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GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES

Trabajo de Fin de Grado

Syllabus Design Suited to the Needs of an ESP Group of Learners

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Salamanca, 2014



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This thesis is submitted for the degree of English Studies

Date 09.09.2014

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Vº Bº

Signature

Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to propose a complete and exhaustive person-orientation syllabus for a range of lessons suited to the needs of a particular group of ESP learners. As a result, a questionnaire and a test have been designed to find out students' opinions about learning English in a foreign language classroom and their attitudes towards speaking English, as well as to gather information on the learners' general background. Furthermore, it examines how an adequate approach can be designed and the different strategies implemented, both communicative and motivational, in order to enhance students' attitudes towards the practice of oral communication in English.

Key Words: Applied linguistics, ESP, Curriculum Design, Syllabus, Needs Analysis, Methodology, Objectives, Negotiation, Materials and Techniques.

Resumen

El propósito principal de este trabajo consiste en representar un exhaustivo plan de estudios para una serie de lecciones adaptadas a las necesidades de un grupo específico de estudiantes (IFE). Como resultado, un cuestionario y un test han sido diseñados para conocer las opiniones de los estudiantes acerca del aprendizaje del inglés en una clase de lengua extranjera y sus actitudes hacia el habla inglesa, así como para recoger información sobre los conocimientos generales de los alumnos. Además, en este trabajo planteo el diseño de lo que podría ser un enfoque correcto del curso a través de diferentes estrategias de motivación y comunicación, con el fin de mejorar las actitudes de los estudiantes hacia la comunicación oral de la lengua inglesa.

Palabras Clave: Lingüística aplicada, IFE, diseño curricular, plan de estudios, análisis de las necesidades, metodología, objetivos, negociación, materiales y técnicas.

Abbreviations

ESL English as a Second Language – ISL Inglés como Segunda Lengua

ESP English for Specific Purposes – IFE Inglés para Fines Específicos

EAP English for Academic Purposes – Inglés para Fines Académicos

EMP English for Medical Purposes – Inglés para Fines Médicos

EGP English for General Purposes – Inglés para Fines Generales

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0. Introduction

It is widely accepted that use of the English language is expanding continuously across the world. As a result, more and more people are interested in learning and improving this global language, which has become one of the most useful tools for success in our lives. In this contribution I shall develop a syllabus design process for ESP learners seeking to be able to communicate fluently in English in order to improve their abilities as medical teachers. Here, in my study of English for Medical Purposes (henceforth EMP), I shall address a group of learners composed of ten Spanish medical teachers between thirty and fifty-five years old and I have designed a syllabus according to their needs. Thus, a syllabus for a potential ESP course has been developed through a curriculum design process.

Firstly, in order to move from the general to the specific, I introduce a theoretical approach to applied linguistics in order to explain the meaning of the term applied linguistics as well as its different levels. Subsequently, I study the divisions and subdivisions of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as well as its main features and key aspects, such as Curriculum Syllabus design, needs analysis, selection and production of materials, methodology and evaluation. Accordingly, I start by analyzing the meaning of the term syllabus as well as the different parts of the curriculum design process based on principles, goals, environment and evaluation. Once I have explained the complex process of Curriculum Design, my aim is to study syllabus typology, which can be divided into three different types: Grammatical or structural syllabuses, Functional-notional syllabus and Process/task-based syllabus. Nonetheless, although the particular syllabus explored here covers the features of each, it mainly focuses on a Task-Based Syllabus, which involves the teacher and the learners working together and making common decisions and negotiations regarding some of the parts of the curriculum design process.

In the second part of this contribution, after analyzing the theory in depth, I shall focus on the practical part of my work. In this sense, a small-scale study involving a thorough needs analysis has been carried out, in which I have considered the present proficiency, future needs and wishes of the learners. The needs analysis is divided into pre-analysis and post-analysis. The pre-analysis was carried out during the second term of the 2013-14 academic year, while the post-analysis will be addressed at the end of the course. In the pre-analysis, students performed an upper-intermediate level test and a completed questionnaire about the general and particular aspects of the language in order to help me to gather information about their general background. Thus, I have collected data from the questionnaire and test results and represent them by means of different diagrams. After carefully studying the results, I have been able to elaborate the syllabus design of an EMP course.

To finish with the practical approach of my study, I shall explore the methodology, materials, techniques and linguistic aspects that could be used during the course. Within this ESP course, each activity is based on the students' specific area and it is directly related to the needs of the students. The method to be employed by the teacher is a communicative approach and the interaction between the teacher and learners plays an important role in the methodology of the course. Moreover, the selection of materials and techniques must be elaborated very carefully, which underscores the far-reaching importance of the teacher as a figure. The materials selected are mainly texts or documents used in specific academic or professional contexts and they are written in the language it is actually used. In addition, although there are several techniques that may be of great use in an ESP course, I selected the ones I considered to be most relevant to my study as projects and assignments, case studies, discussions and role plays. Regarding the linguistic aspects, I shall focus especially on the use of vocabulary and its three different types: technical, semi-technical and general; as well as on the improvement of pronunciation.

At the end of this project I draw some conclusions and address any results that might arise during and after completing the course, such as problems of negotiation or a possible weakening of the teacher's figure. Nonetheless, since the course has been designed exclusively according to the needs of this particular group of learners, there should be no impediments to putting it into practice.

1. Theoretical Framework in Applied Linguistics

1.1 A general approach to applied linguistics

As an introduction to this section, I would like to raise the following question: what do the terms Applied Linguistics and second language acquisition mean? The answer to this question is a key ingredient in order to understand the present contribution. According to different authors (Ingram 5; Stevens 14; Palmer 17), the term Applied Linguistics encompasses several definitions: Applied Linguistics is the study of linguistic issues whose contents may be used to improve the theoretical and practical work in disciplines that include the use of language. It is therefore a multidisciplinary approach that develops a methodology to solve specific language-related problems.

Thus, although the term Applied Linguistics refers to a broad discipline that covers a wide range of aspects, below I shall mainly focus on the learning and teaching of foreign languages. Helping others to learn foreign languages “depends on who we are or, rather, where we are in the power structure on which educational planning rests” (Bell 24) and there are at least four levels of responsibility and influence, each with relatively well-defined problems to face and solutions to propose:

1. Political Level
2. Linguistic Level
3. Psychological Level

4. Pedagogical Level

Despite this, here I am only interested in the linguistic level, represented by three agencies called Pure Linguistic, Applied Linguistic and Sociolinguistic. However, again in order to be more specific I shall focus on the agency of Applied Linguistic and its issues and outputs. (See appendix A)

One of the three secondary levels into which the linguistic level can be subdivided refers to the activities of Applied Linguists who attempt to seal the gap between the theoretical preoccupations of descriptive linguistics and the practical needs of the classroom, where a pedagogical grammar¹ may be used by the instructor as a source of data about the language. Thus, with these theoretical aspects of an approach to Applied Linguistics in mind (See appendix B), I have developed an ESP course for adults through a syllabus design process.

1.2 Divisions and subdivisions of ESP

ESP stands for English for Specific Purposes and it aims at satisfying the specific needs of learners. An ESP course is therefore a technique for teaching English to students who need it for a particular purpose and, in the present case, the medical instructors interviewed need this kind of course for their classes.

ESP has now become an academic discipline recognized by international agencies such as the UNESCO or the British Council and it constitutes the core of many courses offered to professionals, university students and teachers. Consequently, the term ESP is today a well-established branch within English Studies. The scope of ESP covers a wide range of contexts

¹ **Pedagogical grammar:** This seeks to present an existing model in a form which provides the teacher or syllabus designer with access to the theoretical insights of the descriptive grammar in order to form the basis of language teaching syllabuses and materials. (Bell 30)

and as a result it has been classified in different ways. One of the most general ones is the division of ESP into two groups:

- EOP (English for Occupational Purposes): courses for professional purposes related to the use of language at work.
- EAP (English for Academic Purposes): courses for educational or academic purposes related to the study of a particular discipline.

Notwithstanding, I feel that we still need to be more specific and must try to analyze other classifications of English for Specific Purposes, where we find abbreviations such as EVP (English for Vocational Purposes) or VESL (Vocational English as a Second Language). Although the above classification is considered to be the main division, there is another one that depends on the nature of the students' specialization:

- EST (English for Science and Technology)
- EBE (English for Business and Economics)
- ESS (English for the Social Sciences)

These distinctions may be also subdivided into smaller branches devoted to the study of English for medical studies, English for psychology studies or English for experts, secretaries and teachers. For instance, within English for Academic Purposes the main study area is the EST, followed by EMP (English for Medical Purposes) and ELP (English for Legal Purposes). Thus, the syllabus I propose here is based on an EMP course in that it offers my participants ample and highly specialized knowledge of the terminology used in healthcare and it also strengthens participants' communication competencies.

In order to provide a better understanding of the several divisions and subdivisions of ESP that have been mentioned previously, I have drawn up the following diagrams:

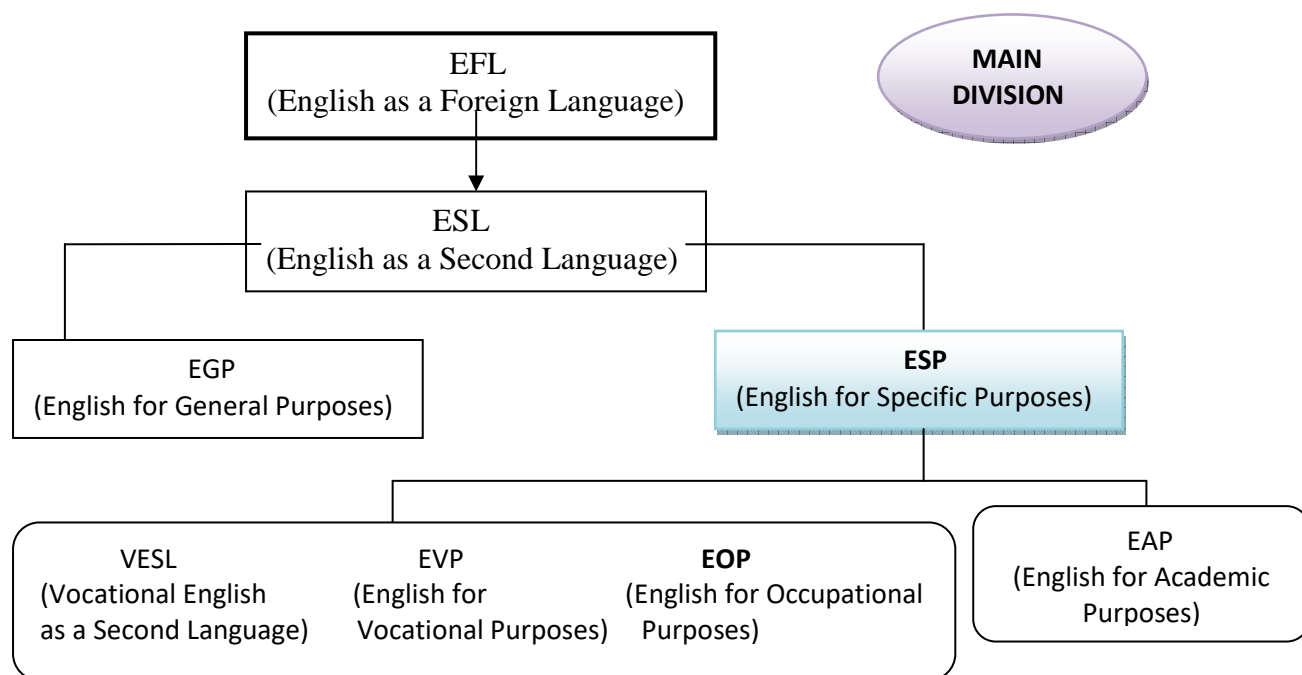


Figure 1 (Source: Author)

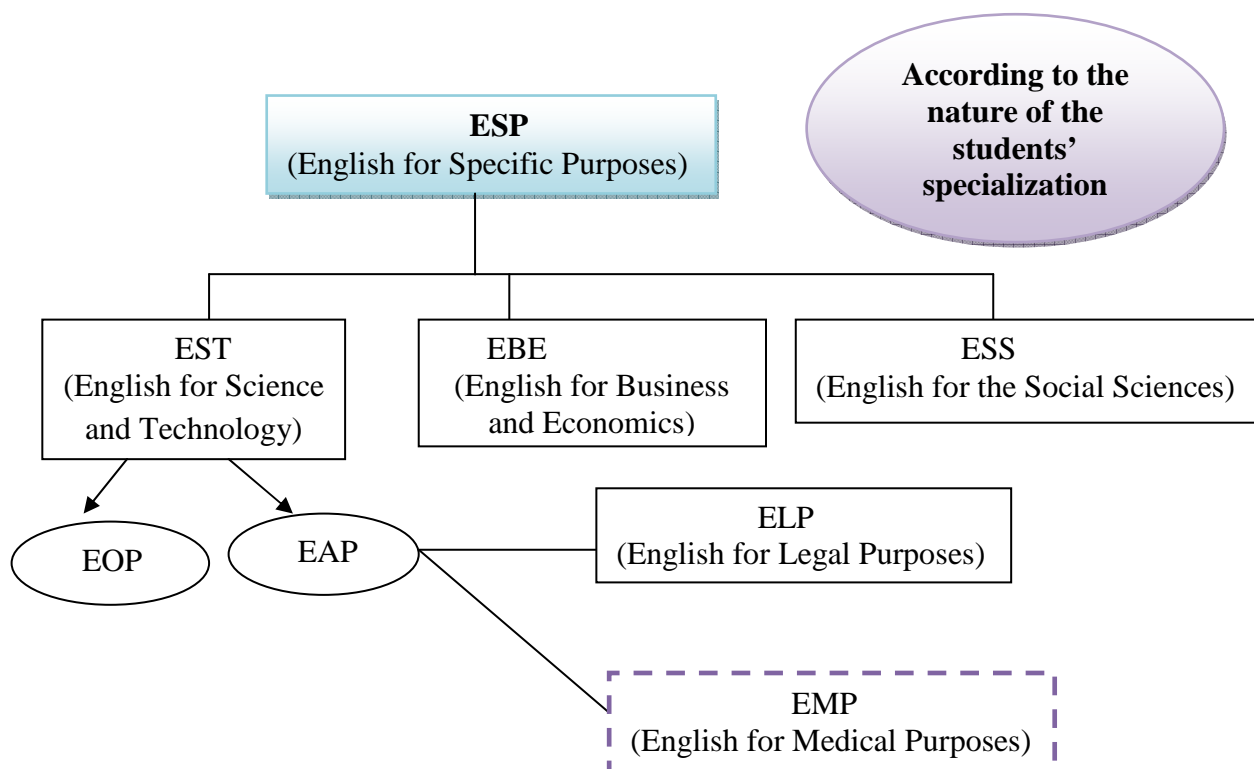


Figure 2 (Source: Author)

As has been explained, there is a huge variety of ESP courses for different purposes and, despite having different classifications, it is the specific situation of the students involved that will determine the content and methodology of each course.

1.3 Features of ESP teaching

One of the main characteristics of ESP is text analysis at the oral and written levels and also the way in which these texts are used within a discipline or profession in particular. All these key aspects such as the methodology, linguistic aspects, materials and techniques of an ESP course will be studied in greater depth in section 3: Syllabus design for an EMP course.

The teaching of an ESP course requires prior preparation by means of needs analysis in order to estimate the knowledge and skills the students must acquire, the diverse texts and tasks they must master, the situations in which they will participate, and the different roles they will assume after completing the course. Accordingly, I shall discuss the different features that define my ESP course and differentiate it from General English courses. The following aspects are the pivotal factors I have borne in mind when developing my activity and they are the key steps in ESP teaching:

1. Curriculum Design
2. Needs Analysis
3. Selection and Production of Materials
4. Methodology
5. Evaluation

1.4 The curriculum design process

In what follows I shall examine previous steps in ESP teaching and will start with the Curriculum Design Process since this represents the basis of the study.

First, it would be important to specify where the syllabus comes from. In this sense Janice Yalden provides an accurate and precise definition of this term: “[...] the syllabus is now seen as an instrument by which the teacher, with the help of the syllabus designer, can achieve a degree of ‘fit’ between the needs and aims of the learner (as a social being and as individual), and the activities which will take place in the classroom.” (14) In other words, a syllabus is a particular scheme within the Curriculum Design Process that is developed for a particular content and that represents a plan of what is to be achieved through our teaching and our students’ learning. According to Widdowson, it is possible to identify two different approaches to this term:

1. Position-oriented syllabus. This is based on the future social role and its focus is on the satisfaction of the needs of human resources. In this case, educational success is directly related to the socio-economic well-being of the state.
2. Person-orientation syllabus. This is based on individual development, which allows for a greater degree of divergence and is less focused on productivity. (23)

Furthermore, a syllabus is a procedure within the Curriculum Design Process in which there is a series of demands (principles, needs and environment) to be met so that students’ learning becomes efficient and effective. Within these elements, many aspects are developed, such as assessing and improving students’ knowledge, the different skills of teachers and the different resources and principles of teaching and learning. In addition, learners can also present and recognize their shortcomings and try to overcome them. However, one of the most important aspects of a Curriculum Design Process is the goals and objectives of learners and teachers and this is the process involved in my syllabus.

In the figure below, which is about the Curriculum Design Process, John Macalister represents the different stages of the process as well as the general goals at the center of everything.

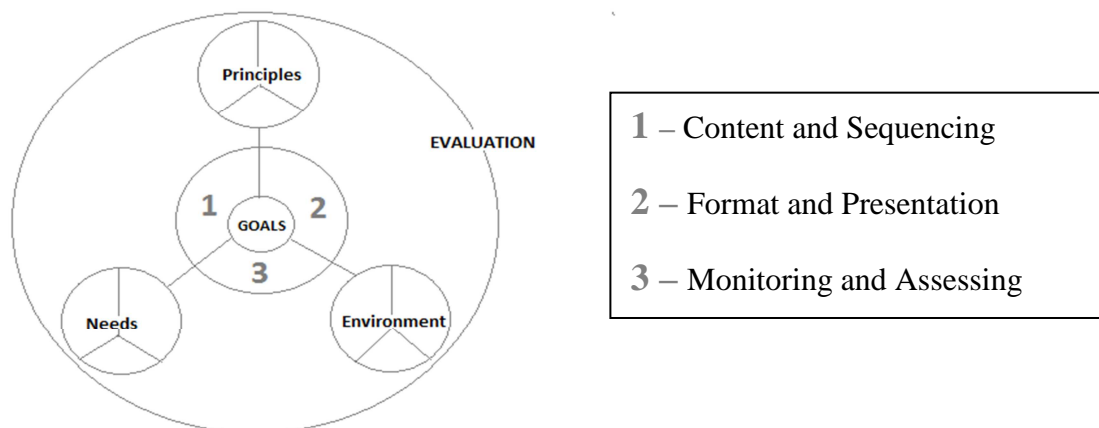


Figure 3 A model of the parts of the curriculum design process (*Language Curriculum Design 3*)

As can be seen in the figure, surrounding the circle of goals there are another three sections that also belong to the syllabus process and these also play an essential role:

1. Content and Sequencing: “Represents the items to learn in a course and the order in which they occur” (Macalister, *Language Curriculum Design 2*). This means that there is something useful for learners and, as a result, they are able to develop their own control of the learning process. Accordingly, they must be aware of their learning achievements and such learning will include all the skills required for them to master the intricacies of a language.
2. Format and Presentation: “This is the part of the course that the learners are more aware of. It is important that it’s guided by the best available principles of teaching and learning” (*Language Curriculum Design 2*). This part consists of the different techniques and materials used to help the students in their learning.
3. Monitoring and Assessing: “The need to give attention to observing learning, testing the results of learning, and providing feedback to the learners about their progress” (*Language Curriculum Design 2*).

To complete the different parts of the Curriculum Design Process, the figure depicts a circle called evaluation, which encompasses all the different individual elements and represents an

extremely important step inasmuch as we, as teachers, should focus on each part of the course and then ensure that everything is as it should be or, conversely, determine whether improvements are required.

1.5 Syllabus typology

After studying the different parts of the Curriculum Design Process and the particular meaning of the term syllabus, it is important to consider that there are several types of syllabus such as Grammatical or Structural syllabuses, Functional-notional syllabus or Process/Task-based syllabus. Each of them has a specific purpose and uses different methods to teach a language. Nevertheless, although the course plan addressed below has been designed as a process/task-based syllabus, it incorporates some features of the other two. A syllabus of any kind usually provides some control over the learning process by the institution or teacher, although in some instances control can and should also be exercised by the learner. This is why the course proposed here was focused on a process/task-based syllabus, where an adult group of learners may be more motivated than in other kinds of syllabus.

1.5.1 A task-based syllabus and the increase in motivation

According to Breen, “The word *Process* in the term *process syllabus* indicates that the important feature of this type of syllabus is that it focuses on HOW the syllabus is made rather than WHAT should be in it” (85) For this reason, I consider that this kind of program is the most appropriate for a group of medical instructors wanting to learn English as a second language. A task-based syllabus involves the teacher and the learners working together so that they can make common decisions regarding some parts of the curriculum

design process. In other words, this type of syllabus consists of a negotiation between teacher and learners and is usually known as a negotiated syllabus.

This negotiation fosters a positive attitude in students regarding their learning and it also increases their motivation. The world is changing at a dizzying rate and learners are in a quite different situation from former times because they can now be much more active in class and, as a result, participation and communication increase. Therefore, the increase in learners' motivation is extremely important since it is the principal impetus for starting to learn a language as well as the driving force behind a positive attitude towards the development of oral communicative competence. Thus, motivation to learn a language becomes one of the most crucial factors that will influence learners' success in the ESL classroom and I consider that a negotiated syllabus would be essential to generate this environment in the classroom. In addition, in this course learners' needs have a huge priority in that they can be changed and improved, depending on the circumstances in which the course is offered, and participants might therefore feel more comfortable and motivated about their own learning process.

With a negotiated syllabus, learners play a central role in the learning process because they themselves will be able to decide how they want to learn English. For instance, because they are medical teachers, they are well informed about the aspects to be learned by their students and, also, which skills are the most important for achieving this. Of course, we must not forget the importance of the teacher's role since he or she must agree with the students and help them deal with any problem. To gain a general idea about what a process syllabus is, the following figure may be useful:

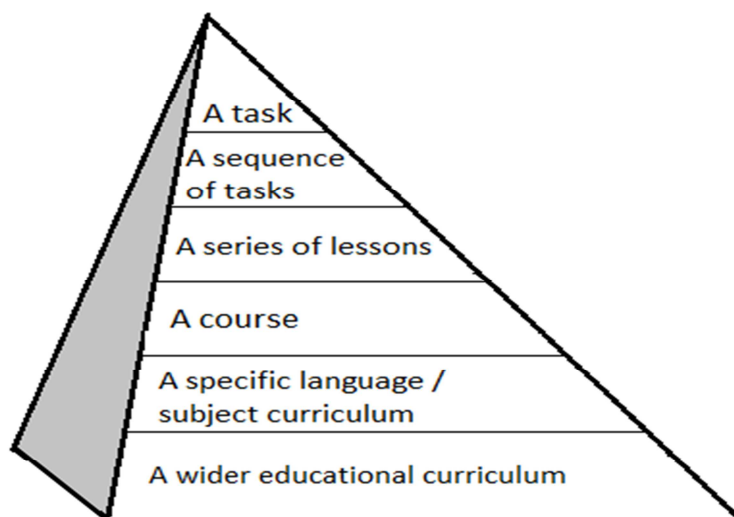


Figure 4 A Process Syllabus (*Language Curriculum Design* 150)

As noted by Breen and Littlejohn, a negotiated syllabus involves the following steps:

1. Negotiating the goals, content, format and assessment of the course
2. Implementing these negotiated decisions
3. Evaluating the effect of the implementation in terms of outcomes and the way the implementation was performed. This should therefore lead to a return to the first step (30-31)

2. Practical Framework

2.1 My course design

This study seeks to propose a complete and exhaustive person-orientation syllabus for a range of lessons suited to the needs of a group of ESP learners. A small-scale study has been performed involving a particular group of Spanish medical instructors who are not unfamiliar with English but who first entered into contact with the language many years ago.

As explained before, and in agreement with Hutchinson and Waters, “A syllabus consists of integrated series of teaching-learning experiences, whose ultimate aim is to lead the learners to a particular state of knowledge” (65). Regarding the specific syllabus proposed

here, it focuses on the needs and goals of these medical instructors who urgently need to improve their command of English for their professional teaching duties.

Although this group of participants must expand their knowledge of grammar, the most important goal is for them to be able to expand their vocabulary. Currently, English scientific vocabulary can be found in nearly all medical books (*stent, bypass, etc.*) and hence teachers must know the meaning and usage of that terminology, which may prove to be extremely complex for their students. My syllabus has been elaborated for a five-month period of lessons and the course consists of four hours per week on Saturday mornings. At the end of this elective course, students will obtain a diploma indicating the number of hours of attendance on the course together with a grade indicating their effort and interest.

2.2 Participants

The syllabus was designed for a group composed of ten students whose mother tongue is the same. The learners are Spanish medical instructors between thirty and fifty-five years old who are currently teaching two different subjects -Histology and Biology- at the School of Medicine of the University of Salamanca. All of them have some general goals aimed at enhancing the quality of their lessons such as improving their oral output and the acquisition of technical vocabulary through listening. As a result, this EMP course can be very effectively based on a list of competencies that these participants suggest they want to be able to develop in English. Thus, Learner Autonomy is a key feature in this syllabus design since it allows learners to take control over their learning processes. In other words, these medical instructors play an integral role in choosing their learning content since they are professionals whose only needs are improvement and learning. Moreover, they are different from any group of university students inasmuch as they are not interested in obtaining a grade, but in

improving their own learning and they are usually much more motivated than other types of learners.

Furthermore, the effect of instruction on the rate of acquisition might prove to be more positive if these students receive the influence of natural exposure or can become immersed in English abroad. According to Jasone Cenoz, natural exposure provides not only a positive effect but also has a specific effect on fluency and communicative strategies and students who have a low level of proficiency benefit more (155). Unfortunately, the particular group included in the present study will not be able to travel abroad because of their teaching duties but they will have some lessons with a native teacher in order to compensate for this.

2.3 Needs Analysis

In needs analysis, the course designer considers the present proficiency, future needs and wishes of the learners and, as noted by Paul Nation and John Macalister, there are three types of needs: lacks, wants and necessities. The result of needs analysis is a realistic list of language elements, ideas or skill items that will be covered in the course (Macalister, *Case Studies* 3), and, in the course addressed here, the needs analysis is divided into a pre-analysis stage and post-analysis stage.

- Pre-analysis → during the second term of the 2013-14 academic year, participants performed an upper-intermediate level test and completed a questionnaire about general and particular aspects of the English language. As a result, it was possible to gather information about the learners' general background and elaborate the needs analysis.

Regarding the results of my study, the box below shows the information acquired in the pre-analysis stage. On studying the results of the questionnaire (See appendix C), I realized that all ten medical instructors had the same goals and had common interests, although here I

offer the results of the questionnaire completed by only one of the participants in order to provide a general idea of the results:

- **Participant:** Forty-three-year-old Spanish-speaking female. Present command of English pre-intermediate.
- **Purposive Domain:** Occupational and academic—to teach the subject of Histology in the Medical degree using books and materials in English; but also to be able to elaborate written assignments as well as to be able to understand and communicate in English when attending different conferences or debates.
- **Setting:** Classrooms in the School of Medicine (University of Salamanca), conferences or debates.
- **Interaction:** Mainly with university students but also with other teachers.
- **Instrumentality:** Spoken and written, productive and receptive language. Face-to-face encounters.
- **Dialect:** Understand and produce Standard English
- **Communicative Events:** teachers being able to communicate with students and to explain English technical language found in medical books to them.

Once the group of medical inductors had answered the questionnaire, they completed a twenty-question test about grammar and vocabulary. General data about the test results can be seen in the following diagrams:

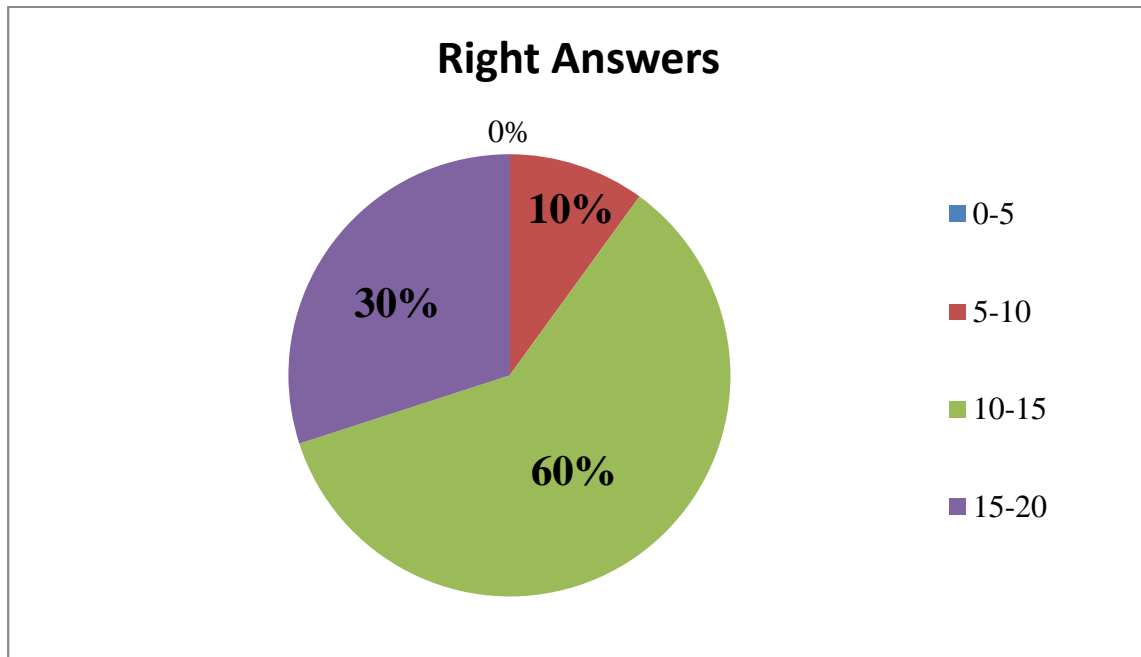


Figure 5

The above diagram shows that six out of ten people answered between ten and fifteen questions correctly and, as a result, the average mark lies at intermediate level. By contrast, there were three people who answered from fifteen to twenty questions correctly and only one person answered fewer than ten questions correctly. The following diagrams offer more specific information about the test results:

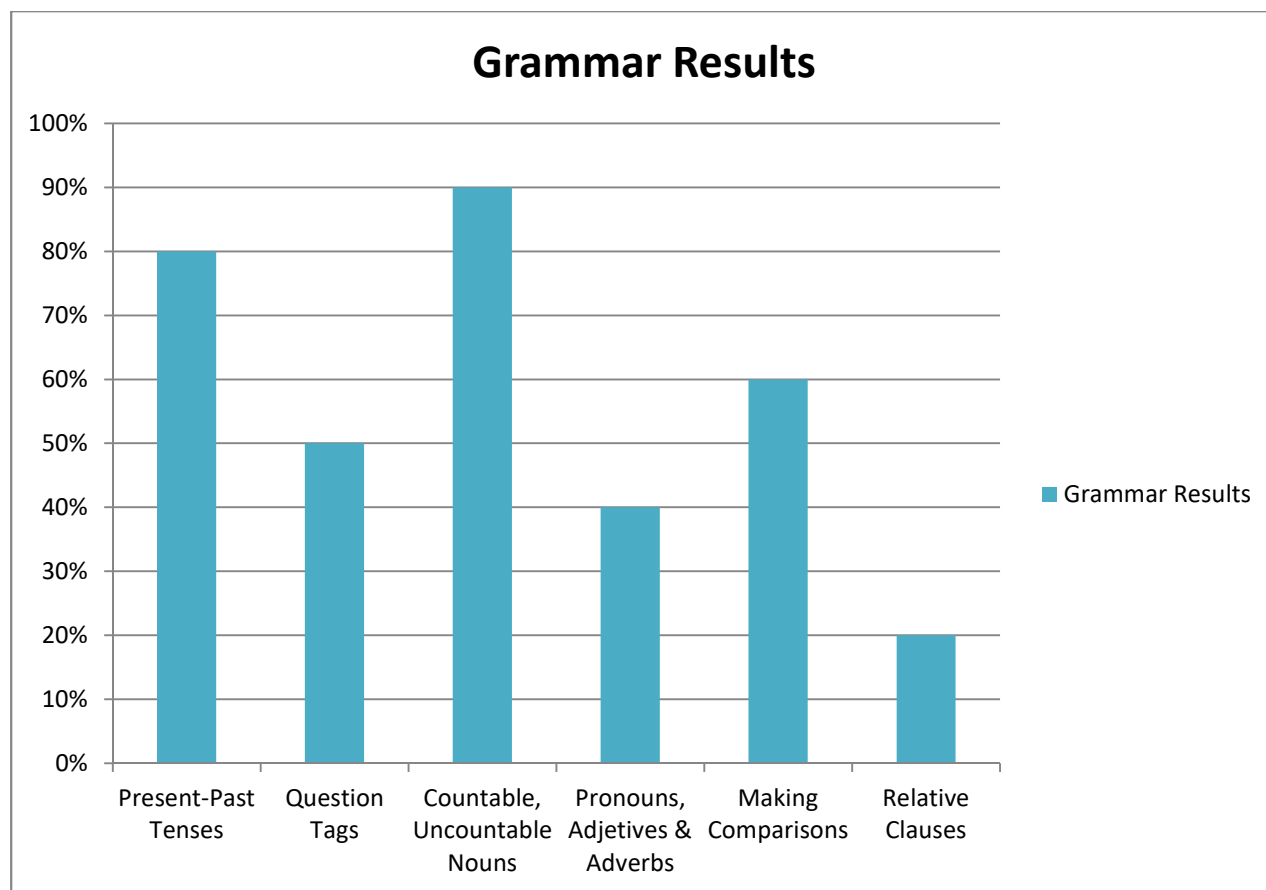


Figure 6

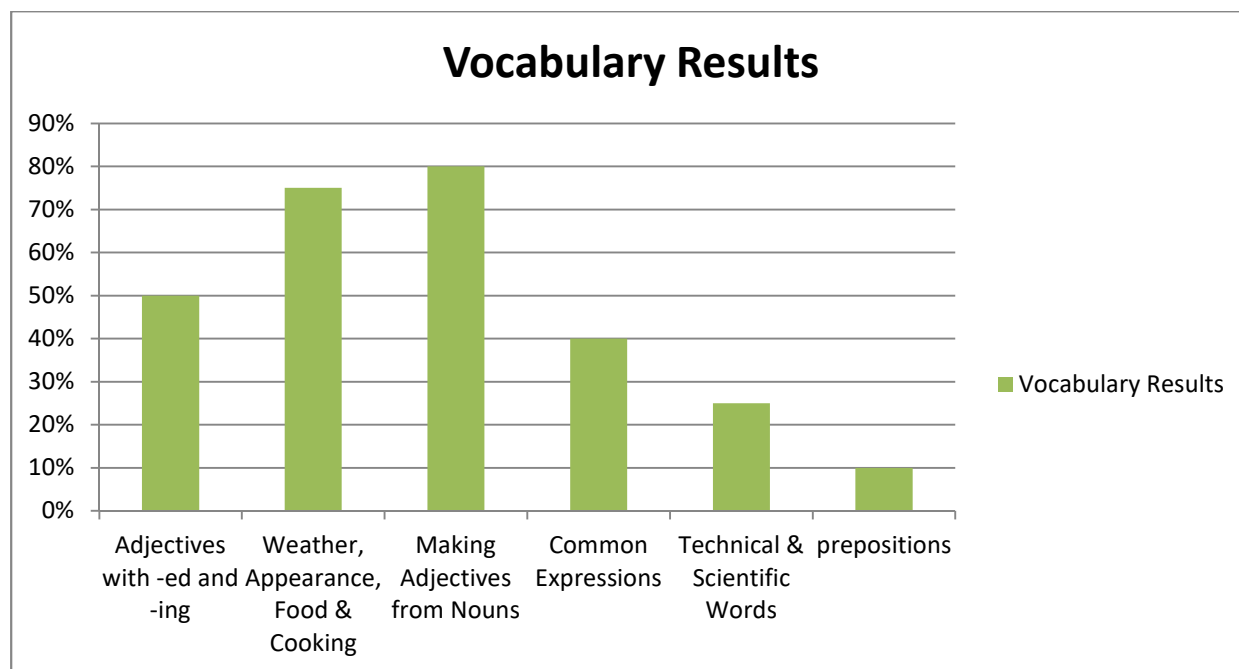


Figure 7

Figure 6 shows data pertaining to the results of the grammar exercises. Although they are not unduly poor results, the students must improve certain aspects such as the correct use of pronouns, adjectives and adverbs as well as the use of relative clauses.

As can be observed in Figure 7, the results regarding vocabulary are not bad either but the fewest correct answers can be found in the exercises on technical and scientific words and the exercises on prepositions. Thus, the teacher should start the course with a thorough review of the students' prior knowledge to encourage them to remember the four skills as well as to establish a comparatively equal level between all of them. After this, they will focus in particular on learning scientific vocabulary and improving pronunciation.

- Post-analysis → At the end of the course, there will be a supervised group discussion for the participants to exchange views and opinions, and finally learners will perform a test and the teacher will interview them individually to be able to make a deeper analysis of the course and determine the efficiency and productivity of the syllabus as regards the learners.

After careful scrutiny of the participants' answers, I now describe four different stages of the syllabus according to the questionnaire and test results. The four stages are purposes or goals, contents, ways of working and evaluation, and all of them can be negotiated.

1. Purposes. The homogenous group of learners, comprising ten medical instructors, had some explicit major goals. These instructors use specific medical texts every day and such texts contain many English words, expressions and explanations, such as *vessels and arteries*, *cells* or *surgical treatments*, and they increasingly make use of texts written exclusively in English (English being the global language) and are therefore interested in extending their vocabulary, focusing especially on scientific issues. Nonetheless, these are not their only goals. For instance, before learning such specific vocabulary, they have to know the basics of

English grammar and they also have to be able to understand and interpret different texts properly.

2. Contents. The focus of the lessons is to improve English as much as possible in terms of medical language. It is clear that reading and speaking will be the skills most developed because the participants usually have to pronounce some words in English, or even read parts of texts to the whole class on an almost daily basis and their pronunciation must therefore be as good as possible because they are probably facing a large number of students who may well have a very high level of English. Despite this, it is important to stress again that before learning complex aspects, the bases must be well-known.

3. Ways of Working. The work to be carried out is a very important aspect. At the end of the first month, learners will discuss the different ways of working with their teacher during the course. However, since they themselves are also instructors, it may be very difficult for them to tell the teacher what to do and, consequently, teachers should start the course by introducing their own points of view because they are supposed to be the expert and should not allow themselves to be influenced by learners' opinions. As noted by Hattie, "Teachers are better decision-makers and can identify what decisions are important and which are less important decisions" (6). After this, the students are able to negotiate.

4. Evaluation of the effects on the learner's language ability. In this section the learners must complete different exercises and make oral presentations to boost their self-confidence. They are not interested in obtaining a grade; they only need to be aware of their progress and personal improvement. The teacher will also interview them privately in order to gain a better understanding of the learners' progress and he or she will be able to realize whether any improvement should be made. Recall that this is an elective course which principally benefits the learners, who opt to participate in it because it is important for their jobs as medical instructors.

3. Syllabus Design for EMP Course

After carefully analyzing the results of the needs analysis, I have elaborated the following table which represents the format of the lessons and units of the course based on the participants' needs. Table 1 illustrates how the course will be delivered, although the syllabus may be subject to change, depending on the negotiations between teacher and learners:

[Pre-Analysis: test and questionnaire carried out months before the start of the course]	
1st Month (Without Negotiation - 16 hours)	
Hours	Activities
1-4	: Review of prior knowledge (grammar, vocabulary and the four skills)
4-10	: Basic grammar exercises
10-14	: Reading of several texts
14-16	: Negotiation
2nd Month	3rd Month
Week 1&2 : Scientific vocabulary (50 words)	Week 1&2 : Improving pronunciation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visiting places ○ Meeting an important visitor
Week 3&4 : Applying these words to texts	Week 3&4 : Oral presentations
4th Month: Re-Negotiation	5th Month
Week 1&2 : Increasing vocabulary (200 words)	Week 1&2 : Doubts and questions
Week 3&4 : Working from medical books	Week 3&4 : Debate & Tests/Interviews

Table 1

This table represents a potential course whose main focus lies in the improvement of the acquisition of technical vocabulary through listening and improving students' pronunciation. Nevertheless, since the course has not yet been implemented, some aspects can be modified when teacher and learners negotiate in the future.

3.1 Objectives

- The first month of class is more extensive in its details than the others in that the teacher will follow a set of different activities. On the first day learners will review their prior knowledge in order to recall and become re-familiarized with certain features of English they learned some years previously. Over the next two days the teacher will give the students a wide range of grammar exercises for them to understand the structures of future texts and the learners will also read several texts aloud to start practicing their pronunciation. Finally, the last weekend of the month, students will finish their pronunciation practice and will also negotiate the most important aspects to be addressed in the remaining months with their teacher. According to Macalister, in a negotiation “The teacher and the class members list the activities and parts of the course on the board, and then working in small groups discuss what should be removed from the list, and what should be added to it. The groups report back and the list on the board is revised.” (*Language Curriculum Design* 151) As a result, my course's negotiation between teacher and learners will follow all these steps and both parties will rank the items in the list and fit them into the class schedule. This schedule then becomes the timetable for the next eight weeks although it can be renegotiated if problems or difficulties arise.
- In the first two weeks of the second month, students will start learning some scientific vocabulary. At this point they should learn the approximately fifty most common words that

appear in medical books, after which they will apply them to different texts (weeks three and four).

- In the third month, students will improve their pronunciation under strict supervision by a native English-speaking teacher. They will also visit different places of interest and then comment on them, and they will also make arrangements for meeting an important visitor in order to improve their speaking fluency and be adequately prepared for future debates. Over the remaining weekends of the month, they will perform oral presentations in pairs to get used to and overcome any issues of stage fright.

- The fourth month is essential because it is the time when renegotiation is carried out and is when teacher and learners can discuss and share different opinions again. The main purpose of this period is to overcome any previous difficulties or problems and allow any necessary changes to be made. During weeks one and two, students will learn more vocabulary (up to 200 words) while during the other two weeks they will bring their own texts for a deeper analysis of any problematic parts.

- Weeks one and two of the last month will be devoted to clarifying doubts and answering questions about the issues engaged in. Finally, during the last two weeks of the course learners will perform a test and the teacher will interview them individually.

3.2 Methodology

All teachers have their own particular teaching methods and may use different kind of materials. Nonetheless, as pointed out by Goodwyn, there are some essential qualities that a good teacher must have: “Expert teachers can identify essential representations of their subject, they can guide learning through classroom interactions and they also are able to monitor learning and provide feedback. Moreover, they can attend to affective attributes and can influence student outcomes too.” (28)

Regarding methodology, in this EMP course each activity is based on the student's specific area and has a real purpose related to the needs of the students. All these needs are determined by the real situation in which the ten participants will use the English language. In this particular case, they will be real situations related to the teaching context: in the classrooms, meetings between teachers, tutorials with students... Moreover, the interaction between teacher and students is also crucial, especially when the teacher becomes a language adviser and the students must contribute their experience and knowledge about the subject. In English language teaching people now usually prefer a communicative approach to the methodology and this is why the relationship between teachers and learners represents an essential aspect of my syllabus. Thus, the difference between the ESP methodology and EGP methodology can be found in the communicative purposes, needs and goals, and objectives.

3.3 Materials

“Teachers might be shown how existing materials can be successfully adapted and exploited” (Little 9). Materials are anything that can be used to help language learners to learn. Teachers of ESP must have a good supply of different materials since they must know how to select the most suitable and appropriate ones. According to Hattie, teachers “have a multidimensional complex perception of classroom situations” (6) and this perception helps teachers to decide which the most appropriate materials are.

Materials can be found in the form of textbooks, workbooks, cassettes, CD-ROMs, videos, photocopied handouts, newspapers, paragraphs written on a whiteboard; in other words, anything that presents elements of or informs about the language being learned. As noted by Bell, materials have recently been divided into two different types:

1. Content materials, which provide data and information: texts that illustrate the language in use, dictionaries, grammars, etc. and which give direct access to the rules.

2. Process materials, which provide the learner with ‘frameworks’ for activities in which the data and information provided by the content materials can be applied and practised. (44)

In an ESP course, the materials must be based on texts or documents used in specific academic or professional contexts. Consequently, in this case learners will not have a textbook because the teacher will provide them with different texts (articles, essays or newspapers) in order to show learners language in use. (See appendix D)

Moreover, the classroom becomes the only opportunity for students to be in contact with the language, and as a result the materials should be real in order to maximize the use of language. The teacher will also help them with different handouts or diagrams and he or she might use game formats. Since the students must improve their pronunciation, they will also listen to some CD-ROMs and watch different videos in which medical vocabulary is used. The teacher may suggest that the learners use the Internet at home for extra help. For instance, downloading and listening to a podcast on an iPod or visiting websites such as *Youtube* can be very useful activities. By using good, appropriate materials students will receive the encouragement and develop the motivation required for learning. In addition, teachers can choose between existing available materials, designing their own materials or modifying existing materials (a combination of the previous options). In my EMP course, the three types of materials will be used.

3.4 Techniques

According to Bell, “there are at least nine ‘participation techniques’ which can certainly be adapted for use with advanced adult learners:” (44) Lectures, exercises, in-tray exercises, projects and assignments, case studies, incident processes, discussions, role playing and

simulations. To be more concise, the following table represents only the most useful techniques that I consider that can be employed in my EMP.

1. Projects & Assignments	Learners can visit a place of interest or meet an important visitor in order to practise the skills involved in discussions, persuasion and explanations in face-to-face interactions.
2. Case Studies	Learners are given a problem and they must solve it. They realize that several answers might be right and they can present their analysis of the problem and solutions to it via orderly discussions.
3. Discussion	This is regarded as a vehicle for extending a learner's fluency rather than accuracy. Most discussions must be prepared beforehand if the learners are not very advanced.
4. Role Playing	Role playing allows students to be much more participatory and, in particular, with these activities learners can develop their speaking and listening skills. (See appendix E)

Table 2

By contrast, techniques such as lectures or exercises should not be considered because they do not offer the chance to engage in participatory interactions and, in the case of lectures, learners must be skilled at note-taking. In the present case, our medical instructors are around forty years old and they have probably lost that ability for quick note-taking.

3.5 Linguistic aspects

The basic aim in an ESP course lies in the acquisition of the four skills. Although grammar is not usually considered a fundamental objective, depending on the students' level the teacher should place more or less emphasis on it. Accordingly, I have included a grammar review in my syllabus because students may have ingrained certain grammatical

misconceptions or difficulties that might interfere with the productivity and efficiency of the other skills.

However, one of the most important linguistic aspects I have included in the curriculum design is the terminology. There are three different categories or groups of vocabulary within an ESP course:

1. Technical vocabulary: purely specific vocabulary. This consists of the lexical units of a technical nature.
2. Semi-technical vocabulary: this consists of common words with a specific meaning within each field or skill. It is usually abundant in medical texts.
3. General vocabulary: this is frequently used in a given speciality.

The vocabulary of each different group must be understood within a specific context instead of in isolation. Throughout the course students will learn vocabulary from all those groups, although they will focus especially on semi-technical vocabulary. Although vocabulary in ESP is a dynamic element that supports the language, an ESP course cannot be only based on vocabulary learning; the situation is much more complicated than that.

To conclude, communicative skills are also an essential linguistic aspect in ESP. Depending on the needs of the students, in the program of an ESP course the teacher should stress the four skills. If the teacher does not have enough time, he or she should deal with the most relevant skill or skills. This is why I have considered reading and speaking skills as the most significant. For example, oral presentations will help these medical teachers to improve their pronunciation as well as to get over stage fright. However, acquiring a skill is always more effective when the process involves interaction with other skills, and, consequently, despite focusing on reading and speaking, we should not forget the other two skills: listening and writing.

4. Conclusions

To sum up, the process syllabus described in this contribution has been designed for a group of medical instructors who urgently need to improve their skills in English. The syllabus attempts to represent what might be a suitable course for a specific group of learners. To compile a syllabus, many stages must be marshaled together, such as needs analysis, objectives, teaching methods and materials. Furthermore, a syllabus design also involves a decision-making process and provides a long-term plan for intended learning outcomes and teaching methodologies. Thus, it is not a simple program but a complex one inasmuch as it has many underlying processes and steps. It is important to mention that I do not include any of the assignments that all syllabuses must contain because we are addressing a future potential course that has not yet been carried out. Once the course has been put into practice, I shall be able to elaborate the assignments required.

Regarding the role of teachers, these should have a free hand in designing the syllabuses on which their teaching programs are based instead of being consumers of other people's syllabuses and this is what I have tried to defend in this work. I have tried to design my own personal syllabus for an exceptional and specific group of learners and I consider that the role of teachers in the classroom is decisive because they must adapt the syllabus content to their learners' needs and, as a result, they must do so each time a new syllabus is to be designed because with each different group of learners teachers find themselves in contact with new kinds of student. In this case, I have adapted the syllabus content to the learners' needs after analyzing their test and questionnaire results. At first, I believed that this group of learners had a fairly low level of English because most of them had not studied English since they were much younger. Nevertheless, it transpired that some of them had studied at the Official School of Languages or had practised English with their children. Consequently, 60% of the learners answered almost fifteen questions correctly in the twenty-question test, suggesting

that they have an intermediate level. It is true that three of the learners exceeded the average level and I noted that these students were in fact the youngest. I therefore looked at the test of the oldest person, who was almost fifty-four years old, and realized that he was the only one who only answered fewer than ten questions correctly. I therefore conclude that age is an important factor role in this scenario and this is why I believe the course should start with a general review of English in order to bring all students up to more or less the same level.

Furthermore, although the grammar and vocabulary results were similar, the vocabulary results were more irregular. On the one hand, most of the students had no difficulty in using nouns as adjectives or answering questions about common vocabulary such as the weather, food, or describing physical appearance. By contrast, they found the correct use of prepositions extremely difficult and only 10% of the answers in these exercises were correct. In addition, although the students were ignorant at the time of certain scientific words I believed they should already know, they will be able to learn all of them along the course.

Finally, I address certain peculiarities that might arise during the course. Although this syllabus is suitable for the group of learners described here, it could be subject to certain constraints owing to a lack of knowledge or experience with it. Put simply, older learners or certain students who have only experienced traditional educational systems might feel themselves to be in conflict with this type of teaching program. According to David Nunan, “[...] the majority of learners desire a grammatically-based syllabus with explicit instruction. If teachers are planning to follow a non-traditional approach, they may need to negotiate with the learners and modify the syllabus with which they are working.” (18) This is why my syllabus includes a negotiation period at the end of the first month of the course in order to plan what is to be done in the remaining months. However, learners might not want to negotiate among themselves because they might think that this is the teacher’s task. As a result, another example of constraint is a possible weakening of the teacher’s figure because

he or she might be seen to have less status in the eyes of the learners. In the present case, however, since most are older than thirty this is unlikely to be the case. Likewise, disagreement between learners could emerge because they may have different opinions and views and some of them might wish to concentrate more on improving their vocabulary while others might prefer to focus on other types of improvement. To overcome such problems it is essential for different opinions to be shared and learners should give their own views as well as accept others' opinions in order to make the whole learning process more fluid.

However, although all these peculiarities represent possible differences between several different groups of learners, this specific syllabus designed for a group of EMP learners interested in improving their professional activities should not offer serious obstacles since it has been exclusively adapted to the learners' needs and these cooperate with and already know each other. Thus, putting this potential course into practice should have highly positive effects and the overall results of the course will hopefully be very successful. I therefore anticipate that the learners involved in this EMP course will find it extremely useful for their professional activities.

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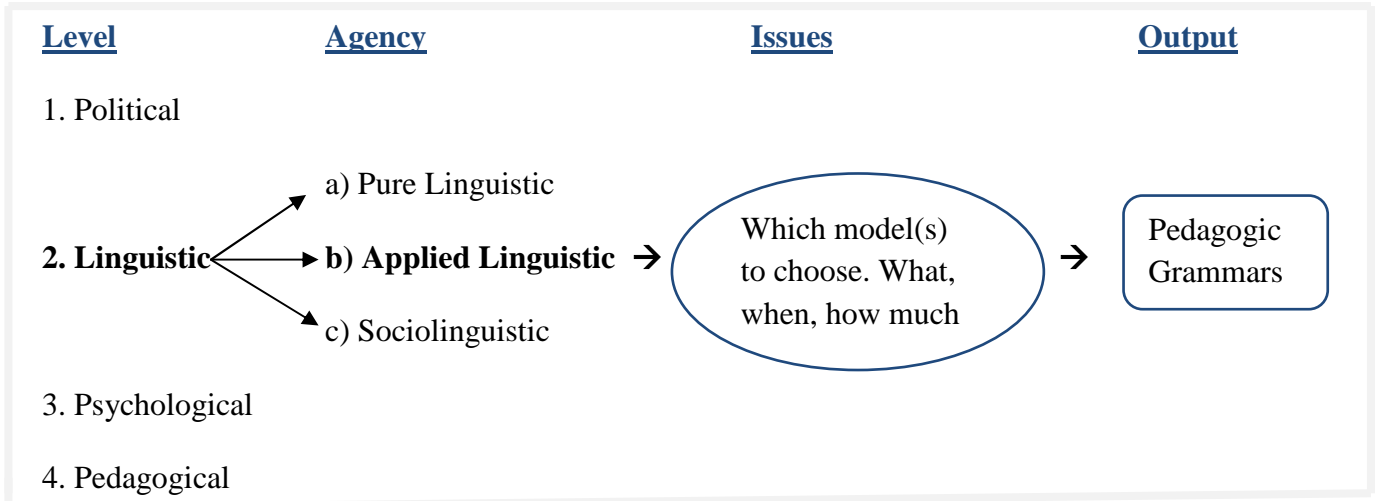
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6. APPENDICES

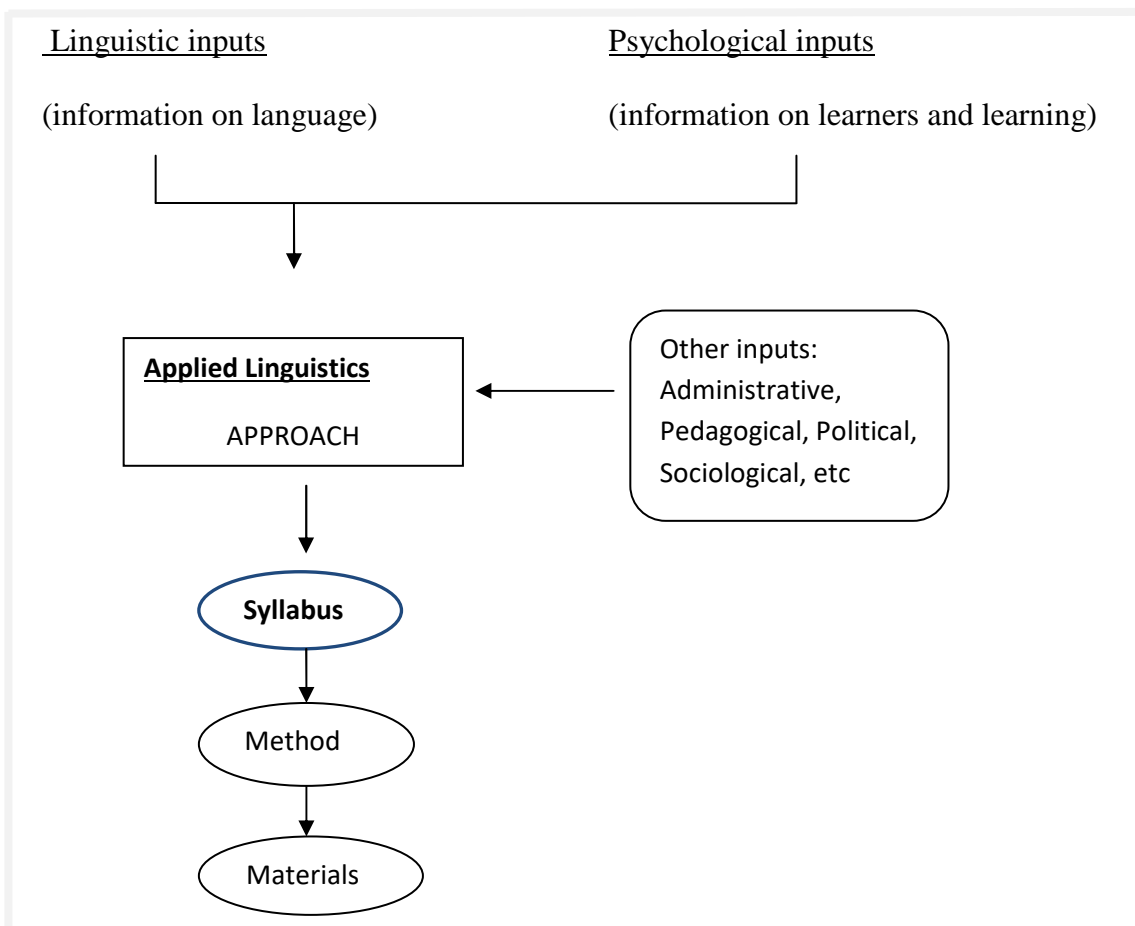
APPENDIX A

Language planning: levels, agencies and issues (Based on Bell 25)



APPENDIX B

The Genesis of an Approach in Applied Linguistics (Based on Bell 29)



APPENDIX C

Sample of the questionnaire answered by the 10 medical teachers

English for Specific Purposes Course Questionnaire

Last Name:..... ID.....

First name:

Date of Birth:..... Email:

Permanent Address: Street.....

City.....

Country.....

Phone Number.....

Current Profession.....

How long have you been studying English?

.....

Why did you decide to do this course?

.....

Which goals do you expect to achieve by doing the course?

.....

.....

What would you suggest should be included in the course program that will be useful for your job performance?

.....

.....

SIGNATURE Date

Salamanca, 25April 2014

APPENDIX D

Although the test consists of twenty questions about grammar and vocabulary, I only show 4 grammar and vocabulary exercises as an example (from *Total English--Upper Intermediate* book)

English for Specific Purposes Course Test

GRAMMAR

1. Choose the best alternative

-- I'm going to try and see my boyfriend *every/any* weekend

--*Everybody/Anybody* was thrilled to see Naomi

--I can't get rid of this cold. *Nothing/Anything* seems to help

--I'd like to go *everywhere/somewhere* hot for my holiday. I need the sun

2. Choose the correct alternative

--I've decided. I'm definitely not *bound/going to* apply for that job

--*We'll meet/'re meeting* after work at the café on the corner

--*She's getting/'s bound to* get the job. She's got the right experience.

VOCABULARY

1. Complete the table:

NOUN	ADJECTIVE
intellect	
art	
	jealous
	lonely
responsibility	
	successful
importance	
skill	
frustration	

2. Complete the questions with the correct prepositions:

--What kind of job would you like to apply

--What music are you most keen

--Do you feel passionate anything?

--What sports are you good

APPENDIX E



The New York Times

PHYS ED**Can Exercise Reduce Alzheimer's Risk?**By GRETCHEN REYNOLDS

JULY 2, 2014 12:01 AM July 2, 2014 2:02 pm 110 Comments



Credit Karen Kasmauski/Getty Images

PHYS ED

Gretchen Reynolds on the science of fitness.

Exercise may help to keep the brain robust in people who have an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, according to an inspiring new study. The findings suggests that even moderate amounts of physical activity may help to slow the progression of one of the most dreaded diseases of aging.

For the new study, which was published in May in *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*, researchers at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio recruited almost 100 older men and women, aged 65 to 89, many of whom had a family history of Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's disease, characterized by a gradual and then quickening loss of memory and cognitive functioning, can strike anyone. But scientists have discovered in recent years that people who harbor a specific variant of a gene, known as the APOE epsilon4 allele or the e4 gene for short, have a substantially increased risk of developing the disease.

Genetic testing among the volunteers in the new study determined that about half of the group carried the e4 gene, although, at the start of the study, none showed signs of memory loss beyond what would be normal for their age.

Then the scientists set out to more closely examine their volunteers' brains.

For some time, researchers have suspected that Alzheimer's disease begins altering the structure and function of the brain years or even decades before the first symptoms appear. In particular, it's been thought that the disease silently accelerates the atrophy of the hippocampus, a portion of the brain critical for memory processing. Brain scans of people who have Alzheimer's show that their hippocampi are considerably more shrunken than those of people of the same age without the disease.

There's been less study, though, of possible shrinkage in the brains of cognitively normal people at risk for Alzheimer's. One reason is that, until recently, few interventions, including drugs, had shown much promise in slowing or preventing the disease's progression, so researchers – and patients – have been reluctant to identify markers of its potential onset.

But then some studies began to suggest that exercise might affect the disease's progression. A 2011 brain scan study, for instance, conducted by some of the same researchers from the Cleveland Clinic, found that elderly people with the e4 gene who exercised regularly had significantly more brain activity during cognitive tests than people with the e4 gene who did not exercise, suggesting that the exercisers' brains were functioning better.

But that study looked at the function, not the structure of the brain. Could exercise also be affecting the physical shape of the brain, the researchers wondered, particularly in people with the e4 gene?

To find out, they asked the volunteers in their new experiment how often and intensely they exercised. About half, as it turned out, didn't move much at all. But the other half walked, jogged or otherwise exercised moderately a few times every week.

In the end, the scientists divided their volunteers into four groups, based on their e4 status and exercise habits. One group included those people with the e4 gene who did not exercise; another consisted of those with the e4 gene who did exercise; and the other two groups were composed of those without the gene who did or did not regularly exercise.

The scientists then scanned their volunteers' brains, with particular emphasis on their hippocampi. Eighteen months later, they repeated the scans.

In that brief interval, the members of the group carrying the e4 gene who did not exercise had undergone significant atrophy of their hippocampus. It had shrunk by about 3 percent, on average.

Those volunteers who carried the e4 gene but who regularly exercised, however, showed almost no shrinkage of their hippocampus. Likewise, both groups of volunteers who did not carry the e4 gene showed little change to their hippocampus.

In effect, the brains of physically active volunteers at high risk for Alzheimer's disease looked just like the brains of people at much lower risk for the disease, said Stephen M. Rao, a professor at the Schey Center for Cognitive Neuroimaging at the Cleveland Clinic, who oversaw the study. Exercise appeared to have been protective.

Meanwhile, the brains of sedentary people at high risk appeared to be slipping, structurally, toward dysfunction.

“This occurred in a very compressed time frame,” said Dr. Rao, who described the differences in brain structure as “quite significant.”

How exercise was guarding people’s hippocampi remains unclear, he said, although the e4 gene is known to alter fat metabolism within the brain, he said, as does exercise, which could be counteracting some of the undesirable effects of the e4 gene.

More research needs to be done to better understand the interplay of exercise and Alzheimer’s disease risk. But even so, Dr. Rao said, “there’s good reason to tell people to exercise” to protect their memories. Many of us do not carry the e4 gene, but everyone has some chance of developing Alzheimer’s disease.

And if exercise reduces that risk in any way, Dr. Rao said, “then why not get up and move?”

Correction: July 2, 2014 An earlier version of this post misstated the title of Stephen M. Rao. He is a professor at the Schey Center for Cognitive Neuroimaging at the Cleveland Clinic, not an associate professor.

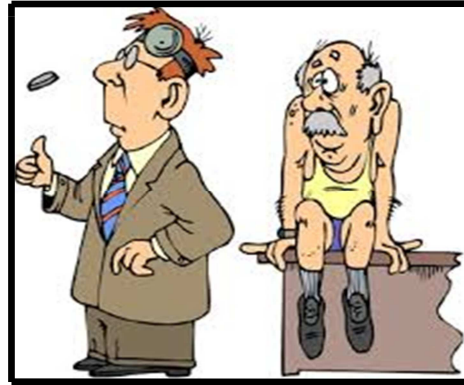
<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/07/02/can-exercise-reduce-alzheimers-risk/?ref=health>

APPENDIX F

Several cards of small dialogues were given to students to practise. They refer to everyday situations e.g. at a hotel, at a restaurant, at a travel agent’s, at the cinema, in a clothes shop, reporting an accident, at the doctor’s...

Situation in a clothes shop



Situation at the doctor's**Situation at the restaurant**

There are many role-play activities that are really useful for interactions among students.

Another example is giving each student a role card depicting a person and a family tree.

Students have to circulate and find members of their own family around the classroom.