
Brief Reports and Summaries

“A Brief Report on the Short-Course Training on ESP Course and Material Design (April 20-May 1, 1987) at King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology, Thonburi.”

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The writer of this report attended the 2 week-course offered to English lecturers, course designers, and material writers particularly interested in designing ESP courses or writing ESP materials.

The rationale for the program was that teaching and learning English could be made effective only if the syllabus, materials, and classroom teaching techniques were appropriately designed to meet the specific needs of learners, both in their fields of study and careers.

The aims of the course were :

- 1) to provide participants with background knowledge in planning and designing ESP courses and syllabi ;
- 2) to make known to participants, methods and techniques used for designing ESP courses and syllabi and writing ESP materials;
- 3) to give participants an opportunity to practise designing an ESP course and writing ESP materials.

After the preliminary session, about thirty participants from various institutions in Thailand were divided into three groups to share ideas and discuss the topic in general. As for the discussions of specific contents, the participants were divided into seven groups. The first three groups were divided according to the institutions they came from : the Department of Vocational Education, the Ministry of Education, the Institutes of Technology and Vocational Education, and the Teachers’ Training Colleges. The last four groups were divided according to their main areas of ESP interests : EAP (English for Academic Purposes), Business English, Science and Engineering, and General Science & Medical Science. The Director of the course, Mr. Alan Waters, a specialist from the British Council and at that time working at KMIT, gave lectures on relevant topics in each session. Then he assisted each group in carrying out the discussions and completing the tasks assigned. In the sessions dealing with designing and writing materials, video tapes were presented to give a clearer picture of how the materials developed from the model were put into practice. The tasks completed in each group session were presented to the whole class orally or displayed on the boards to elicit commentary from the participants. It was noticeable that only a few participants discussed or asked questions, making most of the discussion sessions rather ineffective. The reason for this might be due to a lack of confidence among participants in their use of English, the medium of instruction for the course. The contents covered in this course were as follows :

- planning ESP courses
- surveying needs
- analysing needs
- designing ESP syllabi
- evaluating materials
- designing ESP materials
- developing ESP materials

The course provided valuable insight not only on ESP Course and Material Design but also on other courses and material development. Principles, methods and techniques acquired from this course are widely applicable in the ELT field today. The only drawback was that participants came from a variety of backgrounds and interests in ESP. Even though they were grouped according to their general areas of interest, they still concentrated on their own specific goals (i.e., to solve problems in planning ESP courses or writing ESP materials for their own institutions). This caused difficulty in the sessions on 'Planning a Course' and 'Writing a Unit of Materials' since the actual process of doing so in each institution varies, is time consuming, and involves different people. In this particular course, however, time and resources were limited. Therefore, in the future, if this course were to be organized for people involved in the same fields or sharing the same needs, it would be more beneficial.

In order to have a better understanding of the course, it is recommended that one read the publication on which it was based : Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

This report cannot be concluded without mentioning the pleasant, energetic, and helpful KMIT staff who made this course possible and made the participants always feel at home.