ESP Material Development in Chinese Universities: Problems and Solutions

Jiajing Gao
Faculty of Foreign Languages
Beijing Normal University (Zhuhai campus)

Abstract

This paper comes out of concern about instructional principles of developing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials in China. It points out the major problems of ESP material development in China: incapability to write ESP materials; selection of materials; imbalance between carrier content and real content; imbalance in language skills development. To solve these problems, it is suggested that a learning-centered approach be utilized in the process of material development. Based on this approach, principles are provided in terms of key factors that need to be considered in pre-development, in-development and post-development stages. A sample teaching unit is also provided, aiming to improve traditional ESP classroom practice.

Introduction

With the increasing international exchange in finance, technology, and culture, recent years have witnessed a great demand for more internationalized, high-quality, versatile personnel who are capable of exchanging information by means of English. As a result, the booming of various English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses is a common phenomenon in Chinese universities. However, there is an increasing concern about the quality of ESP teaching materials in China.

Materials play a crucial role in the design of language courses, particularly in the ESP material development. Teaching materials should make the most of learners’ existing knowledge and experience and offer them chances of taking in new information through interesting, challenging and achievable tasks. Only in this way can learners be equipped with effective use of language for future communication purposes. The quality of the material, to a great extent, can in turn affect the teaching methodology, which in turn influences learners’ motivation and learning results (Mo, 2003). Therefore, the success of ESP courses rests a great deal with high-quality teaching materials.

This paper attempts to provide some guidance on ESP material development in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context, especially in Chinese universities. On the ground of analyzing current problems of ESP material development in the Chinese context, a learning-centered approach and the underlying theory of learning are put forward as the guide to writing ESP materials. Then the principles of developing ESP materials are recommended, which could be applied to the ESP course design in various EFL situations.
The Role of ESP Materials

Materials are of vital importance to language learning, especially in EFL situations, since they may be the only source available for language learning. The possible roles of materials in ELT are as follows:

- a resource for presenting both spoken and written materials
- a source of activities for practice and communicative interaction
- a reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.
- a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom language activities
- a syllabus which reflects the learning objectives
- a resource for self-directed learning or self-access work
- a support for less experienced teachers who need confidence

(Dunningsworth, 2002)

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) also put forward four significant roles of materials in the ESP context. In EFL situations, ESP materials serve as the only source of language, which implies that the materials need to expose the real language to the maximum. Materials also play an indispensable role in supporting learning, stimulating, motivating and providing reference to learners.

Major Problems of ESP Materials in China

There is no doubt that the quality of teaching materials plays a considerable role in learners' engagement in the language learning process, which in turn will greatly affect the ultimate learning results. However, most ESP teaching materials available in China are poor in quality due to the fact that material designers are either English majors without much knowledge in specific fields or specialty majors without high English proficiency. For many ESP teachers, the selection of teaching materials is an arbitrary choice without any proper theoretical guidance. Many ESP teaching materials selected therefore fail to balance language with subject content, either laying too much emphasis on linguistic forms and structures or ignoring the opportunity for language learning. The textually authentic materials selected from original English newspapers and magazines are not consistent with the teaching purpose and the writer’s intention cannot agree with the learner’s need. Skills in the teaching materials are presented in isolation and the difficulty level does not go hand in hand with learners’ proficiency.

Writing ESP Materials

Most ESP material writers in China are ESP teachers who may have rich experience in teaching ESP but not have been trained for developing ESP materials (Mo, 2003). They are either specialty majors with little knowledge of ESP theories and methodology or English majors with little background of particular subject areas, with the result that the production of ESP materials is unlikely to suit the target learners' needs. It is noteworthy that many ESP materials are produced on the basis of the writers’ assumption rather than the analysis of learners' real needs and expectations. In compiling the ESP materials, many writers focus much on language usage instead of language in use (Chen, 2004; Liang, Chen & Lu, 2006; Wang, 2004). After the evaluation of 268 nationally published Business English course books, Cai
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(2006) further points out one of the prominent deficiencies in designing ESP materials in China lies in the lack of theoretical guidance among ESP material writers. She further argues that the majority of business English course books investigated fail to demonstrate the theoretical principle their books are based upon.

**Selection of ESP Materials**

Investigation carried out by Wang (2004) in Tongji University in Shanghai showed that when selecting ESP teaching materials, ESP teachers of different faculties in Tongji University either continued to use the precedent textbooks, borrowed original specialized journal articles with slight adaptation, or used the downloaded internet resources. Students had no say in the material selection. Based on the observation in more than 10 universities of different levels, Liang, Chen and Lu (2006) conclude that the selection of materials among ESP teachers in those Chinese universities remained a big problem, without any proper guidance.

**Nature of ESP Materials**

**Imbalance between Real Content and Carrier Content**

Carrier content refers to the subject matter used to teach the specific language of an exercise whereas real content is the language or skill content of an exercise. The real content and carrier content should be properly balanced (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Many ESP teaching materials available in China, however, are subject-oriented and descriptive (Duan & Gu, 2006). Some ESP materials, derived from English magazines and newspapers in the original, put too much emphasis on the linguistic aspects with traditional vocabulary and translation exercises; some are general English with specialized vocabulary while many are highly specialized texts with little or no opportunity for language learning and language use (Deng, 2006; Liang, Chen & Lu, 2006; Mo, 2003).

**Imbalance in Language Skills Development**

In real world communication, we seldom use language skills in isolation. Some specialized fields may highly demand learners’ oral proficiency while some may ask for higher writing capability. Exposure to tasks with language skills in conjunction is therefore needed to help learners arrive at a better understanding of the real-life communicative interaction in the target situation (Crystal & Johnson, 1993). However, in the Chinese ESP context, too much emphasis has been put on developing learners’ reading and translation abilities; other language abilities, such as writing, listening and speaking, are ignored. This runs counter to the purpose of teaching ESP—to prepare learners for competent performance in the target context. ESP materials, in terms of designing language skill practice, should be written with careful consideration of learners’ target needs.

**Inappropriate Difficulty Level**

As many ESP teaching materials in China are adopted arbitrarily from the original English specialized literature or newspapers and magazines, the difficulty level does not satisfy learners’ needs or learning purposes. Some are general English
plus specialized vocabularies. Others are far beyond learners’ previous knowledge and understanding (highly specialized theories plus complicated vocabularies) with the result that learners tend to lose interest as well as confidence in language learning (Mo, 2003; Wang, 2004).

Learning-centered Approach to ESP Material Development

Without proper guidance, ESP writers in China usually follow the traditional approaches to material design. For years in ESP teaching in China, emphasis has been on language analysis and little concern has been given to language learning and language use. As pointed out by Wen (2002), teaching materials in China in the last three decades are mostly structure-based, function-based or structure-and-function based. Traditional approaches to material design primarily focus either on isolated linguistic forms and structures or on lists of functions such as greetings, making arrangements, agreeing and disagreeing. Although each has its own strength, they ignore the need to cultivate learners’ competence as required by real communication.

A Learning-centered Approach

Based on the criticism against the target situation analysis (TSA) and the linguistic analysis of lectures and textbooks, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that ESP concerns too little about the learning skills of helping learners to reach their expectations. In their 1987 book, the concept of a learning-centered approach is outlined. Different from traditional approaches, a learning-centered approach takes learners and their learning needs into full consideration at each stage of the design process. It promotes full consideration of learner motivation and the process of learning. Learning is viewed as an internal process of negotiation between learners and society. In the process, learners use their existing knowledge or skills to understand the new information. Learner autonomy is also taken into account as different learners learn in different ways (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Other aspects of the learning-centered approach include certain learning skills which can be developed from academic study or work experience and be applied in the ESP classrooms. It is also suggested that learners should concentrate on understanding and doing something with language, but not on learning linguistic forms (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

To summarize, a learning-centered approach to material development can realize the full potential of learning, and with the learning-centered tasks and activities, learners are involved in the problem solving process. Thus, their competence and performance is strengthened.

Rationale for a Learning-centered Approach

The following three subsections explain the adoption of the learning-centered approach to ESP material design. The theory of learning tells us the nature of learning; the concept of motivation makes us understand how to promote learners’ motivation; the humanistic psychology emphasizes learners’ internal development. All aspects concerning learning are brought into the material design process.
**Theory of Learning**

Hutchinson's (1988) theory of learning provides a solid foundation for a learning-centered approach of material development by examining the nature of learning and the mental processes involved. In his view, learning is a developmental process in the first place. Learners understand the new information on the basis of existing knowledge. Consequently, material development should take account of learners' existing knowledge and skills. Second, learning is a thinking process which requires learners not only to utilize their existing knowledge to understand new information but also to apply the knowledge to real interaction. So activities should be developed to involve learners in thinking. Third, learning is an active process. Learners are active processors of information rather than passive recipients of information. Learning, then, is a process in which learners think about and actively try to interpret what they see and hear. Since learners are viewed as active thinking beings, the learning process also requires their decision-making. Classroom tasks should be designed with opportunities for decision-making practice. Finally, learning is an emotional experience. The emotional reaction to the learning process is of vital significance to the success or failure of learning. It could evoke positive or negative impact on the learning experience.

**Learner Motivation**

Recently, more and more attention is paid to motivation as ‘one of the most important powerful forces for good and effective learning’ (Cunningsworth, 2002, p. 17). Gardner and Lambert (1972) categorize motivation as instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. On the one hand, learners learn the target language due to their external needs, such as the need to pass an examination or to understand documents in the target language at work. On the other hand, integrative motivation refers to the internally generated want of learners who intend to communicate with the target community members.

Disappointingly, Chinese ESP practitioners tend to assume instrumental motivation as the only aspect of learners’ motivation. Therefore, being relevant to the target needs is of vital significance to motivating learners. In order to develop learners' full potential and motivate them, teaching materials should be interesting, enjoyable and creative with various topics and activities.

**Humanistic Psychology**

Humanistic psychology sees learners as whole beings with many interacting parts. It stresses learners’ internal world and holds the belief that the development of a whole person rests on his or her cognitive and emotional development (Cheng, 2002). On the one hand, people's learning potential is inborn; on the other hand, people's need for learning is persistent. Learning is not meaningful unless learners are actively engaged in it.

**Learning-centered Approach vs. ESP Material Development in China**

The core question addressed in this section is: why is the learning-centered approach especially appropriate for the Chinese context of ESP material
The culture of learning in the Chinese context has long been influenced by Confucian values which view teachers as knowledge providers rather than ones who are concerned about students’ needs or feelings (Kubota, 2001). Wang’s (2004) study in Tongji University in Shanghai indicates the same status quo that teaching materials or course books have often been selected by ESP teachers alone. Students have no say in the selection process. This seeming teacher-dominated approach to ESP thus results in unpleasant consequences in teaching. As Deng (2006), Liang, Chen and Lu (2006), and Duan and Gu (2006) point out, students in the traditional ESP class may be “experts” of subject specialization but know little of applying their existing knowledge to meaningful communication in English. Materials at an inappropriate difficulty level, and with imbalanced language and subject matter, hence diminish students’ motivation and interest in learning. A learning-centered approach to material development is therefore appropriate to the Chinese context because it calls for considerations of other factors concerning learning at all stages of the design process, such as constraints of learning, learners’ attitudes, wants, teaching situation and so forth (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Principles of Developing ESP Materials in China

To compensate for the major problems of the current ESP material development in China, general guidelines, based on the learning-centered approach, are provided for ESP teachers and material designers to improve the status quo of the Chinese ESP material writing. Writing materials is a complex, time-consuming process, especially in EFL situations, involving the following three stages: pre-development, in-development and post-development. It should start from analyzing learners’ specific needs and evaluating the relevant existing materials. Then some crucial factors need to be considered in the development process. After the accomplishment of the writing process, writers also need to get a full understanding of the existing authoritative book review and the feedback from the audience.

Pre-development Preparation

Needs Analysis

According to Cunningsworth (2002), what makes ESP courses distinct from general English ones lies in the fact that ESP is goal-oriented and based on the awareness of learners’ needs. Identifying what learners need has a significant influence on the development of appropriate ESP materials. For Robinson (1991), needs analysis may be a combination of both the target situation analysis (TSA) and present situation analysis (PSA). TSA aims at students’ needs at the end of the course while PSA focuses on students’ strengths and weaknesses at the start of the course. Two divisions of need, target needs and learning needs, are also identified by Hutchinson & Waters (1987). Target needs are analyzed in terms of (i) what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation, (ii) the gap between learners’ existing proficiency and target proficiency, and (iii) learners’ view as to what their needs are. However, consideration of target situation needs alone is not enough since the target situation is not reliable in terms of what is needed or useful in the ESP learning context. This indicates the necessity of analyzing learning
needs, especially in terms of the conditions of the learning situation, learner’s existing knowledge, skills, strategies and their motivation.

**Material Evaluation**

Material development and material evaluation are complementary. Evaluation of the existing materials can inform material writers of the existing ideas and techniques (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Adopting the effective ideas and eliminating those inappropriate ones can help material writers develop more reliable, applicable materials. Three phases are suggested by McDonough and Shaw (1993) about material evaluation. *External evaluation* calls for the comprehensive examination of the introduction and table of contents of the target material in terms of the intended reader, the proficiency level, and the presentation of language aspects. If the examined material appears appropriate and deserves further inspection, the second phase, *internal evaluation*, should be carried out, focusing on the internal organization of the material, namely, the presentation of the skills, the sequence of the material, the type of reading, writing, listening, speaking content in the material, the appropriateness of the exercises, self-study availability and balanced role between the teacher and learner. The third stage, *overall evaluation*, considers the following factors: usability, adaptability, flexibility, and generalizability.

**Textbooks or Tailor-made Materials**

Whether ESP teachers should use published textbooks or produce their own in-house materials is a difficult decision in many EFL contexts. Kuo (1993) points out that published materials have been rejected for the following reasons. Initially, textbooks in a particular specialized area are unlikely to suit all courses in that area. Some textbooks, due to unknown readership, fail to consider the language level and subject knowledge of any particular group of learners. Additionally, they fail to demonstrate explicitly the rationale the material design is based on. Finally, published materials do not take into account the appropriateness for classroom use in other cultural and social contexts. Instead, Kuo suggests that published textbooks, as a kind of data bank, have potential values with a variety of texts, skills, classroom activities and problem-solving tasks. ESP teachers can choose what is appropriate or adapt what can be adapted for a particular group of learners. It is necessary, however, to allow room for local input. In other words, the chosen or adapted parts should suit the local learning context. Tailor-made materials can be used as either the supplement or the replacement of certain parts when necessary.

**In-development**

**Matching Carrier Content to Real Content**

Carrier content can be defined as the subject matter used to teach the specific language whereas real content refers to the language or skill content of a language practice. In a material design model presented by Hutchinson & Waters (1987), a sample practice is to describe a circulatory system. It makes use of the heart and blood system to present the language. The heart and blood system is the carrier content used as a vehicle for the real content, the language of description. According to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 173), carrier content and real content should be
appropriately balanced. The carrier content must be appropriate and the real content must match the course objectives. They further propose two possibilities in preparing new materials with the two types of content:

**Figure 1. Process for preparing new materials (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 177)**

The first possible starting point is to have good carrier content. The next stage involves analyzing it to decide on the real content and think about how the real content can fit in with the course. The second possibility starts from where there is a need for some materials to reach the specific course objectives but there is no suitable one at hand. Under this circumstance, searching for the suitable carrier content is necessary.

**Authenticity**

Authentic materials refer to those written for purposes rather than language teaching (Nunan, 1985). Many researchers and material developers agree with the principle that materials should be based on authentic texts with authentic activities and tasks so as to expose learners to some real input (Saraceni, 2003). Supporting this claim, Candlin and Edelhoff (1982) distinguish four types of authenticity in language learning and teaching: authenticity of goal, environment, text and task. Material development should explore learners’ authentic needs in the target contexts, take the learning environment into consideration, and provide tasks and activities for a real-life communication purpose. In Lee’s (1995) view, a text should be both textually
authentic and learner-authentic. Learner authenticity involves learners' interaction with the materials, which means that authenticity can be achieved only if the material writer's intention matches well with the learner's interpretation. However, some researchers argue that authenticity should be concerned with the transferability of strategies or activities rather than with spoken or written texts from some target situations (Johns & Price-Machado, 1991). Another objection to the use of authentic texts is made by Widdowson (1979), when he suggests that authenticity cannot be found in materials themselves but occurs when there is congruence between material writer's intention and language learners' interpretation.

In practice, it is possible that authentic texts are not relevant to a particular group of learners in terms of interest or usefulness. As stated in (Robinson, 1980, p. 36), "conversely, much relevant and interesting material has been used on many courses without being authentic". Additionally, authentic materials from other ESP environments may not be relevant for learners in the Chinese ESP environment (Kuo, 1993). Therefore, in avoiding any blind use of authentic texts, ESP teachers and material developers should be aware that every text, as Morrow (1977) puts it, is particular and individual with regard to topic, function, channel and audience. The selection of texts, accordingly, should be consistent with both authenticity and relevance on the basis of topic, function, channel and audience.

**Integrity and Variety**

In real life communication, it is less likely for us to use language skills in isolation. Therefore, tasks and activities should be presented meaningfully with the nature of skills in conjunction so as to achieve different communicative purposes (Crystal & Johnson, 1993).

Variety is particularly essential in ESP materials, which may fail to motivate learners if they are boring. On the one hand, variety in the micro skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) should be introduced to the class; on the other hand, the range of exercise types should be varied to increase motivation for both learners and teachers. Moreover, class interaction need to vary from teacher input to learners' individual work to group work as different learners prefer different learning styles (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

**Stimulation and Motivation**

Materials should be interesting texts which can stimulate and motivate learners. Good materials need to encourage creativity and offer new ideas and information to learners, while they should be grounded on the learners' existing knowledge and previous experience. Since learning is a thinking process, materials should provide learners with the opportunities of thinking about and using the language (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Through completing activities which stimulate their cognitive process, learners will realize how much achievement they have gained so that their confidence will be built and their learning will be enhanced (Cunningsworth, 2002).
Post-development: On-going Assessment

Assessment is a process of measuring which can help material designers work out the unsatisfactory features of the material and assist the on-going process of amendment. Accomplishment of writing the material is not supposed to be the dead end. Feedback from the audience can also inspire writers of ESP materials with valuable ideas and useful information for continuous improvement (Mo, 2003).

Material Design: A Sample Teaching Unit

Identifying Learners

The target learners were pre-experience learners who were senior college students of Hotel Management in Guilin Institute of Technology. They had definite subject knowledge as they had learned hospitality subjects in Chinese for three years. From the first year to the third year they had a compulsory general English course. The majority had passed the National College English Test (Band Four), which means that their English was at the intermediate level and was sufficient enough to start the ESP course.

Target Needs and Learning Needs

Based on the questionnaires, informal discussion with learners and interviews with past students and faculty members, target needs and learning needs were identified. The majority of the learners showed their aspiration to be potential employees in multinational hotels after graduation. In order to function effectively in the future hospitality world, the target learners needed to participate in the discussions in meetings, make presentations in meetings, conduct appropriate phone conversations, take notes, and write E-mails and reports in English. Being aware of their own needs, the learners hoped, through this course, they would be able to participate in discussions in meetings, make presentations in meetings, and write appropriate correspondence and reports. Almost all of the students indicated their deficiency in oral communication with native speakers and many of them said they needed more guidance and practice in writing reports. In addition, they would prefer teaching materials to be presented in an attractive and interesting way with video recordings and integrated skills.

Based on the principles and needs analysis of the target learners and learning situation, we now look at how to apply a learning-centered approach to ESP material design. A teaching unit was developed, including the following parts.

Sample Teaching Unit

Learning Objective

The unit mainly aimed at 1) developing students' ability of writing appropriate investigative reports, and 2) improving their skills in making presentations in English.
Selection of the Text (see Appendix 1)

For this group of learners, the investigative report was chosen because reports play an important role in management practice and most major or decisive actions are based on investigative reports. Additionally, the report was also consistent with students’ perceived needs. The criteria for selecting a text were: 1) It should be a naturally occurring piece of communication (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 121); 2) It should suit learners’ interest and needs; 3) The carrier content should be appropriate and the real content must match the learning objective.

Lead-in Questions

This part served as a warm-up exercise to facilitate learning as well as involve learners in thinking. Learners could anticipate what would be coming up by using their existing knowledge and experience. The following questions were selected as lead-in questions to activate what learners already knew and lead them toward what they needed to know.

1. Have you ever written a report? Share your experience with your partner.
2. Do you think formal or informal language should be used in a report?
3. What elements are crucial for a successful report?

Language Focus and Corresponding Questions

For the group of hospitality students under investigation, the structure of a report and its formal language style were the two language foci needed in their report writing. The two foci could be handled with the two exercises below. The first exercise aimed at raising learners’ awareness of the sentence structure, the lexical choice and the formal language style of the report. The second exercise dealt with the basic components of the report and what should be included in each component.

Exercise 1

Compare the following pairs of sentences to see which is more formal and more suitable for a report. Give your reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This report describes findings from a recent exploratory visit to Shanghai and Guangdong Province, and makes recommendations regarding the options Ultradine has.</td>
<td>The purpose of this report is to describe findings from a recent exploratory visit to Shanghai and Guangdong Province, and to make recommendations regarding the potential for Ultradine operations in these areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This report aims to take the temperature of the domestic economy, both among consumers and industry, to make contact with relevant people, and find out the key facts that will enable the possible business options to be looked into.</td>
<td>The purpose of this report is to assess the current state of the domestic economy, both at the consumer and industry levels, to establish relevant points of contact, and ascertain the key facts to enable the possible business options to be explored.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a result, the production of finished synthetic goods is likely to be more feasible, although the question of profit needs to be looked at. Therefore, the production of finished synthetic goods offers greater ease of entry and marketing opportunities. However, profit potential requires further assessment.

A follow-up visit should be made to Shanghai and Guangdong in early 2000, so that we can keep in touch with the people we met on this visit, and make new contact. We also recommend that a follow-up visit be made to Shanghai and Guangdong in the first quarter of 2000 to maintain and increase contact.

Exercise 2

The following sentences are picked out from some reports. Figure out where they should be placed in the report, an introduction, a finding, a conclusion, or a recommendation.

- I sincerely hope that effective measures can be taken to prevent the attack from sharks.
- The workers are not paid enough and may go on strike if their wages are not increased.
- In terms of personnel matters, we feel that additional staff should be recruited before the end of the financial year.
- This report will first describe the recent changes in the tax system and will than go to argue that these changes are unfair and impractical.

Writing Task

After the exercises on the structure and language of a report, the learners created their own solution to a communication problem through using English, which was likely to be encountered in their real working world:

Supposing you were the general manager of the Palace Hotel. You were asked to investigate the English training programs in three local major hotels. Based on your investigation, write a report to the general manager of the parent hotel abroad.

Listening and Discussion

Besides writing skills, learners’ note-taking and discussion skills in the meetings should be developed. This could be achieved via an exercise accompanied by a video recording:

Watch the video recording of an annual conference of a hotel and try to write down the main points of each presentation. Based on your notes, work in groups to discuss the issue reflected in the video recording.
**Simulation**

With the above audio input and written preparation, learners could simulate the hotel managers through presenting the report to the management staff in the meeting:

You are going to make a presentation in the meeting on the English training program for the waiters and waitresses in the hotel you are working for. Work in groups first, and then each group has to choose the spokesperson to present the ideas in class.

The simulation gave learners the chance to apply their knowledge and skills gained from the listening stage to practice their presentation skills.

**Conclusion**

In the EFL context, where exposure to English is extremely limited, high-quality ESP teaching materials should be introduced in the ESP class. To achieve this goal, what is suggested is a learning-centered approach which serves as a guide to developing materials suitable for the target group of learners. To make ESP courses more meaningful and effective and to help Chinese university students become more active learners, material designers need to take the following factors into account seriously in the process of writing the material. Specific needs of the intended groups of learners should be analyzed in the first place. Then it is followed by evaluating existing relevant materials to get some inspiration for the actual writing process. When it comes to writing the material, designers are supposed to ask themselves such questions as: Does the carrier content match the real content? Does the material meet the standards of authenticity, variety, and integrity? Does the material possess the capability of stimulating and motivating learners as well as facilitating their learning process? Finally, material development should be taken as an on-going process on the basis of feedback from users and their learning results.

Although the learning-centered approach is ideal to material design, there are still difficulties in its implementation, such as learners’ attitude towards the learning-centered approach, level of material designers, and complexity of learning process. Therefore, on the one hand, material designers should be trained with professional English, specialized knowledge as well as ESP material design methodology. On the other hand, learners should be aware that learning ESP is not only about language and skills but also about solving problems in real communication contexts. It is expected that more ESP researchers and practitioners both in China and abroad will conduct further research in this field and provide more effective solutions to the current problems.

**References**


Longman.
Appendix 1

Investigative Report

To: Joseph Perkins, General Manager
From: Robert Myers, Training Manager
Date: February 15, 2006
Subject: The Palace Hotel’s English Program for Foreign Waiters and Waitresses

Introduction
As you requested, I have investigated the Palace Hotel’s English program for foreign waiters and waitresses to determine whether we might also adopt such a program. The program does not teach the English language as a whole, but only English used in restaurants. For us, this program would also be most beneficial because some of our foreign waiters and waitresses are not fluent in terms of restaurants and catering.

Programs Description
The purpose of the palace Hotel’s English Program is to help foreign waiters and waitresses acquire fluency in the special terms of restaurants and catering.
Though the program does not train waiters and waitresses in general terms, it does teach them the different phases of catering, as well as the duties, problems and rewards of this career.
Waiters and waitresses under this program use a book entitled “The language of restaurants and catering in English”, It is one of a series of texts called “English for Careers”. The book consists of ten units. Each unit begins with a glossary of special terms in which words and expressions are defined. This is followed by a vocabulary practice section to test comprehension and give practice in using the special terms; then these terms are used again in context. Each reading is followed by questions for discussion, giving additional opportunity to use both the special terms and the structural patterns.
The instructors are the hotel’s experienced head waiters and waitresses who are native speakers of English. The program takes two months on a two-hour-a-day basis.
Waiters and waitresses who take the course should be at the high intermediate or advanced level and should be acquainted with most of the structural patterns of the English language.
The Palace Hotel’s English program is a part-time hands-on one, which enables the waiters and waitresses to attend a special course of instruction without leaving their jobs. This makes it necessary to the palace Hotel to find substitutes or temporary help while the waiters and waitresses are receiving training.

Conclusion and Recommendations
I see three possible ways in which we might be able to employ some or all of the elements of the English Program; 1) in using experienced head waiters and waitresses who are native speakers of English as instructors, 2) in teaching special terms of restaurants and catering, as well as terms of greeting and courtesy, or 3) in giving instruction in special terms, different phases of the food service industry, as well as the duties, problems and rewards of this career.
As for our initiating an English program similar to the Palace Hotel’s, I recommend that we include terms of greeting and courtesy in the program. Since each of our three restaurants has a different cultural emphasis, we would need to add a few lectures on these three cultures as an extension of the program.