then SLA does not work, what students spend a lot of time and energy learning is not useful for their working languages, directly reducing the effectiveness of learning and utility; whereas when the target is set according to the requirements in acquisition, the knowledge learned from textbooks can be gradually formed on the basis of job-related language skills, so that every phase of the study process is applied-oriented. In other words, this will ensure successful L2 learning as well as perfect correspondence of training goals with job demands.

2.2. Alignment of textbook content organization with second language acquisition principles

The process of acquiring a second language is an objective cognitive process, namely, from language input to knowledge learning, from understanding to use, from basic stockpiling to skill enhancement. This is the sequence that should be reflected in the structure of ESP textbooks for easier and more effective learning. A rational structure offers an orderly path for learners to follow along which their language knowledge/skill acquisition corresponds to the way humans think, thus, reducing the mental blocks and the learning curve ^[1].

When the contents of textbooks are arranged against the background of SLA, and there exist problems like scattered knowledge points, disordered skill practice, and a mismatch of input-output, it may throw the learner into an acquisition crisis, which prevents them from forming an organized structure of linguistic knowledge, as well as from making that vital move from learning towards acquisition. On the other hand, a pedagogical framework that follows the learning model so that material builds sequentially in an intuitive manner, whereby students can learn languages in a suitable mental workload, which helps them more effectively absorb information and apply it for learning purposes, optimizing procurement results.

2.3. The relationship between the functional use of teaching materials and second language acquisition efficiency

As has been mentioned, the main function of ESP textbook is to convey basic knowledge about language while it also serves as a major medium for practicing SLA. Whether this kind of material can be applied efficiently determines the level of acquisition performance. A well-designed ESP textbook should play several roles such as knowledge teaching, practice skills, extend learning and apply it in context, to give students all the help they need to connect their school work with productive self-directed study, "thus making full use of scarce acquisition time. Textbooks which emphasize only knowledge transmission but disregard practice will make students lack in language production as well as situation training, which leads to "quick learning, quick forgetting", or "how to talk, but do not know how to use". This is a direct effect on the acquisition effectiveness and results. By comparison, well-designed textbooks feature varied exercises in different forms, situational tasks and supplementary materials for learners so as to create an input-practice-application-consolidation loop, ensuring each textbook session can be turned into actual language ability, considerably increasing the rate of return for learning languages.

3. Core principles of ESP textbook design for enhancing second language acquisition efficiency

3.1. The adaptation principle integrating career demand orientation with second language acquisition patterns

Career demand orientation is the basic feature of ESP textbook designing and the rules of SLA are the scientific basis of textbook writing; the best combination of them is the central principle to improve the efficiency of second language acquisition, which means the textbook design should not only go against the actual need of professional field's language use but also violate the objective cognitive law of second language acquisition, thus seeking to strike a balance between practicality (i.e., vocational applicability) on one hand, and science on the other.

The textbook designed is not in line with the needs of occupation, so learning a second language becomes useless and meaningless, as the acquired linguistic knowledge cannot be used for a professional work; in turn, violations of the acquisition principles by the design make the learning process inefficient, increasing learners' work load and frustration. Both aspects are indispensable^[2]. The principle of integrated adaptation means that textbooks should be built on the basis of the need for using a certain language in occupational contexts, with its system of contents and logic organization based on SLA principles, enabling students to efficiently acquire knowledge according to their mental logic in the process of learning industry English, hence, an interplay of job requirements with learning laws.

3.2. The principle of progressive input-output balance and hierarchical acquisition

Input and output are in a state of dynamic equilibrium which is at the heart of the requirements for L2 acquisition; the progression of acquisition is determined by the objective laws of cognition; the gradual coordination of the above two factors is the basic law to follow when designing an ESP textbook. According to this law, ESP textbooks must provide sufficient scientific input: with specific and useful language production, and to systematically expand input and output materials during learning.

Accurately adjust for student rate of acquisition of skills. If instruction is input oriented rather than output oriented then students may fall victim to "mute English", not using language knowledge in practice; and focusing on output while neglecting input, leaving students with no relevant background knowledge, while risking loss of output quality, and/or establishing bad linguistic practices. A progressive ordering strategy ensures the progression in complexity of sources used from simple to complex and from generic to domain-specific, while output activity moves from easy to difficult and from practiced-controlled performance to real life tasks, enabling the learner to build his/her language competence via well-balanced input-output practice and achieve quick, effective advance.

3.3. The integration principle of synergistic development between language knowledge and professional competence

Since the main purpose of ESP teaching is cultivating learners' practical English ability which can be used at work, it requires that the textbooks should follow a key rule: language + profession, intimately linking foreign language learning to occupational training. That is, the process of learning a foreign language constantly supports that of developing job competencies, avoiding the dissociation of theory from practice.

If a textbook separates language knowledge and vocational skills, students' gained language knowledge will not enter a particular occupation field. Not only does this affect the formation of good occupational languages, but it will also cause them to forget quickly because they have no opportunity for practice in actual situations. embedding vocabulary, grammar and discourse knowledge in operation or practice of professional scenario so that students can learn language knowledge by doing vocational tasks, simultaneous learning of knowledge and skills.

4. Content construction in ESP textbook design to enhance the efficiency of second language acquisition

4.1. Construction of a vocational, contextualized language knowledge system based on second language acquisition

ESP textbook authors' construction on language knowledge should base on SLLA, which has been based on a traditional structure of organizing information in terms of knowledge, and shift towards its main focus i.e., vocational scenario-oriented use, which classifies the information in terms of single pieces of knowledge, but to build a situation based knowledge system according to work needs and improve learning efficiency. It should take common working situations as the unit, integrating words, grammar and usage with real world language use (thus making the learning of language very much tied up with its actual use).

The conventional knowledge point based organizing method makes it difficult for students to connect the abstract language knowledge and practice situations, increasing the difficulty and cost of knowledge transfer and impeding efficient second language acquisition. By contrast, a situation-centered knowledge structure in which students are able to experience, understand, and remember language learning in certain job scenarios, while specifying when to apply it, how to use it. This considerably lightens the load on transferring knowledge, making language learning focused and efficient, and enabling quick growth in the ability to use language contextually.

4.2. Design of a stepwise skill training module optimized for learning efficiency

Skill practice is an important link between learning and proficiency during the process of L2 learning; therefore, ESP textbooks need to provide different levels of skills that can be easily acquired: after a certain period in which listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating follow their natural development; when they have been related to the particular needs of different kinds of work: they develop an iterative, incremental training program which leads from simple tasks towards practical implementation and from exercises to operations.

The modular skill training programs should be both extensive in terms of skills covered and relevant to the working world, while each program is linked to previous linguistic learning: allows students to quickly apply what they have learned in practice, so that there is a good combination between study and practice; whilst training difficulty should gradually change in accordance with the learner's development level; the task is evolved from independent skills drill into joint skills practice, which conforms well to the learner's ability level and speed of knowledge acquisition, balancing the prevention of acquisition fatigue due to too high or low a level of difficulty with effective and ongoing skill learning^[3].

4.3. Supporting the development of vocational pragmatic practice content for autonomous acquisition

Autonomous learning provides an important basis for improving the effectiveness of second language acquisition, and it plays a vital role in cultivating learners' lifelong learning ability. It is imperative that we fully develop the ESP textbook with the contents of vocational pragmatic practices supporting autonomous learning: go beyond the confines of their role as teachers in classrooms. They need to make available ample practical practice materials for self-study, application, and consolidation outside of class, prolonging acquisition time outside of the classroom and allowing for continual language acquisition during the school day.

Practical pragmatic practice material for professionals must be a combination of interest and utility. It may consist in role-played independent work, professional topic discussions; real-world professional case analysis with explicit task instructions; step-by-step guidelines, and assessment standards that allow the learner to perform a task and evaluate his/her own performance on its completion. These resources exactly fulfill the personalized learning demand of the learner, enabling them to have focused practice according to their learning process and particular deficiencies which would make self-study of a language more efficient and effective as well as facilitate long-term SLA.

5. Implementation strategies for enhancing the efficiency of second language acquisition through ESP textbook design

5.1. Refining the layered structuring of instructional content through needs assessment

Precise demand analysis is the prerequisite and the crux for the scientific design of ESP textbooks, by carrying out double-precision analysis according to the linguistic demand of occupation situations and students' second language learning demands, and in tandem with restructuring the content hierarchy of the textbook itself, represents the most basic route toward more effective L2 learning. The process of determining student requirements must employ various stringent scientific methods (e.g., surveys, qualitative interview with workers in work settings, field observation and analysis of occupation-specific skills to systematically identify the language knowledge requirements as well as professional competence needs for each learner's occupation and level: thus, providing correct, precise, and subtle criterion of frameworks to build up the textbook's level-up structure.

Based on the above double demand analysis of the teaching materials, we divide our hierarchical textbook into three levels from simple to complex as follows: basic, advanced and applied. The first level is concerned with the knowledge of common vocational language and basic communication; the high level focuses on professional vocational language knowledge and job-related skills; while the application level stresses on holistic vocational pragmatic ability as well as practice under realistic environments. The two levels are independent, each having its own focus but also have sequential relations. Students may choose to personalized instruction according to his or her L2 acquisition background as well as future career plan without wasting time and efforts on unimportant topics; which is more in line with the personalized acquisition demand of each learner's own acquisition requirement. Thus, improving global L2 learning performance on a pedagogical scale ^[4].

5.2. Integrating diverse teaching methods to create a practical platform for textbook learning

ESP textbook development should closely incorporate various traditional pedagogical approaches including task-based pedagogy, situational approach, and pedagogical communication. Combining SLLA's I-O model and ESP as a professional discipline, textbooks should be transformed into functional vehicles that conform to SLA pattern. In this way, textbooks are no longer just a vehicle used to convey linguistic information but also become the main tool or important means in practical language learning process. It is through such an approach that ESP classroom teaching could be transferred from traditional "teacher-centered knowledge transmission" model towards modern "student-centered experience-based acquisition" mode, considerably enhancing student participation, involvement and realization of the educational experience.

The structure of the ESP courseware incorporating different pedagogical approaches needs to be based on real-world work activities, including contextual learning activities related to work contexts and communication skills activities for the use of language, and work practices focusing on the overall applications. Through accomplishing certain works, engaging in exercises, and by involving them to do real projects they also put their hands on the language input and output, experiencing a process of immersion and experience-based second language learning. This setup strongly engages learner's autonomy and intrinsic motivation, turning learners into active consumers, explorers and discoverers of language content; which helps in more efficient acquisition of language concepts and professional language skills: thus, placing the teaching material at the core of foreign language learning activity.

5.3. Establish an integrated online-offline support system for textbook-based learning acquisition

A monolithic, paper-based textbook can no longer satisfy the diversified and effective requirements for SLA nowadays. The design of ESP textbooks should build up an online-offline learning assistance platform to smoothly integrate the essential contents within print version and digital learning tools together so as to offer learners a holistic, multi-dimensional, and context-driven support, breaking free from the time and location-bound nature of conventional learning,

as well as mixing together bits of autonomous learning with formal in-class sessions, thus adapting to the learner's learning pace and style of absorption.

The offline printed textbooks emphasize the explanation of core language knowledge and the specific training of basic skills, ensuring systematic, logical and fundamental knowledge learning in order to lay down the groundwork for L2 acquisition. Online digital resources provide broad coverage of contents, such as micro-lecture videos, simulated audio materials, interactive exercise banks, professional corpora and real-time online Q&A platforms, exactly the learners' personalization requirements of precise filling gaps, repetitive consolidation and expansion of occupational knowledge boundaries. Online and off-line resources supplement, interact, and complement each other: students could watch the video before class, after class, and supplementary education, as well as using the offline books to conduct formal lessons in classrooms and more hands-on teaching sessions, thus creating a closed loop acquisition system which optimizes the effectiveness and quality of second language acquisition.

6. Conclusion

The first is ESP textbook design, which lays down a solid foundation for more efficient L2 learning. The rationale behind its design should be in line with SLA theory and fit the requirements of ESP teaching profession, that is, the best possible fit of aims, syllabus, learning activities, and real-life teaching and learning conditions. In this article we shall discuss how to achieve and realize ESP text book development in terms of internal consistency, design elements, content, and approach. These include the following guidelines for design—flexibility, gradualism, and synthesis, further suggests practical tools such as developing materials based on scenarios, hierarchical structure, diverse practice tasks, and online-offline synergy. The study will offer both an integrated theory and practical suggestions to improve ESP textbooks while bridging the gap existing in textbook writing from learners' acquisition perspective. It will promote closer connection between ESP textbook and SLA process; it improves the teaching effect and level of ESP courses to promote the high-quality development of specialized English education.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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