

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Ministry of Higher Education  
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## **A Suggested Online Business Course (How to eBay)**

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### **Abstract**

ESP Needs analysis leads to design a language course, which is more accommodating in the meeting of learners' needs. The paper aims to investigate language needs to develop an ESP course framework for Saudi female entrepreneurs in the fields of online business. Questionnaire as the instrument for data collection, are used for the language needs analysis. The samples of questionnaires include 13 Saudi females in the fields of online business .

This paper reviews literature on some fundamental features of ESP, EAP, language needs analysis and concludes with designing an Intensive English language course for online business .

### **Introduction:**

Online businesses are a rapidly growing activity among Saudi females. It is certainly more convenient as they get to conduct their business from home and there are some obstacles facing these women and the most recurrent one is their inability to sometimes understand the terminology used in purchasing, paying and refunding, especially when dealing with websites like: eBay and amazon. The only solution they have come up with is to pay someone who speaks English to deal with the website.

This is only a fraction of what young Saudi graduates, who aspire to have careers in the private sector, have to face. Not having a good grasp of the English language prevents many of them from conducting their jobs effectively. This causes many companies and work facilities to avoid hiring young Saudi graduates in different fields of work. To overcome this problem, ESP courses need to be customized to suit the Saudi work environment. ( Alharby,2005)

Educators and ESP practitioners in Saudi Arabia are seeking applications of the ESP approach to serve different language programs designed for different specialties. What is available now consists mostly of the theoretical framework of the ESP approach with different applications conducted outside Saudi Arabia. Statement of the Problem:

In order to contribute empirical data to the ESP context in Saudi education, this study investigates the English language communicative needs of a targeted

group of Saudi females, who work in business fields, by inspecting their needs in the workplace.

In this paper I wish to discuss in detail online shopping aspects like purchasing , payment , cart , delivery and complaint, and to provide the targeted group with the terminology needed to acquire that skill.

I will design a course but due to time constraints, I cannot apply the course or evaluate it.

Research Questions:

- 1- What are the expectations and the needs of the targeted group to function efficiently in conducting their business?
- 2- How would the proposed syllabus design look for students' usage of English in the workplace?

The Significance of the Study:

ESP researchers and practitioners can compare and contrast the language situation in this study with other ESP applications around the world. This study also contributes to our understanding of how English is used in international workplace settings as a foreign language.

Limitations of the Study

The most significant limitation to this study is its sample size since only 13 participants have completed the questionnaire. Therefore, my findings and conclusions are unfortunately limited to that small group. Also, the instrument used for data collection was only a questionnaire. Hence, the results of the needs analysis fully relied on the perceptions and feedback given by the respondents.

## Literature Review

Although the research is mainly about ESP, there are relevant and equally important topics to address such as Need Analysis, Course Design, and IT to put matters into perspective. The review of the literature will start with introducing ESP in general. Then, a specific type of ESP will be discussed. Need Analysis will also play an important role in ESP and the Course Design which will be discussed at the end.

ESP has been identified by many scholars such as Strevens (1988). He has formulated a definition of ESP that makes a distinction between four absolute characteristics and two variable characteristics.

The absolute characteristics are that ESP consists of language teaching are:

- 1- Designed to meet specified needs of the learners.
- 2- Related in content to particular disciplines, occupation and activities.
- 3- Centered on language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, and analysis of discourse.
- 4- In contrast with General English

The variable characteristics are that ESP:

- 1- May be restricted as to learning skills to be learned.

2- May not be taught according to any pre-ordained methodology.

According to another scholar, Robinson (1991), there are many types of ESP. The two main types are: EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) and EAP (English for Academic Purposes). Another emerging type of ESP is EIP (English for Internet Purposes). The type of ESP which is being investigated in my paper is a cross between EOP and EIP.

I will design an ESP course for an aspect of online business. Online business can be defined basically as, "the organized effort of individuals to produce and sell, for profit, products and services that satisfy society's needs through the facilities available on the Internet" (Brahm Canzer, 2009). Campbell goes on to say that "[M]anaging a brand and being able to promote that brand and market it successfully is clearly vital to the prosperity of the business" , (Campbell et al. 2011). The amount of platforms existing today can seem overwhelming and the choice of which ones to use when deciding to have a social presence should be well thought out .

Internet shopping has grown almost five-fold since 2000(Annexe F, 2007). Commentators hold the view that ecommerce has many advantages for developing countries. Also, there are many constraints limiting the potential benefits of business, such as "the cost, lack of IT knowledge, lack of exclusive supports and concerns regarding the reliability of technology", (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2004). Lack of language proficiency will be the focus of my paper. This brings us back to the point that ESP is better described as a learner-centered approach to teaching English as a foreign language.

English for specific purposes (ESP) has emerged from the learners' needs in accordance with their profession or job description. Therefore, a need analysis must be conducted before taking any step. Need analysis is considered the key stage in ESP (Q). Stevens (1977) suggests that need analysis is a necessary first step for specific purposes language teaching. Hutchinson and Waters ( 1987 : 53 ) argue that any language course should be based on need analysis and should involve " compiling information both on the individuals or groups of individuals who are to learn a language and on the use which they are expected to make of it when they have learned it " ( Richterich , 1983 : 2 ). A variety of data collecting methods are used in need analysis such as questionnaire, interviews and observations. However, the problem that exists in the Arab World in general, and the Saudi context in particular, is that there is not yet a realization, neither by institutions nor by learners, of the importance of such a definition and assessment of needs. This is evident in the fact that such analyses are rare, and, if conducted, they are not taken seriously by both parties (i.e. institutions and learners). ( *M. Al-Humaidi* )

After conducting the need analysis, the final step is designing the course. To design an ESP course, there are three common features as Carver (1983) states:

a) authentic material, b) purpose-related orientation, c) self-direction.

The first step in designing a language course is deciding on its general and specific teaching objectives. As stated by Ellis and Johnson, the course objectives are “the goals of a course in English, as indicated by the needs analysis, and expressed in terms of what the learner should be able to do” [2, p.221].

This stage is extremely important because it is the guiding line in the whole process of ESP course designing. It offers information on both the content and the form that the course should take. It also offers information on the skills that are most required in the target situation taking into account students’ necessities. *Needs Analysis* is usually accomplished through questionnaires and discussions with the learners. The result of these enquiries may sometimes show that there is a conflict between learners’ *necessities* (as perceived by the teacher) and their *wants*. The ESP teacher is expected to find some sort of compromise between these conflicting forces by designing a course that should be both useful and interesting for the target learners.

## Methodology

The methodology of the study is concerned with how the study is carried out. First, the researcher conducts a Need Analysis for these entrepreneurs. Second, an ESP online business course framework will be developed on the basis of the outcomes of the language Need Analysis.

### Course Tools

A self-administered questionnaire was designed as a quantitative technique for data collecting . The questionnaire investigates the English language needs of the targeted group and the questions vary between the 3-point scale (Likert scale type) , close-ended questions and open-ended questions .

The questionnaire is divided into two parts:

- a- General information
- b- Questions focusing on the following aspects :business background , English language level and what platform is used in conducting their business .

### Participants

Saudi female entrepreneurs who have online businesses . Their ages vary between 22 to 46. Their job specialties differ , too. Two women are in the food catering business , five are in the make-up and beauty products field and the other five sell clothes and accessories.

All the participants have previous experience in learning English for six years in public schools and the participants who have college degrees have had four

more years to learn English. Still, their level of proficiency in the language is not satisfactory.

### Data Analysis

The participants' responses were evaluated by looking at the frequencies and making scores in terms of understanding their needs . The questionnaire data was analyzed using the google doc website . The frequency and percentage of the responses were generated through the website.

## Results

The questionnaire was forwarded by email on April the 25<sup>th</sup> , 2014 . So far it is not possible to calculate the number of the potential recipients of the questionnaire. Therefore, no percentage of the response is available yet and only 13 questionnaires were returned.

The participants of the study were 13 Saudi female entrepreneurs. Their age ranges from 22 to 46 . Four of them have finished secondary school. Three have got a diploma and the remaining participants have finished college .

Only six of the thirteen participants are fulltime business women . The rest are either studying or holding a position in a government job like teaching .50% have just started their business six months ago , 42% have been working for a year and only one participant has a five year experience .



The study shows that *Instagram* is the most used website as 75% of the participants use it as a platform for conducting their business. However, a question has revealed that the same number of people face difficulty when dealing with *EBay* as it is shown below:

The participants have all agreed that English is a great asset to them. 27% of them think their English language is weak and the rest believe their general English is good to an extent. 92% have agreed to join a course, if available, to learn how to deal with such websites. As for the topics suggested by the

participants for the course, they included: business terminology and how to contact with buyers and possible clients.

### **Discussion:**

The most noticeable result from the questionnaire is the participants' enthusiasm to join a course that will benefit them in their jobs. The study outcomes show the important role that social media plays in the future of online business. The majority of the participants have chosen *Instagram* as the place to display and sell their products and to communicate with customers and other business men and women. And their choice makes sense because *Instagram* in the Arab or Saudi community has an obvious influence. Nevertheless, the difficulty for these businesswomen, especially the ones who sell beauty products or clothes, lies in acquiring their merchandise. 80% have chosen *eBay* as the best website to get products since it offers goods from different parts of the world, especially China. Though the website supports the Arabic language, dealing with sellers and the customer support requires English proficiency. It is also not the language everyone uses in daily routine. So to find a solution to this recurring problem, I suggest an intensive course for learning English business terminology.

The course is adapted from an online course, the universal class which offers courses in accounting, cooking and business.

#### **Course Description:**

This English for Business course serves to narrow the gap between the professional knowledge of the business people and their English proficiency to further develop their competency in the real business world.

The course will be 'extensive' as the class duration is for 2 hours three times a week over a four -week period (a total of 24 hours). The study group will include between ten and twenty students. The 'target learners' are Saudi female entrepreneurs. The classes should be held in a well-equipped room that has computers, LCD and PowerPoint equipment to facilitate the teaching and the learning process .

The course will apply to both small businesses, which would like to develop an alternative method of addressing potential markets, as well as people who wish to make an income selling their personal items.

**Course Material** :The resources that will be used in class focus mainly on materials selected from the website.

**Goals:** During the course, learners should be able to familiarize themselves with business terminology and utilize EBay competently using correct English.

**Course Details:** The course will start with some background information and tips on deciding what to sell on eBay, how to set up an eBay and PayPal

account, and how you can bid for everything .The importance of customer service will also be discussed in this course, as well as how best to resolve customer complaints or disputes, how to make and send payments or items for your eBay purchases or sales, and how to make the best use of eBay's seller tools.

### **Course Lessons:**

- Lesson 1: EBay: How it All Began : Introduction to the Course.
- Lesson 2: Setting up an Account on eBay
- Lesson 3: Deciding What to Sell on eBay
- Lesson 4: Buying on eBay
- Lesson 5: Setting Up a PayPal Account
- Lesson 6: Selling on eBay
- Lesson 7: Accepting and Sending Payments
- Lesson 8: Shipping Items
- Lesson 9: eBay Seller Tools
- Lesson 10: The Importance of Customer Service
- Lesson 11: Dispute Resolution
- Lesson 12: Setting Up an eBay Store
- Lesson 13: Legal Issues with eBay

**Course Requirements:** to attend this course, it will be best if learners can bring their own laptops.

### **Conclusion**

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) meets the needs of the learners for academic or professional purposes. Designing an appropriate ESP course that suits target groups in an academic setting is not easy task. The study focused on conducting needs assessment for designing an ESP Intensive online business course for Saudi entrepreneurs.

In this concern, some fundamental aspects needed to be considered to propose the ESP online business course framework. First, a need analysis was conducted focusing on a number of tasks and skills for academic purposes. Then, objectives of the course were formulated.

Subsequently, the content of the course was constructed based on the results of language needs analysis.

However I would recommend an evaluation study test how the new courses meet the intended communicative needs. Because This ESP course is not a final product that remains unchanged. Course development should be viewed as an on-going process.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A

#### 1- بيانات شخصية

الاسم : .....( اختياري ) .

العمر: .....

المستوى التعليمي :

ثانوي – دبلوم – بكالوريوس – دراسات عليا

ما هو أفضل وصف لطبيعة عملك (الرجاء اختيار الأقرب لطبيعة عملك من التالي):

طالبة – اعمال حرة – اداره – غيرها ( الرجاء التحديد )

#### 2- بيانات عملية :

1- برأيك هل ترى أن التجارة الالكترونية أفضل من التقليدية ( المحلات والاسواق التجارية ) ؟

نعم

لا

2- متى بدأت تجارتك الالكترونية؟

6 اشهر – سنة – خمس سنوات – اكثر من خمس سنوات

3- اكثر موقع تستخدمينه في تجارتك الالكترونية؟

ايبي –انستقرام – المنتديات – المدونات

4- اكثر موقع تجدين صعوبة في التعامل معه؟

ايبي –انستقرام – المنتديات – المدونات

5- من السهل الشراء من المواقع الإلكترونية الاجنبية؟

نعم

لا

6- من السهل تعلم كيفية القيام بالشراء من المواقع الإلكترونية ؟

نعم

لا

7- اعتقد أنه يتوجب علي معرفة اللغة الإنجليزية للقيام بعملية الشراء عن طريق الانترنت؟

نعم

لا

8- كيف تقيسين مستوى لغتك الإنجليزية في المواقف التالية:

أ- التواصل مع البائع عند عدم وصول البضاعة

ضعيف

جيد

ممتاز

ب- كتابة شكوى عند وجود مشكلة في البضاعة

ضعيف

جيد

ممتاز

ت- التعاملات المالية بخصوص البطاقة الائتمانية

ضعيف

جيد

ممتاز

9- ماهي المجالات التي تتمنين ان يتحسن مستواك اللغوي فيها ؟

10- لو عرض عليك الانضمام لبرنامج تدريبي متخصص باللغة الانجليزية عن التعامل مع المواقع المذكورة هل تتحمسين للمشاركة ؟

نعم

لا

11- ماهي المواضيع التي تتمنين ان يتضمنها هذا البرنامج التدريبي ؟

12- كم المدة المقترحة المناسبة للبرنامج ؟

## Appendix b

**Answer questions as they relate to you. For most answers, check the box(es) most applicable to you or fill in the blanks.**

### Section I: About you

1. Name: Optional

2. Age:

3. Gender:

Female

Male

4. Educational level

High school graduate

Diploma

Bachelor

Master

5. In terms of your current occupation, how would you characterize yourself?

Student

Businesswoman

Administrator/Manager

Other, please specify:

**Section II: About your business**

1. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

SD = Strongly Disagree  
 D = Disagree  
 N = Neutral  
 A = Agree  
 SA = Strongly Agree

2. How do you measure the level of the English language in the following situations:	
a- Communicate with the seller in case of missing purchasing .	<input type="radio"/> Low <input type="radio"/> Average <input type="radio"/> High
b- Writing a complaint when there is a problem with the goods	<input type="radio"/> Low <input type="radio"/> Average <input type="radio"/> High
c- Financial transactions in connection with credit card	<input type="radio"/> Low <input type="radio"/> Average <input type="radio"/> High

a- It is easy to purchase from online websites.	<input type="radio"/> SD	<input type="radio"/> D	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> SA
b- It is easy to learn how to purchase goods online.	<input type="radio"/> SD	<input type="radio"/> D	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> SA
c- English is essential to carry out an online purchase.	<input type="radio"/> SD	<input type="radio"/> D	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> SA

3. How long have you had your online business?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Six months	<input type="checkbox"/> One year
<input type="checkbox"/> Five years	<input type="checkbox"/> More than five years
4. What platform you used the most in your online business ?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/> EBay
<input type="checkbox"/> Forums	<input type="checkbox"/> Blogs
5. What platform you face most difficulties in dealing with ?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/> EBay
<input type="checkbox"/> Forums	<input type="checkbox"/> Blogs
6. Do you think that e-commerce is better than the traditional (shops and commercial markets)?	
Yes	No

7. If you are offered to join a specialized training program in English for dealing with the sites mentioned would you be eager to join?	
Yes	No
8. What topics would you suggest to be included in the proposed course ?	
9. What is the suitable amount of time you suggest for the course ?	

**Appendix c**

**Need Analysis Questionnaire**

This research project is conducted as part of the requirement of passing English for Specific Purposes Course instructed by Dr. Barnawi at the English Language Institute in KAAU . The purpose of this study is to know the needs of Saudi female entrepreneurs currently conducting their business online .

I would appreciate your taking the time to complete the following survey. It should take about five minutes of your time. Your responses are voluntary and will be confidential. Responses will not be identified by individuals. All the responses will be compiled together and analyzed as a group.. Please make sure that you have responded to every statement.

If you have any questions please contact :

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Thank you